The History and Enactments of Contact in Social Psychology

by

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

2010

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Social-Personality Psychology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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The atrocities of World War II and the lingering racial segregation in the United States ignited the field of intergroup relations. With a fierce sense of responsibility and purpose, social psychologists sought to unite theory and action, in order to better understand the potential extremes of intergroup hostility. Much of this research, conducted at the time in the spirit of democracy, was lost to the anti-communist hysteria. The rest was shadowed overtime by the canonization of Gordon Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954). This dissertation begins with an analysis of the history of the social psychological study of contact. It follows the theoretical legacy established by early contact scholars that prioritized the disruption of dominant ideologies, relational and naturalistic research designs, the connection between research and action, participatory methods, and an engagement (rather than tolerance) of difference. The historical analysis is then joined by a longitudinal study of a real-world enactment of contact in the form of an intergenerational research and performance project called *Echoes of Brown* that

documented the history of segregation and integration in public schools and contemporary educational injustice in the United States. Created as a contact zone (Pratt, 1992) *Echoes* brought together thirteen radically diverse young people, scholars, community elders, spoken word artists, dancers, and a choreographer in the final phase of a participatory action research project. The findings from *Echoes* analyzed in the context of the early contact research of Benedict and Weltfish (1943), Williams (1947), Watson (1947), Dubois (1943, 1950), and Dubois and Li (1955), as well as post-colonial (Pratt, 1992) and borderland (Anzaldúa, 1992, 2002) theories, suggests a revision of Allport's optimal conditions of contact: shifting equal group status to an explicit engagement of history, power, and privilege; common goals to shared collectively determined goals; cooperation to participation with negotiated conditions of collaboration; and support of authorities to collectively determined solidarity. They further demonstrate how engaging history, power, and improvisation can foster individual and collective development and the production of knowledge, making the argument that contact should not only be engaged in social psychology as a subject, but as a critical epistemology.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, María García Torre, Francisco Torre, Andres Picado Martínez, and María Regina Martínez Vazquez, and my great uncle Antonio Vazquez, (aka TiTony). Their stories are alive in me. Their experiences of leaving home, and creating new ones through immigration informed some of my earliest ideas about the possibilities and consequences of contact. Much of family left Galicia, Spain, in the 20s and 30s, and scattered to the US and Latin America – both legally and not. All of this history shaped in me a deep connection to ideas of multiplicity and intersectionality, of contradiction, improvisation, and imagination. In many ways they have joined Gordon Allport, Rachel Davis DuBois, Gene Weltfish, Goodwin Watson, Maxine Greene, Mary Louise Pratt, Gloria Anzaldúa, and of course Michelle Fine, Roger Hart, Susan Opotow, Wendy Luttrell, and Louise Kidder, in shaping this dissertation.

My journey through graduate school has been an incredible adventure – one filled with the support, love, sacrifice, ideas, energy, and commitment of so many. However, this adventure would not have been possible without the unbelievable teaching and guidance of Michelle. Michelle, the depth of my appreciation is hard to describe. You saw in me things I never knew, picked me up when things fell apart, and from my very first day provided me with endless opportunities to grow beyond that which I thought I was capable. Our work together has been some of the most meaningful in my life. Thank you for showing me how to weave together family, science, justice, and compassion. I will be forever proud to be your student.

My dissertation would not have been possible without the loving participation of the *Echoes* collective. I would specifically like to thank Amir Bilal Billups, Yasmine Blanding, Malan Bullock, Emily Genao, Ariane Gilgeous, Elinor Marboe, Annique Roberts, Joanna Roberts, Tahani Salah, Iri Osorio Sorondo, Travis Staten, and Kendra Urdang, for their unending belief in our collective project, their keen analysis, and generous spirits. I look forward to our continued relationships.

The committee that nurtured me from my second doctoral exam through the final drafts of my dissertation was simply amazing. Michelle, Roger, and Susan you have expanded my understandings of science, justice, and participation, and demonstrated how to craft a meaningful life as a social scientist. Your careful attention to my ideas, ongoing enthusiasm, respect, and humor allowed me to grow in ways I never thought possible. Thank you for being such passionate teachers, scholars, activists, and people. My committee was supported by the wonderful contributions of Wendy and Louise. It was truly an honor to have such celebrated scholars serve as outside readers for my dissertation, scholars whose research I have taught and admired for a long time. Thank you both for your rich insights in methods, analysis, and the arts. I look forward to our continued conversations.

I had the outrageous luck to be born to my Mama and Papa - Juanita Martínez and Frank Torre. Your unconditional love, deep compassion, fierce belief in justice, and broad sense of family made me who I am. I love you. Graduate school would not have been possible without the endless encouragement and patience of parents and my Massachusetts and New Jersey families. Thank you. I love you all so much and can’t wait to spend more time together!

I entered graduate school in the arms of Kathy Boudin, Iris Bowen, Judy Clark, Donna Hylton, Migdalia Martínez, Rosemarie Roberts, Melissa Rivera, Pam Smart, and Debora Upegui. Our work together on *Changing Minds* opened up the world of participatory action research to me. It was an incredible gift to be a part of such a rich collective of thinkers.

I would like to extend my deepest love and gratitude to all who have helped me grow intellectually and creatively - sparking new ideas, helping me refashion old ones, and reminding me to enjoy life along the way: Jen Ayala, April Burns, Caitlin Cahill, Lori Chajet, Maddy Fox, Valerie Futch, Monique Guishard, Patricia Krueger, Judith Kubran, Anita Harris, Tracy McFarlane, Adreanne Ormond, Yasser Payne, Jessica Ruglis, Brett Stoudt, Rafi Torruella, Eve Tuck, Mayida Zaal, and Sarah Zeller-Berkman. Because of you The Graduate Center has felt like a home…and The Public Science project was born. I would also like to thank Nancy Barnes and Gregory Tewksbury, amazing educators and colleagues who nurtured my mind, body, and soul. You were the best of the New School. I cherish our friendships. And special thank you to Emma Donnelly for her sweet support during the writing of this dissertation and for becoming an APA-style goddess!

