6-2014

The Knowing Body: Participatory Artistic-Embodied Methodologies for Re-Imagining Adolescence

Madeline Fox

Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation

Fox, Madeline, "The Knowing Body: Participatory Artistic-Embodied Methodologies for Re-Imagining Adolescence" (2014). CUNY Academic Works.

https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/210

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
The Knowing Body:
Participatory Artistic-Embodied Methodologies for Re-imagining Adolescence

by

MADELINE C. FOX

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Michelle Fine, Ph.D.

Date Chair of Examining Committee

Maureen O’Connor

Date Executive Officer

Susan Opotow, Ph.D.

Wendy Luttrell, Ph.D.

Roger Hart, Ph.D.

Kathleen Gallagher, Ph.D.

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

The Knowing Body: Participatory Artistic-Embodied Methodologies for Re-Imagining Adolescence

Adviser: Professor Michelle Fine

Braiding critical youth studies, social science methodologies, participatory action research, performance studies, and art, this dissertation investigates how we can produce knowledge collectively toward reimagining adolescence. Polling for Justice was a multi-generational participatory action research project that took place between 2008 and 2011. Polling for Justice was interested in understanding young people’s lived experiences at the intersections of education, criminal justice, and public health in New York City. The study centered on a city-wide survey and a series of data-driven focus groups. The Polling for Justice research collective used participatory artistic-embodied methodologies to make sense of, and later perform, the mostly quantitative data. This dissertation argues that art can be considered a meaning-making process, and that social science scholarship can benefit from incorporating artistic approaches into the analysis process. Through a careful examination of data from the Polling for Justice study, parts of life stories from Polling for Justice researchers, and key moments from the participatory process of analyzing findings using artistic-embodied methodologies, this dissertation details how we can turn to art to engage in knowledge production towards re-imagining adolescence in the social sciences.
Acknowledgements

With deep thanks for support in countless ways to:

Michelle Fine

and Roger Hart, Wendy Luttrell, Susan Opotow, Kathleen Gallagher

and Judith Kubran.

María Elena Torre and Brett Stoudt

and Suzanne Ouellette, Caitlin Cahill, Jessica Ruglis, Valerie Francisco, Monique

Guishard, Valerie Futch, Michelle Billies, Rachel Verni, Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Rachel

Liebert, Bree Picower, Ariana Manguard, Ben Lerner, Dessie Donnelly, Charhonda Cox,

Karen Pittelman, Susannah Flicker, Brian Mundy, and Stephanie Nephew.

Rickie Solinger, Jim Geiser, and Nell Geiser.

Una Osato, Niara Calliste, Darius Francis, Candace Greene, Jaquana Pearson, Maybelline

Santos, Jessica Wise, Dominique Ramsey, Isabella Alisha Vierira, Paige Taylor, Jose

Torres, and all those involved with the Polling for Justice Project.

Dr. Jonathan Chen, Dr. Manoj Chhabra, and your teams.

To my family: Sam Coleman, Ruben Coleman Fox, and the little one in my belly

Jo Salas, Jonathan Fox, Hannah Fox, Rio Espinosa Fox

and Sharon Prince and Danny Coleman.

I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude for ice water, naptime (not mine), long

runs, and Prospect Park.

This dissertation would not exist without all of you.

Dedicated to the memory of Inez McCormack – a most extraordinary person.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iv  
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ v  
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. vi  
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................ ix  
List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... x  

Chapter One: An Introduction to the Project and Adolescence ........................................... 1  
  Psychology’s Adolescence ...................................................................................................... 2  
  Adolescence Historically Constructed .................................................................................... 6  
  Producing Knowledge ............................................................................................................. 8  
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................ 10  
  From Where I Sit ..................................................................................................................... 11  
  Conceptual Framework: Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage ...................................... 13  
  Polling for Justice .................................................................................................................. 14  
  Timeline ................................................................................................................................ 17  
  Introducing the Players ........................................................................................................... 17  
  Art as Analysis … Analysis as Art ........................................................................................ 20  
  Outline of Chapters ............................................................................................................... 25  
  Finally, on Purpose ............................................................................................................... 27  

Chapter Two: Methods ........................................................................................................ 29  
  Methodological Influences .................................................................................................... 29  
  Analytic Approach .................................................................................................................. 31  
  The methods of Polling for Justice and this dissertation ....................................................... 34  
  Methodologies of Praxis and Process ..................................................................................... 35  
  Artistic - Embodiment ........................................................................................................... 49  
  Data Performance Labs ......................................................................................................... 51  
  Methods as Art ......................................................................................................................... 54
Chapter Three: The Results are In - Polling for Justice Survey Data

Chapter Four: Lives in Motion

Darius

Maybelline

Jessica

Maddy

Jaquana

What We Know for Next Time

Chapter Five: Theorizing Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage through Artistic-Embodied Methodologies

Devising Dr. Researchy

In the Shadow of the Data on Mothers’ Education

A Tale of Two Manhattanvilles: Sparking the Embodied Circuits of Dispossession Analysis

Discussion: Epistemologies of Embodiment through Spontaneity, Meaningful relationships, and Audience

Chapter Six: Dissemination as Participatory Action Research

Theatrical Frame

Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage Analysis

Performing the Findings

Audience Up

Don’t just sit there - Organize

Analysis is Dynamic: Considerations for future

Interdependence, Interconnecting, Circuits

Chapter Seven: An Epilogue - Artistic Embodiment in a Critical Youth Studies

The Space Between

Collective Knowledge Production for Liberation

Art-in-Research
List of Tables

Table 1: Polling for Justice performances for analysis .................................................53
Table 2: Polling for Justice Survey demographics .........................................................58
Table 3: Audience Responses .....................................................................................142
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polling for Justice Timeline</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A screenshot from video on youth reporting depressive symptoms</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An image from Photo Voice work</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The confluence of life stories, PFJ data, and our collective analysis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Artistic-embodiment in action</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Educational aspirations</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>When I think about the future, I feel</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Positive feelings towards school</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Negative feelings towards school</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>PFJ survey responses to policing questions</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Negative police contact by borough</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Negative police contact by sexuality</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Circuits of Dispossession chart</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Maybelline embodying data on LGBQ experiences with aggressive policing in the Bronx</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>PFJ Survey questions on everyday interactions with police</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Darius liked to wear the lab coat to and from PFJ events</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>PFJ Researchers in their lab coats</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mother's education data graph</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Circuits of Dispossession analysis chart</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Polling for Justice researchers embodying audience responses to PFJ data</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

An Introduction to the Project and Adolescence

In January 2009, the Polling for Justice research team conducted a formal research discussion with ourselves – a within group focus group – to unpack, understand, interrogate, and, theorize the troubled relationships between young people and police in New York City. One week later, wanting to get a sense of what adult perspectives might be around the same area of inquiry, we conducted a focus group with adults also asking them to theorize the troubled relationships between young people and police. When we brought the materials from the two focus groups together, one striking difference stood out between the adult and young peoples’ discussions – multiple adults named “fear of youth” as a root cause of high rates of negative interactions between police and young people. Meanwhile, “fear” didn’t come up at all within the young people’s discussion. Youth researcher Jaquana Pearson said it first: “What does that mean, fear of youth?” As we talked it through various interpretations emerged: Erik thought it couldn’t be fear of youth themselves, because who would be scared of little kids? Rather, he theorized, it was fear of what kids might become. Maybelline provided corroborating evidence for Erik’s theory, remarking how adults always (rather annoyingly) say youth are the future. Kate thought it was more about lack of control than fear because, from an adult perspective, youth are out of the control of adults, and that makes them fearful. While the idea that adults were afraid of young people was a surprise to the youth researchers, a reflexive examination of my own discipline, psychology, in conjunction with a historical analysis of “adolescence” sheds some light onto this experience of young people as to be feared.
Psychology’s Adolescence

I decided to examine this chasm we uncovered between normalized adult understanding of fear of youth, including my own, and the young people’s incredulity about this fear. I first went to PSYCINFO, a well-respected psychology database. In PSYCINFO, one can quickly get a sense of the dominant story of urban adolescence in the United States in this particular historical moment. Supported by the American Psychological Association, PSYCINFO provides systematic coverage of psychological literature that spans the past two hundred years. It is the go-to database for scholars of psychology seeking to conduct searches of literature in the field.

In an effort to document a dominant story on urban adolescence within psychological literature today, I conducted a simple PSYCINFO search in September 2011. I plugged in the search terms for keywords “adolescence” and “urban” and “peer reviewed journals” between the years of 2000 and 2010 (the most recent year PSYCINFO provided), and I was returned ten journal articles on studies that took place within the United States. Taking a cursory look at the titles of the ten journal articles suggests a picture of what the words “urban” and “adolescent” might be proxy for within the field of psychology. Across the studies, adolescence is understood as encompassing ages 12 or 13 through 18 or 20 years old. Nine of the ten journal article titles make reference to adolescent drinking, drugs/alcohol/substance use, abuse and/or prevention, violence/violent behavior/exposure to community violence, delinquent behaviors, “persistently dangerous” school environments and/or school disengagement (Belgrave, Reed, Plybon & Corneille, 2004; Farrell et al 2005; Lanza & Taylor, 2010; Jones et al, 2005; Martino, Ellickson, & McCaffrey, 2008; Roberts, White, & Yeomans, 2004; Sullivan, Farrell, & Kliwer, 2006; Xue, Zimmerman & Cunningham, 2009; Lambert,
Ialongo, Boyd, & Cooley, 2005). The tenth article, that does not follow this trend, is titled: *The attributes adolescents associate with peer popularity and teacher preference* (Hopmeyer, Kim & Schimmelbusch, 2002). Looking a little more closely, 8 of the 10 articles include predominantly (over 80%), or entirely, African American young people as their samples (Belgrave, Reed, Plybon & Corneille, 2004; Farrell et al 2005; Lanza & Taylor, 2010; Jones et al, 2005; Roberts, White, & Yeomans, 2004; Sullivan, Farrell, & Kliewer, 2006; Xue, Zimmerman & Cunningham, 2009; Lambert, Ialongo, Boyd, & Cooley, 2005). Of the two articles that do not include a predominantly African American sample, one study takes place in South Dakota comparing a rural sample with an urban sample (Martino, Ellickson, & McCaffrey, 2008), and the second takes place in Burbank, California and is the study of peer popularity and teacher preference (Hopmeyer Gorman, Kim, & Schimmelbush, 2002). Looking at content and sample together, it becomes clear the “urban” “adolescent” is operationalized in psychology in the early twenty-first century as African American adolescent as, or in, environments that are, violent, dangerous, drug/alcohol/substance using. Reading these studies, one can easily imagine how young people get characterized as fearsome.

Analyzing the articles further, a focus on individual responsibility stands out. In each of the articles, the authors consider the individual psychological experience/fall-out of social reality/context. Several of the articles point to contextual factors for individual behavior (Lanza & Taylor, 2010; Belgrave, Reed, Plybon & Corneille, 2004). However, even these articles, through their foci, and their accumulation, not only reify but produce psychological representations of young Black people as damaged, with responsibility located at the individual/family level. For example, Lanza and Taylor (2010) conducted
a study of African American girls and boys of low socio-economic status backgrounds to examine family routine, school disengagement, and delinquent behaviors. They found that low levels of family routine were associated with higher levels of school disengagement and delinquent behaviors (Lanza & Taylor, 2010). The authors point out that a significant percentage (76%) of their sample lived in single-parent homes. Instead of conducting a policy analysis of contributing factors, the authors do not go beyond blaming families/parents in seeking out the root causes of school disengagement and delinquent behaviors. In another example, Jones, Bradshaw, Haynie, Simons-Morton, Gielen, and Cheng (2009) studied two Baltimore schools, populated with predominantly African American students, to examine the classification ‘persistently dangerous’ and to understand predictors of fighting. Their analysis suggests a relationship between higher likelihood of fighting and the number of peers who fight, parental endorsement of fighting, and the existence of relationships with non-parental adults (mentorship) (Jones et al, 2009). Their analysis does not attempt to theorize the reasons for fighting, only the predictors for future fights. In a third example, Belgrade, Reed, Plybon and Corneille (2004), conducted a study looking at the impact of a drug prevention program on drug and alcohol refusal and efficacy among urban African American girls. They found that girls in the intervention group, who went through the drug prevention program, had higher drug refusal efficacy than girls in the comparison group. The authors explain that African American youth have lower rates of substance abuse than White youth (Belgrave, Reed, Plybon & Corneille, 2004) however, they decide to focus on African American girls because, as they state, “Drug refusal efficacy … may be especially important for African-American youth from urban neighborhoods where drug culture is an everyday
reality” (p. 268). Even knowing that African American girls already have lower rates of alcohol and drug abuse than White youth (who don’t have a drug culture, apparently?), the study is based on the assumption that it is important to teach the girls how to refuse drugs, instead of perhaps thinking that the girls might have something to teach others/white youth about what they know already about drug refusal efficacy.

From my examination of the top-ten search results in psychological literature, I detect a problem - an instance of what Thomas Teo (2010) might call epistemological violence. The problem is not simply the homogeneity of samples that operationalize “urban youth” as predominantly African American young people. These studies reify historic, racist and sexist constructions of adolescents and systematically white out the history and policy changes that have created the realities we psychologists study. These studies elucidate how psychology might characterize my co-researchers. The question was then, why? It turns out, by design.

The psychological study of adolescence was designed to reflect – and perhaps provoke - this fear. According to a critical youth studies perspective, adolescence was conceived as a new stage of human development in order to provide a technology of control (Hall 1904, Lesko, 2001). Describing the stage of life we know now as adolescence provided a way for state and scientists to shape children into being the right kind of citizens as well as shape social hierarchies (Lesko, 2001). Meanwhile, it is clear that structural changes, such as policy shifts, have fundamentally shaped individual experiences, public perceptions, and treatment of adolescents. Where has this history gone? How does the history of psychology intersect with the history of adolescence? Through an examination, even if brief, of the history of the construction of adolescence,
we can begin to find answers, develop a more critical understanding of the present and craft a methodological response.

**Adolescence Historically Constructed**

Adolescence as we conceive it today is a stage of human development that was socially constructed largely in the early 1900’s (Lesko 2001, Hall 1904, 1906, Arnett 1999, Chinn 2008, Bakan 1971). In the United States adolescence was established at the beginning of the twentieth century while industrialization was taking hold. In 1904, as the Progressive Era got into full-swing, emerging psychologist G. Stanley Hall published a study that named “adolescence” as a stage of human development (Arnett, 1999). Hall’s study served to both establish adolescence as a life phase, and establish the topic of adolescence as a cross-disciplinary area of scientific study (Youniss, 2005). G. Stanley Hall is widely credited with being the father of “adolescence.”

Adolescence in practice was produced in order to prolong childhood in the context of urban industrialization and an influx of immigration in North America in the first part of the 20th century (Bakan, 1971). During the late 1800’s and early 1900’s the United States experienced considerable population growth as waves of immigrants came to find work. With the influx of poor immigrants, there was a concern about the moral development of American citizens (Chinn, 2009; Hall, 1904). The high rate of immigration brought about fears of rampant immoral behavior for middle and upper class, settled, white, North Americans.

Nancy Lesko proposes our conceptions of adolescence were and are produced as a technology for social control:

… [In the early 1900’s] adolescent bodies became a terrain in which struggles over what would count as an adult, a woman, a man, rationality, proper
sexuality, and orderly development were staged. Adolescence today continues to be defined within the doubled tensions of its history: the mixing of fear and desire, emotions and reason, sexuality and purity, black and white, and masculine and feminine. (Lesko, 2001, p. 50)

Fears of Others (like immigrants) were even more dramatically stoked by the aftermath of the emancipation of African slaves in the United States. In the early 1900's, while African Americans were migrating north from living confined within one "peculiar institution" (Wacquant, 2000) to another, G. Stanley Hall and psychological colleagues were establishing "adolescence" as a field of study. Hall was invested in the project of studying, shaping, and growing "Americans", for which he (and his peers) meant White, male Americans (Lesko, 2001). Black teenagers were studied only to 'prove' Lamarckian theories of racial superiority for whites (one aspect of this was Hall’s theory that the turbulence of adolescence indicated a deeply held memory of a difficult time in the history of the species passed from one generation to the next and therefore was naturalized and inevitable (Arnett, 1999). The moral exclusion of African Americans, so deeply institutionalized in US socio-political practice (Opotow, 2008), was incorporated fundamentally, scientifically, into the construction of the "adolescent". And, female adolescent bodies challenged the state’s sense of control throughout. At times too dependent, at other times too independent – depending on race and historical moment (Solinger, 1992) –the study of adolescence helped produce policies that punish rather than support girls and girlhood (Lesko, 1996).

One could frame the historical construction and production of adolescence as a process of what Susan Opotow (1990, 1995) might refer to as moral inclusion and
simultaneous exclusion. As particular adolescents, and parts of adolescence, were being
guided through school, community, and science to produce the right kind of adult citizen
(an inclusion process), other adolescents and parts of adolescence were “…perceived as
outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply”
(Opotow, 1990, p.1; see also Fallis & Opotow, 2003). Adolescence, as a life stage, is
something we all have intimate experience with. It can therefore be challenging to gain
perspective and to see the contours of what is fair and what is not fair in the present-day.
A historical perspective is a particularly useful way to make visible the ways that the
scope of justice, and who is included or excluded, shifts over time to create the present
(Opotow, 2008; McClelland & Opotow, 2011).

And so, this dissertation begins here: with an understanding of how studies within
my field, psychology, have been used against young people, to generate fear – limiting
analysis to the individual level, not considering systemic causes, increasingly valuing
only positivist methodologies, and then using data gathered to justify racist claims and
problematic systems and structures that produce the conditions they examine. Psychology
not only studies, but shapes everyday realities for our young people (Giddens, 1976).

**Producing Knowledge**

At the root, perhaps, there is a need to reframe how we consider how knowledge
is produced. The academy, generally, operates under a narrow conception of what counts
as knowledge production. Limited perceptions of who has the right to research and
produce knowledge serve to maintain hegemonic societal structures that benefit a very
few at the cost of a very many (Appadurai, 2006). Narrow conceptions of *knowledge* and
who has the authority to produce it have - and will continue to - harm oppressed
communities (see – Smith, 2012). Through extending access to knowledge production
and expanding what is considered knowledge we can change the academy, transform scholarship, and contribute knowledge of use for justice in the world. In this dissertation, I write about doing this through participatory action research. In particular, I write about using artistic-embodied methodologies with a multi-generational research team including high school aged researchers in order to devise a way to produce knowledge collectively on youth experiences of neo-liberal public policies.

Phil Brickman, Vita Rabinowitz and colleagues (1982) published a study on helping and coping that provides a distinction between those who are responsible for a problem and those who are responsible for a solution. In their model, some are considered responsible, or are blamed, for problems/conditions, while others might be perceived to have control over the solutions. Applying their frame to young people: Adolescents are assumed responsible for the issues in their lives, but are not assumed to be the source of the solution. As if in reply, Roger Hart (1992) takes seriously not only the rights of children, but their contributions as well. In Hart’s frame, children shape society through their (too often unrecognized) active participation. Further, he writes that children and adolescence develop civic engagement and a deep sense of democracy from regular participatory engagement with their communities (Hart, 1992). In this way, Hart’s work makes the important claim that adults, children, and global society all benefit from recognizing and supporting children’s capacity to take responsibility for generating actions, design, and “solutions”. In the process our understanding of childhood is reshaped. In this dissertation, taking Hart’s frame to heart, I document how through multi-generational participatory research with youth about youth, we begin to reimagine a psychology that undoes a fear of youth and does some work towards re-visioning adult-
youth relations and adolescence itself through a focus on policy and institutionalized practice.

**Research Questions**

Foregrounding a theoretical challenge to conventional approaches to producing scholarship, I lift up key insights and new understandings about adolescence arrived at by the Polling for Justice project’s collective analysis of youth experiences of public policy betrayal and critical resistance in New York City. Ultimately, in this dissertation, I aim to answer the question:

- **How can we produce knowledge collectively towards liberation?**

More specifically, I ask:

- **How can participatory artistic-embodied methodologies contribute to building liberatory knowledge?**

And:

- **How do the Polling for Justice researchers’ collective understandings of young people’s experiences of systemic policy betrayal and critical resistance contribute to re-imagining adolescence?**

In PFJ, art-full participatory artistic-embodied methodologies produced understandings of youth experiences of policy betrayal and critical resistance that contribute significant findings to the field of social psychology that might have otherwise been missed using more traditional methods/forms of knowing. Through sharing the theoretical contributions made by the Polling for Justice research collective on youth experiences of public institutions in New York City through collective and artistic-embodied research, I aim to make the case that there is revolutionary and scientific potential in approaching the research process – and analysis in particular – as an artistic one.
In this dissertation, the actual issues that I explore with Polling for Justice (circuits of dispossession and advantage); the methodology (including artistic-embodied approaches and participatory dissemination); and the structure of the research are all secondary, though deeply related, to my primary aim that is about the epistemology of and philosophy of knowledge production. I examine young people’s every day experiences of public policy via participatory action research in order to shed light on how multi-generational, collective knowledge production can re-imagine adolescence.

From Where I Sit
Because the field of psychology as a whole has some reckoning to do with regard to its participation in the oppression of young people, I locate myself within a community of psychologists concerned with and committed to a critical stance and a liberatory frame for the discipline. The Critical Social/Personality Psychology program at the City University of New York Graduate Center is identified with critical, liberation, and feminist psychology. Our program is part of a legacy of psychologists that stretches back throughout psychology’s history – even back to the very newborn days. Writing in the 1800’s, Wilhelm Dilthey called for the budding field of psychology to distinguish itself as a holistic science that situated the study of human experience in a social historical context. Wary of the growing trend towards natural “scientific” thinking and positivism which resulted in fracturing the human condition into disconnected, measurable parts, Dilthey proposed methodologies that would iterate back and forth between the relations of the part and the whole, crafting a complex, contextualized understanding of humans, human thought and experience (Dilthey 1988/1883, Torre, Fine, Stoudt & Fox, 2012). This dissertation is inspired by a Dilthey-ian psychological approach to understanding adolescence.
Within the Critical SP program, I am part of the Public Science Project – an incubator for critical participatory action research. Participatory action research (PAR) is an epistemological approach and political/justice commitment that positions those considered the subject of research as the researchers themselves. In PAR, those most impacted by an area of inquiry come together as a research collective to define for themselves the research question, the research design, collect data, analyze data, and decide together what should be done with the results. In this way, participation in knowledge production is opened up to those traditionally excluded – via history, via the achievement gap, via underfunded education, via white supremacy – from being knowledge producers within the academy. PAR is informed by the popular education approaches of Paolo Freire, liberation psychology of Ignacio Martín Baró, the action research of Kurt Lewin, the critical social science of W.E.B. DuBois and critical theory. PAR has been shaped over time by a broad range of scholars, educators, and activists who think carefully about participation (Hart, 1992, Hart et al., 1997; Lykes & Mallona, 2008; Cahill, 2004; Fals Borda, 1979; Friere, 1970; Torre, Fine, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, “Missy”, Rivera, Roberts, Smart, & Upegui, 2001; Guishard, 2008; Tuck, 2008). This dissertation grows directly out of the PAR work that has taken place at the CUNY Graduate Center under the guidance of Michelle Fine, writing, work, and collaborations of Caitlin Cahill, María Elena Torre and Brett Stoudt (who each wrote the psychology PAR dissertations that have come before me) along with the work of members of the PAR Collective.¹

¹ Consisting of the ever-growing group that includes Maria, Brett, Caitlin, Monique Guishard, Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Eve Tuck, Jessica Ruglis, Patricia Kreuger-Henney, Mayida Zaal, Michelle Billies, Anne Galletta, Carolina Muñoz Proto, Duquan Hinton, Akemi Nishida, Rachel Liebert, JenJack Geiseking, Gregory Donovan, Eïnat Manoff, Hillary Caldwell, Kim Belmonte, Cory Greene
**Conceptual Framework: Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage**

The particular conceptual frame activated here - *circuits of dispossession and advantage* - grows from the work of Michelle Fine and the Public Science Project. Political theorist David Harvey describes neoliberalism and dispossession:

“Accumulation by dispossession is about dispossessing somebody of their assets or their rights…we’re talking about the taking away of universal rights and the privatization of them so it [becomes] your particular responsibility rather than the responsibility of the State” (Harvey, 2004, p. 2). In the US, public resources, opportunities, dignity and therefore aspirations are being redistributed by public policies, from poor communities to elites. Youth of color, those living in poverty, and youth who are immigrants are increasingly denied access to or detached from public access to high quality education and health care as their families and housing are destabilized. At the same time the state has invested heavily in their criminalization and surveillance.

In 2009, Michelle Fine and Jessica Ruglis migrated Harvey’s theoretical work into critical youth studies and critical social psychology to understand how neoliberal policies activate what they call “circuits of dispossession,” in the lives of low income youth of color, such that they are increasingly detached from public institutions of development such as education and health care, and attached to public institutions of containment such as criminal justice and the military. In the original article, Fine and Ruglis (2009) document, for instance, how the simple condition of being a high school drop-out/push-out cascades into a flood of negative outcomes in education and economics as well as health outcomes, parenting practices, voting and community participation and criminal justice involvement. Just as dispossession accumulates within
communities and across sectors, it is also the case that dispossession is unevenly distributed across communities. The loss of resources, human rights, dignity, legitimacy and opportunities in one community corresponds with their respective accumulation in another. As the inequality gap widens across communities, social outcomes worsen for all. Thus, within the Public Science Project, we are interested in understanding and undermining circuits of dispossession and privilege for purposes of progressive solidarity.

**Polling for Justice**

Out of frustration with these realities and eager to examine, expose, and make demands for radical alterations, we launched the participatory action research project Polling for Justice (PFJ) in February 2008. The study was conceived as a multi-generational research project and it grew out of a collective desire from youth-centered community organizations and the Public Science Project to document current conditions for the City’s youth. From the outset, we took our inspiration and initial direction from the expressed needs of community members and groups. The project included over 40 young people from across New York City along with academics, community organizers, public health officials, and community lawyers. We gathered together in an initial 2-day meeting, or “research camp” (Torre & Fine, 2004), in order to craft a city-wide survey for youth in NYC on experiences with education, public health and criminal justice.

We intentionally established the research space as a “radical space of democratic inclusion” (Torre, 2005, p. 255) and together we sought to craft a critical working environment where youth and adults could jointly interrogate youth experiences of public policies. We wanted to trouble social representations of young people that portray youth as too loud, too violent, too “urban”, too pregnant, too apathetic, irresponsible, ignorant, *too fearsome*, and put forward new liberatory visions of adolescence. As Polling for
Justice youth researcher Maybelline Santos explains, with her own commentary on how young people are characterized as the top ten PYSCINFO studies discussed above:

It seems like teens are always going to be looked down on. Adults look down on us, like “What do they know? They’re not going to go nowhere.” We are always being stereotyped. They can look at Darius and think, because of his skin color, he’s not going anywhere. They look at me and think: “Oh, she’s Spanish, she might drop out and have a kid.” That’s the stereotypical way of adults looking at teens and profiling them like that.

In addition, through this re-examination of adolescence, we wanted to shift the frame for how adults see themselves in relation to youth and youth experience. Linda Powell Pruitt (2004) re-theorizes the achievement gap, proposing instead we consider it an achievement knot in order to take into account the ways we are all implicated by, and responsible for, the educational experiences of youth of color (Pruitt, 2004).

Sparked by these ideas, we developed a research space where young people and adults had to communicate across generation and meaning to come towards agreements about the uses, interpretations and politics of the words, concepts, and practices that made up the PFJ study.

When we came together at the initial research camp, the young people decided where they could best contribute their expertise, and we divided up into four topic areas: health, education, safety and violence, and criminal justice. Small groups worked over two days to sift through a stack of existing literature and surveys relevant to their topic, looking for existing questions to use on the PFJ survey.

For some of the young people, their expertise came from intimate every day experiences with the topics we were interested in, like schooling, criminal justice and public health. For some of the adults, the expertise they contributed came from their
backgrounds as scholars, educators, community lawyers, and/or public health advocates. It makes sense that when developing a survey on youth experiences, it is beneficial for the people generating the questions to be young people themselves. However, we found it strengthened the survey questions to also take into account informed adult ideas and critical knowledge of historical trends, context, and past research.

By the end of two days, we had a first draft of the survey and five months later, after much revision, we launched the Polling for Justice survey across New York City. In order to distribute the survey, we brought it to street fairs, community organizations, after school programs, GED completion programs, rallies and protests, basketball courts, listservs, websites, and anywhere else we thought we might find young people. Like the Social Justice Sexuality Survey conducted by Battle, Pastrana and Daniels (2013), we intentionally did not strive for a random sample with the PFJ survey. We recognized that any methodology that would produce a random sample would exclude groups of young people who we felt were particularly important to hear from. For instance, one sampling strategy to acquire a random sample includes random phone dialing. Young people in New York City have unstable phone numbers and access to cell phones, and many homes no longer have landlines. It was clear that phone sampling would not be a successful approach. We used a purposive sampling strategy, aiming to achieve broad geographical distribution, and over-sampling for populations of young people too often under-represented, particularly youth of color from low-income neighborhoods and LGBTQ young people. After one year of collecting surveys, we succeeded in hearing from over 1,000 young people ages 16 – 21 well distributed across the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan (see Table 2, p. 51). From this sample, we do not attempt to generalize to
the general population, however we can make significant claims that stem from the experiences of the 1,000+ young people who completed the survey.

Timeline
Polling for Justice took place between 2008 and 2011 over two and a half years, including six months of design, one year of data collection, and a year and a half of analysis and participatory data performances that took place from New York to Denver to Halifax.

![Polling for Justice Timeline](image)

**Figure 1: Polling for Justice Timeline**

**Introducing the Players**
In PAR projects, perhaps especially youth PAR projects, it is helpful to design moments for exiting and entering a project. In PFJ we had two moments within the
project when our research group rearranged itself to meet the needs of the research, and provided a moment for some researchers to step forward and others to step back.

At the launch of PFJ we gathered 40 young people together and worked over 6 months to draft the survey, as mentioned above. Once we launched the survey, we decided as a whole that in order to do the ongoing work of the research project, we needed a smaller working group willing to meet regularly (2+ hours/week). Of the forty young people, there were ten (and then eight) who were able to make the commitment to meet each Tuesday from 5pm – 7pm. We worked together for about nine months (keeping the larger group informed), and at the end of 9 months, we were nearing the completion of data collection and the school year was ending. We decided as a group to make the move to start using artistic-embodied methodologies for analysis and dissemination, and this was another moment when some PFJ researchers left (to go on to college/life/etc.) and some new members joined our group. This dissertation is mainly centered on the collective work that took place with the final iteration of the PFJ collective, the group that met regularly from June 2009 – December 2011. We are:

Maybelline Santos
Jaquana Pearson
Candace Greene
Jessica Wise
Darius Francis
Niara Calliste
Una Osato – artistic director
Plus Brett Stoudt and Michelle Fine

Though this dissertation focuses on the work of the people named above, our analysis and theorizing was deeply shaped by the PFJ researchers who were part of our core collective that met weekly from Sept 2008 – June 2009. In addition to me, Maybelline and Jaquana, all part of PFJ from the start to the end, we were:
Paige Taylor  
Alisha Isabel Vierira  
Dominique Ramsey  
Jose Torres  
Eric McKenzie

And Dr.s Jessica Ruglis and Valerie Francisco were also integral to our research collective.

(for full list of all PFJ researchers and community partners, see Appendix B)

As I expand on later in the dissertation, my role in the group was Project Director, though I thought of myself as Organizer. I came to the work not only as a doctoral student dedicated to understanding the experiencing and undoing of social justice, but also as an educator, community organizer, and having been imbued with a theatrical sensibility throughout my life.

In this dissertation, I write about the Polling for Justice (PFJ) project and how we approached analysis as art and dissemination as participatory research. The heart of the PFJ project was a 13-page survey on youth experiences at the intersections of policing, schooling, and public health that asked young people to respond to a wide range of questions including feelings about their teachers, access to health care, how they handled feeling stressed, details about daily interactions with police, and their activisms and resistance.

The PFJ project was born out of a desire from a variety of individuals and community organizations to take stock of and respond to the ways public policy was impacting young people in New York City. From the outset, all of us working on PFJ shared a commitment to the idea that knowledge production belongs to the people/public/the masses, not to the academic elite. However, it’s one thing to have a
commitment to the idea that knowledge production should be deeply participatory, but it became our work to discern, in detail, how that might work in practice.

In PFJ, in 2009, one year after we began, the surveys flowed in from all over the city and we had to figure out what to do with all the data. Our survey produced a data set that stretched out for what felt like miles: approximately 1,000 questions x 1,000 respondents. We asked ourselves: How would this data become knowledge? And how would we make sure that the knowledge produced would be by all of us, for everybody?

It is important to note that our research collective was made up of mostly young people of color from low-income areas – a group historically and profoundly marginalized, disenfranchised, and told in so many ways that their knowledge/perspective is not worthy. The other members of our research team were academics, mostly white academics of privilege, like myself – who meanwhile in our own ways needed to remember that we weren’t entitled to all the weight of our own voices.

**Art as Analysis … Analysis as Art**

In PFJ, one of the ways we responded to this moment was to understand the analytic process also as an artistic one.

As social scientists we’re trained to understand analysis as scientific, as a systematic study – and we don’t usually think of analysis as artistic. In this dissertation, I make the case for their overlap. “Art” is often defined or thought of as a product of a creative endeavor meant to be appreciated for its beauty and emotional impact. Art can be much more. Indeed, I consider art as a way to make meaning, a perspective that has taken shape over a long time. In this dissertation, I use the words “art” and “artistic” to refer to the realm of human endeavor which has to do with engaging imagination, creativity, form,
and aesthetic decisions in order to express vision, insight, knowledge, and meaning, whether in the visual, verbal, or performing arts.

In my scholar-life, my own thinking about the ways art and the social sciences overlap might go back to my consideration of Wilhelm Dilthey and his conceptual frame for psychology that I explored in my First Doctoral Exam and that I briefly introduced above. My First Doc traced a Dilthey-ian conception of psychology – which is to say a humanistic, holistic psychology from Dilthey, through Gergen (1973) and his call for a more social-constructionist, contextual social psychology, through feminist social psychology (Sherif, 1979, Cherry, 1995), and liberation psychology (Martín Baró, 1994).

If I were to re-do my First Doctoral Exam in this moment, I would still begin with Dilthey, but taking a divergent path, I might trace how social psychology has considered the overlap between art and the production of knowledge.

After Dilthey, who himself studied artists, one critical turn in understanding in what ways art has been a presence within the social sciences, might be a consideration of scholars who have turned to art for its political potential. There is a legacy of social scientists using artistic performance to insert their research into the public sphere, beginning with W.E.B. Du Bois. In one stage of his career, W.E.B. Du Bois turned to pageantry, performance, and circus theater in order to explore alternative possibilities about African American history and reality. He conceived of art, the stage, drama and theatre as a vehicle through which to educate, inspire and unite Black audiences (Horne & Young, 2001). Through theater, Du Bois was able to share histories, and historical figures, to audiences without reliance on literacy. Committed to theater with Black people, for Black people, he used the stage to insert productive stories of African Americans into
the public discourse and imagination (Krasner, 2001).

A separate turn would be to philosophers who call for art as a way of understanding the world, in particular, John Dewey and Maxine Greene. Dewey, a contemporary of DuBois, began to speak and publish about art and aesthetic as an approach late in his career (1934). He argued for considering – recognizing - art as life, and within and part of the every-day, as vital and imperfect and to be experienced, not consumed (Dewey, 2005). And he made a call that there is much to be gained from theorizing art, from understanding art as an everyday experience (Dewey, 2005.) Maxine Greene, taking up where John Dewey left off, argues for the meaning-making potential of art and the imagination. Greene contributes the idea that through art and the imagination we can – and are – forever striving towards being free (Greene, 2000).

Another turn might be to a consideration of the work of Kathleen Gallagher (2007) who employs theatre as both metaphor and method in her ethnography of urban North American schooling. Gallagher and her team spent three years in four schools, two in Toronto and two in New York City, conducting a study on schooling, culture, experience and relationships in schools. She/they specifically used drama classes as the site of their study, and in this way they were, “Looking at the theatre that is invented by young people alongside the theatrical turns and performances of the everyday …” (2007, p.4). The research team made use of drama classes inside public schools as (relatively) un-surveilled spaces where youth could share, through drama, their understanding and experiences of schooling. In this dissertation, following in Kathleen Gallagher’s wake, I too make use of theatre, or rather performance and artistic-embodied approaches, as metaphor and methodology, and also evidence.
In another turn, I would trace how the work of PFJ and the intersection of arts and social science builds on the interdisciplinary field of performance studies. Performance theory values other forms of knowing and expression as much as the written word (Bial, 2004). As Dwight Conquergood (2002) explains, “performance studies is uniquely suited for the challenge of braiding together disparate and stratified ways of knowing” (p. 152). This is in part because performances are simultaneously a work of the imagination, a pragmatics of inquiry, and a tactic of intervention (Conquergood, 2002). Like participatory action research, performance studies shrugs off the imposed, and misleading, distinction that is often made between research and application. As we broaden conceptions of performance, a few things can happen – the lines between audience and actor come into question in a variety of settings, complexity is communicated through multiple mediums, and dreams/desires/the subjunctive becomes a unit of analysis.

In psychology, use of the arts is more commonly found in clinical approaches rather than in research (i.e. using arts for therapy: music therapy, art therapy, drama therapy, etc.) (Clover, 2011). Even in research, within the disciplines of psychology, participatory action research, and education research, artistic and/or embodied approaches are most often used for the purposes of personal empowerment, enhancing self-esteem, and growth at the individual level. Norm Denzin (2003) has encouraged qualitative researchers to use performance to communicate auto-ethnographies, or reflexive studies of the researcher herself-in-context. Just as there is more institutional/structural support for positivist research approaches in psychology and other social science research, there is also more funding and support to be found for projects and studies that emphasize individual-level change (read: neoliberal), rather than
structural change/resistance (Billone, 2009).

Denzin’s work follows the performative psychology work lead by Mary Gergen in the 1980’s. In my genealogy of the overlap between art and social science the work of Mary Gergen and Kip Jones would mark the most recent and prominent turns. In 1989, at an academic conference in Denmark, Gergen (2001) took the stage to give an academic talk in heels and red feather boa. Instead of giving her presentation as her audience expected her to, she performed her talk in the form of a play that was titled “From mod masculinity to post-mod macho”. Gergen performed her talk - and went on to develop a genre of performative psychology – as a way to practice a feminist psychology, to challenge narrow conceptions of truth, and to call attention to limiting methodologies that foreclose alternative ways of knowing (2001). Kip Jones brings the genre of what he calls performative social sciences forward with wide-ranging theoretical, academic, and artistic products in a various media that takes up how social scientists can use art for investigation and dissemination (2012, 2006; Gergen & Jones, 2008). In 2008, Jones and Gergen called for the future of performative social sciences to find ways to include the audience in the performance/social science process. As Jones states that future of performative social sciences will:

... allow for intrusions, shocks and surprise endings by focussing the development and production of performative pieces on the audience as the final interpreter, interlocker, magician, sage. This is where the politics become profoundly embodied; the evocative transformed to the provocative; and the possibility of social science research contributing to changing hearts and minds a reality. (Gergen & Jones, 2008, p. 41)

Polling for Justice and this dissertation take up this call for involving audience in the work, as is described in detail in Chapter Five.
My most intimate turn in my understanding art’s overlap with social sciences and its potential to make meaning and produce knowledge through participation comes from my upbringing. My parents, Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas, founded a form of improvisational theatre called Playback Theatre where audience members tell stories/moments from their lives and actors enact interpretations of those stories on the spot. In Playback Theatre the *art* happens when an artistic-embodied interpretation of a story – no matter how abstract, fleeting, creative, or metaphoric - resonates for the teller and the watchers/audience. The *art* is a feeling in the room, a communication around the complexity that life is, recognition of a truth or some purpose in the search for ontological meaning (Salas, 1990, p. 10). Through my familial orientation to art-in/as-life, I understand that through art we can underscore and/or uncover pattern and thus reveal meaning. Fortunately for me, my mother, Jo Salas, documented her conceptual frame for art – described above - in an article in the *Journal of Music Therapy* (see Salas, 1990). And what is analysis if not that?

For PFJ, connecting to bodies helped get out of the world of positivist, elitist conceptions of knowledge production and the academy and instead connect to people’s own ways of knowing, and value those ways of knowing. It had the potential to make evident the connections between individual stories/life stories and stacks of quantitative data. An artistic-embodied approach gave us a way to stitch together various ways of knowing and theorize collectively.

**Outline of Chapters**

This dissertation takes place in a historical moment where low-income young people of color experience compounded betrayals, and so in these beginning pages, I
have constructed my understanding of how adolescence has come to be what it is in society and psychology today. In the first chapter, I outlined the key concepts that provide the framework for this dissertation: a participatory action research approach as a liberatory response to *epistemological violence* (Teo, 2010), circuits of dispossession and advantage, and the fields out of which my artistic-embodied research methodology grows from, I re-constructed a history and present of the construction of adolescence as it is relevant to this study, with a particular focus on the discipline of psychology, and I provided an introduction to the flow and content of the Polling for Justice project. In the second chapter I describe the methodologies for writing this dissertation: a study of lives approach (Josselson & Leiblich, 1993; Josselson, Leiblich & McAdams, 2003), storytelling as method (Gallagher, 2011), the bodies of data that I turn to for this dissertation, and my approach to analysis. In the third chapter, I ground the dissertation in the key data from the Polling for Justice survey, providing a tour through the PFJ study findings. As a direct product of the collective work of the Polling for Justice project, Chapter Three is a co-authored chapter. In Chapter Four, through life stories from some of the Polling for Justice researchers I lift up and theorize the overlaps between our lives and our data in order to explore how the complex relationships within our research team not only provided a site for the work, but generated moments and data that were the work itself. In the fifth chapter I describe and share findings from our artistic approach to analysis, towards our artistic-embodied analysis of circuits of dispossession and resistance. In Chapter Six, I introduce the participatory data performance genre we developed in order to consider the implications for solidarity of including audiences as part of an artistic-embodied understanding of a *circuits of dispossession analysis*. Finally,
in the seventh chapter, the epilogue, I conclude with reflections on the future of critical youth studies and an artistic-embodied social science.

**Finally, on Purpose**

In Polling for Justice, our aim was not to intervene at the individual level in the lives of the youth researchers nor of the research participants. This is not to say that the project didn’t have impact on our (both youth and adult) lives, however, we consider this impact/these changes by-products of participating in the project. Our research goals and our turn to artistic-embodied approaches were concerned with the production of knowledge in line with our collective research questions about deepening understanding of youth experiences in NYC. Other studies have done the important work of documenting the ways participatory action research project can impact co-researchers (see: Torre, 2010).

Instead of psychology being a technology for controlling what White supremacy decides are out-of-control bodies, and instead of contributing to a fear of young people, I see that psychology can be a tool for building power, in terms of both recognition (i.e. social representation) and redistribution (i.e. policy impact) (Fraser, 2000). In PFJ, art-full participatory embodied methodologies produced understandings of youth experiences of policy betrayal and critical resistance contributing significant findings to the field of social psychology that might have otherwise been missed using more conventional methods/forms of knowing. By sharing the theoretical contributions made by the Polling for Justice research collective on youth experiences of public institutions in New York City through collective and artistic-embodied research, I make the case that there is political and scientific potential in approaching the research process – and analysis in particular – as an artistic one. And, I consider the implications for solidarity (Powell
Pruitt, 2004) of including audiences as part of an embodied understanding of circuits of dispossession and analysis (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). The PFJ artistic-embodied approach holds the potential to reimagine how the field understands adolescence in a way that can support systemic change as opposed to reinforcing systemic oppression.
Chapter Two

Methods

This dissertation is a critical ethnography of the production of knowledge within a participatory action research group. Critical ethnographies aim to produce intact, subjective, and therefore complex data-stories from which to make sense of the world. Written explicitly through the eyes/brain/fingers/tongue of the author/researcher, this dissertation-ethnography holds validity because of multiple sources of data, transparent description of analysis, and the validity of the data itself. In this dissertation, methodology and findings are entwined inextricably with each other. The near-conflation is intentional and is characteristic of a critical participatory action research stance. In-depth discussion of methodology is included in each findings chapter however, in this ‘Methods’ chapter I detail the bodies of data I used and how I went about generating findings for this dissertation.

This chapter has three parts. The bulk of the chapter consists of a description of the particular methodologies of praxis and process that we used in Polling for Justice to do our work. Prior to that discussion, I begin with an orientation to the key methodological influences I pulled from in writing the dissertation, followed by a description of the analytic approaches I employed to produce the dissertation findings.

**Methodological Influences**

My approach is shaped by ethnographic scholars who are grounded in critical race, feminist, and post-structural theory (Behar, 2003; Wolf, 1992; Luttrell, 1997, 2003; Fine 1990; Gallagher, 2007; Winn, 2010; Stewart, 1996; Stewart, 2007). Meaning, authors who are explicit about their own subjectivity in relation to the research, who work from an understanding of social experiences as constructed, who hold a profound commitment
not to do harm with their research, and who presume that there is not one truth, but many truths of which they might try and share various perspectives, but can only know their own. For instance, in Kathleen Gallagher’s ethnography of drama classrooms in urban public schools in NYC and Toronto, she described her approach as “situated ethnography” (2007, p. 7), grounded in “robust examinations of context and specificity” (p. 4), committed and attentive to decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 2012). She used multiple methods, and included multiple perspectives (graduate student co-researchers, high school students and high school drama teachers) in crafting the ethnography. In this way, Gallagher sought to share a complex, multi-layered story of youth experience of urban public schools using theatre as both a metaphor and process.

My approach is influenced by the methodological framing of Wendy Luttrell’s (2003) ethnography of the complex lives of pregnant and parenting young women. In that study, Luttrell worked with a group of young women to make art (collage, dramatic performance, self-portraits), foregrounding their artist-selves, in order to listen closely to the girls’ experiences and critiques. Luttrell found that art - both dramatic and fine - made space, perhaps through providing distance, for the young women to share more of themselves than talking would have alone. The Polling for Justice project as a whole, and this dissertation-ethnography included, are an instance of, or attempt at, what Luttrell calls “activist ethnography” (1997, p.121) - an opportunity to systematically re-imagine and re-present our own representations. I consider my dissertation-ethnography a participatory activist ethnography: activist to indicate that we were engaged with a collective project to re-imagine adolescence, and participatory to indicate a set of ethical
and methodological practices and dilemmas that I grappled with while conducting and writing up my account of the research.

Further, this is a participatory activist ethnography for liberation. I use liberation to describe our interpretation of the expansive, collectivist conception of freedom theorized by Maxine Greene (1988). Greene writes that, “... freedom is a distinctive way of orienting oneself to the possible, of overcoming the determinate, of transcending or moving beyond in the full awareness that such overcoming can never be complete.” (p. 3). For us in Polling for Justice, the word liberation is multi-layered containing ideas of a radically democratic research space within (Torre, 2005), as well as the more outward facing connotations of emancipatory research (Lynch, 1999; Lather, 1986), with ideas of release, including of desire, of imagination, of self, of community (Greene, 1988), and of return.

Analytic Approach
The methods I used to write this dissertation are layered. In our research, the Polling for Justice project generated our findings by weaving survey/focus group data, life stories of the research team, and the critical reflections of the audiences who watched our research performances. In this dissertation, I provide an account of that process in order to answer the question: How can we produce knowledge collectively?

I turn to several bodies of data. In the first findings chapter, I describe key findings from the youth-to-youth survey we distributed to over 1,000 young people in New York City. In Chapter Three, I cross-reference five lives with the survey/focus group data to simultaneously lift up how we used life-stories within our critical participatory action research collective and key findings we generated through our collective knowledge-making process. Rather than present whole life-stories, Chapter
Three peeks into the lives of several Polling for Justice researchers in order to make evident how our life-stories informed the research process in key ways. In Chapter Four, I explore the embodied research methodology we devised to analyze and disseminate the research, in which we used variously situated knowledge across the research team to metabolize the PFJ survey/focus group data. In Chapter Five, I use data from five data performances to describe our dissemination methodology, that is the process, and subsequent implications, of putting embodied analysis up on its feet in order to provoke audiences of privilege to consider their own mutual responsibility.

Qualitative researchers Carl Auerbach and Louise Silverstein (2003) recommend that researchers working with qualitative data use a grounded theory approach to code their data by combing through transcripts to pull out relevant text and repeating ideas in order to create themes. In this dissertation, I argue that the embodied process we employed as a collective was in fact an analysis process in which, through action, we identified codes, relevant parts, repeating ideas and themes. Adopting an approach introduced by Kathleen Gallagher (2011), we do this through *story as method* or way of knowing. Pulling on theoretical work of Hannah Arendt, Gallagher claims that through storytelling, we can reach critical understanding based on human experience (p. 50). Rather than ‘giving voice’, storytelling leaves room for multiple truths, multiple interpretations, contradictions and even silences – rooted always in experience - to contribute meaningfully to knowledge production. And, the refusal of objectivity inherent in a *story as method* approach, with all *story* rooted in experiences, is deeply political, as I discuss on later in the dissertation (Gallagher, 2011).
In order to decide which stories to tell in this dissertation, I identified themes
(Auerbach & Silverstein) and key moments (McAdams, 2001). These themes and key
moments are the relevant texts and repeating ideas of our research collective that brought
us to an analysis of Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage (Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Fine,
Stoudt, Fox & Santos 2010). I identified themes and key moments through the following
process: I noted stories, events, and moments that repeatedly emerged in the survey
and/or focus group data, the embodied research process, and individual and/or collective
youth experiences - either through seeing the same kind of data across the survey, focus
groups, and in our lives, OR a piece of data, story, or experience that was told repeatedly,
dramatically or otherwise, by the research team. In other words, I triangulated themes and
key moments from a same/similar story emerging from within the survey data, within the
focus group data, and from within the experiences of our research team.

For instance, youth experiences of growing up policed in New York City was a
topic area that was consistently central to our work throughout the life of the project.
Issues connected to growing up policed came up when we first started drafting the survey,
the questions we included in the survey produced some of our most powerful survey
findings, related topics came up across our focus groups, and the PFJ youth researchers
consistently told personal stories and grappled with their stories and the findings in
relation to aggressive policing. Some of our most vivid group experiences were
connected to encounters with policing.

Gallagher (2011) describes a story as method approach as being productive for
examining and/or exposing the contradictions, complexities, and multiplicities of stories.
In order to decide which particular data-stories and moments to write up in this
dissertation, I focused on key moments that hovered over underlying tensions. Within our work on understanding young peoples’ experiences of growing up policed in New York City, this meant that I analyzed stories from the data and our group members that suggested disagreement, differing perspectives, and/or discomfort – like, for instance, Darius’ story of aspiring to be a cop which sat at odds with our analysis of the injustices of aggressive policing, or Maybelline’s relaxed, no-big-deal way of telling about getting arrested in her own neighborhood while doing nothing wrong. As I describe in detail in the findings chapters, the artistic-embodied methodology we used was our approach to unpacking and examining these tensions.

**The methods of Polling for Justice and this dissertation**

**Survey.** The Polling for Justice study collected its own set of data, centering on the survey of over 1,000 high school aged young people across the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. The survey produced a database of both open and closed-ended responses across a broad range of policy sectors that we labeled public health, education, criminal justice, and home and family life.