My life during graduate school was filled with unexpected new lives, ideas, and experiences, as well as deeply sad losses. I am grateful to my New York family for celebrating and holding me through both. A loving thank you to Lisa Cowan, Jonathan Spear, Jacob Spear Cowan, Tessa Cowan Spear, Eva García, Martina Marlene Visús, Kendra Barber, and Louis Perlman for soft couches, supportive ears, endless meals, late night drinks, and wild laughter.

And to my two hearts, Kimberly Bliss and Mateo Warren Torre-Bliss, I have no words adequate enough to express how you have changed my life. Just thinking about how much I love you makes my eyes well up. You have taken such care of me in every way, sharing with me the most profound love, joy, and happiness. Thank you for your boundless excitement, patience, and silliness. I can’t wait for the adventures ahead!

If everyone had the opportunity to be born into and held, loved, taught, and encouraged by the people in my family, school, and community, this world would be a very different place. In my sincerest truth, I could not be more fortunate.

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Foreword: Finding a truth between the blues and possibility

The truth is that lately I can't escape the blues. It feels at times that I know too much – too many things that are so wrong, so deeply, profoundly wrong that I don't know how to make sense of them. The 2.3 million people in US prisons and jails (does anyone remember they are citizens?); the 5 days that tens of thousands of New Orleaneans waited, with full media attention, baking in the sun without food or water; the 50% of New York City youth who are pushed out of school without a diploma; abandoned cities; elementary schools without toilet seats; endless wars in Afganistan; Iraq; Palestine… (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009; Gotbaum & Advocates for Children, 2002; Fine, Burns, Payne, & Torre, 2004; Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Or maybe it is not that I don't know how to make sense of these outrageous wrongs, but more that they just keep piling up inside me like the rocks in Virginia Wolfe's pockets. And each day seems to bring more – the daily papers brimming with in your face injustice.

In the spirit of Barbara Ueland (1938), who insists that good writing is fueled by one's truth, I begin this dissertation with a little of my own. My truth right now is that I am increasingly haunted by the depth of violence and polarization in our current world – whether in the form or war, bias attacks, discrimination, or neglect. In my quiet moments I slip into despair, aware that there is simply too much evidence – that the divides between the haves and have-nots are simply too deep and that those in power are just fine with how things are currently organized. There are things that interrupt these blues – the silliness of family and friends, growing figs on my rooftop, a good belt from Aretha Franklin, working with groups across difference… 'Working with groups across difference.' Could it sound clunkier? What I mean is that whether I'm teaching or

researching, I get an undeniable high from moments when folks come together from their very different corners and wrestle through that which is important to them. It is always exciting when people develop new ideas or make a body of knowledge their own, but when people realize that this learning has come about in relation to another, *an other*, someone 'different,' it sparks an energy in me – a hope that, just maybe, larger change is possible. And it has been this desperate need for possibility that has propelled my ongoing interest in *contact* or what Mary Louise Pratt calls *contact zones*. As I will explain further below, shifting from contact to *contact zones* brings an awareness of the context of contact – to history, power and place. It encourages an analysis that braids individual moments to the larger sphere of social relations.

In 1992 Pratt introduced the notion of contact zones in an address to the Modern Language Association. Speaking within the context of colonization in 'the Americas,' she described contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt, 1992, p. 4). Pushing the binaries of oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized – not to *erase* the atrocities committed by such relationships – but to *expand* our totalized understandings of living in and under such conditions, Pratt, like others before her, sought a conceptual framework that created room for the lived experiences of those colonized – room for the agency (however cramped) expressed by individuals, groups, and cultures, even under extremely oppressive conditions.

Pratt builds her notion of contact zones from and understanding of *transculturation*, a term Fernando Ortiz (1995) and others have used to describe the

processes whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture (Pratt, 1992). The intension behind transculturation was to critique and replace overly reductive concepts of acculturation and assimilation used to characterize culture under conquest. The idea recognizes that while 'subordinates' do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they can and do determine, to varying extents, what gets absorbed into their own culture and what it gets used for. Transculturation, Pratt argued, is a phenomenon of the contact zone.

What I find so compelling about the idea of a contact zone is its demand for a more complicated understanding of power. It challenges the notion that oppression is necessarily a 'totalized' or complete/fixed experience – that the conditions of colonization, slavery, poverty or imprisonment, squash all that there is to be human, to be alive. I would extend this argument to include oppressive hierarchies as well, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Contact zones recognize what Bill Cross (1991) would call the *life space* that American Black slaves were able to create amongst themselves on certain plantations. Contact zones recognize the birthday parties and Nanas that exist within the dilapidated walls of the housing projects that line Avenue D in New York's East Village – the same buildings that I used to walk young people home to, holding our noses in the stairwells, afraid to ride the elevators. Contact zones recognize people's abilities to live, grow and even laugh in actively and impossibly hostile environments – and then conceptually pushes further – arguing that not only can people make life spaces inside oppressive conditions and systems, *but they can also create, produce and build <u>in and from</u> the new contexts, relationships and conditions created at the clash of contact*