**Data-Driven Focus Groups.** The aggregated data from the PFJ survey showed a wide range of negative experiences for youth identifying as LGBQ and highlighted a dire climate of violence and discrimination across public and private spaces for LGBQ young people. The data also made evident that particular young people from particular neighborhoods bore the brunt of negative experiences with police. In response to these survey results, we conducted data-driven focus groups where key populations, like groups of LGBTQ young people, contributed their expertise to help us analyze the PFJ data (see Brewster, Billies & Hyacinthe, 2010). Each of these focus groups started with a close reading of key PFJ findings and then focus group participants were invited to respond, react, and explain the findings in relation to their own experiences and expertise.
In total, we conducted six focus groups: two focus groups with formerly incarcerated young people of color in the Bronx, two focus groups with young people who identify as LGBTQ, with the help of graduate students Jan Haldipur, Michelle Billies, and Kendra Brewster, and two focus groups with youth organizations engaged researching youth experiences of police interactions in New York.

**Stats-in-Action.** PFJ co-researcher Dr. Brett Stoudt introduced our research team to Exploratory Data Analysis (Tukey, 1977), and led us through what he calls “Stats-in-Action”, that is thinking about the data, in real-time, in an iterative way (Stoudt, 2010). In other words, we would look at statistical output from the survey findings in our research meetings and then generate further questions we wanted to ask of the data, running the statistical analyses right then in the meeting, in a process that brought us deeper and deeper into the data (Stoudt, 2010).

In this dissertation, I consider the PFJ research team’s collective analysis of the PFJ survey and data-driven focus groups as the basis for my own analysis of our collective process.

**Methodologies of Praxis and Process**

I analyzed the PFJ performances/collective analysis, audio/video recordings and transcripts of interviews, research sessions and performances, to lift up my own analysis of the PFJ research collective’s understanding of young people’s experiences of systemic policy betrayal and critical resistance. Specifically, this looked like:

**My role as Organizer.** At the beginning of each phase of our research project we asked each other: “What do we need from each other to do this work?” We agreed: “we need to show up” “expect to disagree at times” “give each other the benefit of the doubt” “ask if we don’t understand” “remember we all bring different knowledge/experiences”.


The exercise of creating a group agreement was one of a series that we used to craft a radically alternative accountability structure within our research team, one that leaned away from the familiar top-down/adult-youth/teacher-student models we were all familiar with.

I refer to my role in the group as Organizer, and I consider this to be methodology. Roger Hart (1997) suggests that researchers engaged in participatory projects should frame themselves researcher/facilitators. Caitlin Cahill (2005) makes a similar claim in her dissertation, writing that her dual role as both facilitator and collaborator generated a particular set of responsibilities, including a commitment to transparency and reflexivity in the research process. María Elena Torre (2010) writes about reframing Gordon Allport’s social psychological concept of intergroup contact from the subject of research to a critical epistemology. She claims that participatory action research collectives that are made up of intentionally diverse groups are particularly rich with potential for generating knowledge across and through those differences (intergroup contact), in what she calls participatory contact zones (Torre 2010, 2005). Torre takes great care to outline the conditions for collaboration that are required for a group to research together in the participatory contact zone.

In Polling for Justice, following the work of prior Public Science Project studies and as was outlined in Chapter One, we took great care to establish our research space as a radical alternative to traditional classrooms and research labs. The role I took on in the group was something like facilitator, but I’m calling it Organizer: That is I took on the work of setting the space for the process of collective sense making. This included what might be considered the mundane (from room reservations to passport applications and
flight reservations; from video recorders to tape recorders to journals, pens, and markers; from pizza orders, snack runs, to time-sheets, and computer passwords and “home-grown” Graduate Center youth-researcher IDs) to the substantive (creating the scaffolding for each session, in collaboration with others, through which we did the work). My approach to the more mundane tasks was to consider each one a crucial piece of support for making the content of our work possible. For the more substantive, I pulled from a background as both an educator and a community and union organizer to design a research space shared/owned by all and to co-facilitate a research process towards our collective project goals. I maintain that each part of this work as Organizer is vital for participatory knowledge production.

**Intimacy as methodology: Reflexivity, transparency, and availability.** My methodological approach to the group included a deep and personal commitment to each person and to the collective; I valued our group’s need for food or drink as just as important as the data analysis we engaged in. Likewise, while the collective research meetings were where the bulk of our work took place, there were countless times we worked together in smaller groups, or one-on-one, in formal and informal ways. I made the decision to be personally available and to invite that dynamic within our group, for three main reasons: 1. The first was to live the ethic we proclaimed to uphold. In order to engage in this participatory research collective, I wanted to be as transparent as possible about my own positionality, to invite others to do the same, and to create a culture of reflexivity/knowledge-of-self-and-context through a critical lens (Harding, 1995). My approach to doing this was to show up with my whole self, and thus build meaningful and
complex reciprocal relationships (Lather, 1986) over time with my co-researchers. 2. The second reason I took this approach was in service of our collective goal: in order to re-imagine adolescence, we needed to re-imagine the adult-youth relationships we formed with one another. 3. The third reason I made the decision to build this intimacy was so that I had some level of confidence that I could facilitate the group through analysis towards theorizing. Put a different way, I claim that creating and maintaining the conditions for collaboration and facilitation are key methodological moments within a participatory research collective. This is perhaps especially obvious in Polling for Justice because of the way our data and methods of analysis snowballed overtime until we ultimately produced our embodied analysis and performance of *circuits of dispossession and advantage*.

**Developing an artistic language.** Our research meetings took place at the CUNY Graduate Center either during a weekday evening or on a Saturday, depending on our schedules. In the final year of the research, as we were developing our artistic-embodied analysis, we generally met every other week for four to five-hour sessions. Una Osato, the youth researchers, and I were always present for those meetings, and sometimes we were joined by Brett Stoudt, Michelle Fine. Over the course of the year we worked with invited guest artists to help us develop skills and think artistically – to summon our imagination, our creativity, and to develop skills at tapping into knowledge in various forms.

---

*2 I do want to note that I did this/do this after 15+ years of working with young people in a professional capacity and with all the accompanying training on how to responsibly respond to challenging situations that arise.*
**Playback Theater.** As described in Chapter Five, we spent 5 days in June 2009 on the suburban campus of Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York in a Playback Theater training with instructor Hannah Fox. There were nine of us from Polling for Justice and three participants from the local community. Over the course of 5 days we were trained in improvisational theater and the foundations of Playback Theater. Playback Theatre is a form of improvisational theater in which actors enact in real time the real life stories of audience members. There is an explicit commitment in Playback Theatre that a story always belongs to its teller (Fox, 1994). This was important for our methodological purposes because it provided a dramatic approach to working with our data that was in line with our participatory commitments: we could “play” with the data, but for the purpose of understanding and interpreting the meanings intended by our respondents and each other.

**Participatory video.** Participatory videographer and spatial scholar Denisse Andrade worked with our group over two long days to introduce participatory video. During those days, each youth researcher wrote a video focusing on findings from the PFJ survey from each policy sector – so that by the end we had a short video on schooling, on public health, on growing up policed, on young people experiencing depressive symptoms (see Figure 2 below), and an idea for a movie on home and family life.
Figure 2: A screenshot from participatory video on youth reporting depressive symptoms

Photo Voice. Artist Evan Bissell facilitated our group through a modified Photo Voice (Wang & Burris, 1997) project in which the research team took photos on their own time in/of their lives and we paired each photo with captions/findings from the survey (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: An image from Photo Voice work
**Playwriting.** Ben Snyder lead the group through a playwright workshop and each PFJ researcher sketched a play based on our data.

For the most part, we did not use these products directly in our final data performances, with the exception of the Playback Theatre, which we used centrally, as well as some Photo Voice images, but the process of working with the data and each other through these various approaches informed our analysis in important ways and allowed for us to increase our artistic vocabulary towards thicker expression.

**Writing journals.** Each member of the research team had his or her own journal that we stored in a collective file that lived at the Graduate Center. We used these journals to take notes when working with the data, or as a space for a creative project (playwriting, for example), and at the end of each research session, we took a few minutes to write reflections and thoughts on the day. At the end of the research project, we all agreed that the individual journals would remain for the eyes of the author only - each person wanted to bring theirs home. As a result, I never read the individual journals. However, at various times in the research process and before each individual interview, I invited my co-researchers to read their journals for themselves to refresh their memories about what they’d written down.

**Reciprocity: Specifically, Polling for Justice as a job.** The PFJ youth researchers were paid for their work. This was an important epistemological decision - as working and valued members of the research team, they deserved to be paid just as any other worker. For the first two years of the project, youth researchers were paid $8/hour, thanks to generous support from the Surdna Foundation, Schott Foundation, Overbrook Foundation, Hazen Foundation, Glass Foundation, ADCO Foundation, the Urban Youth
Collaborative, and the Youth Research Studies Fund. In order to maintain the democratic, horizontal culture of our research team despite the fact that I was responsible for the paperwork that made the paychecks happen, we developed time sheets that each researcher filled out for themselves and tallied paychecks accordingly. The process was self-directed and served the purpose in terms of providing just enough distance and autonomy that we did not feel that I was making decisions about how much each person was being paid (although, Maybelline insisted on calling me “boss” in order to tease; she knew it bugged me). In the final year of the study when we were developing our embodied analysis, we changed this process. Instead of being paid bi-weekly based on how many hours they worked, youth researchers were paid a stipend each semester. The total amounts were virtually the same as the previous year, however, the feeling was markedly different. Tension around money, and tension directed at me, developed amongst our research team during the final year. My sense is that this was largely due to a felt-sense of lack of control on the part of the youth researchers, while I seemingly had much more of the control, and going months without seeing any money while working so hard; once a semester is infrequent. I regretted the decision to move away from the methodology of using homegrown time sheets. However, it is also possible that the change made visible power dynamics within our group that existed previously but were harder to see and feel.

Check-ins and life stories. The Polling for Justice study took place between 2008 and 2011. At the time of the writing of this, in 2014, the “youth” researchers from the PFJ project are fast losing their “young person” status. Some are living with partners and/or children, others are in their final years of college, most are working and shouldering
major responsibilities, some are organizing, and all are (most likely) feeling more and more “adult” every day. Being “young” or “adolescent” is, by definition, a temporary state.

The group started as an unwieldy 40 or so. The large group design was best for doing the work of generating questions on, and from, a wide range of experiences, but when we needed to do the longer, sustained work of analyzing the data, we decided to shrink the project down to a smaller, more intimate group. There were ten of us at first, twelve counting Brett Stoudt and Michelle Fine. Each meeting began with a check-in – a time for each person to say how he or she was doing that particular week before we launched into whatever the work was that day. I implemented this “check-in” practice. I knew from my time as an educator, in mostly in outdoor and/or artful settings, that the more we had ritual, set routines each meeting, the more the group would feel/behave like a collective instead of a more conventional ‘classroom’. With shared knowledge about what was going to happen next, leadership could also be shared. Since I was an adult and everyone else was a young person, we had to be careful/mindful about creating conditions that would distinguish our research space as an alternative to the more familiar top-down-teacher classrooms.

Thus, these “check-ins” were part of our weekly ritual – and at first people didn’t have much to say: “I’m good” “fine” etc. But, eventually, we started hearing more details about each person’s life. The experiences we told each other about echoed the disturbing racialized, classed and sexualized patterns of dispossession emerging from our survey analyses. We shared moments small and large, thrilling and alarming: being arrested for trespassing, getting into college, falling asleep in English class, being locked out all night,
getting grandma to the doctor, reading a good book on the subway. Sometimes in the quiet, smaller space right after a meeting someone would share that s/he was homeless again, or trying to scrape together the fees to take the SAT. We’d strategize about how to get the morning after pill with no ID, or about trying to get pregnant. While at first we conceived the check-ins as part of the scaffolding of our group, but ancillary to our research, we noted how the events of our daily lives mirrored and complicated the data we were analyzing from the survey.

This weekly ritual of listening to each other’s lives – even if only for a minute or two – helped us to see the ways our research resonated with our own lives, as well as the small, everyday – and normalized – ways young people in NYC experience oppression and the City’s policies. It also provided a moment, weekly, for me to include my self and my everyday stories in the fabric of our group, and in that way live up to our commitment to undo assumptions around my role as white academic – adult - researcher. Repeating this story-telling moment week after week did some work toward creating a democratic and multi-generational space. I came to understand this swapping of life stories within the context of a participatory action research collective as a form of what Weis and Fine (2012) have called *critical bifocality*; interrogating-at-once clear evidence of structural violence and injustice and embodied evidence of agency, resistance, contestation, despair, hope and desire in motion.
My approach to analysis of these life studies centered around making sense of the momentary confluence of lives with PFJ data with the collective analysis we developed (see Figure 4). The practice of being flexible enough to re-frame our methodological approach, to be responsive enough, for instance, to recognize the theoretical contributions available right under our noses - from check-ins - was vital to developing a thick, critical, theoretical analysis of the PFJ data.

In PFJ we did the work collectively and came to collective analyses of the data. Our process was democratic, and when asked who is in charge, youth researchers would explain that we make decisions and come to analyses together. I take this dissertation as an opportunity to document my own perspective on how we came to know what we know.
This in part included conducting individual interviews of PFJ researchers in order to better understand the individual storiesstreams that make up our collective analysis. To be clear, I do not frame individual youth researchers as *subject*, but rather, since I am convinced that our collective analysis is informed and enhanced through our individual experiences/lives, I write the connection between those experiences and the data.

In 2008 I conducted a life story interview with a young person whom I had done research with on a PAR project researching everyday journeys to and from school. The experience of conducting the long, detailed conversation – interview – with my co-researcher was positive and enlightening – for both of us. Through the conversation, my co-researcher, Elena, and I voiced ideas, experiences and perspectives about our lives and work together that we hadn’t found the opportunity to articulate in other settings. Elena told me details of her life and life-story that she had not shared in our group meetings and that shed new light on, and added depth to, the findings of our collective research project. By the time we did the interview, we had been working together for a year and a half, including traveling out-of-state together. We would not have been able to have the intimate, frank, and analytically complex conversation we had without first establishing a meaningful and complex relationship (Gordon, 2008) with each other. I believe that there are moments in participatory action research, when it is good to leave room for hearing one person’s near-whole story (and not necessarily in a group setting). As participatory researchers, our own stories are particularly relevant to our research. However, there is much that Elena and I discussed that we decided not to disclose publicly. There was also much left unsaid, or *unsayable* (Rogers, 2007). While I do think that sitting down one-on-one to tell stories can strengthen participatory collective research, I do not think that the
work must always come through as a “life-story” for public consumption. Instead, it can inform our collective research, and come through in creative, less direct ways. For this dissertation, I conducted individual interviews with my co-researchers to make space for the youth researchers of PFJ to contribute their own story-streams to the holistic story. I include some glimpses into some of these life-stories in Chapter Three. The rest comes through via our embodied findings, our theoretical contributions, and the spaces between.

My hermeneutics is not one of suspicion/ demystification (Josselson, 2004). In other words, as I analyzed the life-story contributions, my aim was to listen deeply, but for the purpose of reflecting what I understood my co-researcher to be saying/feeling/thinking/doing. I did not seek to find “explanations beyond the text” (Josselson, 2004, p.16). My decision to approach the life-stories this way is political. All too aware of the dominant story of urban youth as discussed in Chapter One, I understand this dissertation, and Polling for Justice, to be engaged in the project of generating new visions for adolescence not reifying historical racist, sexist constructions. I took care to focus on the fragments of my co-researchers’ life stories that informed our collective analysis of the survey and focus group data, through stories of strength. However, I do not mean to suggest that my hermeneutics was one of “faith” alone (Josselson, 2004). In my analysis of my co-researchers’ life-stories, I attempt to lift up their own words, stories, and perspectives to speak for themselves, as my co-researchers would wish. Ultimately, perhaps, my interpretive process is a listening project that reflects my understanding of how my co-researchers articulate analyses grown out of situated knowledges crafted in a context of experience, data, and art.
I had a sense of some of the complexities in each of my co-researchers’ lives. However, my interest in hearing about their lives was not to uncover a juicy story. My intention was to let them know I was interested in their personhood, and that our collaborative work on understanding youth experience of public policy in NYC could only be strengthened from a vertical look at our singular stories, one at a time – all of us. I explained this to each co-researcher and received their consent that they were interested in collaborating with me on this aspect of the work. The individuals whose stories are included in this dissertation reviewed their sections, requested edits if they desired, and gave their final consent for the inclusion of their story.

I conducted life-story interviews with five of my co-researchers beginning in January 2011, after our group had stopped regularly meeting and working together. The audiotaped interviews took place at The Graduate Center, in a restaurant, in my home, on a walk, over the phone, or a combination of all of the above. Sometimes, some aspects of the conversation were continued or clarified via email or Facebook private message. In the interviews, I asked my co-researchers about their experience with the PFJ research project and performances, their experiences of the relationships we formed, their experience of adolescence, their ideas, understanding, and take of/on the data, the ways their own expertise and experiences overlapped with the data, their hopes and desires for their future, the future of the project, and their desires for the data.

Following each interview, I took notes on my reactions and thoughts. I wrote summaries of the interviews, identifying themes that stood out as salient, and repeated this process - listening to the interviews, re-writing summaries, clarifying salient themes - and ultimately developing claims (Booth, Colomb, & Williams 2003; Auerbach &
Silverstein, 2003; Chase, 2003). In general, I defined salience as themes where I noted overlap between what a youth-researcher discussed in an interview, the PFJ survey data, and our collective analysis. In order to write up our use of and findings from the life stories of the PFJ project, in addition to the interview data, I turned to field notes, audio recordings and video from three years of research meetings, and the survey and focus group data from the PFJ study.

The life story fragments I write up were constructed from the data noted above, but most importantly through reciprocal relationships (Tuck, 2008) that developed over time. The stories include occasional factual changes in order to protect details that we decided to keep private.

**Artistic - Embodiment**

As one strand in a complex methodological strategy, Rosemarie Roberts used her own embodied reactions to watching dance as data for her dissertation research. She watched dancers dance, noted her own reactions, repeated the process and through writing made sense of why she had a visceral response to particular moments (Roberts, 2005). The Polling for Justice embodied research process echoed Robert’s approach but in a collective way. In other words, in order to make sense of the data, we made room for, and took note of, our bodies’ responses using improvisational theatre as a group.

Instances of this process are described in detail later in the dissertation. Our process evolved and shifted somewhat over the year that we worked with embodied methodologies, but the skeleton remained the same. After using theater games and exercises as warm-ups to awaken our expressive, artistic awareness and to connect as a group, we engaged Polling for Justice data. This often looked like projecting statistical output, graphs, or charts on the wall and talking them through to ensure we all understood.
Sometimes we’d look at various pieces of data at once – for instance we might look through all the education data. Other times, in a stats-in-action process we might wind our way through the data based on questions that arose within the group. After establishing comprehension we’d use various theatre exercises to embody the data. Sometimes we’d sit by ourselves to write a quick scene or monologue, sometimes in small groups we’d take turns “sculpting” our co-researchers into frozen scenes of how we understood one aspect of the data, sometimes we’d improvise human sculptures with no one directing the action, sometimes we’d tell the data like a story and then turn those stories into improvised enactments. With each approach, we’d pause and discuss different interpretations of what we were seeing. It happened that we received a steady stream of invitations to perform our data from long before we were ready with any kind of polished embodied analysis. The looming presentations provided a productive pressure on our embodied analysis process. The pressure meant that during most research sessions our embodied “play” had a purpose – we were finding ways to communicate our findings to particular audiences. As a result, we were more likely to voice – and negotiate – disagreements in interpretation, since we each knew that we’d soon be presenting our interpretation on a public stage. The pressure of upcoming presentations often meant that we felt a certain level of stress. I contend that this stress helped our process be collaborative and directed by all.

At one research session, just prior to a data-performance, we were joined by a guest youth researcher who had volunteered to come work with our group because we didn’t have enough PFJ researchers who were available.

It smacked me in the head – a field note:
Today while working with the data on youth experiences of circuits of dispossession and advantage, we sat with the words of one of the focus groups participants floating on the projection screen. The quote read:

I was walking to school one morning and some kids were running away from the officers and because he could not catch them he grabbed me and told me I would get a ticket. When I asked why he responded, "Shut up, little brat". I felt that I had no say and that I was trapped in a cage for no reason what so ever. – female, Latina

Una made a suggestion for each performer to take their own frozen image interpretation of the quote, in different places in the room. Terell, who had caught on quickly to the process, interrupted:

“Oh, I want to say something!”

“Yes!”

“An image just hit me in my head! It just smacked me!”

And, he went on to move his co-researchers into his interpretation of the data, directing bodies and faces/affect (See Figure 2). From his image, we observed sense of being trapped, of feeling small, lost, but also of ferocity, determination (to get to/through school) and strength. We decided to keep the image, wondering what additional interpretations our audiences would contribute toward understanding the data.

![Figure 5: Artistic-embodiment in action](image)

As mentioned above, the final data performances were in effect our published findings from the PFJ embodied analysis process. For this dissertation, in order to reveal how the process is entwined with findings, I turned to audio recordings, photos, video recordings, field notes, artifacts from the research meetings, including, flip chart notes, group journal entries, annotated data output, individual interviews, and our performance scripts.

**Data Performance Labs**

In order to document and investigate the participatory performance genre we created and the embodied analysis we produced through those performances, I collected data on each embodied presentation, or *data performance lab*. As is described in more
detail in Chapter Five, I did not end up using the data I collected in exactly the way I anticipated.

I audiotaped and videotaped each performance, took photos, and collected or took note of audience responses. I saved versions of our “script” as it was revised and changed for each performance. Though the PFJ research collective participated in approximately nine embodied presentations, for the purpose of analysis in the dissertation, I made use of five of the performances.
Table 1: Polling for Justice performances for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Performance Labs</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Approximate size of audience</th>
<th>Audio recording</th>
<th>Video recording/Photos</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
<th>Script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignacio Martín Baro Symposium</td>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>CUNY Graduate Center NY, NY</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCORE Annual Conference</td>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Julia Richmond Education Complex, NY, NY</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Meier Institute Symposium</td>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Julia Richmond Education Complex, NY, NY</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to Resilience Conference</td>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Childhood Conference</td>
<td>March 2011</td>
<td>CUNY Graduate Center NY, NY</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I focused on those performances because they represented more formal performed presentations, on stages, with audiences larger than 50 people. The remainder of our presentations were for high school, undergraduate, or graduate classes (small
groups) and the format of our presentations in those settings varied too significantly to be compared across.

**Methods as Art**

Overall, I pulled from a wide range of methods in terms of data collection and analysis to write this dissertation. In the Polling for Justice project, we approached the analysis process as an artistic one. We used art-full methodologies to breath multiple dimensions into the quantitative data from the PFJ survey and to theorize connections between our life experiences and the study data. We understood that art provided a strategy for us to reveal patterns across and to theorize meaning. In this dissertation, that I call a *participatory activist ethnography* (Luttrell, 1997), I similarly consider my methodology both scientific and artful.
Chapter Three

The Results are In: Polling for Justice Survey Data

Co-authors: Madeline Fox, Una Osato, Niara Calliste, Candace Greene, Darius Francis, Jaquana Pearson, Maybelline Santos, Jessica Wise, Brett Stoudt and Michelle Fine

The Polling for Justice survey, as described in the introductory chapters, was designed to ask young people about a range of experiences in order to be able to analyze how public policy intersects in the daily lives of young people toward four ends:

1. Document the geography and demography of dispossession and privilege by detailing empirically where and for whom social policies, institutions and practices enable and constrict opportunities for youth development across the boroughs of New York City;

2. Track the cross-sector consequences of dispossession by investigating how dispossession in one sector (e.g., not earning a high school diploma) adversely affects outcomes in other sectors (e.g., economic, health and criminal justice outcomes);

3. Chronicle the ways in which youth and adult allies mobilize to resist, negotiate and challenge collectively these policies and practices;

4. Design activist scholarship to “be of use” in varied organizing campaigns for youth justice and human rights policy struggles.

We asked questions about experiences with schooling, with public health, with policing and the criminal justice system, and in relation to home and family life (see Appendix A for full survey). In this chapter I will share findings from the Polling for Justice survey to provide an orientation to the dissertation study findings.

This chapter is co-authored. The survey and findings are not mine to write on alone. However, because this dissertation is a close look at how we produced knowledge collectively, and an investigation of the artistic-embodied knowledge we produced, it is important for me to include the detailed terrain of the study findings on which our
collective analysis was built. The chapter is a co-authored remix of mostly unpublished writing on the findings of the Polling for Justice survey, and it can be considered the launching off point for our artistic-embodied analysis of *circuits of dispossession and advantage* that we developed via telling the story of a Day-in-the-Life (for more on Polling for Justice see: Fine, Stoudt, Fox, & Santos 2010; Fox & Fine, 2012; Fox & Fine in press; Fox & Fine 2013; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine 2012; Stoudt, Fox & Fine 2011; Torre, Fine, Stoudt & Fox 2012; Fox, 2011).

The survey itself produced a large data-set rich with findings. Indeed, in Polling for Justice we examined much of but not all of the survey findings. In this chapter, I provide a focused tour through particular findings that we examined as a collective. As noted in the Methods chapter, it is important to remember that as a purposive sample, the PFJ data is not meant to generalize, in a conventional sense, beyond the experiences of the 1,100 young people who completed the survey.

The Polling for Justice survey allowed us to probe the conditions under which dispossession accumulated in the lives of NYC youth and the relationship to socio-emotional health/risk. The PFJ findings highlighted the ways that public policies have profound social and institutional consequences for young people, and move away from individual-based explanations that place blame onto individuals. Youth of color, those living in poverty, youth who identify as LGBQ, and youth who are immigrants experience the highest levels of policy betrayals in terms education policy, health care, and in terms of increased rates of incarceration and surveillance.

We were interested in education, criminal justice, family/housing and health for three specific reasons. First, these were the four areas of life that youth living in cities
widely cite as the major institutions (policies) in their daily lives. Second, education and housing are themselves social determinants of health so their policies are important to account for. Third, family, police and prison are all related to larger public, social and economic policies and with neighborhood conditions – also known social determinants of health. The connection between prison/jail and health outcomes are widely reported. Conceptually, violence and sexual behaviors are considered as socio-emotional health outcomes, not as the dependent (policy) variables, since poverty, dispossession and disinvestment engender conditions of violence and high-risk behaviors.