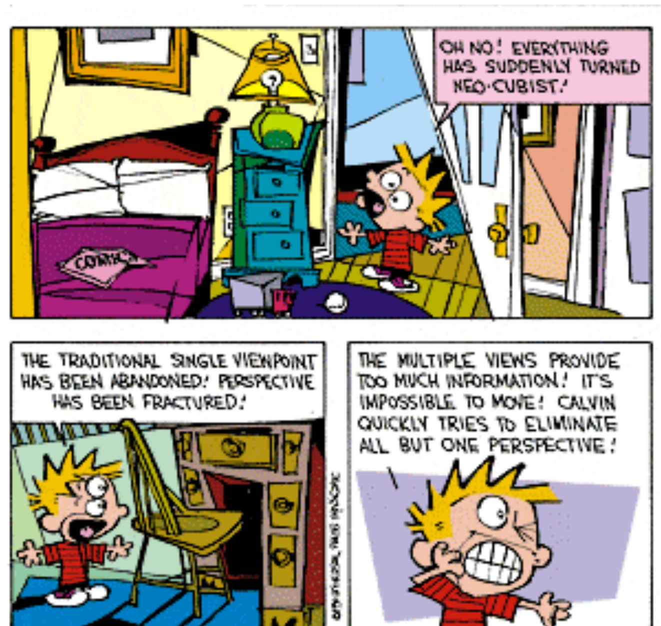
itself. In other words contact, even in its most extreme forms, such as colonization, can provoke spaces where new ways of living, ideas, languages, cultures are created. Pratt (1992) writes that a contact perspective, "foreground[s] the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. …[It] emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other…in terms of copresence, interaction, [and] interlocking understandings and practices" (p. 5).

It is important here to pause and acknowledge that contact in the form of colonization and slavery has caused horrific death and destruction of lives, ideas, languages and cultures. This history can make it feel morally impossible to attempt an exploration of the productive nature of contact. Bearing this in both mind and body, I believe it is necessary to remember and *integrate* this tension – that between the terror of how contact has been lived and the desire to find hope in what it can produce – when theorizing contact zones.

The truth is that I've been theorizing contact for a long time. My body, memory and language bring together ancestors from Spain; the pride of Ellis Island and the humiliation of stowing away; working class neighborhoods in Newark and Boston; a gorgeous sexual desire for women; a legacy of red diapers, and painful regular migraines. I was swaddled in blankets made of anti-war, anti-racist, down-with-capitalism-feminism. I held a fierce love of my Abuela and yet can remember – with a shame that still tears like a rock in my throat – wishing she would stop talking to my teachers, her accent so strong and powerful. My life thus far has led me through famous beaches and urine-soaked hallways; gifted me the feeling of unconditional love and to behold lives with

seemingly endless pain. I know the freedom of creating a living in exploring books and ideas, and I've had the privilege of witness the daily life of imprisonment. All of this has produced fractured lenses from which I see and understand the world. Not broken, but ones that interpret from many planes at once. I've had these eyes for as long as I can remember. As a kid I hung this *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoon onto my bedroom door – even then I was drawn to an experience of multiplicity (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Calvin's fractured lens (Waterson, 1991).



Although unlike Calvin who finds the multiplicity impossible to navigate, I found it a helpful description of my experience. I welcomed it as what I thought was a more accurate way of moving through the complex world ahead.

Introduction

In my reading on contact, I came across an old interview with the wonderful borderland theorist Gloria Anzaldúa (1999), in which she said,

> I have a term that is called nos-otras, and I put a dash between the nos and otras. The nos is the subject 'we,' that is the people who were in power and the colonized others. The otras is the 'other,' the colonized group. Then there is also the dash, the divide between us. However, what is happening, after years of colonization, is that all of the divides disappear a little bit because the colonizer, in his or her interaction with the colonized takes on a lot of their attributes. And, of course, the person who is colonizing leaks into our stuff. *So we are neither one nor the other; we are really both. There is not a pure other; there is not a pure subject and not a pure object. We are implicated in each other's lives.* (p. 243, emphasis added)

Anzaldúa's notion of nos-otras has inhabited me. Although I encountered it after my work with *Echoes* and the Opportunity Gap, I have found it useful to layer onto Pratt's theory of contact zones. Nos-otras attempts to address the social psychological layering that occurs in contact zones that produces new 'hybridized' selves – selves with contrasting, conflicting roots, selves from communities, people, now responsible for one another. Given our contentious histories and present disparities this left me asking, how might a deep understanding of nos-otras shift our social relations? How would it shift the work that we do? *What would it mean for us* – as researchers, teachers, students, activists, community members, prisoners, politicians, immigrants; those of us committed to justice – *to be implicated in each others' lives?* How would our mutual implication impact the design of our studies? How would it shift the knowledge we produce? How would it influence the products, actions, social policy recommendations that result from our research?

Thinking specifically about the framework of participatory action research used in the Opportunity Gap and the *Echoes* Project, if we are truly implicated in each other's lives, how might we create participatory research that investigates injustice that is unevenly distributed? For example, what would it mean for youth who have been underserved by educational practices in their schools to investigate educational injustice alongside peers benefitting from the very same practices? What do the differences between these youth have to offer the research? What might they offer each other?

To answer these questions this dissertation examines the social psychological dynamics of contact, as elaborated by Pratt (1992), within the context of participatory action research (PAR). Contact, commonly discussed as intergroup relations, has largely been framed in psychology as a subject of research (Torre, 2006). I am interested in what happens when this frame is shifted slightly and contact becomes not so much a research subject but *a way of doing research* – a way of producing knowledge. My interest is focused on two areas. The first area is the broad impact of contact on the overall knowledge production of PAR collectives. The second area stems from the recognition that much of PAR is organized around research that interrupts social injustice. Given this, I am particularly interested in understanding the relationship of contact to participants' development of a broader social awareness and/or sense of justice as a result of their participation in the research collective. Bringing these two interests together my aim is to produce an analysis of contact that offers psychological insights at three levels: (1) individual development, (2) collective dynamics and (3) knowledge production.