This Polling for Justice survey was comprised of nationally standardized items and questions that were developed and pilot tested by Polling for Justice. Our sample of 1,094, ages 16 – 21, was distributed fairly well across the boroughs of Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan with only a few respondents from Staten Island. The racial/ethnic demographics of the survey reflected the high school public school population of New York City at the time of the survey. We had more female respondents than male. Fifty-six participants were excluded from the sample for not adequately filling in the survey (e.g. nearly all of their responses were left blank). Another three participants were excluded from the sample because they did not live in NYC or fit within the age criteria. (See Table 2)
Table 2: Polling for Justice Survey demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polling for Justice Survey Demographics</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans(gender/sexual)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBQ</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race &amp; Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African American or Caribbean)</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a or Hispanic</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, South Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYC Borough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the survey findings, we uncovered some wonderful “surprises” – for instance, most survey respondents reported having high educational aspirations with 69% hoping
to complete a Master’s degree, a Ph.D., or become a doctor or a lawyer (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Educational aspirations

We heard young people report feeling hopeful about the future, with 89.6% describing feeling somewhat or very hopeful about the future (See Figure 7).
Young people reported caring about working with other young people to improve their communities (see Figure 8) and feeling good about parts of their schooling experience, in particular 94.3% cared about getting good grades, 88.7% reported that their teachers had high expectations of them, 88.4% reported that teachers help them when they need it, and 85.9% reported that their teachers care about them (See Figure 9 for these and more positive results). On these measures, there were basically no racial/ethnic, gender or geographic differences – it was all good news.
Young people also registered their dissatisfaction with their schooling experiences. 63.8% reported that in their school students act rudely towards teachers in their classes,
62.5% reported feeling bored, 49.3% felt that too much class time is spent getting ready to pass high-stakes standardized tests, 48.5% reported their classrooms are overcrowded, and 40% felt that school rules, tests, the way personnel treat students, and other elements of school made them feel pushed to leave school (See Figure 5).

But analyzing the data by race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality, as well as neighborhood, we also uncovered some disturbing trends. For instance, in response to youth-generated survey items about everyday interactions with police (questions like, “In the last six months: I was helped by a police officer; I was given a summons/ticket; I was arrested; I was touched inappropriately by police?”), young people reported high levels of negative interactions with the police (See Figure 8). 48.1%, or 481 of the 999 youth sampled in NYC, reported having negative contact with police in the last six months.

**Figure 10: Negative feelings towards school**

But analyzing the data by race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality, as well as neighborhood, we also uncovered some disturbing trends. For instance, in response to youth-generated survey items about everyday interactions with police (questions like, “In the last six months: I was helped by a police officer; I was given a summons/ticket; I was arrested; I was touched inappropriately by police?”), young people reported high levels of negative interactions with the police (See Figure 8). 48.1%, or 481 of the 999 youth sampled in NYC, reported having negative contact with police in the last six months.
4.5%, of the youth sampled have been in jail or prison. 10.7% of the youth’s parents have been in jail or prison. Of those 570 youth who encountered the police in the last six months, 84.4% reported a negative encounter that was sexual, physical, legal, or verbal in nature. Looking further, we noted that too many young people reported repeated negative encounters with police: Of the 481 youth who reported at least one negative interaction with police in the last six months, 64.2% reported two or more, 43.0% reported three or more, 30.9% reported four or more, and 22.2% reported five or more negative interactions with police.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the last six months, has any of the following happened to you? (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POSITIVE POLICE CONTACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was helped by a police officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was given a “second chance” by a police officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE SEXUAL POLICE CONTACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received “sexual attention” from the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A police officer crossed the line (touched, inappropriately) while searching me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE PHYSICAL POLICE CONTACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was frisked (pat-down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was strip searched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE LEGAL POLICE CONTACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got a ticket/warrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was picked up for a PINS (person in need of supervision) violation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE VERBAL POLICE CONTACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was told to move by the police in a disrespectful way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was stopped by police for questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was threatened and/or called a name by the police</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 11: PFJ survey responses to policing questions**

The PFJ youth researchers were growing up with intimate, every day experiences with police because of key policy changes in New York City in the years prior to the survey. In 1998 New York City implemented a policy making the police department in charge of running and staffing security in all the public schools. The result is a police
force inside NYC schools with over 5,000 police inside, which is equivalent to the 5th largest police force in the country (Mukherjee, 2007). Meanwhile, due to a separate policy that allows students to apply to public schools outside of their neighborhood school, students in New York City often travel to schools in other neighborhoods or boroughs, increasing the amount of time young people spend on the city streets getting to and from school. Particular areas of New York City, like Central Brooklyn and the South Bronx are identified as ‘impact areas’ by the NYPD and as a result they experience especially high levels of aggressive policing inside schools (in ‘impact schools’) and on the streets/in public spaces (Stoudt et al, 2012).

When we mapped the survey data, we noticed geographical trends of concern, like that young people living in South Bronx and Central Brooklyn reported especially high levels of negative interactions with police (see Figure 7):

![Figure 12: Negative police contact by borough](image)

The map in Figure 8 shows the number of PFJ survey respondents who identified as Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and/or Questioning who also reported negative contact with police. We were especially distressed and activated by the alarming rates of police contact we heard from LGBQ young people.
From these findings we began to understand that in terms of youth experiences with police, place matters, as does skin color, gender identity and whom you might be attracted to.

In relation to these findings, we launched a set of data-driven focus groups to get a deeper understanding of the PFJ survey data. In these focus groups, young people were asked to interpret the survey data for and with us. Conducting focus groups with youth who sit at the intersections of our statistical findings, we heard that young people remain buoyant through a sense of solidarity, critical understandings of unjust arrangements to stay positive, and through actively imagining a different tomorrow.

One focus group was with young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning and/or transgender. As they pored over findings about negative youth interactions with police, they discussed their anger in response to experiences like getting ticketed on the subway for putting their feet on a seat, for sitting in a playground after
dark, or getting harassed for wearing the wrong clothes (“gay wear”) in the wrong neighborhood.

They explained that outrage at these conditions is paired with an understanding that there is little they can do about it, and therefore, they find ways to dissipate their anger and move forward with their lives. As one focus group participant put it,

It’s like an everyday life in the city. It’s like cops are mean, we just have to deal with because it’s really like, there’s really not much I can do with arguing with a cop. So it’s like move on and keep on going, and it’s every day. So it gets to the point where you no longer, it’s not as shocking to us anymore. It just goes away after a while, you know, you walk it off, you watch TV, take a shower, and then it’s like, okay, just another day in New York City.

The focus group participants offered up their critique of current realities and their vision for the kind of world they wish exists, a world rich with supports, access and resources for all young people (Billies, Brewster, & Hyacinthe, 2010).

In the survey we asked a range of questions about youth experiences in relation to health and health care and home and family life. We learned, for instance, that 33% of respondents did not receive health care when they needed it due to immigration status, communication barriers, not enough money, no health insurance, or because they didn’t know how.

We continued analyzing the survey data across the policy sectors of public health, education, criminal justice and home/family life. In order to analyze for the ways young people experienced public policy in intersectional ways throughout their everyday lives, we developed a quantitative analysis approach for analyzing *circuits of dispossession and advantage*. This work was lead by Brett Stoudt. Focusing on key questions within each
policy area, we quantified the number of positive and negative experiences each survey respondents reported within each policy sector area.

Our analysis brought us to an understanding of injustice experiences connected as interdependent circuits. In other words, not just “bad things happen to poor kids” but policies differentially affect (and connect) young people and adults, rich and poor, across race/ethnicity, geography, gender, sexuality, and privilege.

![Circuits of Dispossession chart](image)

**Figure 14: Circuits of Dispossession chart**

We found that there are consequences for experiencing policy dispossession.

Young people who had had at least one negative experience in each of the four policy sectors we analyzed (education, criminal justice, public health and home & family life) were more likely to also have reported more feelings of depression and/or to have put
themselves in harm’s way in terms of risky sexual behavior, violent situations, drugs and alcohol.

We used a modified version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale (CES-D) where a score of 11 or greater indicates clinically meaningful depression (Radloff, 1977). Youth in the most dispossessed group (see Group 4 in Figure 10), that is young people who reported at least one negative experience within all four policy sectors, were twice as likely to report symptoms of clinical depression as compared to youth in the least dispossessed group (see Group 0 in Figure 10), that is young people who reported zero negative experiences in any policy sector. However, it is important to note that 50% of the youth in Group 4 reported scores that suggested they were not clinically depressed.

We also found evidence that certain experiences and relationships can buffer policy betrayal. Negative feelings and experiences were lower for those young people who reported belonging to a youth organization or having a trusting relationship with an adult, like a teacher. 71% of the young people who have the most negative experiences across policy sectors and who report low trust in teachers, also report clinically meaningful depressive symptoms; in contrast, 45% of the most dispossessed youth who report strong trust in teachers report clinical levels of depressive symptom. Similarly, 56% of these youth who do not participate in youth organizations reported severe depressive symptoms compared to 32% of those youth in this same group who do participate in youth organizations (Fine, Stoudt, Fox, & Santos, 2010).

Our statistical analysis of the Polling for Justice study findings brought us to an analysis of oppression and potential liberation, both discouraging and hopeful. The data
helped us understand some of the detailed ways that young people, and particular
groups of young people, bear the brunt of inadequate public policy while also providing
evidence of how meaningful and powerful youth organizations and meaningful
relationships with teachers can be. In the following chapters, I will detail how we
metabolized this data, using art and through our bodies to bring the analysis and impact
of the data to new depths, and also doing the work of devising a deeply participatory
process for analyzing the mostly quantitative data. Because, it is one thing to understand
that 88% of young people who identify as LGBQ in the Bronx have had a negative
interaction with police, but it is another thing – as both researcher and audience – to put
that number in your body (see Figure 12).
Figure 15: Maybelline embodying data on LGBQ experiences with aggressive policing in the Bronx
Chapter Four

Lives in Motion

The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.

-Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks as found in Orientalism by Edward Said

At 5am one steamy June morning I climbed into a taxi outside of my apartment in Park Slope, Brooklyn, suitcase in hand. “Crown Heights, Brownsville, East New York, then Mid-town” … I was turning this taxi cab into a school bus this morning. As the taxi pulled away from the curb, I continued my wake-up calls: to Fort Greene, Bedford Stuyvesant, West Harlem, Washington Heights, and the South Bronx …

On the rare occasions when we traveled like this to each other’s neighborhoods, I valued the chance to glimpse into what “home” looked and felt like for my friends, my co-researchers. Though our research meetings took place in grey-walled conference rooms at the CUNY Graduate Center, we’d all heard a great deal about each other’s outside lives. Touring through the neighborhoods of our homes made me think about the geographies of our work.

My neighborhood, Park Slope, is one of the wealthier, whiter neighborhoods in Brooklyn (median household income $85,488). Park Slope ranks as one of the top ten neighborhoods where a young person is least likely to be stopped by police. According to NY Police Department data from 2008-2009 of Stop, Question, & Frisks of young people ages 14 -21 by precinct, Park Slope youth experienced on average one stop every 13 hours. Driving only a couple of miles to the east to pick up my co-researchers, to Brownsville (median household income $35,463), the numbers of young people stopped
by police are starkly different. In 2008-2009, in Brownsville, police Stop, Question & Frisked a young person every 50 minutes. In the neighborhood Bedford-Stuyvesant, it was every 93 minutes, East New York every 46 minutes, and Morris Heights in the Bronx every 117 minutes (see Stoudt, Fine, Fox, 2012 for full details).

Though our research team was not, and did not aim to be, exactly representative of either the population of New York City adolescents nor of the PFJ survey respondents, the neighborhoods we hailed from on that June morning were well represented in both. Many survey respondents identified themselves as from Central Brooklyn, the South Bronx and upper Manhattan, most were Black and/or Latin@, and we had more female than male respondents. When we looked closely at the survey data, we heard a heavy data-story of life for young Black and Brown youth living in predominantly low-income neighborhoods. Through critical, participatory, artistic-embodied analysis of that data, and informed by the life stories of the research team, we came to see that heaviness as one facet of the data – that existed alongside experiences of resistance, joy, liberation, complex desire, and critique.

By 6am we were piling into the rented van outside The Graduate Center, six youth researchers, a performing artist, two graduate students, and one recent PhD, and a distinguished faculty member on our way to the airport to perform the story of our research in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Though some of our co-researchers couldn’t make the trip – due to family obligations or work, or due to citizenship status here in the United States, despite being life-long New Yorkers - this trip was a near-culmination of a three-year long research project on youth experiences at the intersections of criminal justice, education and public health in New York City.
As we launched the journey, I reflected on how our different geographies and biographies informed the *circuits of dispossession and advantage* analysis we were about to perform. Over the course of the three years, we’d come to perceive the sharing of stories from our lives as a crucial methodology in our research. The data of the PFJ study was made up of responses to over 1,000 surveys and a series of focus groups. But we found that the more we filtered our interpretation of the data through the collective lens made up of the varied experiences of the research team, the more complex, textured, and truthful our findings.

A *study of life* approach comes out of the field of narrative psychology and is based on the understanding that we make sense of and even construct our lives through narrative (McAdams 2010, Josselson 2004). In our case, from within the Polling for Justice project, our multi-generational participatory action research team used the overlaps, clashes, and spaces between our life stories to deepen and complicate our analytic understanding of PFJ survey and focus group data. The personal stories we told, and the understanding of each other’s lives, the reciprocal relationships we built over time, ultimately contributed meaningfully to the findings we generated.

In this chapter, I will share with you glimpses into five lives from the Polling for Justice research team, highlighting how collective understanding gleaned from these life stories, braided together, informed our critical analysis of the Polling for Justice data. I share these small stories from PFJ researchers’ lives for three purposes: First, and foremost, to make visible the ways we brought our personal stories and experiences to bear on the PFJ data, and then wove them into our sense-making and theorizing of the data. In support of this aim, for each “life” I provide a brief overview of the person and
then hone in on one aspect of their story in order to highlight generative overlaps with particular pieces of Polling for Justice data. Second, to make clear that though we shared much with each other, and over time came to know each other well, there were significant pieces of our lives that we never shared and were never collective knowledge. It was important to that we balanced an invitation to intimacy with a clear sense that we didn’t have to share anything. In addition, there are other pieces that we did share with each other that is sacred knowledge (Tuck, 2008) and will never make it to/wasn’t destined for the public page. Third, to expand on the idea that intimate details matter and relationships take time. As we built our group and relationships over three years, more salient details from our lives, experiences, and expertise would make their way into our research space, informing analysis. For each person, I will shine a spotlight on one aspect of their/our story in order to make evident how our life-stories thickened the PFJ collective artistic-embodied analysis of circuits of dispossession and advantage in generative and essential ways.

Coming from a critical youth studies stance (James & Prout, 1997; Steinberg, 2011; Lesko, 2001; Orellana, 2009), my understanding of the lives as I share them here is that we are simultaneously in a constant state of becoming (Greene, 1988) while at the same time very much valued for who we are in the moment. The way my co-researchers narrated their own stories often had a strong future-orientation, which I attribute in large part to the dominant script available that places strong emphasis on college, in particular, and career. As I share partial life stories, my purpose is to take note of the insights into the work of the Polling for Justice study that our life experiences brought to the work.
Darius

Darius had a reputation for running late. Really late. To research meetings and to school, it was not unusual for Darius to be … hours late. But, Darius was deeply dedicated to his communities and to the Polling for Justice project and when the moment really mattered, he always showed up on time. Sure enough, as the taxi arrived to pick him up at the break of dawn that June morning we were traveling to Halifax, for instance, Darius was standing outside of his building, with an impressively small bag and some breakfast fruit in hand.

As a junior in high school, Darius joined the Polling for Justice project in the third phase of our research, after we had most of the completed surveys and as we were starting to turn to embodied/artistic approaches to interpret the data. He heard about the program at school from his principal who had encouraged Darius to apply. Darius was drawn to the program because of the combination of social justice and performance. Darius was sweet and full of kindness and smiles. He developed strong friendships with other members of our research team, with many inside jokes. Darius lived with his mother and younger sister, amidst a large loving family scattered from Brooklyn, to Queens, to Jamaica.

In our first hothouse days together at a 5-day Playback Theatre workshop on the Manhattanville College campus in Westchester, NY, Darius emerged as an amazing actor/performer, very comfortable at tapping into his artistic instincts and leading others to do the same. That week at Manhattanville College he thrived with the chance to make art. At that theatre retreat, we spent some time familiarizing ourselves with preliminary PFJ data and sharing with each other our stories and experiences. As a dark-skinned young Black man living in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Brooklyn, Darius told
stories that week of growing up policed. He felt like he hadn’t experienced being stopped as frequently as some of the survey respondents in his relatively safe neighborhood. Crown Heights where he lived did not make it on the top ten most policed list referred to above. Still, he was happy to be staying in a dorm and hanging out on a college campus for the week, especially because his mom wasn’t wild about him going outside in the summer – too many police cars and gunshots.

During that week, we heard Darius describe his dreams to become a star. To perform his talents on stages before vast audiences – and it was easy, in his case, to imagine this dream coming true. We collected information for him on Manhattanville College’s Theatre & Dance program in case he decided to apply. In the meantime, we appreciated and admired the artistic contributions and leadership he brought to our embodied work in Polling for Justice.

In the months of research we conducted together following that first week, Darius made it clear that while there might be part of him that fantasized about stardom, he was actively pursuing a more practical ambition - to go to the police academy. Darius’ desire to become a police or parole officer existed in tension with our research focus on youth experiences of aggressive policing in New York City. In our survey, we asked a set of detailed questions about youth interactions with police - parenthetically most of these items were “home grown” because prior to PFJ there was no standardized instrument for assessing youth interactions with police (see Figure 13).
Looking broadly at the descriptive data to get a sense of how many young people (by gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, neighborhood) had had what kinds of negative and positive interactions with police, and where (in school, on the streets, in subways, in public housing), we learned, on the positive side, that 24% of survey respondents had been helped by a police officer within six months of taking the survey, 17% were given a second chance. We also learned that 14% of survey respondents had been frisked in the last six months, 18% had received a ticket or a summons, 33% had been spoken to in a disrespectful way, 23% had been stopped for questioning.

Considering the implications and meanings of this data with Darius in the room meant that we had to contend with a rich set of complex and contradictory realities. Darius shared the outrage at the high number of stops youth experienced – especially
youth of color – however, he never wavered from his conviction that he could, and would, work from within the criminal justice system to have a positive impact on young people and his community. In focus groups when delving into the topic of policing, we often ran into this kind of boiling debate. In one focus group of young women, we heard some young women expressing disgust at sexual comments/advances made by police officers and others wishing that it felt possible to ask a police officer to walk with them in safety down a dark nighttime street. In a focus group of young men and women discussing policing soon after the shooting of Sean Bell we heard expressions of rage and frustration with racism in reference to the police at the same time a conviction that communities deserve to be safeguarded by the police. With his life experiences, location, and ambitions, Darius embodied these conflicting perspectives and tangibly brought them into our research space. Each time we put embodied a piece of data about youth experiences with police, Darius’ personal story existed along side whatever data we were examining, providing accountability to the complexities surrounding the issues of policing.

In our final version of the PFJ performance, we used a day-in-the-life as a device to ‘show’ our data on circuits of dispossession, that is, the way that discreet negative experiences within the different policy sectors of policing, schooling, health, and home and family life accumulate throughout a day, pile up in the lives of particular young people with negative impact. Darius, as the focal character, played the young person who starts his day caught between family responsibilities and school, runs late, gets picked up by police on his way to school, isn’t allowed into class for being late, leaves the building
in frustration, and finally at the end of a long, hard, day gets a supportive phone call from a teacher. As Darius describes:

*It’s the one that I perform, the kid that gets stopped by the truancy officer, and basically what our analysis is saying is that students without their metro cards often get stopped, and it also plays into race in some ways because getting stopped depends on the area that you come from. The type of person I had to play was based on all of that. He doesn’t have his metro card and so he has to jump over the turnstile in order to get to school because he was late in the first place so that makes him even more late when he gets to school. The emotions associated with that were real because it is something that we’ve all been through. It’s not something that is strange to us, we’ve been there from the beginning.*

Darius’ personal story opened up space to re-imagine what we understood by/with security and his complex desires forced us to think in complicated ways about policing. Susan Opotow (1995, 2004, 2008) theorizes the ways the arc of justice is, for each of us, organized around morality. Opotow explains that in any situation, we evaluate who and what is *morally included* or *morally excluded* from deserving justice. The issues surrounding policing and discriminatory, aggressive policing practices, produce knotty dilemmas in terms of moral inclusions and exclusions: are police officers within or without the scope of justice? Who are the criminals? If a policy is unjust, what does that mean for everyday interactions on the street? What about the justice of access to a good job? Is it possible to make justice claims from within an unjust system? Darius’s story in combination with his desire to work for the criminal justice system ensured that we kept our feet squarely right inside that justice muddle. The process of artistic-embodiment within the research process facilitated us to find ways to understand the tensions themselves as productive. In our final performances, we didn’t attempt to present our findings in such a way that suggested solutions for the policing dilemma. Instead we
embodied the complexities of youth relations with policing in order to communicate that the answers lie somewhere in making sense of the contradictions.

**Maybelline**

Maybelline Santos moves through life with flying colors and buoyant spirits. If she were reading this over your shoulder she would likely instruct you *not* to start humming the *Maybelline* make-up ad tune – she inspires her own original jingle. She’s a dancer, an athlete, a joker, a little (as in short) fireball of energy. Strong in her identification as an ally to her LGBTQ friends, she was fierce and committed to the data from our survey on disproportionate experiences of dispossession experienced by young people identifying as LGBQ.

3 She worked hard at school, even when she found the work challenging, desiring more than anything to be a nurse. She was active in afterschool sports and other programs and was integral to the Polling for Justice project every step of the way.

When we met, Maybelline was living with her mother, sisters, and grandmother in an apartment in the Bronx. It was a hard few years for Maybelline during the PFJ project – her grandmother was sick, life was increasingly challenging at home, and eventually May, seeking some independence, peace, and stability, moved out and into the home of a friend. At the time of writing this dissertation, May is in her senior year of college, fighting for a spot in nursing school, living in an apartment with her boyfriend, working at a drug store to make rent. When I commented to Maybelline about the stress in her life she replied:

---

3 Though we asked about gender identification in our survey, we ended up with too small of a sample size of gender non-conforming young people to be able to draw conclusions about youth who identify as transgender in our findings.
I use that as a motivation to go towards my way. If I’m not stressed, I’m lost. Stress is like a fuel to my flame. I don’t like to sit still. But, it also affects me because there are days when I don’t sleep.

The particular expertise that Maybelline brought to bear on our work that I’m highlighting here had to do with how we understood the impact of aggressive policing. When Maybelline Santos was 18 she was arrested for trespassing while visiting a friend in a public housing project in the Bronx. She was in the wrong hallway, at the wrong time and was arrested under the notorious auspices of the “Clean Hallways Act” (Fabricant, 2011). In our research to contextualize the findings from our survey, we’d learned that “trespassing” charges were commonly handed out at particularly high rates in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn. After her arrest, May was able to find a lawyer and fight the charges, which were eventually dropped, but her experience of being targeted by the police, and of growing up in a context of aggressive policing, provided a personal perspective, an intimate account, within our research team of experiences we heard repeatedly in our study.

From the survey findings we understood that youth interactions with police were alarmingly prevalent. May’s personal experience being unjustly arrested for trespassing along with witnessing countless other interactions between police and her peers in the Bronx helped us to contextualize the numbers and theorize the ways, reasons for, and implications of the normalization of growing up policed in New York City.

As we looked at the survey findings on youth experiences of policing, May pointed out:

*It doesn’t shock me because it is normal where I live. I mean, everybody’s getting stopped. If you get stopped, it’s probably because they’re being assholes or they need to take in someone for the money. That’s what I’ve lived around my whole life, so not everybody sees this the way we see it.*
In the focus groups we conducted, participants told us that young people are less likely to report being unjustly stopped because it happens with such regularity. As one young male focus group participant put it: “It just proves that like we’re so used to it that we expect it, like, certain things you just expect in life, expect a girl is going to be harassed by a cop, if you’re black.”

Chewing through the data on policing with expertise like Maybelline’s within our research collective was a catalyst for us to shift our understanding of youth experiences of policing and other dispossessing experiences as a societal/public issue located somewhere in the space between youth and adults. In other words, we recognized that the normalization itself of experiences of aggressive policing was what we wanted to call particular attention to, especially when considered in contrast to the strong outrage I, for instance, as a white adult, felt when looking at our data.

This finding had profound impact on how we eventually designed our data presentations. Discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, we used the methodology of our performances as an embodied response to our theoretical understanding of youth experiences of public policy as being best interpreted as intergenerational. That is, we shared survey and focus group findings, but were explicit in our expectations that adult audience members examine their own location, responsibilities, and reactions in relation to the data on conditions for young people.

Not only did Maybelline help us understand about normalization but she also gave us insight into resistances. Maybelline’s high-spirited and optimistic approach to life was its own kind of expertise. Her experience getting arrested was, to her mind, no big thing. It was a hassle, and an injustice, but she didn’t take it on as a defining moment. She
didn’t ascribe substantial meaning to the experience. She laughed it off. In part, this was due to the normalization of aggressive policing described above. However, because of Maybelline, we came to consider *positivity* and a *sense of humor* as resistance strategies to surviving and thriving despite growing up aggressively policed.

**Jessica**

Jessica is hard working, academic and a beautiful dancer/singer/actor with limitless creativity. A friend might describe her as talented, funny, fearless and fierce – but she is more focused on her goals than being social. She does not hesitate doing what she thinks is right even if whatever that might be is at odds with what her peers are doing. Jessica is keenly aware of gross injustices of racism, mass incarceration and gentrification that have affected her family and community. As we were analyzing the PFJ data, Jessica was sailing towards completing high school with ease and had plans to go to college and then graduate school beyond.

Jessica’s mother was a social worker, she was interested in the data from our study and was supportive of Jessica’s involvement in the project. They lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the center of Central Brooklyn, a famously African American neighborhood quickly being gentrified by young white people, much like me. Jessica lived in a house with her brother, mother and father across the street from a small park.

We saw echoes of Jessica’s educational aims in the PFJ survey data. In the PFJ data, survey respondents report high educational aspirations. More than 70% state their intention of getting either a master’s degree, a doctoral degree, or becoming a doctor or a lawyer. We considered the consistency of youth responses as evidence of hopefulness and young peoples’ belief in self. In every presentation of our research, we front-loaded the presentations with the positive data on high educational aspirations. It was also our
way of embodying our own very personal sense of hope, determination, and success – as we presented the PFJ data in data performances, most of the PFJ youth researchers were in their final year of high school.

Before the project finished, all of the active core PFJ youth researchers had successfully graduated high school. In New York City, with a 59% graduation rate (NYCDoE, 2007), it is truly an achievement against the odds to graduate high school. In the PFJ performance piece, Darius would tell audiences that when he started high school there were 100 in his class, but over the years he watched the seats empty until by the time graduation came, only 30 graduated. Michelle Fine’s seminal work *Framing Dropouts* (1991) documented this steady leakage and betrayal of low-income black and brown youth in NYC in the early 1990’s. Twenty years later, despite Mayor Bloomberg’s claims to the contrary, it is still a triumph against power for high school students to finish high school. And, for those that do manage to graduate? Well, every high school steers their students towards college.

In the Fall season during the years that PFJ took place, every check-in at the start of our research meetings was filled with young peoples’ tales of the college application process. For some it was squeals of pride - “I got another application in!”, for others it was quiet reports of frustration - “When I had my appointment with my guidance counselor he said he didn’t have any more waivers left” (waivers for the application fee for CUNY applications). We did whatever we could to support. We concocted PFJ “scholarships” to buy the youth researchers Regents or SAT study books, to pay register fees for the SATs, and to pay college application fees. The PFJ youth researchers knew that they could use any of the Graduate Center resources at any time - computers, printers,
me - to support their school work and college application process. We wrote recommendations and made phone calls. This all in addition to the supports that schools were providing and to the hard work of the young people and their families. In Spring of the final year of PFJ, college acceptances started coming in, and by the time each PFJ youth researcher received their high school diploma they almost all had a college to go to in the Fall.

Jessica, like the other PFJ youth researchers, was eager to go to college. She attended the same small public high school as Darius, and she did very well in school with a high GPA and an impressive roster of extra-curricular activities. However, she had a very difficult time getting accepted to college. She applied to several schools in the State University of New York system, but the system lost some crucial forms, so she missed the deadlines and did not get into any school. Her school guidance counselor was rarely available, so Jessica navigated the college application process on her own with the help of her parents. By the time of her graduation, she was still scrambling to find a college to attend. For Jessica she needed more support from her school in order to get accepted to the colleges she applied to.

There is a concept of an aspiration-achievement paradox (Sutkus, 1999) where we must make sense of the nearly universal presence of high-aspirations for adolescents alongside the harsh reality of the achievement gap. The word paradox, in this case, seems inadequate. More than a paradox, the mis-match between high-aspirations and low-achievement for low-income youth of color is like a manipulation on the part of the education system and/or perhaps society at large. Jessica, who finally found a school to attend in the summer after she graduated, is down in North Carolina at a Historically
Black College/University and doing very well, although she took out substantial student loans in order to attend.

For me, sitting in my same office at the Graduate Center, watching my friends and colleagues progress through their college experiences and into adult-hood, I was struck with a certain kind of helplessness as I watched inequities unfold. The youth researchers high aspirations were not necessarily preparation enough for the world that they find themselves in now. Jessica’s surprising struggle to get accepted into college informed our understanding of PFJ survey data on high educational aspirations as not only evidence of hopefulness and belief in self, but also as hopefulness that also signals betrayal on the part of the educational system and the adults who work within it.

Maddy

As for me, I entered graduate school at age 29, on the old side of young, after years as an educator, union organizer, and community organizer. As a community organizer in Belfast, in the North of Ireland I came into contact with Participatory Action Research (PAR) and my encounter with PAR felt like a culmination of a long, somewhat windy, search for an ethical way for me to join a/the struggle.

The geography of my upbringing was in contrast to my co-researchers. My hometown, New Paltz, is located only 75 miles north of New York City, but it is rural with orchards and forests, lakes and mountain trails. A town of about 13,000 (not including the student population of SUNY New Paltz), as of the 2000 census, it is more than 80% white (6% Black or African American and 8% Hispanic or Latin@). I’m not sure how old I was when I learned that police cars made noise. My parents are artists – we’ve always lived simply and with silliness. They are activists – my mother’s Nancy Reagan mask for wearing to protests was a staple of my childhood. We are white and
middle-class and intellectual in culture – on non-rehearsal or performance nights our house was quiet with the sound of everybody reading. In a familiar tale of coming to consciousness as a white person, I learned much later in life a little of what it meant and why I had grown up privileged and with so little fear.

Before I started working with my co-researchers on PFJ, I had gone through a radical political awakening and conscientization (Friere, 1970) through reading, through my work as a union organizer, as a community organizer in the North of Ireland, and as an anti-racism activist/educator. So, that as I researched youth experiences in New York City and worked to craft reciprocal relationships with each of my co-researchers, I was active in my own personal process of reflexivity and awareness of privilege, race, and history.

However, though I knew intellectually that young people of color growing up in low-income areas of New York City had shrinking access to public resources in school, at home, and in between, while under the scrutiny of increasingly harsh and pervasive surveillance, I was still hit hard with the realities we heard survey respondents and my co-researchers report. Within our research collective I shared my outrage and we worked to understand the space between our different experiences and perspectives.

Linda Powell Pruitt (2004), writes on how the experiences of white and Black and Brown are bound up in each other in a complex interplay of power that she calls the achievement knot. My participation as a white graduate student researcher in relation to the youth researchers and survey respondents in PFJ kept me attuned to the ways social justice research is bound up in research that perpetuates the same, and kept me mindful of the potential for violence in decolonizing research (Smith, 2012; Fanon, 2004).
Participatory action research elevates these issues without claiming to necessarily solve them.

My life-story within the PFJ project provided a critical juxtaposition, sometimes making privilege, race, and socio-economic status more visible than it otherwise might have been. Where Maybelline’s story helped us see the normalized water we were swimming in in terms of aggressive policing practices, my life-story brought the opposite perspective to the group. My outrage at everyday, normalized, injustices sparked meaningful discussions.

In one research meeting, we were coding the survey responses to the open-ended question: “Tell us about a time when you witnessed or experienced injustice.” As we worked individually, I couldn’t resist reading responses out loud that I found remarkable:

*Once I was in the train station going home and a police officer assaulted a teenage boy by smacking him in the face, choking him against the wall and pushing him to the ground while the boy never touched him at all – Female, White*

*My friend was handcuffed & the School Safety Agent hit her in the face. – Female, Latina*

*In H.S when I was arrested the police officer, a Caucasian guy, called me and my friend welfare bitches and said that it was bound for us to get picked up because we all do it at a point in our lives. – Female, multi-racial*

Eventually, Darius made a comment that these responses didn’t seem that shocking to him. In the theoretical discussion that followed, we poked and prodded at the reasons behind our different reactions. The spaces between our different experiences helped us to kindle a collective outrage and think carefully about how different audiences might respond to our findings.
In addition, we found a constructive space in the gap between my experiences and my youth-researchers when we came face to face with how my role was perceived by outsiders to our project. Early in the project, three youth researchers and I – Jaquana, Dominique, and Alisha (Dominique and Alisha moved on from the project in its final year) brought a stack of surveys to a Community Board meeting in East Harlem. We were excited to be engaging at this most grassroots level of government, and we were expecting the easy passage of a resolution to support the distribution of the PFJ survey across East Harlem.

However, as I began speaking, one member of the Community Board aggressively challenged us, questioning my intentions of getting a PhD on the backs of young people. She knew of damage that had been done to her community in the past in the name of “research”, and she didn’t like what she was hearing me describe. We couldn’t find a way out of the impasse, and the resolution was not passed. We collected up our stack of surveys and left the meeting. The next day, when we told our co-researchers what had happened, the story quickly became iconic in our group. Maybelline still refers to the story indignantly, as if she were there herself.

Mostly our research team felt like we’d been misunderstood and the young people were offended that their own agentic roles in PFJ were not recognized. However, the experience provided a moment for us to take a step back and understand the history of harm caused in the name of research, particularly within communities of color (Smith, 2012; Guishard, 2008). And, we reflected on how my role in the group embodied this same paradox – the level of my collaboration as an adult with my youth co-researchers
was real and felt revolutionary, and it was important that we remain vigilant about the privilege, power, and history of my whiteness, especially as the adult.

**Jaquana**

Jaquana Pearson: “Five words to describe me are ambitious, independent, industrious, reliable, and alone.”

Jaquana lives in Washington Heights. With the encouragement of a family friend/community organizer in her neighborhood, Jaquana came to her first research meeting at the Graduate Center in June 2008, three months after the project began, and stayed with it until the very end. As she describes:

*I had a conversation with a good friend of the family about being a part of an organization where I could be surrounded by new faces, ideas, and intellectual dialogue. A week after, he suggested that I join P4J.*

Jaquana attended a Catholic school where she graduated valedictorian of her class. She is a beautiful writer, meticulous, and not the most talkative. After one full year of working with a very quiet Jaquana, it was a surprise that she was in favor of moving forward with using embodied methodologies to analyze our data. But, she was, and she contributed key embodied insights throughout the process. After one of our early versions of a performed data presentation, it was Jaquana who insisted we lead with the embodiments of the positive data. She wanted to make sure that our audiences knew that young people were not to be defined by negative experiences caused by inadequate policies.

Jaquana’s fierce commitment to her family and her community and protective feelings for her younger siblings combined with her own politics meant that she was especially committed to the embodied interpretation of the *circuits of dispossession and advantage* analysis that we developed. Our close investigation of PFJ data-in-aggregate
helped her understand personal experiences through a new lens. She could see, for instance, how her younger siblings educational lives might be impacted in the future by aggressive policing or inadequate health care:

*I have three younger siblings that will more than likely have to face injustice and deal with one aspect of life that will have an affect on another, if not already. It’s funny because I remember us doing exercises regarding how one aspect of life can affect another, such a health disparities affect on education or vice versa. Growing up in a low-income environment and dealing with unjust policing can really take a toll on an individual and/or hinder most from success.*

More often than not, Jaquana preferred to keep her personal stories to herself and so her life story influenced our analysis in a different way. Her sense of community and her commitment to bring our analysis back to be useful for her own community and younger siblings, informed our *circuits of dispossession and advantage* analysis especially in terms of how we framed the story for public audiences. Jaquana made sure we communicated positivity and resistance, along with the heavy data story we told – as if in an effort to be accountable to the experiences of her younger siblings who might be sitting in the audience.

**What We Know for Next Time**  
Though I knew Jaquana almost longer than anyone else in PFJ, I did not feel like I necessarily knew her the best. She kept the details of her life to herself, which I respected. It was important that our research space made room for intimacy without any demand for it. None of us told each other our Entire Life Stories. Though our research team became an intimate group over time, and we all knew a lot about each other, none of us knew everything. There are parts of all of our stories that we prefer to keep private but that were woven into our collective analysis in both overt and undisclosed ways. These
experiences and stories helped us understand what was present …. and absent in the data. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the purposes of including these life-story sections is to highlight that intimacy matters and relationships take time. A large group of 40 young people drafted the PFJ survey in the initial 2-days of the project, when none of us knew each other well. We stand behind the survey as it was drafted, and we think we might have created a different set of questions if we’d drafted a second survey at the end of our time together.

In our survey we asked questions about Home and Family Life. We asked about experiences with homelessness, or if a respondent was in foster care, we asked about whether a respondent had been in a GED completion program, whether a parent had spent time in jail or prison, or if respondents’ mothers had left high school before graduating. As we chewed through that data, the powerful, small everyday ways “home and family life” experiences came up in our everyday lives were sometimes in contrast to the data we collected. The numbers of survey respondents who had been homeless or been in foster care were relatively small: 7.4%. But, we wondered later if we could have asked more intimate questions, based on experiences in our own lives. What if instead of asking about homelessness, we had asked about less defined experiences that might contribute to not quite to homelessness, but to rights violations related to home. Like, what if we’d asked about how often water or electricity is turned off in the home? Or, how much access to privacy/personal space young people have in their home? What if we’d asked how many times a young person had moved and why? What if we’d asked whom a young person lives with? We knew that off-the-radar hardships at home due to lack of access to resources and support bleed through and impact a young person in
invisibly circuited ways throughout their day. Like, when the water is off at your house making it so that you have to find creative ways to bathe, you might want to arrive at school early to sneak in and use the gym showers, but surveillance from school security officers might deter.

We asked youth participants about their experiences with healthcare. They were asked if in the last year, if they’d gone to a school based health center, a hospital emergency room, a botanica, acupuncturist or other alternative care, a church/mosque/synagogue/place of worship and/or spirituality, or to some other place other than a private doctor and/or used a community or hospital clinic. Participants were asked if in the last year they had ever needed health care but not gone because they had no one to go with, their immigration status, language barrier, they had trouble communicating with health care providers, did not have enough money, did not have health insurance or did not know how. Participants were also asked if they pay for health care with methods other then their family’s health insurance such as with their own money, they find places where health care was free or some other way. We didn’t ask about if they had gone by themselves to a health care provider, and if they had what that was like. We knew from our own lives that sometimes you figure out how to manage, even if that includes discovering a breast lump and going through the experience of doctor, biopsy, and results alone. We didn’t ask if they’d self-taught themselves how to provide first aid for their mother after her boyfriend left the apartment in a rage. We didn’t ask about the quality of the relationships they might have developed over years and many visits with the staff of the school-based health center in their school.
The PFJ research team developed a collective interpretive structure over time, slowly, through the stories we shared with one another, in our *story-as-method* approach (Gallagher, 2011). Oscillating back and forth between individual life stories like the snippets shared above and the data-in-aggregate, we could ask questions of the data in an iterative way. We learned unequivocally that gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, probably skin color and definitely neighborhood matter in terms of cumulative dispossession experiences. We documented from our own data that there are psychological consequence for a young person who has been legally, verbally, physically and/or sexuality assaulted by a police officer (Fine, Stoudt, Fox & Santos, 2010). We interviewed judges, elders, educators and peers about why they thought patterns of dispossession were so disparate by demographics and geography. Our survey data alongside the collective personal experiences of our group provoked a layered, structural and historic analysis about race, community and policing that certainly wouldn’t have been possible had we been thinking in isolation. The life stories we shared with each other clued us into unexpected directions to take with the data and new knowledge to uncover. In addition, the intimate knowledge we built over months and years with each other helped us to understand how the potential for posing good questions can be improved with intimacy and over time.

Though we didn’t draft a second Polling for Justice survey at the end of our research project, in many ways the knowledge we gained through sustained and often intimate work with each other spawned further research. Several research projects based out of the Public Science Project at the CUNY Graduate Center picked up where Polling for Justice left off, including two studies on policing and community safety: the Morris
Justice Project and Researchers for Fair Policing; and a study looking at the school discipline experiences for high school students identifying as LGBTQ.
Chapter Five

Theorizing Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage through Artistic-Embodied Methodologies

One afternoon, in a research meeting, during our season of thinking through the PFJ data on youth interactions with police, Jessica told this small story:

Jessica described sitting on her stoop eating watermelon. It was summer, a time when her predominantly Black neighborhood felt particularly full of patrolling police officers, and as a pair of police came around the corner walking towards her, she jumped up, throwing her watermelon out of sight. It didn’t make sense, she explained, but instinctively, she didn’t want the police officers to catch her eating-watermelon-while-Black.

When she shared this, Jessica’s co-researchers/performers turned that moment into a small piece of improvised theatre on the spot, interpreting multiple layers through their bodies, in a complex tableau of perspectives: in the foreground, one person froze, savoring the delicious taste of watermelon on a hot summer day. Behind him, two actors were spitting – one providing the impression simultaneously of spitting watermelon seeds and trying to rid herself of herself, of shame/guilt, and the other spitting with anger, focused outward – perhaps at the police, perhaps at racism.

The power of Jessica’s story was not lost on any of us. From our data we knew not only about the high rates of negative interactions with police reported by youth, but we also knew that young people – both males and females - reported concerning levels of depressive symptoms. 22.5% of survey respondents reported feeling that life wasn’t worth living at some point in the week of taking the survey. Jessica’s small story, along with others, informed the research process as we began to theorize how frequent, normalized interactions with police might impact young people in other ways, like their emotional well-being. But, we also knew that Jessica’s story held more. Her experience
could be considered an instance of Goffman’s *facework* (1955) – she threw the watermelon as a way to protect herself from what felt like it could be an embarrassing, or worse, stigmatizing, interaction with police officers. Jessica told this story in an amusing way, making us all laugh even as the implicit shame, anger, and outrage that her co-researchers picked up on coursed through the story as well. But, more than an interaction between one young woman and two police officers, we also understood this story to be about society and power - the ways power sways to favor adults, with young people sometimes scrambling to assert themselves in unexpected ways. Jessica’s story contributed to our growing work theorizing the ways dispossessing experiences are located in the space between young people and adults.

As noted in Chapter Four, we began to notice how our own experiences aligned with the PFJ data were intertwined – each experience had reverberations in other parts of life. As we layered the data with the life stories of individual PFJ researchers and the experiences of our group, metabolized through embodiment, a composite understanding of the data emerged. Eventually, over the course of the year, this developed into our interpretation of the circuits of dispossession and advantage analysis (Fine & Ruglis, 2009, Stoudt, Fine, Fox, & Santos, 2010).

I am interested in what it means for knowledge, for science, and for justice if art-full and participatory epistemologies and methodologies were broadly accepted for their potential to contribute meaningfully to scientific discovery. In the previous chapter, I examined how our life stories impacted the work, and in this chapter I delve into how in Polling for Justice we used our bodies in artistic ways to analyze and interpret data, in Gloria Anzaldúa’s words, “theorizing from the flesh” (1987, p.). I describe key moments
in the scientific-artistic process that brought the PFJ project to our collective analysis of youth experiences of neoliberal policies. The task is slippery, for the analysis-through-embodiment more often developed in a gradual, iterative way and very rarely in any “aha” moment. In the moment it was challenging to document, and in the writing it is difficult to pinpoint, to find the moments, one, then another that will bring you, reader, to understand what exactly took place.

This slipperiness I recount is a characteristic of creative-artistic process and is an element of art that appears to resist the systematic requirements of science. It might be one of the reasons art-full epistemologies are often under-valued as legitimate ways of knowing by science. However, I contend that bringing art, specifically art-full embodied research, into social science is productive and even important. It is a methodological response to Patti Lather’s (1986) appeal for emancipatory research, “… to move research in many different and, indeed, contradictory directions in the hope that more interesting and useful ways of knowing will emerge.” (p #272)

In line with the theorizing of Robin D.G. Kelley (2008) and Avery Gordon (2008) who insist, simply, powerfully, on complexity, Polling for Justice took an epistemological stance that assumed/made room for polyvocality, multiple perspectives, intersectionality and even contradiction. In our case, we used drama/embodied methodologies to do this work. Kathleen Gallagher (2007, p.) writes, “… in drama, meaning is analogous, personal, collective, metaphoric, improvised, and ambiguous, but rarely scripted.” As discussed in Chapter Two, dramatic embodiments as a methodological approach allow for thick interpretation of what can otherwise be flat data. Dramatic embodiments can convey at once the multiple interpretations that
simultaneously exist in a participatory research collective (see María Torre, 2005 on contact zones). The particular kind of dramatic embodiment methodology we used relied on and was strengthened by Sandra Harding’s (1995) conception of strong objectivity, that is it began and ended with the personal experiences of those most impacted by the research questions. The art of our embodiments provided a space for theorizing in more than two-dimensions. As David Quijada, Caitlin Cahill, and Matt Bradley describe in relation to their own use of art in participatory action research:

[Art provides] … a critical space for us to engage with and express collective concerns our art making is more than an act of resistance, as it allows us to communicate our differences and to critically interrogate what it means to live and negotiate our hostile context in our everyday lives.” (Quijada Cercerer, Cahill, & Bradley, 2011, p. 588).

In PFJ, via embodied analysis, we found caverns of meaning on youth experiences of neoliberal public policies.

The chapter is structured around three emblematic data-stories: Devising Dr. Researchy, The Imposition of the Mothers’ Education Data, and A Tale of Two Manhattanvilles. The purpose of sharing these stories is to provide an intimate glimpse of our embodied research process, way down close, in order to make clear how a great number of small embodied-data analysis moments accumulated over time to contribute to our more final and full artistic-embodied analysis of the PFJ data (see Chapter Six for our final-ish analysis). Through Devising Dr. Researchy I show how we used a small, collaboratively devised theater piece to re-theorize expertise and positionality – both within the research team and later with audiences. In The Imposition of Mothers’ Education Data I tell a story of an embodiment that failed initially but eventually lead to a layered interpretation of, and critical resistance to, a particularly heavy piece of PFJ
data. In the third data-story, *A Tale of Two Manhattanvilles*, I show how embodying data alongside real-life experiences provided critical juxtaposition and served as catalyst for developing the *circuits of dispossession, advantage and resistance* analysis. Together, the stories of our analysis of PFJ data through *embodying expertise, liberating data* via repossessing it, and *critical juxtaposition* brought us to an embodied analysis of young peoples’ experiences of systemic policy betrayal and critical resistance.

**Devising Dr. Researchy**

In one of our first research sessions as a small group, we conducted an exercise to re-consider the ideas of “research” and “researcher”. We each took a piece of blank paper, a handful of colored markers and independently drew a researcher. The "Draw a Researcher" activity, developed by María Elena Torre, has become a standard activity near the beginning of participatory action research projects. The purpose of the activity is to expand traditional conceptions of research, challenge ideas about ‘who holds the expertise’, and draw out the idea that there are countless ways to embody the role of "researcher". Popular conceptions of *researcher* are still quite narrow. To get a sense of this, if you look up the word "researcher" in a Google image search, pictures of white men in lab coats pop up as far as the eye can see. In our group, on that day we had a range of interpretations of “researcher”: Candace drew a little guy with a magnifying glass – in discussion she elaborated that he was white, Darius drew a head surrounded by many books, Maybelline (at that point a PFJ researcher for a year and a half), crowded her page with young people of all shapes and sizes, I tried to make a question mark into a person, and to pepper the page with shapes meant to be knowledge/data. In the discussion of this activity, we laughed at our drawings and began to articulate some implications of broadening the definitions of who gets to take on the role of expert, of knowledge
producer, of "researcher".

The activity lodged in our muscle memory and several months later, while working through analysis of the data, we found ourselves facing the fast-approaching deadline of our first data performance. We surrounded ourselves with the materials we’d produced in our research meetings so far – flip chart paper with meeting agendas, brainstormed lists of responses to the data, stacks of statistical output and data graphs. Una Osato, artistic director for PFJ, proposed the idea that we develop a performance piece from the "Draw a Researcher" activity we’d done months before. Then through collaborative creative discovery we came up with our lines through the doing of putting drawings of a researcher “up on its feet” in real time. We devised a way to describe our project that involved a "researcher" character (we named him Dr. Researchy Research). This character was costumed in white lab coat, glasses, notebook, pocket protector, and standing behind a podium before the audience, expounding on his positivist study on urban youth as urban blight. One-by-one, each PFJ researcher came to the stage interrupting Dr. Researchy, explaining PAR and PFJ and meanwhile taking a piece of "researcher" costume for her or himself: Maybelline took Dr. Researchy’s lecture notes, Niara took Dr. Researchy’s glasses, Candace his pocket protector, Jessica took Dr. Researchy’s podium, Jaquana his magnifying glass, and Darius asked nicely for Dr. Researchy’s lab coat. By the end of the piece, each person on stage, including Dr. Researchy - who got to keep his pointer - had a symbolic researcher’s “tool”. At first, in the doing of it, we found it was uncomfortable to interrupt and take props away from Dr. Researchy but, as we got the hang of it, each performer-researcher found their confidence and voice and became attached to the prop he or she was taking – and especially the lab
coat.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 17: Darius liked to wear the lab coat to and from PFJ events**

The process of putting the two-dimensional drawings we’d made into our bodies deepened our research collective’s theoretical understandings of expertise and power. Through the process of artfully embodying the “What is a Researcher?” activity we went beyond abstract discussions of expertise and made particular connections and provocations in relation to our area of inquiry and field of adolescent studies. Through the action of finding embodiments of the drawing exercise, we devised a pointed critique about who traditionally studies adolescence, how, and who gets studied on.

The artistic-embodiment pushed us to articulate our theoretical stance in relation to our audiences – and in particular the conceptions of circuits, solidarities, and interdependence. The depiction of Dr. Researchy was meant to critique and provoke. As a caricature of the disembodied and “objective” researcher who studies on but not with youth, he pushes audiences to rethink their assumptions about where expertise lives, troubling notions of objectivity, validity and the celebrated distance of academic research. In their initially disruptive presence, interrupting Dr. Researchy, the PFJ researcher-
performers raised equally compelling questions about critical research, participation, social representations of youth and social justice. By modeling talking back and speaking out from their seats, they encouraged other audience members to do more than watch; to engage actively in the production. And, through re-distribution of Dr. Researchy’s “research tools”, they made a certain kind of interdependence visible, modeling what solidarity might look like.