In order to better understand the social psychological dynamics of contact in the context of participatory action research I conducted a study using a two-part design. The

first part of the study consists of an archival analysis of the history of contact research within psychology, beginning with the early work of Watson (1947), Williams (1947), DuBois (1943) and Allport (1952, 1954) up through the recent challenges to contact from indigenous and marginalized communities (Smith, 1990; Marker, 2006; Grande, 2004, and Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman, 2007). This section provides a historical analysis of the social and political environment in which the field of contact 'emerged' and the various theoretical shifts that occurred in the years that followed. Special attention is paid to the periods where themes of participation, democracy and justice were more central to conceptions of contact. The second part of the study is a case study analysis of *Echoes of Brown*, the fourth and final 'research camp' of the Opportunity Gap project, a youth PAR project designed as a contact zone which brought together a set of radically diverse youth to document educational inequalities in 13 ostensively integrated school districts in greater metropolitan New York and New Jersey (this project is further elaborated below; see also Fine, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, Payne, Perkins-Munn & Torre, 2005).

Why Contact Zones?

Pratt (1992) warns that contact zones are, by definition, messy and difficult spaces. Yet they are also simultaneously ripe with new and unpredictable possibilities. Along with the "rage, incomprehension, and pain," that often occurs in contact zones there are "exhilarating moments of wonder and revelation, mutual understanding and new wisdom" (p. 14). I wish to capitalize on that which sparks this wonder and new wisdom – and better understand the psychological dynamics that provoke and sustain it. In other words, I wish to shape a set of psychological tools to better understand how the practice

of research in these contexts can move Khouri, one of the Opportunity Gap youth researchers, to see what she described as "beyond the flat." I strongly believe that there lies great promise for democratic engagement and social change in the theory and practice of PAR as contact zones. There is promise in the potential to create what Nancy Fraser (1990) calls "counterpublics" or democratic spaces where people (researchers, educators, students) might build, in the words of Maxine Greene (1988), "the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise" – spaces to develop thought and ideas, critical inquiry and understanding of a "world lived in common with others, a world that can be to some extent transformed" (p. 4).

Chapter 1

The Context of the Study

> It has sometimes been held that merely by assembling people without regard for race, color, religion, or national origin, we can thereby destroy stereotypes and develop friendly attitudes. The case is not so simple. (Allport, 1954, p. 261)

What does it take to bring different kinds of people together to create not just fair and equal treatment among them, but a more just world? How does contact between individuals and with groups impact human growth and development? How does it shift our understandings of ourselves, each other, and the world around us? Taking seriously Allport's caution that contact must be thoughtfully engaged this dissertation examines how contact has been theorized, operationalized, contextualized and historicized within the field of social psychology. Through a study of the construct at two different units of analysis, individuals and collectives engaged in intergroup relations, it looks at the human and epistemological impact of contact.

Specifically, it asks:

1. How has contact been theorized in psychology?
2. What is the impact of contact on the individual?
3. What are the collective dynamics of contact?
4. What is the impact of contact on knowledge production?

These questions were studied in the context of *Echoes* project, a youth participatory action research and performance project which was the outgrowth, the fruit, if you will, of a larger tree that took root in 2001.

An Overview of The Opportunity Gap Study

In the Fall of 2001 a consortium of suburban school superintendents of desegregated districts gathered to discuss the Achievement Gap in their schools. Recent changes in state policy in New York and New Jersey had made public their test data – disaggregated by race – and they were eager to move beyond surface understandings of 'the gap.' The test scores across the 12 school districts in the consortium reflected the nationally disturbing disparities between Asian American, White American, African American and Latino students.[1] The Consortium organizer, Superintendent Sherry King of Mamaroneck, New York, invited researchers from The Graduate Center of the City University of New York to join a research effort funded by the Rockefeller Foundation to Study the Achievement Gap across the districts. We agreed under the condition that we could collaborate with a broad range of students from suburban and urban schools, to create a multi-year, multi-site, multi-generational, participatory action research project to document how urban and suburban youth perceive the processes and consequences of the gap (for research design see Table 1).

October 2001 through March 2002 was spent gathering ethnographic data in the schools of the 12 districts. As Research Director, I coordinated a team of graduate students[2] who visited each of the schools interviewing principals and guidance

[1] The Regional Minority Achievement Consortium districts included Mamaroneck, New York; Ramapo/Spring Valley, New York; Bedford, New York; White Plains, New York; New Rochelle, New York; Montclair, New Jersey; Cherry Hill, New Jersey; Summit, New Jersey; Maplewood/South Orange, New Jersey; South Brunswick, New Jersey.

[2] The graduate students included Janice Bloom, April Burns, Lori Chajet, Monique Guishard and Yasser Payne.

counselors; went on youth-led tours; hung out in lunch rooms, libraries and common spaces and detention halls; and held focus groups on 'what was working well/not so well' with different populations in each school**.** From this phase of the research, young people in 7 high schools of the 12 districts were recruited to participate in the research as youth researchers.[3] Participation was open to any interested young person. We did not ask principals, guidance counselors or other school administrators for recommendations for youth researchers. Instead ethnographically involved graduate students invited youth who represented a broad range of diverse academic, demographic, political and personal styles within any one school to participate (see Appendix A for recruitment flyer). In the end, the youth researchers that joined the Opportunity Gap Project represented a wide array of identities, communities, and experiences – across social class; race and ethnicity; religion; gender; sexual orientation; track (AP/honors through special ed); involvement with police; social services; and so forth. The contact zone we created with this level of diversity was intentional and proved to be a key to our epistemological design. By crossing the lines separating 'suburburban' and 'urban,' integrated and segregated schools, deeply tracked and detracked schools, we designed the Opportunity Gap Study, to reveal similarities across county lines and to identify important contrasts (Orfield, 2001). We attempted to document the co-dependent growth of the suburbs and the defunding of urban America, reveal the fractures of inequity and open up the pools of possibility that fill the topography of 'desegregated' suburban and urban communities and schools. Our intention was to capture some of the magic of those schools in which

[3] The schools with youth researchers were: Columbia High School, Maplewood, NJ; East Side Community High School, New York, NY; El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, New York, NY; Fox Lane High School, Bedford, NY; John F. Kennedy High School, Patterson, NJ; Urban Academy, New York, NY; White Plains High School, White Plains NY;

rich, engaging education flourishes for youth across lines of race, ethnicity, class, geography and track.