Because of the Dr. Researchy Sketch, the lab coat itself became the symbolic artifact of the Polling for Justice Project. Our artistic-embodied response to the question “Who holds expertise?”, and in particular the PFJ research collectives’ sense of ownership over Dr. Researchy’s lab coat, provided a prop through which our participatory and justice commitments could travel even outside research and/or academic spaces and into the world. As captured in the photograph included above (see Figure 17), Darius liked to wear the lab coat to and from PFJ events and meetings. In a nation where 1 in 3 Black men will experience incarceration (Lyons & Pettit, 2011) and in a City where the Stop, Question, and Frisk practices of the police department are widely known to discriminatorily target young Black and brown skinned men (LaPlante, Dunn, & Carnic, 2012), it was no small thing for Darius to don a Dr.’s uniform over his own clothes and walk down public streets. His action was a theoretically informed, everyday protest. At the end of the project, in recognition of the importance of our embodied take-over of the Doctor’s clothes, each PFJ researcher got their own lab coat (see Figure 18) with their own names (“Dr. Jessica” “Dr. Maybelline” “Dr. Darius”, etc.) embroidered on the lapel to bring with them out into the world and into their lives, in motion.
Figure 18: PFJ Researchers in their lab coats

In the Shadow of the Data on Mothers’ Education

When we started thinking and analyzing the education data, many of the survey questions produced responses that had us nodding our heads in recognition of frustrating school experiences: “In my school I feel bored” 62.5%; “In my school teachers do not listen to what students like me have to say” 27.5%; “In my school I worry that Regents exams could keep me from graduating” 41%; “In my school it is overcrowded” 48.5%. And reassured by the reports of positive school experiences: “In my school I care about getting good grades.” 94%; “In my school my teachers have high expectations of me.” 89%; “In my school teachers help me when I don’t understand something” 88%; “In my school I feel challenged by what I am learning” 67%.

In the survey we asked about the survey respondents mother’s level of education. Asking about mother’s education is often used in the field of public health as a proxy for socioeconomic status. In line with our interest in understanding how young people’s
experiences of dispossession and advantage in relation to public institutions were *circuited*, we looked carefully at the data on mother’s educational level and cross-tabulated it with a range of other experiences covered in our survey. As a result of this *circuits* analysis, we looked at mother’s level of education by the survey respondents level of education. It was this cross-tabulation that produced the most interesting results.

The first time we looked at the graph connecting mother’s education with current drop/push out rates, our initial task was simply to understand the graph. Once we were clear on the meaning of the y-axis, the x-axis, and the bar charts between, the data sat there uncomfortably among us. The graph told us that young people whose mothers had dropped out of school were more likely to drop out or be pushed out themselves, as compared to young people whose mothers graduated from high school. We let it sit untouched, processed, or analyzed for weeks.

![Figure 19: Mother's education data graph](image)

In our research meetings, when we were embodying data, we often started by projecting the data up on the wall and creating an improvised still image – or human sculpture – of the data. Our aim was not to replicate the data-graph with our bodies, but to explicitly interact with the data, and begin an embodied, theoretical conversation. Once
we had an improvised response, we’d discuss, edit, argue, change, re-examine and continue re-embodying in different ways until we had an embodied interpretation that we all agreed upon.

With the *mother’s education data* projected up on the wall we began to improvise our bodies into an embodiment of the data. Instead of the spontaneous and richly layered human sculptures we often created on the spot, on this occasion, with this data, the process didn’t seem to be working. The three youth researchers who were ‘on stage’ at that moment created …. nothing. If there was an embodied response going on it was one of being guarded, still, resistant, or maybe numb.

We changed direction, and instead I suggested each researcher take a few moments to say out loud what they were thinking and feeling about this data. Our research collective shared feeling boxed in by the data. It turned out that the data we generated about mother’s education loudly reinforced societal messages about so-called failures within their communities. These were the very messages that the Polling for Justice youth researchers wanted to resist. Even though we’d been the ones to write the survey and decide to run that statistical analysis, once the graph was generated, some of the youth researchers didn’t feel like their experience could be heard or seen as significant/real. The data we produced on the generational fall-out of high school non-completion was oppressive itself.

The graph describes that those survey respondents who had a mother who didn’t finish high school were twice as likely not to finish high school themselves. At the time we were working with this data, the youth researchers attempting to embody the *mothers’ education data* were all seniors in high school, determined and intent on graduating and
continuing to college. They also had mothers who did not finish high school. What they really wanted to do with this data was more than just to be an exception – they wanted to resist it, challenge the dominant story of it, while at the same time recognizing the truth in it.

They each wrote a short monologue, telling their story and speaking back to the data.

**Monologue a:** My mother is like that – she didn’t finish high school, and then she had me but I haven’t seen her since I was a kid. But, I’m not my mother, I’m going to make something of my life. I’m graduating high school in June and I’m already accepted to college.

**Monologue b:** I was raised by my grandma and both my mother and grandma worked hard to give me everything. I’m about to graduate high school at the top of my class, thanks to them. They might not have finished high school, but they couldn’t. They had to work.

**Monologue c:** It seems like teens are always going to be looked down on. We are always being stereotyped. They look at me, and think, Oh, she’ll probably drop out and have a kid.

Soon after deciding to weave personal stories into our performance of the mothers’ education data, we were invited to be the keynote performance at an educational conference in New York City honoring educator Debbie Meier.

We met at the Graduate Center a few hours before our performance to travel up to the Julia Richman Education Complex together. On our way, as we were stocking up on egg and cheese Dunkin’ Donuts breakfast (no bacon – it was a vegetarian Dunkin’ Donuts much to my co-researchers’ dismay), we checked in one more time about performing the monologues. In that moment, I felt responsible to anticipate and communicate my concerns about the vulnerabilities of our research collective. While respecting the agency of my young co-researchers to decide for themselves what parts of their stories they wanted to speak out on a public stage, I also felt worried that the pride they felt in our research space might curdle into something darker when mixed with the
privileged responses of a large audience of mostly white adults. Suzanne Ouellette recommends picturing the subject of your research listening to or reading your findings as a way to consider ethics. In an accountability and ethics check, I asked each researcher, again, to imagine their mothers and/or grandmothers sitting in the audience, listening to our presentation on the *mother’s education data*.

With the very real pressure of a very real audience looming in the immediate future making the experience feel more real than it did in the research meeting, the youth researchers performing that day decided that though they wanted to tell their story and speak back to that data, they weren’t comfortable talking about their mothers, and what could be construed as their failures on a public stage. At the last minute, we scrapped the monologues and, just for that day, simply stood tall in front of the data as one researcher narrated the data chart. We took turns telling the audience in brief sentences about plans to finish high school, go to college, live our lives. We did decided to perform the data in this way on that day in order to communicate in an embodied way our desire to challenge and add complexity to the story the numbers tell alone.

In part this data-story is about process and about epistemology. It wasn’t the artistic embodiment of the data that is focal here, but the *process* of embodiment that made a more complex analysis visible and possible. When one is using an artistic approach to analysis, the process is just as important as any embodiment that one might devise. In other words, how we actually ended up putting this data “on its feet” is less important. What matters more is that through those moments when we tried to understand and re-present the *mother’s education data* with our whole bodies, we had to contend with the data in multiple ways at multiple levels.
In other ways, this data-story speaks to our research collective’s critical resistance to a dominant and painful history of labeling our mothers as “bad”. The narrative called up by the mother’s education data too easily slipped right into the mother-blaming culture so prevalent in our society (Ladd-Taylor & Umansky, 1998, Solinger, 2002, Dodson & Luttrell, 2011). The implication of the data is of “failure” on the part of our mothers – they couldn’t even finish high school. When in fact, studies show that family and caregiving responsibilities are significant factors when young people decide to leave school (Luttrell, 2012). For those of us whose mothers left high school before getting a degree, they may well have left in order to provide better care for their children. Inadequate access to support, livable wages, flexible schedules, daycare, education, and healthcare often put mothers – especially low-income mothers - in the position of having to make impossible-feeling decisions, and certainly decisions for which they could be blamed for “bad” mothering no matter what they decide (Dodson & Luttrell, 2011; Ladd-Taylor & Umansky, 1998). The work of embodiment and performance, in this instance, kept us accountable to ourselves, the survey respondents, our communities, our mothers, and our social justice goals. The embodied resistance my co-researchers expressed when faced with how to put the mother’s education data in their bodies was a felt-sense of the existence of a mother-blaming culture, without necessarily the words to name it as such. Our process was resistance to a dominant story that we wanted to change.

The work of moving numbers on a graph into our bodies took statistics constructed from over 1,000 amalgamated lives and artfully breathed life back into them, re-creating a multi-dimensional interpretation of the data. The process facilitated our analysis of that data to include a space for the experiences of our participatory researchers
within the data where, at first, it didn’t look like there was data at all.

This story-experience of coming to our collective analysis of the mother’s education data was a moment of taking re-possession of - or liberating - data arrived at through playing through failure. It was a moment of shifting power in the process of doing research.

In traditional conceptions of science, it would be problematic to shift analysis of statistical data based on the individual experiences of the researcher(s). Traditional, positivist science dismisses individual experiences as “anecdotal” and admitting one’s humanity/politics/experience of ones self as the researcher - “biased”. In participatory action research, because there is an explicit alignment between the subject of the research and the researcher, individual experiences of the researchers provide valuable interpretive frames. In PFJ, coming from our commitment to Sandra Harding’s (1995) strong objectivity, we understand that knowledge production is strengthened by privileging the perspectives of those most impacted by the research, who are often traditionally excluded. We agree with Kathleen Lynch (1999, p.55) when she states, “Unless it is shared with those who are directly affected by it, research data can be used for manipulation, abuse and control. The importance of democratising research arises therefore because knowledge is power.” This story of the mother’s education data was a moment when our participatory commitments almost came into conflict with the very data we ourselves had produced. Our methodology of embodiment within a participatory action research approach - facilitated us to liberate the data for our selves, our families and our communities and liberate new meanings.
Importantly, ironically, the culture of playfulness within our research collective was a crucial ingredient for making this liberatory process of repossessing the data possible. Even though we were the ones who collected the mother’s education data – it was still intimidating and held power over us – threatened us with the familiar stereotypes of youth/communities of color that we wanted to resist. It was an instance of potential, felt epistemological violence (Teo, 2010). But, when we played with the data, when we allowed ourselves to be irreverent, when we didn’t subjugate our own stories in relation to the whole, when we embodied it – then we were able to engage it deeply and analyze.

Through the artistic-embodied process, through understanding the data via putting ourselves inside it, we came to an analysis of the mother’s education data as being about intergenerational impact. However, instead of interpreting the data as evidence of how leaving high school is construed as a failure, or how a mother’s failures can have negative impact on her children’s educational outcomes. We instead understood the data as an instance of circuits on a vertical plane, and evidence of how structural policy betrayal can ripple down through generations – one era’s inadequate education and family policies could impact future outcomes for future young people.

**A Tale of Two Manhattanvilles: Sparking the Embodied Circuits of Dispossession Analysis**

The Polling for Justice survey was 13 pages long with over sixty multi-parted questions. It took survey respondents 30 – 60 minutes to complete and produced a thick pile of data for our research team to wade through. At first, we presented/performed preliminary findings as a dis-connected string of data points.

Ultimately, we theorized (inter)connections between all the data points, but we didn’t get there the way we thought we were going to. We had unexpected experiences
that contributed in crucial ways to our collective analysis. In this section, I describe a key
group experience of having a negative interaction with campus security that served as
catalyst for embodying the circuits of dispossession analysis.

We went in July, 2009 to Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY for a 5-day
theater retreat. It was 1.5 years into the PFJ project and the beginning of our use of
theater and the arts in analysis and dissemination. The week marked the turning point in
the study that laid the foundation for our group having a shared arts-language through
which to work for the duration of the PFJ project. We had a rich week – full of the thrill
of staying on a college campus in dorm rooms, late giggly nights, cafeteria food, and
seriously silly, thoughtful, challenging days learning improvisational community-based
theatre.

The third night of the week we had our very first opportunity to perform the PFJ
data. It was a somewhat rash decision – 3 days is a very short amount of time of working
together as theater artists, and we only had an afternoon to put the performance together.
The participants in the workshop were mostly PFJ researchers, but there were also a few
others – all girls, all white and from Scarsdale, Connecticut and Holland. Their presence
brought welcome new/different/other and therefore generative perspectives, but also
meant we had to do the extra work of filling them in, catching them up to speed, in order
to perform together.

We scrambled to put together a simple show and an audience made up of the
participants in the other summer workshops taking place on the Manhattanville Campus.
Our efforts at pulling together an audience were successful, and the audience was made
up of people from all over: the U.S., Brazil, Israel, England, Burma, Germany, and
Canada.

The performance more or less followed the format we then used for the rest of our shows – we embodied data, in this case on youth interactions with police. We performed quotes from the open-ended questions in the PFJ survey, like these:

Me and 2 of my friends got stopped by a detective because I "fit" the description of one hispanic, white, african american girls who had just jumped somebody. We got written up and were not allowed to ask questions. Which was bullshit!

When I was 15, I was profiled as a car thief by an undercover cop and he approached me disrespectfully, even pulling out his badge in a way one would put out a gun (I didn’t know he was a cop, so I ran). I ran home, and cops flooded my house, frisked me in my own living room, and wanted to cuff me until my mother yelled at them as told them there was no way they were going to take me. When they realized they had the wrong kid (apparently they were looking for a white male in a black coat, real good description guys), I didn't even get an apology

I was arrested for "disorderly" conduct last year while talking to my friends. I was speaking towards my friend and said the f word but the cop thought I was talking to him and started to harass me about it. I tried to explain to him and he arrested me. I said aren't you suppose to read me my rights he said "you’re a kid you have no rights."

We then used Playback Theatre to dramatize audience reactions to the data. Audience members described their reactions after seeing the data in this way and then the Polling for Justice researchers turned those reactions into small moments of theatre on the spot.

Despite our nerves and worries and last-minute changes, the performance was a success and we sailed into the next day feeling glorious. We felt the power of our data, the potential for the data to have an impact, and the Polling for Justice youth researchers felt seen, celebrated, respected, and dignified by the adult audience reactions to their performance.
This feeling lasted until the following evening, when late late at night, the young people were halted in their tracks by campus security – in a verbally violent interaction that echoed of Polling for Justice data, and abruptly reminded us of history, of racism, of the limit-situations (Martín Baro, 1994, Greene, 1988) the youth researchers knew all too well.

The PFJ youth researchers were playing tag late in the night in an empty building. At about 1am, a male security guard entered the building and screamed at the young people to leave: “Get the fuck out of my building!”, etc. It is not necessarily unreasonable that campus security wanted the young people to vacate the building so late at night. The young people would have happily responded to a respectful request from security that they stop playing and leave the building. However, the young people were frightened and outraged by his aggressive response. Most dramatically, they were caught off-guard; the security guard’s actions served to destabilize our group’s sense of safety and security that we’d been reveling in that week on the suburban college campus.

The incident as an isolated event would barely have registered – after all no one got cited, ticketed, arrested, or physically assaulted and the security guards were not police officers. Indeed, it wasn’t the first, nor last, time PFJ youth researchers would get in trouble with university/campus security (we had substantial support from but also various run-ins with Graduate Center Security Officers during the life of the project). However, in juxtaposition to the rest of the experience our research team was having that week at Manhattanville, it was a dramatic and painful reminder of lives intimately connected to the Polling for Justice study results on aggressive policing of adolescents.

It was an experience of the ways expectations shift depending on the setting – on
stage the young people had the power to tell the story and incite solidarity, but when they were running through the halls their version of the story did not matter. From that moment, the work of Polling for Justice became in part claiming subjectivities and reclaiming expectations.

It was also an experience that highlighted the differences between the privileged, sheltered environment that week at Manhattanville College and the public streets of low-income areas of New York City. It wasn’t until our trip to Halifax a year later, using the *circuits of dispossession and advantage analysis* (Fine & Ruglis, 2009), that we devised the way of performing that analysis through a day-in-the-life. It took the nearly year-long evolution, with everybody contributing, for that analysis and embodiment to mature (see Chapter Six for details on analysis).

But, we wouldn’t have gotten to that analysis if we hadn’t had this collective, embodied, experience of aggressive policing in dramatic juxtaposition with dignified recognition and acceptance (Young, 1990). At Manhattanville, in the midst of analyzing data using embodied methodologies we experienced, as a group, the very kind of data we were working with.

The real-life policing experience we had as a collective leant an urgency to the artistic-embodied analysis work of the project. It deepened our conceptual understanding of “embodiment” in the context of our work. At Manhattanville that week learning how to harness and interpret artistic-embodiments, we learned how to let our bodies participate, beyond language, in communicating important knowledge. This work primed our collective to be able to make sense of, and even theorize from, the group’s experience with aggressive security in the middle of the night.
The next day after the experience with Manhattanville Security, we used artistic-embodiments in the form of Playback Theatre to process and make sense of what had happened. In the calm light of day, we sat down to talk through the interaction with campus security and share our reactions – we shared frustration, outrage, and we laughed, remembering funny moments, “I didn’t realize what was going on at first - I was still hiding under the stairs, like – where is everybody!” The discussion turned to how this experience echoed pieces of Polling for Justice survey data and we decided that we would write a letter to Security at Manhattanville Campus.

And then we took time to tell stories and feelings that the experience brought up in relation to the data and to our lives. We talked about the different experiences of being “seen” as respected performers on a Wednesday night and more like juvenile delinquents on a Thursday. We talked about stereotypes and how our sense of self existed as an interaction between what was inside us and what was coming at us from the outside world. As we shared, we turned to artistic embodied methodologies – each of us taking turns re-enacting stories, moments, and feelings via Playback Theatre. It was in this context and in this moment that Jessica told her small story about getting ‘caught’ eating watermelon.

We came to understand, that through this moment of fracture – clashing with campus security in the midst of feeling most secure – our group gained a profound understanding of Maxine Greene’s (1988) conception of (situated, collectivist) freedom. The negative interaction with campus security snapped us (back) into full awareness of what is – and fueled a collective yearning and even demand for situated freedom. We were joined together in a collective effort to produce knowledge for liberation.
Discussion: Epistemologies of Embodiment through Spontaneity, Meaningful relationships, and Audience

Our claim is that via embodying data we were able to move farther with our analysis. None of the research, the embodiment, the analysis and theorizing would have taken place without the existence of meaningful relationships and a culture of play within the PFJ research collective.

We consider the embodied analysis form an instance of what Linda Tuhiwhai Smith calls “researching back” (Smith, 2012). In Linda Smith’s (2012) book *Decolonizing Methodologies* she elaborates on thick meanings of “researching back”. She writes, “[Researching back] has involved a ‘knowingness of the colonizer’ and a recovery of ourselves, an analysis of colonialism, and a struggle for self-determinization.” (p. 7).

This work of ‘researching back’, and the concept of decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 2012) comes out of an indigenous scholar perspective. In the histories of indigenous peoples globally, *research* has played a particularly insidious role (Smith, 2012); science was/is used as a ruse for carrying out colonization. In Polling for Justice, paralleling the decolonization work of others, we too found generativity in developing critical understandings of histories, oppressive policies, ourselves, and resistance – and flipping/altering/revolutionizing the deleterious histories/policies of the academy.

As stressed in Chapter Three, PFJ invested a great deal in developing meaningful relationships with each other in the research collective. Out of the strong base of those relationships we built with each other through slow time and steady meetings, we imported dramatic, improvised, action exercises into our work. This was work that required silliness, wild expressions of sound and movement, risk-taking of all sorts – and importantly spontaneity. Jonathan Fox (1994) writes, “Spontaneity means more than a
quickness of action. It means a choice of action. …. It is connected to our capacity for play, but calls upon our highest intelligence.’ (pp. x). Adopting a culture of play/spontaneity allowed our group to begin to analyze the data without being limited by worrying if we were smart enough or schooled enough. It also provided a methodology for us to tap into knowledge stored deeply in our bodies, life stories, and sharp brains that went beyond easily accessed and overwhelmingly reductive social representations of teenagers so readily found in media (including academic literature).

Perhaps bringing an art-full approach into the analysis process works particularly well in a collective of people who have been told that they are the subjects not the authors of research because as art has been more or less dismissed by the academy it is not as regulated, There aren’t as many rules. It is easier for anyone to jump in and try their hand – who’s to say you’re wrong? Perhaps because art has been more or less dismissed by the social sciences, it is more easily used to revolutionize [the academy]. Being on the margins in the academic world gives us openings to try wild things.

This is how our use of art is a social justice move. Art itself is a strategy. Anna Deveare Smith writes, “As artists we have more resources from which to draw than the mind. And we need those. Society needs those resources tapped …..” (1995, p.82).

Through acting out issues, moments, dilemmas, and in Polling For Justice we would add – data – we can know differently (Smith 1995, p.80) and make meaningful contributions to knowledge production. Our art moved us towards reimagining an adolescence that liberated rather than oppressed. We laughed and played around with our “lab coat”, but ultimately recognized that the act of wearing that lab coat – especially on public streets – was a visual provocation in response to all the young men of color targeted for “fitting
the description”, a theoretically informed embodiment of our analysis of the PFJ data, an active protest to harmful stereotypes of young people with violent consequences, and a subtle insertion of what could be. The artistic-embodiment work of Polling for Justice meant that we, and our audiences, had to make sense of the paradox between the data on dispossession and negative experiences of young people in New York City, and the sophisticated, playful, often comedic work of the youth researchers embodying the research. Through sharing our experiences with Devising Dr. Researchy, The Imposition of the Mothers’ Education Data, and A Tale of Two Manhattanvilles my aim was to investigate and explicate how our embodied approach helped us to re-theorize expertise, reveal the ways youth experiences of dispossessing experiences can be understood as intimate moments of structural betrayal, and overall, how our methodological approach brought us to our findings.
Chapter Six

Dissemination as Participatory Action Research

“The dancer steps, he pushes the earth away and is in the air. One foot comes down, followed by the other. It's over. We agree, dancer and watcher, to hold on to the illusion that someone flew for a moment.” Bill T. Jones

In the first chapters of this dissertation, I wrote about how Polling for Justice claimed the right to develop our own interpretations of youth experiences of public policy in NYC. In this chapter, I will document our efforts to claim and shape how our analysis was interpreted. Devising this way to share our findings with others was a vital step in the process of creating knowledge collectively; our data performances clarified for us that our work was not just about developing analyses, but about putting those analyses out into the world to be of use.

Ignacio Martín Baró (1994) conceptualized public opinion polls as social mirrors designed to provide a scientific reflection of lived realities that might speak to power and disrupt injustice (1994; Torre et al 2012). In PFJ, in line with our commitment to do social research of use (Fine & Barreras, 2001), we turned to performance methodologies that might interrupt hegemonic, mostly negative, representations of adolescence and adult complacency. We imagined our performance spaces as labs where we played with and dismantled the wall that can separate audience from performer-researcher. We thought of performances as opportunities for the PFJ researchers to hold up a social-mirror-in-the-round, making a visible the link between youth, adults, and structural inequalities. In the pop-up performance lab space we created, our aim was to engage audiences in producing knowledge together with us. We brought them into the data and analysis in multiple ways. The performance process we devised contributed meaningfully to the analysis of PFJ data,
and provided a way for us to analyze the audience themselves. In this chapter I will share the triumphs and challenges of this process.

**Theatrical Frame**

In our research process, as we discovered new ways of understanding our data through an art-full embodied approach (as discussed in Chapter Five), we were meanwhile being invited to share our findings with various audiences. After experimenting with multiple ways of presenting data, we came to the following insights:

1. Talking the data in the form of a traditional presentation with presentation slides and written remarks felt inadequate and failed to communicate the urgency and complexity of our findings; 2. We needed a way to share findings from the survey alongside our own stories, analysis, and process because we were coming to understand them as fundamentally interwoven and important to reconcile; 3. The groups who were inviting us to present at their conferences and events were attracting audiences made up of mostly white academics and/or educators and this made us want to articulate the ways our data spoke directly to them and their experiences; 4. We were committed to sustaining our participatory ethic through the dissemination moment, even-especially across differences in power and positionality.

Because of these insights, over time, we re-conceptualized the data-presentation moment as a *data performance lab* - a way to share complex findings from the expert voices of a group of people traditionally oppressed by their audience, leaving open the possibility for collaboration - and even solidarity - across the traditional 4th wall that divides audience and performer. We conceived of our findings and of dissemination both as dynamic processes rather than finite moments.
There were loosely two sections to the data performance lab experience (described in more detail below): an embodied performance of the data followed by interactive engagement with the data with audience. In order to invite audience members to participate with us in our research, our first priority was to re-create, to some extent, the conditions of collaboration that we had built over time within our research team. In order to do this we brought critical participatory action research together with the practices of Playback Theatre. In Playback Theatre, there is a process that takes place over the course of a performance, where each story told becomes part of a layered whole. Playback Theatre practitioners are careful and skillful about creating a performance space where the connections between audience members’ shared stories and experiences can be felt to exist. The process of layering stories throughout a Playback show, known as narrative reticulation (J. Fox, personal communication, April 1, 2013), includes seven principal nodes: story sense (or literary imagination), spontaneity, embodiment, atmosphere, guidance, collaboration, and context. In Playback Theatre there is a host or emcee – called a Conductor - who walks the audience through the participatory performance process, and while paying careful attention to those seven principles, facilitates communication between audience and the actors, and in this way prepares and holds a space for narrative reticulation through improvisational theater. We relied on these praxes of a Playback Theatre performance to establish the atmosphere we needed to be able to achieve participatory dissemination. The architecture of our data performance lab was theatrical in nature.