Creating a Participatory Collective and Design through Research Camps

In order to participate more equally with youth as our co-researchers, we structured 'research camps' each held for two days at a time in community and/or university settings. The purpose was to develop skills as well as a common language for us, as a research team, to participate together. In workshops we deconstructed who can 'do' research, what constitutes research, who might benefit or be made vulnerable, etc. Youth researchers were immersed in methods training, social justice theory, and contemporary studies of educational policies and practices. They read social theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins (1991), bell hooks (1984), and Sandra Harding (1993); learned about critical race and feminist theory, epistemology, ethics and methodology. As a collective, we practiced conducting interviews, focus groups participant observation, designing surveys and undertaking archival analyses.

In an effort to create a research collective that was as participatory as possible, we organized our camps with the understanding that each of us brought valuable (and necessary) knowledge and history to the 'research table' – in other words that our experiences up to that point would inform and enrich our analytical contributions. We also recognized each co-researcher to hold a sincere commitment to creating change for educational justice and we were all 'learning as we went,' meaning that ideas, opinions, and beliefs were expected to change and grow. Further, we were committed to recognizing, explicitly addressing, and exploring power and differences – within our

collective and as they arose in the research. In the same spirit the collective made an agreement to 'excavate' rather than smooth over disagreements and disjunctures as we suspected these moments to hold important dynamics that might potentially inform our research. Over the course of 18 months, more than 100 high school students participated in the research camps. Forty-two of these high school students who worked consistently with the project overtime (forming PAR teams of their own) ultimately earned college credit for their involvement in the research.

The first research camp was an intensive two-day overnight at St. Peter's College, in Jersey City, New Jersey with 25 very diverse youth from six of the participating schools. We were a diverse collection of researchers from The Graduate Center, visiting scholars, and urban and suburban high school students from AP classes and special education. We were White, African American, Latino, Asian or Afro-Caribbean or some combination; religious and not; gay and straight; wealthy and poor. After group-building activities, learning about quantitative and qualitative design, critical race theory and a series of methods, including: interviews, focus groups, observations and survey research, youth researchers were given the 'wrong' draft of the survey on perspectives on educational and class (in)justice in schools and the nation which incorporated some of Tony Bryk's items on school climate and trust, some of Constance Flanagan's items on civic engagement. Much of the weekend was dedicated to its revision, with youth insisting that the survey *not* look like a test. They inserted cartoons, and open ended questions like, "What's the most powerful thing a teacher said to you?" and sensitive Likert scale items like "Sometimes I think I'll never make it" or "I would like to be in advanced classes, but I don't think I'm smart enough." The survey was eventually

translated into Spanish, French-Creole and Braille and distributed to nearly 10,000 students from 13 urban and suburban districts (2 urban school districts joined the study, New York City and Paterson, New Jersey).

The full survey sample (see Table 1) included: 11 district high schools drawn from the Regional Minority Achievement Consortium (suburban schools designated "desegregated" with 25% to 55% African American or Latino student body); 4 small urban high schools drawn from the Performance Assessment Consortium (one desegregated; the others are largely Latino and African American and Afro-Caribbean); one large high school in New Jersey with a student body that is largely Latino, recent immigrant and native born African American; and the youth involved with Mothers on the Move, an activist educational reform organization in the South Bronx. Across these schools and communities we distributed surveys to 9th and 12th graders in order to document how students enter, and exit, these institutions.

In addition to the survey, we engaged in participant observations within four of the suburban and two of the urban schools; conducted four cross-school visitations where teams of young people visited each other's schools; facilitated 24 focus-groups with high, middle and not yet-achieving high school students; seniors, student government leaders, ESL students, and Gay/Straight Alliance members in seven schools and one community based organization; and 32 individual interviews with high, middle and not yet-achieving, high-school students across these same sites; conducted a systematic transcript analysis of all senior transcripts for 4 districts, tracking race/ethnic differences in enrollment in AP/honors courses; designed and facilitated data feedback sessions in eight sites, and interviewed 12 White and African American elders active in/affected by the history of

Brown (see Fine, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, Payne, Perkins-Munn, & Torre 2004; Fine, Roberts, & Torre, 2005 for details).

At the second and third camps, another group of youth researchers from the same schools (with some overlap) analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data from 9,174 surveys, 24 focus groups and 32 individual interviews with youth. In between the camps, teams of youth and adult researchers fed back their school specific data to varied groups of faculty, students and community members in the New York metropolitan area. Teams of youth researchers cross-visited four urban and suburban schools to document the racialized impact of finance inequity and tracking on the structures, opportunities, social relations and outcomes of public education. And they presented their research findings to national conferences of educators, youth activists, community organizers and racial justice advocates.[4] Most of the youth researchers received high school credits (when a course on participatory research was offered in their schools) and 42 received college credit for their research work.

[4] Youth researchers took up (and published) research studies of finance inequity, tracking, community based organizing for quality education and the unprecedented success of the small schools movement. See http://www.thebrooklynrail.org/poetry/fall02/moneyfornothing.html; http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/18_01/ineq181.shtml.