**Circuits of Dispossession and Advantage Analysis**

To review, as a collective, we ultimately produced a circuits of dispossession and advantage analysis of the Polling for Justice data. We looked across the policy sectors
examined in the survey, and noted which groups of young people reported multiple, or cumulative negative experiences across. Figure 15, below, charts this analysis. Young people who reported no negative experiences in the areas of Education, Police & Prison, Parents & Home Life, and/or Health were put in what we called Group 0. If a young person reported negative experience(s) in only one policy area, they were coded as Group 1, if they reported negative experiences in 2 of the policy areas, they were in Group 2, and so on so that young people in Group 4 were those young people who reported at least one negative experiences in each of the four policy areas. We found that the most highly dispossessed group – young people in groups 3 & 4 – were more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods, more likely to be youth of color, more likely to be LGBQ, and more likely to be male. We also found that those young people were more likely to engage in activities that might place themselves in harm’s way – In fact, youth in Group 4 were nearly six times more likely to engage with violence, more than four times more likely to engage in unsafe sex practices, and almost three times more likely to use illegal drugs than youth in Group 0. We also found that young people in group 4 who were in a youth organization or who reported a positive relationship with an adult, like a teacher were less likely to report feeling depressed than other members of their group. Through our embodied analysis approach we devised a Day-in-the-Life performance in order to tell the story of this analysis.
Performing the Findings

The performance invitations we received provided our research team with a productive pressure to come up with a way to tell our data in a cohesive, compelling way without over-simplifying. After introducing our project via the Dr. Research-y sketch described in Chapter Four, the Day-in-the-Life performance looked something like this:

\textit{Day-in-the-Life:} A young man wakes up. It’s a new day and life is before him. He showers, dresses, and looks good. On his way out of the door, his mother stops him and reminds him he needs to pick up his cousin from school today. He can’t – he has SAT Prep class (he’s determined to go to college, everyone says that’s the only way …to succeed). They get in an argument and in frustration he retorts that she wouldn’t understand anyway – she never graduated high school herself. She’s angry, hurt, misunderstood, caught, proud. He’s angry too, and he leaves. But at the train station he realizes he left his school Metro Card in yesterday’s pants pocket. Since he’s already running late, he hops the turnstyle but gets caught by a police officer, put in the police van (once again), written up, and hours later gets dropped off at his school. His Math teacher won’t let him in the classroom because he’s late (again), telling him he is going to fail the class and might not graduate. He considers stopping by the school-based health center to get a long-overdue physical so that he can get that job he needs, but he remembers the school clinic was recently closed due to budget cuts. He leaves school, wondering, what’s the point? It’s been a rough day and it’s not yet 11am. Later that
evening his phone rings and he’s surprised and happy: it’s his English teacher checking in on him since he missed class and trying to help him figure out how he can make up the work so that he can graduate.

As described earlier, it took us the better part of a year to arrive at this way to tell the story of the data. Over time, and through layering survey data, our own stories, policy data, and critical theory we decided on this way to communicate the PFJ analysis. We needed a way to share the our finding on the generational fall-out of leaving or being pushed out of high school without over-locating blame on our mothers; we wanted to share the data and our outrage at the way young people – especially young men of color, especially LGBTQ young people – report being treated by police without erasing youth desire for a safe walk home or aspirations for a good job; we wanted to make visible the ways inadequate access to healthcare places extra responsibility on our City’s youth; and we wanted to communicate all this while also making sure to sing the ways young people are thriving despite. Our answer – the Day-in-the-life – was imperfect, but we were satisfied with the way it allowed us to convey enough of the complexity of the experiences of a young person’s day. The aim was to communicate the interconnectedness of various data points and provide the audience with a sense of our interpretation of the lived experience of circuits of dispossession and advantage.

Like a musical chord, our data-story was performed for the audience via various “notes” or modes played all at once. Each beat of the Day-in-the-Life included a data graph, a human sculpture, and narrated analysis of the data all at the same time. In this way we were able to simultaneously communicate the polyvocality, multiple perspectives, contradicting ideas, personal story, and aggregated survey data that make up the PFJ
findings. In less time than it took you to read that sentence, the PFJ audiences would drink in a complex set of truths and interpretations.

A version of the Polling for Justice script:

Dr. Researchy is center stage alone, he is the stereotypical nerdy researcher, who is only concerned with his own work, which he feels like he owns and just likes to congratulate himself on it all. He fumbles thru his papers and tries to hold the microphone as well.

(the P4J researchers are sitting in the “audience” offstage)

Dr. Researchy: (slow and monotone) Hello. My name is Dr. Researchy, and I am going to be presenting a paper to you on “The Urban Teen.” This is a theory that I developed, that is a frame work for looking at one of the major problems that growing urban U.S. city centers have been faced with – namely the adolescent. For the last 8 years I have been working on gathering information about at-risk youth in NYC. My study was recently published in a peer-reviewed journal of utmost importance. In my study, self-report measures were administered to ethnic urban adolescents ages eleven through nineteen living in housing projects in urban centers in order to assess perpetration and victimization, rapid pregnancy, according to the Degenerative Scale and we found conclusively that all indicators indicate young black male adolescents as located at the epicenter of this problematic situation.

(Youth researchers speak to each other from across the audience as if they are right next to each other, Dr. Researchy continues mumbling and sorting thru his papers)

May: This is Boring!
Candace: What is he saying?
Jessica: I think he just said something about the “urban teen.”
Darius: Ohhh he’s talking about you!
Jessica: No I think he’s talking about you!
May: I got no idea what he’s talking about, all I know is this is boring.
Candace: No one understands him but himself!
May: You know what, I’m going to go up there and say something (she gets up to go say something)
Darius: Well just tell him to stop talking about us.
Jaquana: Oh wow, she’s really going up there...

Dr. Researchy: As I was saying there is a direct correlation between the risky, impulse-ridden behavior and the poor outcomes we see in our research and that you are probably familiar with from television and motion pictures ---
May: *(takes the mic)* Ok listen, can you please stop talking about us, we’re right here,

Dr. Researchy: Who are you?

May: I am a “urban teen” or whatever you called it. Why are you talking *about* us when we’re right here? I live my life every day, I know what’s going on.

Dr. Researchy: Well you may live your life, but I’ve studied it.

May: Well I’ve studied it too.

Dr. Researchy: Security, what’s going on? I am supposed to be presenting my paper right now.

Jessica: See here’s the problem you don’t understand the whole picture. You’re only asking certain questions and looking at particular pieces of information.

Dr. Researchy: Excuse me, who are you?

May: Well my name is Maybelline, I’m a researcher with Polling for Justice.

Jessica: And I’m Jessica and I’m also a researcher with Polling for Justice.

Dr. Researchy: What’s that I’ve never heard of it.

May: We’re a project where young people come together to do research ourselves about what’s important in our communities.

Dr. Researchy: Well that’s very nice, but in my study I actually have information that shows why the youth are so angry and--

Jaquana: Dr. Research, I’m Jaquana. See what we do is something called participatory action research –

Dr. Researchy: I’ve never heard of that – I’m not even sure that is a legitimate field of study.

Jaquana: It means that we are young people doing research about the experiences of other young people because we are the experts of our own problems.

Dr. Researchy: *(to the audience)* They’re talking about research projects in school that they’re doing. How cute. How old are you?

Jaquana: 18.

Dr. Researchy: So you’re what, in high school?

Jaquana: Yes, I’m just about to graduate.

Dr. Researchy: Well that’s very sweet, but I have my PhD. Let’s move on, back to my study.

Darius: Hi I’m Darius. Also a researcher with this whole Polling for Justice thing. See you might have your PhD, and that’s great, but we’ve also been working on this for a while. We are a research study that started back in February of 2008 and we wrote a survey about young people’s experiences with criminal justice, education and public health.

Dr. Researchy: Well in my sample group we found that of the over 200 people who were studied, they need the assistance of--
Candace: Hi, I’m Candace, and I’m also a Polling for Justice researcher.
Dr. Researchy: There’s more of you! (looking out at the audience) are you all part of this project??

Candace: Between 2008 and 2009 we collected over 1,000 surveys from youth all over New York City. Look, here you can see where all the survey takers are from in New York City. And here you can see the demographics of who took our survey.
Niara: Hi, I’m Niara. We use performing arts to show our data on interactions with the police, about education, public health and other youth experiences. We share this data with everyone in the hopes that you won’t just sit there and listen to it but you will be inspired and that you will take action!
Dr. Researchy: Action? What action, this is research, we can’t confuse what we do, that’s for other people to--
Candace: Hi again! So we all have knowledge and can learn from each other, so how about you just take the opportunity come learn and listen to what we’ve found!
Dr. Researchy: But I know already, it’s that teens just don’t care about their future and—
May: No, we care about our futures, have you seen our study, where 69% of people said they wanted to go to college and get a master and doctoral degree.
Dr. Researchy: What #'s are you talking about?
Candace: Oh wow, do we really need to break it down for him?

Darius: First off, you gotta understand what it’s like being a teen today in NYC:
(everyone beings walking around in a GRID (creating like a feel of a big city) around the stage, going at different paces and stopping at different times, not looking each other in the eye, everyone in their own world.
Everyone stops for a second when each person says “Did you know”)
[slide 9]

Candace: Did you know that there are over 5,000 police in NYC schools? The police force in New York City schools is now the fifth largest police force in the country—there are more police in New York City schools than there are on the streets of cities such as Baltimore, Las Vegas, Boston and Washington D.C.
May: Did you know that in NYC we have to pass 5 standardized tests in order to graduate from high school? And now teacher tenure is tied to how well their students do on standardized tests.
Darius: Did you know that in my first year of high school we had 100 people, and now there are only 30 graduating... we have a 45% graduation rate in NYC?
Jaquana: Did you know, it's really no joke, 45.8 million U.S. citizens don't have health insurance? And, 1 in 6 New Yorkers are uninsured?

Candace: But despite all of these things happening to us our survey found that:
[SLIDE]
69% of youth in our survey plan on getting a masters degree, doctoral degree or being a doctor or lawyer
(everyone says what their plans are for after high school)
[SLIDE]
90% of the youth of our survey feel somewhat or very hopeful about the future.
[SLIDE]
94% of students care about getting good grades in school, and 89% feel their teachers have high expectations of them and say that teachers help when they don’t understand something.

(Everyone is up stage—being “young people,” then when Jessica mentions group 4 everyone “goes to sleep”)

[a slide saying and showing Circuits of Dispossession chart]

Jessica: The way we’re looking at and understanding our data is by thinking about the policies that contribute to the experiences youth have. There’s health, home life, criminal justice and education. In our every day lives, we see how all of these policies intersect - and we notice that there are certain groups of young people who experience more of the negative policies.

Sound: alarm clock goes off, music starts

DAY IN THE LIFE DANCE x 1 (everyone does it together)

Jessica: We’re showing you different days in the life of these different groups and what happens to people along the way. That was a day in the life of a teen with no negative experiences. Now we’re going to show an example of a day in the life of someone who has a negative experience in each other the 4 policy sectors.

2nd DAY IN THE LIFE DANCE –
Sound: alarm clock goes off
(everyone goes through the morning routine to putting on clothes. Darius wakes up late but rushes to catch up to all of that)
::FREEZE:: after putting clothes on

(once Darius steps down center then May meets him and they freeze)
SCENE 1
(Darius (student) and May (sibling)
(frozen images that react to the narrations)

Jaquana (Narrator): This student/Darius is excited about the new after school job he just got. His only dilemma was that he needs to get a health physical. He asked his sister if she knew any place that he could go. His sister didn’t see how he could get the physical without missing school, let alone paying for it.

Darius: But they said I have to for the job! Fine. I guess I’ll just go to school late.

BACKGROUND DATA SLIDE (Narrator): In our data, 38% of respondents did not receive health care when they needed it due to immigration status, communication barriers, not enough money, no health insurance, or because they didn’t know how.

SCENE 2
::CONTINUE LEAVING THE HOUSE PUTS BACK PACK ON::
Darius (student), Candace (mom) (frozen images that react to the narrations)

Jessica (Narrator): He was already running out the door late for school when his mom told him he had to pick up his cousin after school. His mother insists he live up to his family responsibilities even after he explains he can’t pick up his cousin because he has SAT class. The student told his mother she wouldn’t understand because she never even finished high school.

Darius: Leave me alone. I’m late for school, I gotta go!
(Narrator): motherdropout data

::CONTINUE TO THE TRAIN, EVERYONE GETS ON THE TRAIN, DARIUS DOESN’T HAVE CARD SO JUMPS TO STAGE RIGHT AND JESSICA STOPS HIM::

Darius (student), Jessica (cop) (frozen images that react to the narrations)

Jaquana (Narrator): On the student’s way to school, he realized he didn’t have his school train fare so he decided to hop the train. A cop witnessed this, and demanded the student’s ID. The student gets arrested and taken in a paddy-wagon to the truancy office.

Darius: See. This is why I don’t like going to school. This don’t make no sense.

BACKGROUND DATA SLIDE (Narrator): We asked about youth interactions with police. We asked about positive police contact, negative sexual police contact, negative physical, legal and verbal police contact. 61% of youth in the bronx and 58% of youth in brooklyn report negative contact with police.
::CONTINUE TO SCHOOL, DARIUS COMES LATE AND TIRED TO GET INTO THE CLASS::

SCENE 5
Darius (student), Jaquana (teacher) (frozen images that react to the narrations)

Candace (Narrator): The student finally gets to school two and a half hours late. He tries to get into class, but the teacher won’t let him in. He tries to explain why he was late for school but she just doesn’t want to hear it. She tells him he is going to fail the class, and might not graduate.

Darius: I don’t care about this stupid class, anyways.

Jaquana: Very mature.

BACKGROUND DATA SLIDE (Narrator): 64% of students say that in their school students talk back or act rudely towards teachers. 63% feel bored in school.
And 49% say there’s too much class time spent getting ready to pass the Regents.

::CONTINUE HOME FROM SCHOOL::

(everyone get home everyone on the phone and computer etc)
Darius (student), Niara (teacher) (frozen images that react to the narrations)

(Sound of phone ringing)

Jessica: That night when Darius got home he got a phone call from one of his teachers checking in on him and his day and trying to find a way that he could make up work in order to pass.

::EVERYONE GOES TO SLEEP::

(Darius steps into the center and as this goes on people put bags on to him:
Candace, Jessica, Jaquana May)

May: So as you can see these policies pile up in the day in the life of some young people. Not enough health care, being targeted by police, being pushed out of school, not enough support for our families and others. These policies can weigh on us.
(May put bag on Darius, he can barely bear it)
(then everyone together helping him lift)
May: But we also found in our data that if you have a teacher who cares or if you're in a youth organization it can make things better.

Candace: Ok Dr. Researchy, do you understand better now what we’re talking about?

Dr. Researchy: Yes, but I have more thoughts on the matter—

Candace: That’s great, but we also want to hear what other people are thinking and feeling, so we can come back to you, but we’re now we’re going to open this conversation up to everyone here. We’re going to bring up one more person who’s a researcher who’s been involved in this too, her name is Maddy-

Maddy: Hi I’m Maddy, and what we want to do with you now is something called Playback. (she continues)

PLAYBACK PERFORMANCE WITH AUDIENCE

Dr. Researchy: Ohh, I have one more question…Can you playback what I was thinking?

Darius: Well I actually think we’re done with that for now.

Dr. Researchy: Well I was just thinking that we should really ask teens what they think the best solution to some of these problems are since you all are the ones living it each day, and together we can think about we can do next—

Jaquana: Just come join us.

[Everyone goes back to the Grid walking around including Maddy and Dr. Researchy, but this time looking at each other while they walk around, and behind them are images of NYC youth-led organizing campaigns. When each person says “remember” everyone looks at them and stops to listen what they say]

Remember… (x6)

Jessica: Remember that research doesn’t always have to be boring. Use your body, use your mind.

Candace: Remember, every teen goes through things throughout their day. So, remember a day in the life.

Darius: Remember that you can make a difference by not only listening, but taking action.

May: Remember that youth are organizing all over NYC to change policies to make all of our lives better.

Jaquana: This is all the data we're sharing with you tonight. Injustice still exists, so we all have to come up with the ending together. We need your help writing the last line. What should the next steps be?
We designed this telling of our data for the particular audiences who were inviting us to tell it – that is adult, mostly white, educators and academics. We were happy to share the data with them because according to our theory of change, it was these very audiences who we needed most to join with us in organizing efforts in order to impact the problematic policies impacting NYC youth. So, it was our design to tell the story in a way that emphasized the every-day-ness and at the same time highlighted the outrageousness of public betrayals of young people intermingled with liberation moments, joy, and hope. The “script” was never finalized – we would edit it, revise it, and make changes before and after each performance.

**Audience Up**

In our data we theorized the ways distinct policies are experienced in interconnected, accumulative, circuited ways. Our theory of dissemination included a desire to make explicit the connections between audience members, the data, and the young people on stage - like turning the theory of circuits of dispossession and advantage on its side, so that it makes connective circuits visible on another plane. After sharing the data, we spent the rest of the performance reaching through the 4th wall and weaving audience stories/lives/reactions with the data and researcher’s lives and stories.

We devised our participatory dissemination methodology carefully. We wanted engagement from the audience but we were wary of arousing a simply empathic response. Megan Boler (1999) cautions that empathic readings permit the reader to go under the false assumption that it is possible to fully imagine others, and allow for a passive consumption of the subjects experience/emotions without also having to examine the reader’s social responsibilities. She calls instead for an active empathy, or a “testimonial
reading”, where the responsibility for action lies with the reader. In PFJ, as a group of mostly African American and Latina young people, we were especially concerned that we not encourage our predominantly White, adult, middle-class audiences to want to save or help poor Black and Brown youth. We used playful, nuanced, powerful embodiments of our data as one way to guard against portraying youth of color as suffering and as victims. And then we invited audiences to share their own experiences as part of the drama. We wanted to avoid a performance setting where rows of comfortable audience members re-enacted the watching of other’s pain as onlookers. Our hope was to facilitate our audiences to notice, that is, to incite a recognition that their contribution towards collective responsibility could be to do a careful interrogation of their own story/future actions and recognize the cross-circuits of dispossession, privilege and responsibility coursing through the performance space. We wanted to make visible the power lines and the braiding of our collective circuits (Salverson & Schutzman, 2006).

So, in our third act, I stood up as what Playback Theatre refers to as the Conductor – I acted as a human live-wire connection between our audiences and our data-stories – and asked the audience members to share their reactions to the data. Following the Playback Theatre format, we asked audience members to start first with their emotional, affective responses. Audience members would share a sentence or two about their reaction to the data-performance, and then the PFJ researchers would turn their response into a small moment of theatre on the spot.

At one performance, audience members shared these responses:

“I’m feeling angry thinking about all the police officers in schools, and how young people are treated in places where they should be able to learn”
“I’m wondering how does it feel to be in such a hostile place (school). I feel very sorry, and indignant.”
“[I feel] inspired and hopeful from watching the performance and seeing the research.”

The PFJ researchers transformed each response into a multi-layered human sculpture, and thereby acknowledged – and made visible - the range of affect the PFJ data provoked (see Figure 17).

Figure 21: Polling for Justice Researchers embodying audience responses to PFJ data

In the final phase of the performance, the PFJ researchers invited audience members to contribute their own expertise and experience in generating knowledge and visions for action in light of the PFJ data. In some performances this was done through the use of the Image Theatre form created by Augusto Boal (1979, 2002), where audience members were invited to come onto the stage and embody their vision for the future (of education, for instance) with anyone else who wanted to come to the stage. Other times instead of Image Theatre, we invited audience members to write their thoughts on a small piece of paper to contribute to a Peoples’ Mosaic of What Could Be.
Through the Playback Theatre and the audience contributions we were playing with ways to bring the audience into the dissemination process and inviting audiences to experiment with what is possible, with what could be in terms of youth experience and adult-youth relations (Greene, 1988).

In the data performance lab, through this embodied research encounter, though fleeting and metaphoric by design, the audience had to make sense of the paradox between the data on dispossession and negative experiences of young people they were hearing, and the sophisticated work of the youth researchers presenting/performing the research. They had to think about their own/adult complicity in the conditions that were presented and responsibility for action. Through explicit recognition of the adult human-experience of the PFJ data, it was our hope that we might spark connections between the researchers and the audience and perhaps inspire meaningful collaborations to germinate and grow, or at least raise the possibility of new, and as yet unimagined, adult-youth solidarities.

**Don’t just sit there - Organize**

In 1979, Michelle Fine conducted an experimental study exploring how people perceive injustice. She compared what happens when people feel they can’t do anything about injustice, and when they feel they can. Her findings indicate that victims of injustice are keenly aware of the contours of the injustice regardless of whether they feel they can or can’t do anything about it. However, the nonvicitims: the subjects in the experiment who were neither given the role of victim nor judge (with the ability to decide the fairness of a situation) were the subjects most likely to change their analysis depending on whether there was an opportunity to challenge the situation. When there
was an option to appeal, nonvictims were more likely to favor the case of the victim. However, when there was no recourse for advocacy or action, the nonvictims were much more likely to blame the victim for the unjust conditions (Fine, 2002). Applying Fine’s work to the present project of reimagining adolescent experience in NYC, her study implicates adult bystanders of adolescence. Thinking back to the historical construction of adolescence sketched in Chapter One, we must also consider the ways adults have been shaped by this history as well. Fine’s research would suggest that adults are like the nonvictims in her experiment: seemingly unaffected themselves by the lack of justice – in relation to aggressive policing, in relation to inadequate access to health care and quality schooling experiences, and, without being able to put a finger on what to do about it, all too eager to focus the blame on victims (Fine, 2002 p.13). Our participatory performance labs, where we invited the participation of seemingly un-involved adults, were an action approach towards disrupting patterns of dispossession by accumulation of New York City’s young.

At one performance for NYC educators, the PFJ data sparked discussion and debate amongst the crowd. Audience members were moved and they were also challenged. Many expressed that they didn’t know, and wanted to know, what actions to take to change current realities. “WHAT NOW?” they asked, or, “The data was unsurprising and frustrating. It makes me feel like what I do just isn't enough.” Or, “Great job of data collection; great idea to frame surveys around issues of race, gender and sexual orientations. How do we use data moving forward?” We theorized that youth and adults need not only spaces for building relationships and thinking critically together across difference (Torre, 2005), but once mutual implication is acknowledged, there is a
need to know how to develop circuits of political solidarity between privileged and marginalized groups. More opportunity is needed to develop the intellectual and political muscles necessary to generate responses when societal structures are not working fairly and/or effectively.

There were limitations to our approach. We used various methodologies, as described above - theatre, break-outs, brainstormed lists - to turn towards concrete ideas for organizing and change. However, we found that the data-performance genre we developed was important for challenging and reshaping how the academy and scholarship works, and sparking conversations, but not designed for sharply impacting policy changes on the ground.

Jessica Wise explains it this way:

I think at the end of the day, our job is to inform others about our experiences. And, it’s not only our experiences, its something that people all over the world, and young people especially, go through every day – injustice, learning how to be resilient, dealing with the police. This -- our data and performances -- is just a small way to see into what happens every day. Our role is not only just to say, “Oh, this is what we learned,” but, at the end of the day, “what are we going to do about that?” The point is, it doesn’t stop with the performances, it starts with them. We ask ourselves and our audiences, after we perform, or present our data, where do we go from here? How do we get this important data to the big lawmakers and to the people who actually make decisions. They don’t matter the most, but they are the ones who are basically in charge, so how do we get up to their level to say, “listen, this is what we need you to do for us. Because you work for us, you don’t work for yourself.”

As generative as we found embodying and performing research, it was vital to our research goals that the Polling for Justice data circulate outside the performance space as policy, organizing and public education. We made efforts to ensure that key PFJ findings were used in youth-friendly media (Cushman, 2010), public hearings, for instance on school discipline reform, policy reports, community speak-outs (on community and
school safety), and academic papers on education, safety reforms, and social critique (Fine, Stoudt, Fox & Santos, 2010; Stoudt, Fine & Fox, 2011/2012; Stoudt, Fox & Fine, 2012; Stoudt, Fox & Fine 2011; Fox & Fine, 2012; Fox & Fine, In press). In particular, the PFJ data on youth experiences of aggressive policing fed organizing efforts across New York City.

Most powerfully, PFJ spawned further research, lead by Brett Stoudt and María Torre and the Morris Justice research team that is building a body of evidence for community-based police reform (see Stoudt & Torre, submitted) via research, policy reform and direct action (Wall, 2012). Indeed, recently, the Morris Justice Project and the Public Science Project were intimately involved in two historic policy victories that found NYPD’s aggressive policing practices unconstitutional and passed City legislation to change those policies and implement unprecedented oversight of the NYPD. Though Poling for Justice was not directly involved in those wins - though enthusiastic audience rally attenders - the PFJ research team feels immensely proud of these policy gains.

Polling for Justice served as a kind of census of young peoples’ experiences of public policy in New York City. Perhaps, like the population census, once a decade it is important to conduct research project across a broad enough spread of policy sectors in recognition of the ways young people’s experiences are circuited, intertwined, and then from that data generate a rich database for wide use. Today research teams continue to analyze Polling for Justice data – across sector – and the data continues to energize new participatory research teams to design new, better, more current and electric research studies.
Analysis is Dynamic: Considerations for future

In academia the most venerated product of our work – the written word – is unforgivingly final (though this is changing as more work is located on the ever-evolving internet). It turns out that embodying data in a participatory way from analysis through the dissemination process makes obvious that analyses are dynamic. No two Polling for Justice performances were exactly same not only because the audience contributions were always different, but also because through embodiment our research team was often deepening and/or shifting our understanding of the findings.

After a performance, in the theater world, it is customary to give “notes”. The director sits the cast down and gives detailed feedback on what went well and what to change for next time. We engaged this practice, in a participatory way, within our research team - insights from our performances, including audience response, often fueled further analysis and new embodiments.

But we could have gone further. If I were to give “notes” on our data performance labs for future work, I would suggest that our engagement with audience was limited. Initially I planned on including an analysis of the participatory section of our performances based on audience responses and contributions in this chapter of the dissertation. Using data from five performances, including video footage, audio-recording, field notes, and self-completed response cards from audience members, I conducted an analysis of audience responses and the PFJ researchers embodiments of their response. Using a grounded theory approach, I was interested in what patterns might emerge, and in what new insights the audiences’ responses might shed on the analysis of circuits of dispossession and analysis. In each performance we invited four audience members to volunteer their affective response. Interestingly, across the five performances (in different
venues, with different audience size, but with a broadly similar make-up of mostly white, mostly highly educated), the audience members’ responses followed a similar arc:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’m feeling upset that students have to face such a high degree of police harassment. Policies that are meant to protect aren’t doing that at all.”</td>
<td>“I’m feeling lost as an educator – how do I make my students feel important and special and worth living to keep them in school and accomplish goals.”</td>
<td>“I’m feeling a desire to get my hands on this data to be able to use it!”</td>
<td>“I felt shocked by the data (more interestingly presented than most research presentations I’ve ever seen).”</td>
<td>“I’m feeling angry thinking about all the police officers in schools, and how young people are treated in places where they should be able to learn”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel at a loss – what do we do now? How can we make some changes?”</td>
<td>“The data was unsurprising and frustrating. It makes me feel like what I do just isn’t enough”</td>
<td>“I’m feeling very sad. I’m feeling the waste of the potential [of the individual people that were surveyed] that’s there to not be in a place where it can blossom.”</td>
<td>“That was quite powerful and important. My interest is piqued. And, I’m interested in talking with the group about the experience, the process.”</td>
<td>“I feel very sorry and indignant that these young peoples’ schools are such a hostile place.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you can see, sometimes audience members reacted to the data itself, or the ways they experienced the data in their own lives. Other audience members responded to the presentation of the data and the experience of hearing data analysis from young people. Overall, we heard each group of audience members express shock, sadness, feeling lost, frustration, and anger in relation to hearing the data. And then they reported feeling inspired and moved by the form of the presentation.