Table 1. *Opportunity Gap research design*

Method	**Description**	**Sample**
Research Camps	Youth researchers educated in PAR methods, critical race, feminist, indigenous theory, history of struggles for racial/gender/(dis)ability justice in education	4 camps/averaging 35 diverse youth participants from 5-8 urban and suburban schools
Surveys	Lickert-scale with 3 open ended questions, designed by youth – adult PAR researcher at during the research camps	Regional Minority Consortium 9th and 12th graders from 11 desegregated districts (with between 25-55% students of color), specifically: Consortium N=4474 Self-identified as: 340 Asian/PI, 623 African American, 1825 White American, 360 Afro-Carib., 707 Latino Small Performance-based Urban HS N=392 Later additional suburban districts joined the study (added additional N=4308)
Focus Groups	Targeted selection criteria: high, medium and low 'achieving'; student council/government; seniors interviewed separately by race/ethnicity; ESL/ELL; Gay Straight Alliance; Diversity Day Coordinators; Black Latino Student Associations	24 groups of 4 – 8 students in 7 schools and 1 Community-based organization (CBO) (Consortium: 10 groups across 4 schools; 3 groups in large urban; 3 groups in small urban; 6 race segregated seniors; 1 CBO; 1 graduate)
Individual Interviews	1-1½ hour semi-structured interviews across levels of 'achievement' including post-graduate	32 (12 from Consortium schools, 7 small schools, 8 large urban, 5 CBO)
Transcript Analysis	Analysis of AP enrollment by race/ ethnicity in four suburban districts	Seniors only
Elders	1-2 hour semi-structured interviews about their experiences with desegregation	12 (4 White men, 1 White woman, 3 African American women, 4 African American men)
Feedback Sessions	Preliminary data analysis sharing with school and community groups	8 (4 suburban, 3 urban schools and 1 at the CBO)
Graduate Follow-up	Intensive tracking of seniors from into college/work using surveys, interviews and participant observation	2 small suburban school senior classes
Site-specific Case Studies	Youth determined PAR projects relevant both to large-scale and local study findings	7 projects (2 Consortium HS, 3 small urban schools, 1 large urban school and 1 CBO)

As a participatory project, the Opportunity Gap research generated interest among the youth researchers to investigate questions of their own interest in their local sites. The adult researchers supported and at times fostered these interests facilitating them into full PAR projects. During the academic year 2002 – 2003, while we were surveying youth broadly across schools and districts, seven school/community youth PAR teams were formed, undertaking original research on topics including: finance inequities; history of racial equity in their town; student relations with faculty within a small academy; how students receive help when they are in academic need; race, ethnicity and suspension policies; oral histories of local educational activists, and a follow up study of high school graduates now in college. These projects grew out of three small urban schools, a large urban school, two suburban high schools and an activist community based organization.

Shifting to Performance: The Creation of *Echoes of Brown*

Motivated by the Opportunity Gap findings and the participatory process, we held many feedback sessions in the schools and communities where we conducted our research as well as with groups of educators and policy makers throughout the country. As we traveled with the stories of our findings, we worried, however, about the limits of talk. We saw most audiences nod in solidarity, but met far too many adults who refused to listen to the youth researchers' complex renderings of Brown's victories and continuing struggles. We grew weary of adult denial and obsessive questions pointing to poor youth and youth of color – *What's wrong with them? Even in the same school building, we have a gap? But if we stop tracking how else can we teach students at their "natural" levels*? After one too many interrupted presentations of critical youth research,

our youth co-researchers argued for the need to move towards another medium for reporting our findings. The anniversary of Brown v. Board was approaching, and our collective decided to hold a fourth week-long research camp where we would launch into performance as public scholarship, and create *Echoes*.

Recognizing how the diversity of Opportunity Gap researchers contributed to the framing the research questions, development of the survey, analyses and interpretation of the data and development of the research products, it was decided that the fourth research camp (the Arts and Social Justice Institute which became *Echoes*) would also be an intentionally diverse space. Thirteen very different young people aged 13-21 who were interested (but not necessarily experienced) in writing, performing, and/or social justice were recruited from youth groups and public schools in the greater New York metropolitan area including northern New Jersey (some recruited from the same schools in the Opportunity Gap project). They were joined by community elders, social scientists, spoken word artists, dancers, choreographers and a video crew to collectively review the data from the Opportunity Gap; learning about the legal, social and political history of segregation and integration of public schools; and create *Echoes,* a performance of poetry and movement based on social justice research. In doing so, we consciously crafted a radically inclusive research site that would function as a "contact zone," a messy social space where very differently situated people could work together across their own varying relationships to power and privilege (Pratt, 1992, p. 4). It is this week-long research camp (as well as the follow up weekend meetings leading up to the final *Echoes* performance in May 2004) that provides the case study for this dissertation.

Studying the History of Contact and Engagement in the Contact Zone

In order to understand how contact and 'contact zones' have been theorized, operationalized and contextualized in psychology, this dissertation set out to answer questions about the history of the construct, the impact of contact on the individual, the collective dynamics of contact, and knowledge production in the contact zone. In order to answer these questions, I analyzed evidence from for different databases: historical archives, pre and post Institute interviews with *Echoes* youth, longitudinal interviews with *Echoes* youth five years later, youth writings, and field notes from participant observation (see Table 2).

Research Questions and Databases

My research was organized around four main questions. Interested in the history of the construct of contact, my first question asked *how has contact been theorized in psychology over time?* To answer this I examined the archived history of social psychological literature on intergroup relations written during and since World War II. This material in the form of books, pamphlets, and scholarly articles, were written largely by psychologists and activist oriented scholars within the social sciences. Many manuscripts were the result of relationships between scholars and local and national nonprofits interested in improving group relations (i.e. NAACP, YWCA, American Jewish Congress, National Council of Christians and Jews).