I considered the implications of the similarity of the affective arc audience members seemed to follow at each performance. From one angle, these responses could
speak to a kind of collective emotional work audiences were doing with/for each other moving through shame, sadness, towards outrage and inspiration. Perhaps we could take the arc of these responses, and their similarity across different audiences, as evidence that our data performance lab methodology provided enough of an option for “appeal” that it was effective at moving our audiences-as-bystanders out of complacency and towards taking action (Fine, 2002). We theorized that providing an opportunity for audiences to take any form of action – beginning with telling their own story in relation to the data – was enough to nudge audiences towards solidarity with young people and away from blame (Fine, 2002). However, in the end, my conclusion is that this methodology needs further development before we should analyze audience responses as data, for the following reasons: 1. The data-presentations and my question-asking as Conductor varied enough between each performance that I’m wary of comparisons across. 2. The audience responses are so similar, that I’m suspicious. My hunch is that the inexperience of our research team as improvisational actors contributed to a kind of shallow, or surface-skimming of affect in the room. With more time to develop skills as researcher-performers, for instance with more training as Playback Theatre actors, I wonder if we might have created a space where audience members were able to access more complex stories/less predictable feelings about their own connections to the data. Perhaps our performances, and performance work needed more time. Having more skill and training as Playback Theatre actors and/or with dramaturgy might have also had the effect of bringing our analysis forward in terms of the story we told via the Day-in-the-Life. The stories in the data and sitting in our audiences were deeply complex, and it takes a great deal of practice to be able to hear and communicate the multiple layers in a story.
As noted above, the audiences we performed for were all quite similar. Another note for future consideration is that I think our analysis would have been stretched and thickened from creating \textit{data performance labs} with different kinds of audiences. If we had been invited to perform for more audiences of young people reflective of the PFJ research team, I can imagine that we might have focused our data presentation more on the data from our survey on LGBTQ young people faring worse than their peers in almost all ways – including negative interactions with police, homelessness, et. (Fine, Stoudt, Fox & Santos, 2010). In addition, I think overall, we might have done more in our performances to emphasize the outrage of the \textit{normalization} of the conditions we were presenting. We theorized that disrupting the pattern of normalization amongst young people was vital in reimagining and reshaping adolescence.

\textbf{Interdependence, Interconnecting, Circuits}

Linda Powell Pruitt proposes the metaphor of a knot (rather than gap) in the context of educational disparities to describe the ways we are \textit{all} implicated in and affected by issues of race, racism and power. In particular, Pruitt is pointing out how in order to make sense of Black student educational experience, it is imperative to understand and unpack the ways that Whiteness plays a role. Instead of focusing on Black or White (or Brown, etc.), she suggests we interrogate the relationships between (Pruitt, 2004). Our work in PFJ was its own tangle that grew out of the knotty relations between adults and youth, researcher and subject, audience and actor, institutions and individuals, and race and racism.

In many ways, the \textit{data performance labs} of Polling for Justice were taking a \textit{circuits} analysis and flipping it on its side, twisting it onto another plane. We aimed to devise an analysis and dissemination methodology that was grounded \textit{and} dynamic, and
with a form that could hold the ways all of the data, and the lives - of respondents, of researchers, and of audiences – are intersecting and interdependent.

Our work was meant as a provocation, a beginning. Our hope was that audience members would leave fired up to do something towards our collective liberation out of the interconnecting data we presented. While we don’t know how – if – our data performance labs impacted each member of our audiences, we do know that Polling for Justice lives on in the life of various research projects that have taken up where we left off, and always holding on, at their core, to a sense of the ways we are all entwined via connected circuits.
Chapter Seven

An Epilogue: Artistic Embodiment in a Critical Youth Studies

In the growing, still emergent field of Critical Youth Studies, the work is in part to re-frame understandings of adolescence with a focus on the here-and-now and away from assumptions of epigenetic development (Erikson, 1985). In critical scholarship on adolescence and childhood – as in other critical approaches - there is often a focus on what a Critical Youth Studies is not – it is not positivistic, it is not future-oriented, it does not assume normality based on white-ness or male-ness (Steinberg, 2011; Orellana, 2009; Lesko, 2001; James & Prout, 1997). There is an understanding that for over a century, scholarship on adolescence has linked the rearing and well-being of adolescents with the health and success of the whole of society (Kamp & Kelly, forthcoming). And, so, incorporating a critical take, there is an imperative within Critical Youth Studies to contribute meaningfully towards new visions of adolescence. In this dissertation, via epistemology, methodology, and approach, I offer what could be in relation to adolescence, and most importantly, I offer how we might get there. I contend that multi-generational participatory action research using artistic-embodied methodologies can be a generative approach to liberatory collective knowledge production for re-imagining adolescence.

Towards this end, in this dissertation I have contributed my response to the questions: How can we produce knowledge collectively? How can participatory artistic-embodied methodologies contribute to building liberatory knowledge? And, most specifically, how does the Polling for Justice researchers’ analysis contribute to re-imagining adolescence?
The Polling for Justice artistic-embodied approach holds potential to reimagine how the field understands adolescence in a way that can support systemic change as opposed to reinforcing systemic oppression. Chapter Six, with its exploration of the Polling for Justice performance of a *circuits of dispossession and advantage* analysis, provides the concluding discussion for this dissertation. In this epilogue, I briefly revisit some key findings, with further discussion on the *space between, collective knowledge production for liberation, and art-in-research* - to bring us home, towards a re-imagined adolescence.

Through the Polling for Justice collective research and analysis we came to an understanding of how young peoples’ injustice experiences are lived as interdependent circuits. We found that the most highly dispossessed young people were more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods, more likely to be youth of color, more likely to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer/questioning, and more likely to be male. We also found that those young people were more likely to engage in activities that might place themselves in harm’s way. In fact, youth who’d reported at least one negative experience across all policy sectors were nearly six times more likely to engage with violence, more than four times more likely to engage in unsafe sex practices, and almost three times more likely to use illegal drugs than young people who reported no negative policy experiences. Further, we found that meaningful relationships with an adult, like a teacher, can buffer the negative impacts of policy betrayal for those young people who had reported the highest number of negative policy experiences.

**The Space Between**

Through a detailed, intimate look at how we came to our analyses, and then deepened, filled out, and amplified those findings via a participatory artistic-embodied
approach, I have shown how it brought us to an understanding of young people’s experiences as being located in the space between young people and adults. We reached our findings through an analytic focus on the tensions that emerged throughout the Polling for Justice project. We interrogated youth experiences of policing by looking at the normalization of those experiences; we analyzed and re-theorized data connecting our mothers’ levels of education to our own chances of graduating high school; we explored small stories that brought to light how even intimate, private, moments could be evidence of a larger, societal interactions. And we found that our understanding of youth experiences of circuits of dispossession and advantage were best understood as located in between young people and adults, audience and performer, scholar and reader. In other words, our analysis challenged our understanding of adolescence as a discrete life-stage experienced by people in their teenage years, and instead suggested to us that adolescence can best be understood as interactional, relational, as a process or project, and that the experiences of adolescence speak to society as a whole.

Understanding adolescence as existing between young people and adults was our theoretical response to the “fear of youth” we’d noted in the literature and heard expressed by adult colleagues. Through analysis we understood the “fear of youth” as evidence of the tether connecting adults and young people, evidence of racism, and, evidence of the history of the construction of adolescence as a technology of control (Lesko, 2001). Through epistemology and methodology we aimed to provide an approach for adults and young people to reframe this fear and re-theorize raced understandings of “urban adolescence” together.
Our findings on adolescence as existing in the space between young people and adults informed our methodology and approach to dissemination. The theorizing that grew from this conceptualization of adolescence led us to develop a participatory performance genre that provoked audiences to re-think their own relationships to the conditions we presented, and, we hoped, to incite mutual responsibility and solidarity.

The Polling for Justice analysis of dispossession and resistance led us to understand, write about, and present/perform the findings with a commitment to maintaining tensions – we understood there were no easy solutions, nor clear rights or wrongs to the justice dilemmas our data revealed. Our collective artistic-embodied analysis of the data on young peoples’ experiences with the public policies of New York City provoked us to find ways to think with adults to understand the meanings and implications of the data.

Throughout the Polling for Justice project we experienced again and again that how a story is framed, and how it is told, matters for science and for justice. Through our collective approach, we developed a set of commitments when telling our data-stories. In answer to the dominant stories of adolescents that tend to focus on shortcomings (Belgrave, Reed, Plybon & Corneille, 2004; Farrell et al 2005; Lanza & Taylor, 2010; Jones et al, 2005; Marino, Ellickson, & McCaffrey, 2008; Roberts, White, & Yeomans, 2004; Sullivan, Farrell, & Kliewer, 2006; Xue, Zimmerman & Cunningham, 2009; Lambert, Ialongo, Boyd, & Cooley, 2005), we made sure to lead written and performed presentations of Polling for Justice data with our most positive findings. Connected to this, and also based upon my own methodological response to the ways young people have historically been excluded from having a platform from which to contribute their
own expertise about their own lives, my own hermeneutics in including my co-researchers stories in this dissertation has been largely one of faith (Josselson, 2004). In Polling for Justice we took play, humor and spontaneity seriously both as strategies for knowledge production in our process, and of resistance in relation to the Polling for Justice findings. The work of serious playfulness was a key epistemological response to move away from the epistemological violence (Teo, 2010) that can so often be found in literature on adolescence, and towards an epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007).

**Collective Knowledge Production for Liberation**

The participatory action research approach, and our use of artistic-embodied methodologies produced collective knowledge production for liberation (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008). In this dissertation, I have also shown how re-evaluating assumptions about who holds expertise, and expanding notions of expertise, will fundamentally shift findings. Through a participatory artistic-embodied approach, I have explored provocations on accountability, the importance of relationships, and how process matters. Adolescence is ubiquitous – we all experience it. Some suggest that it is the time of life when we are most intensively governed by the state and its policies (Kamp & Kelly, forthcoming). And, yet, it is also a time of life when we traditionally have limited access to power or pathways for participation. Young people rarely get to make decisions for themselves. Polling for Justice inverted that paradigm, privileging the knowledges and expertise of teenage young people in our investigation of adolescent experiences of public policy. And, in this dissertation, I have shared a detailed account of how we went about that. It is my hope that through this kind of participatory work we can work together to collectively revolutionize the academy. The more of us who have access
to produce knowledge of meaning, and of weight, the more we move together towards collective liberation.

**Art-in-Research**

In the Fall of 2009, while deep within the work of Polling for Justice, I went to see a theatre production called *Lily’s Revenge*, directed by Taylor Mac. It was five acts and five hours long - try as I might, I couldn’t get anyone to go with me. The story of the play was a commentary on anti-gay marriage agendas, and in it a flower - the Lily - is trying to marry a man despite attempts by a malicious Stage Curtain who spreads nostalgia as a force of resistance against such an unusual love story. By the culmination of the play, nostalgia is defeated and the Lily decides to propose to everybody.

Meanwhile, the play was produced in a most unusual way. Each act had the audience in a completely new formation – in Act I we were sitting riser-style, in a traditional stage/audience arrangement, in Act II we were seated in the round, and the space transformations continued until by the final act, we had to weave in and out of the performers to get to our seats scattered across the stage. In between each act, we were escorted out of the theatre into the lobby, but “invited” to keep our cell phones off, facilitated to engage with one another, welcomed backstage, and entertained by wild and zany burlesque performers – including our very own Una Osato. There were over 40 cast members, and while Taylor Mac was the visionary behind the writing and production, the process was described as collaborative. The story the play told and the way they decided to tell it were bound up in each other. As an audience member I left the evening feeling like I had been changed by an experience, rather than entertained.

I tell you this in part to point out that we in Polling for Justice were not the only ones working with provocations across the fourth wall that traditionally divides audience
and performer, or thinking about creative, transformative, dramatic experiences. In the world of art, these ideas have been around for decades (see the work of The Living Theatre, Judith Malina, and Julian Beck) and boundaries are being pushed and bent in new ways every day (see the work of Claire Bishop or Christopher Robbins, for examples). What I offer with this dissertation, is a way for the social sciences to take art seriously as a methodology in the analysis process: a way to bring in the resources of imagination, aesthetics, and embodiment to enrich scholarship towards new understandings of adolescence.
Appendix A:  
Polling For Justice Survey

**paper PFJ survey  December**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Polling for Justice Survey 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to the Polling for Health, Education and Justice Project survey! This is a survey written by youth for youth in New York City. 5,000 young people are filling out this survey just like you. Together, your answers will create a powerful voice that will improve young people’s experiences with health, education and justice. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at: <a href="mailto:polling4justice@gmail.com">polling4justice@gmail.com</a> Thank you for your interest in taking the survey. It will take about 20 - 30 minutes. When you finish the survey, we’ll give you a <strong>FREE MOVIE TICKET</strong> to thank you for your time!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. About You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your zip code?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. What are the cross-streets near your house?  
(for example: 35th street and 5th avenue) |
| | |
| 3. What is your birth date?  
for example: MM/DD/YYYY  
01/23/1990 |
| | |
| 4. Do you identify as:  
| | |
| male | female |
| trans (gender/sexual) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. What is your race and/or ethnicity? (check all that apply)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Latina or Hispanic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. What is your sexual orientation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lesbian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Do you have any conditions that would be considered a disability (like a mobility disability, blindness, deafness, ADHD, and/or a learning disability)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, please indicate:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. What country were you born in?

9. What is the highest level of schooling your mother/female guardian has completed?

- did not graduate from high school
- some college
- graduated from high school
- graduated from college
- went beyond a B.A.
- don't know

3. Concerns

10. Everybody has problems. When you are going through a hard time, how often do you turn to . . .

- Adult family members (like: my mother/father/grandparent/guardian/aunt/uncle)
- Peer family members (like: my brother/sister/cousins)
- Friends (including boyfriend/girlfriend)
- Adults at school (like: teachers/Guidance Counselor/Nurse)
- Police (including School Safety Agent)
- Other adults??? (like: youth program worker/organizer)
- Other

11. What are the three most stressful things in your life?

1. 

2. 

3. 

12. During the past week, how often have you felt . . .

- I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me
- I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing
- I felt depressed
- I felt that everything I did was an effort
- I felt fearful
- My sleep was restless
- I was happy
- I was lonely
- I could not "get going"
- I felt that life isn’t worth living

4. What do you think?
The United States right now is very much like this picture. A few people have most of the wealth in the country while a lot of people make do with what is left.

In fact, only 10% of the U.S. population owns 71% of all of American's wealth . . .

and on the other hand

the rest of the 90% of the population owns only 29% of all of American's wealth . . .

In other words, there is a huge gap between the very few wealthy and the rest; particularly the poor.

13. Help us understand what to make of this. Why are some people so wealthy and others so poor?

Some race and ethnic groups seem to have more wealth as a group than others. For example, look at the graph below. Only 8% of the White community is living in poverty while 25% of the Black community is living in poverty, and 22% of people of Hispanic origin are living in poverty.
14. Why do you think some racial and ethnic groups are more likely to be poor than others?

15. Is there anything that can or should be done about some groups being poorer or wealthier than others? Is there anything you have done about it?

5. About you and school

16. List all the high schools you have attended - starting with the most recent:

   school name:
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

17. Your current educational level:
   (check all that apply to you)

   I'm still in high school. yes no
   I left high school before graduating. yes no
   I graduated high school. yes no
   I'm in a GED program. yes no
   I have my GED. yes no
   I'm in college. yes no

   name of college: 

18. What kind of security does your school have? (check all that apply)

   □ none  □ cops  □ other __________
   □ school safety agents  □ cameras
   □ metal detectors  □ not sure
### 19. In my school . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teachers care about me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My culture is respected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like people really know me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers have high expectations of me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers help me when I don’t understand something.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers do not listen to what students like me have to say.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in my class talk back or act rudely towards teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can talk to teachers about problems I am having in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel bored.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school helps me feel prepared for college.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much class time is spent getting ready to pass Regents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that Regents exams could keep me from graduating.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had negative interactions with School Safety Agents.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is overcrowded.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I care about getting good grades.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel challenged by what I’m learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes school rules, tests, the way school personnel treat students, and other elements of school make me feel pushed to leave school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 20. In my school, I have received help from teachers or guidance counselors with . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions about college.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with college applications.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and support with financial aid forms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 21. Have you ever:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>once</th>
<th>more than once</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>been held back in a grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dropped out or been pushed out of high school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been suspended or expelled?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entered a GED program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been homeless?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been in foster care?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. About you and the criminal justice system.
22. In the past 6 months, have any of the following happened to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>yes, happened out of school</th>
<th>yes, happened in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was told to move by the police in a disrespectful way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was arrested.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was helped by a police officer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got a ticket/summons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was given a &quot;second chance&quot; by a police officer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was picked up for a PINS (person in need of supervision) violation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was stopped by police for questioning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was frisked (patted-down).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was strip searched.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A police officer crossed the line (touched inappropriately) while searching me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received &quot;sexual attention&quot; from the police.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was threatened and/or called a name by the police.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Have you ever been in jail or prison?

- [ ] yes
- [x] no

24. Has your parent ever been in jail or prison?

- [ ] yes
- [ ] no
- [ ] I don't know

25. In general, the police in NYC protect young people like me.

- [ ] strongly disagree
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] strongly agree

7. Sex and Relationships
### paper PFJ survey  December

#### 26. Have you ever:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>been in a romantic relationship?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had sex with a male?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had sex with a female?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been tested for a sexually transmitted infection or disease?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had a sexually transmitted infection or disease?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had intercourse without a condom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had sexual pleasure or an orgasm with a partner?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had an abortion (either you or your partner)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taken emergency contraception pills, also known as morning after pills, abortion pills, or Plan B? (either you or your partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been forced to have any kind of sexual contact when you did not want to?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by your boyfriend or girlfriend?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 27. The last time you had sex (sexual intercourse), which of the following did you use? (check all that apply)

- [ ] I have never had sex.
- [ ] Birth control pills
- [ ] Depo-Provera (injectable birth control/ a “shot”)
- [ ] Other:
- [ ] Condoms
- [ ] Withdrawal or pull-out

#### 28. In the last 30 days have you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Once or twice</th>
<th>Three or more times</th>
<th>Every day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoked a cigarette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a drink of beer, wine or other alcohol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used marijuana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used some other illegal drug (like, crack, cocaine, heroin, Ecstasy, crystal meth, LSD, angel dust, inhalants such as air freshener, glue, markers, paint, gasoline etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used prescription pain killers (to get high)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotten into a fight that injured you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injured someone else in a fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried a weapon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in gang activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been hurt or felt threatened by a gang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 8. Your thoughts on the U.S.
29. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basically, people get fair treatment in the U.S., no matter who they are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the U.S. you have an equal chance no matter where you come from or what race you are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S. is a fair society where everyone has an equal chance to get ahead.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me angry when I think about the conditions some people have to live in.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I think about the hard times some people are going through, I wonder what’s wrong with this country.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get mad when I hear about people being treated unjustly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. Rate your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you could vote, would you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. Tell us about a time when you witnessed or experienced an injustice/unfairness that upset you.

32. During the last month, how many days of school or work have you missed because of: (enter # of days between 0 - 31)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical sickness (such as an injury, your period or infections)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health (such as feeling depressed, sad, anxious, or like you just couldn't 'get going')</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking care of family members (babysitting, going to court, taking someone to the doctor, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify below)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33. If you had health education class, what grade was it in? (check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
34. Which of the following did you learn about in your health class(es)? (check all that apply)

- Sex education
- Abstinence
- HIV/AIDS
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs/STDs)
- Sexual health / sexuality / sexual behavior
- Sexual identity and orientation
- Gender identity
- Pregnancy (and pregnancy options)
- Contraception
- Sexual exploitation
- Dating violence
- Abuse
- Nutrition
- Obesity
- Eating and/or body image disorders
- Body systems (reproductive, circulatory, digestive, immune, etc.)
- Physical activity
- Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Growth and development
- Safety
- Emotional and mental health
- Disability
- Dental health
- Disease prevention and control
- Environmental and public health
- Consumer health
- Stress management
- First aid
- Personal hygiene
- Crime/safety/violence

35. In the last year, when you felt sick, have you gone to . . . (check all that apply)

- Haven't used health care in last year
- Private doctor
- Community or hospital clinic
- At school
- Hospital emergency room
- Botanica, acupuncturist or other alternative care
- Some other place (please specify)

36. In the last year, have you ever needed health care but not gone because . . . (check all that apply)

- I had no one to go with me.
- My immigration status.
- Language barrier.
- I have trouble communicating with health care providers.
- Not enough money.
- No health insurance.
- I was scared of what I would learn.
- I didn't know how.
- Other

37. How do you pay for health care:

- With my own money
- With health insurance from my family
- Find places where health care is free
- Some other way

10. Last but not least . . . your reflections!
paper PFJ survey December

38. How did you find out about this survey?
☐ friend
☐ another internet site
☐ other
☐ myspace
☐ a youth organization
☐ facebook
☐ school

if you answered youth organization, what is the name of youth organization:

39. What 3 questions do you think we should be asking other New York City teens?
1. 
2. 
3. 

40. Are you, or have you ever been, in a special ed class?
☐ yes
☐ no
☐ not sure

41. Comment box! (write whatever you want)

Thank you for taking our survey!

~ the Polling for Justice research project
polling4justice@gmail.com
www.polling4justice.org

11. Useful Resources
paper PFJ survey  December

The list of organizations below provides free mental health services for adolescents. Several of the organizations provide 24 hour access for help.

LifeNet
A New York City Hotline that is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for mental, emotional or substance abuse problems.
• 1-800-LifeNet (1-800-543-3638) (English)
• 1-877-Ayudese 1-877-298-3373 (Spanish)
• 1-877-990-8595 (Asian LifeNet—for Cantonese and Mandarin language speakers)
• 1-212-982-5284 (TTY)

The Door
Provides free and confidential services to young people ages 12-21.
121 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10013
Tel: 212-841-9090
Website: http://www.door.org

Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center
Provides free and confidential comprehensive medical, mental health, family planning, and health education services to young people between the ages of 10-21.
312 East 94th Street
New York, NY 10128
Information: 212-423-2900
Medical Appointments: 212-423-3000
Mental Health: 212-423-2981
Nurse: 212-423-2999
Website: http://www.mountsinai.org/msh/msh_program.jsp?url=clinical_services/ahc_about.htm

South Bronx Health Center for Children & Families (SBHCCF)
Provides comprehensive primary health care, mental health, counseling and legal services to adolescents, regardless of their ability to pay or their immigration status.
871 Prospect Avenue
Bronx, NY 10459
Tel: 718-991-0605 (24 hours/day; 7 days/week)
Website: http://www.mountkids.org/programs/sbhccf

Safe Horizons
1-800-621-4673
Since 1979, Safe Horizon has operated Community Programs in New York City to support, educate, and advocate for victims of crime and abuse. Currently Safe Horizon has six Community Programs throughout the five boroughs serving more than 4,000 individuals each year. Safe Horizon’s Community Programs offer the following services: Crisis Intervention, Case Management, Practical/Emergency Assistance, Information and Referrals, Individual Counseling, Support Groups, Advocacy, and Community/Public Education Presentations. Please call the Community Program for further information and/or to make an appointment.

12. Getting Involved! (optional)
42. We want to talk more with you! If you are interested in talking more about these issues, being interviewed, or being in a focus group, please give us your name and the best way to get in touch with you.

DETACH THIS SHEET and hand it in separately from your survey.

Someone from the Polling for Justice project will get in touch soon!

Name: 
Address: 
Address 2: 
City/Town: 
ZIP/Postal Code: 
Country: 
Email Address: 
Phone Number: 
Appendix B:
Polling for Justice Researchers

Niara Calliste, Darius Francis, Michelle Fine, Madeline Fox, Candace Greene, Una Osato, Jaquana Pearson, Dominique Ramsey, Maybelline Santos, Brett Stoudt, Isabel Vierira, Jessica Wise

Appendix C: Polling for Justice Community Partners

Al Noor School
AWAAM (Arab Women Active in the Arts and Media)
BOND (Brothers On a New Direction of the Black Male Initiative)
Brotherhood/Sister Sol
CREDD (Collection of Researchers on Educational Disappointment and Desire)
Disabilities Unlimited
DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving)
Each One Teach One and Safe Passages of the Correctional Association
Future of Tomorrow
Girls for Gender Equity
International Network for Public Schools
Make the Road N.Y.
New York City Department of Mental Health and Hygiene
New York Civil Liberties Union
Red Hook Community Justice Center
Sistas and Brothas United
Teen Health Initiative of the NYCLU
Urban Academy High School
Urban Justice Center
Urban Youth Collaborative
Y.E.S. Program of the International Disabilities Center
Youth on the Move
References


Guishard, M. (2008). The false paths, the endless labors, the turns now this way and now that: Participatory action research, mutual vulnerability, and the politics of inquiry. *The Urban Review, 41*(1), 85–105. doi:10.1007/s11256-008-0096-8


doi:10.1080/09518398.2011.600269

doi:10.1177/014662167700100306