My second question addressed the impact of contact on the individual, asking *what is the impact of contact zones for individual growth and change, particularly in awakening a sense of injustice (Deutsch & Steil, 1988; Opotow, 1995) and social responsibility/activism?* I was further interested in *how the impact and experience of*

contact and contact zones differed for differently positioned individuals. To answer these questions I drew on four databases (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Data bases*

Method	**Sample**	**Demographics**
Historical Archives	Books, pamphlets, scholarly articles, 1900-2009	
Individual Interviews: Pre & Post Institute	Pre-Institute, N=13 Post Institute, N=12	African American/Caribbean=7 Latina=2 White/European=3 Palestinian=1
Individual Interviews: 5 Year Follow-up	5 Year Follow-up, N=11	African American/Caribbean=7 Latina=1 White/European=3 Palestinian=1
Youth Writings	27 youth poems, youth emails and articles	
Field Notes/Participant Observations	Week-long Institute, weekend follow-ups, and research/conference presentations	

The first was set of pre and post Institute interviews that I conducted with all 13 of the youth before and after the intensive week-long "Institute for Arts and Social Justice" that lead to the *Echoes* performance in 2004. The pre-interviews were video-taped by Hancock Productions and clips were used in *Echoes of Brown: Youth Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown* documentary. The pre-interviews were semi-structured interviews with questions aimed at understanding expectations, definitions of "arts" and "social justice", self-definitions, and thoughts on working within a highly diverse group (for complete protocol see Appendix B). The post-interviews were also semi-structured and focused on understanding the interpretations of the youths' experiences of the week. I asked them to reflect on themselves and the group, what they thought was important and/or meaningful about the experience, what they were excited to share with others, what they wished they might have changed (for complete protocol see

Appendix C). The post-interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by Manhattan Manuscripts.

The second database that I drew on to examine the impact of contact on the individual was the longitudinal interviews I conducted five years after *Echoes*. In 2009 I conducted another round of follow-up interviews with the 12 of the original *Echoes* youth. One young woman I was unable to track down. The five year follow-up interviews were semi-structured and focused on participants' experiences over the previous 5 years, reflections on the impact (if any) of their participation in *Echoes*, and their theorizing about contact and its role in the production of knowledge (for complete protocol see Appendix D). These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. I have remained in contact with most of the youth from *Echoes* over the five years through periodic phone calls, emails, and visits. Two I tracked down on Facebook, and one through a family friend who works at The Graduate Center. Demographically, the youth consist of 10 young women and 2 young men; they self-identify as African American, Latina, Palestinian, White, "mixed", Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and not-religious; and they range in age from 13-21 during the 2004 interviews and 18-26 during the 2009 interviews.

The third database I relied on to understand individual experiences, both intellectually and affectively consisted of writings by the *Echoes* youth researchers and performers. Over the course of the week of the "Institute for Arts and Social Justice" and the succeeding weekends leading up to the *Echoes* performance, the youth completed drafts and then final versions of 13 poems that were incorporated into the performance. There were an additional dozen poems that were not included in the performance that

were begun during the Institute and finished in the following fall. All 27 poems were analyzed as data. In addition to the youth poetry, several youth wrote about their experiences as researchers and performers in *Echoes* in various publications (see Torre, Fine, Alexander, Billups, Genao, Marboe, & Salah, 2008; Torre, Fine, Alexander, & Genao, 2007). This writing, both reflective and analytical, was also analyzed as part of this data set.

A last database that I used to understand contact at the individual level was a set of field notes I kept during my participant observation throughout the life of the project. This fifth data set was also used in conjunction with the youth interviews and youth writings to address the impact of contact on the collective. Specifically, *how is the experience of a group impacted by being in a space constructed as a contact zone? And what elements/processes facilitate these experiences?* The field notes that comprise this data set were taken during the week of the "Institute for Arts and Social Justice" and the succeeding weekends in which the youth met to work on their poetry and movement leading up to the *Echoes* performance. They also include notes from informal interviews and participant observation during presentations of the *Echoes of Brown* documentary to school and community groups, conferences; during meetings with youth to write up our experiences for publication; and in informal reunions/phone calls/emails (when youth expressed comments such as, "hey thought you'd be curious to hear I'm gonna be working in an Arab day camp this summer – sounds very *Echoes* doesn't it?!").

The fourth and final question that drove the research asked, *what does shifting contact from the subject of study to an epistemological approach (or in other words, constructing PAR collectives as contact zones) offer collective knowledge production?*

This question was addressed theoretically after each data base was analyzed in relation to the first three questions. A discussion of how and why I analyzed each data set is presented in the following section.

Analytic Strategies

The archival analysis of how contact has been theorized and studied by psychologists post World War II provides a contextual analysis of the social and political environment in which the field of contact 'emerged' and the various theoretical and methodological shifts that occurred in the years that followed.

For this analysis I selected studies that examine contact in relation to themes of race/ethnicity/class/gender/sexuality, equality,[5] justice, participation and democracy, paying specific attention to the development of applied, action-oriented research. I documented conceptual and methodological shifts--historically, socially and politically. This process began with basic questions about the 'who, what, when, when, where' of the research, the researchers and the researched. I also examined the relationship of the research to the larger social political climate, the local context of the initiation and development of the research as well as the audiences and consequences of the work. From there I investigated patterns that emerged across the studies, as well as the outliers, with the intent of identifying further themes to inform my analysis of the 5-year follow-up interviews with the *Echoes* youth.

The archival analysis paid specific attention to studies that incorporated themes of multiplicity, social action, participation and democracy in order to deepen my

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[5] Most of the studies focus on race relations or racial justice, but I am interested in all forms of intergroup justice and equality.

understanding of intergroup contact as well as provide both a theoretical grounding and framework to be engaged by the analysis of the youth interviews and the observations of the *Echoes* Institute.

The second part of the study consists of a case study analysis of *Echoes,* a participatory action research project crafted as a contact zone where group differences were engaged and utilized as an epistemological approach. I drew on the pre, post, and 5-year follow-up interviews I conducted with the youth performers; video footage from the *Echoes of Brown: Youth Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown v. the Board of Education* DVD; participant observation; field notes; as well as creative, reflective and analytical writings from youth participants. The intent of the analysis was to explore the experiences, understandings and ideas of the *Echoes* youth as well as detail the context and conditions of the contact zone created within the *Echoes* Institute.

I made a decision to analyze the youth poetry as part of the data collected under the category of 'youth writings' because I believe it represents the youth performers' intellectual as well as affective engagement with the *Echoes* project. The poems evolved over the week not only in terms of their artistic form, but also in terms of their content. Sometimes this was observed within a single poem about a relevant topic that increased in complexity and other times it was across a series of poems that moved from silly or ironic topics that were not pertinent to much more relevant topics. These 'authored' shifts reflect changes in the ways individuals positioned themselves within the group and in relation to the material. Shifts that resulted from their individual experiences of engaging in the content of the week (the research, the discussions with visiting scholars, etc.) as well as their collaborations with other youth. As the poetry provided both a

conscious and unconscious space to work out ideas and emotions, individually and collectively, I found it a useful method for examining analytical and affective processes over time.

My analysis of the data for the case study – both written and interview – relied on a combination of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) and what Ruthellen Josselson (2004) calls a hermeneutics of restoration. I approached the interviews with the assumption that the interviewees are not only 'experts' on their experiences but that they participated in the interview as a way of contributing or participating in the larger action agenda of the research. In other words they were interested in sharing their experiences with educational injustice (some having suffered, some having benefitted) to further the goals of creating a more just society, and in this light their interviews were co-constructed activist moments. As a result I am not interested in 'giving voice' to these interviews as they already exist with a volume all their own, rather I am interested in intellectually engaging the social psychological realities and analyses of the interviewees as "they understand themselves" (Josselson, 2004, p. 5). I chose to use a hermeneutics of restoration, as its aim is to "re-present, explore and/or understand the subjective world of the participants and/or the social and political world they feel themselves to be living in" (Josselson, 2004, p. 5). Adding to this approach, I analyzed for silences in the narratives (Fine, 1994; Ormond, 2004). Also historical and political connections were made between the contact literature and the experiences and analyses of the *Echoes* youth.

In addition to building on Fine (1994) and Ormond (2004), I utilized what Josselson (2004) refers to as a hermeneutics of demystification, which encourages an analysis to probe beyond the given story for underlying meanings. It is an interpretive

stance that "involves paying attention to how the story is constructed and how its parts are ordered and juxtaposed, noticing the "negative spaces" of silence and omissions, and focusing on contradictions and inconsistencies" (Josselson, 2004, p. 18). By opening up layers within a text or narrative, it's an approach that recognizes multiple explanations, or even selves, within an account. While I am not completely comfortable with some of the assumptions embedded in a hermeneutics of demystification – namely that narratives that people tell are laden with hidden meaning that only learned experts can decipher, or that these unconscious meanings are more 'truthful' or 'authentic' than others, etc. – it proved helpful in analyzing how certain aspects of power and privilege operate in contact situations. In other words, given the nature of some of questions I explored in the youth data (i.e., questions about experiences and impact of contact that address social position and privilege) an analytic approach that allows me to probe dynamics of discomfort, even denial, was necessary.[6] Josselson (2004) addresses my apprehension of introducing demystification into a restorative approach:

> It is, however, possible to interpret from both positions as long as the researcher makes clear when and how these shifts occur. Ricouer (1970) speaks of the possibility that hermeneutics can be animated by both the willingness to listen and the willingness to suspect, that we may oscillate between the demystification and the restoration of meaning (p. 27). From this point of view, the interpreter is open to multiple levels of interpretation with focus on both what is said and what is not said, on both what meanings are intended and possible unintended ones. (p. 23)

With her advice in mind, I made a concerted effort to be transparent when I shifted analytical frames. I should further note, that in my analysis here and in writing up pieces of this data for other publications, when I 'dipped' into frameworks of suspicion and

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[6] It should be noted that though I found Josselson's hermeneutics of demystification to be particularly helpful around issues relating to power and privilege, I do not wish to suggest this is the only data for which it is useful.

developed interpretations of experiences of finding comfort in privilege and/or inaction, my epistemological and ethical orientation as a participatory researcher led me to bring my draft analyses to my co-researchers and participants. Reviewing the arguments I was creating based on theses analyses with the very participants whose data I was 'suspecting,' to use the language of Josselson, while at times anxiety producing, was in each case incredibly illuminating for the participant and me. Often the interpretations I was most concerned about proved least interesting to the person I was writing about. At other times my observations provided a moment of reflection, "I never thought of it that way" and then provoked a longer conversation about the dynamic. I imagine these meetings could also spark difficult conversations about misinterpretation, though I have yet to experience one. I note this as I feel the practice of participatory analyses (in the many forms that it takes) adds layers to a hermeneutics of restoration, where by the co-construction of data and knowledge is not just limited to a narrowly defined 'moment' of data collection.

A Note on 'Writing Others' Lives' when 'the Others' are Your Co-researchers

There is some playfulness in this heading, but I wish to pause here for a moment to address what it means in a participatory project for one member of the par collective to write about the rest of the group, whether it be about individuals within the group or the group process. As participatory action research grows as a field, the question of how to represent what happens – the individual and collective growth that occurs, the group dynamics, the internal practice that at times is collapsed with method, etc. – within the par collective must be addressed. Some participatory action researchers have focused exclusively on the research conducted collaboratively by their par collectives and have

opted not to collect data, analyze, write, or report on their co-researchers or on their par collectives (Tuck, 2008). I have taken the position in the *Echoes* project, and to some extent in the Opportunity Gap project, that it was important to study and write about the dynamics of the collective, particularly through a lens of intergroup relations, 'contact' and participation. This meant different things at different times. Writing collectively and/or alone about individuals, though largely in relation to the collective; writing about dynamics within the par collective; and writing about research/findings that we collectively produced. For example in a chapter for a volume on the lives and conditions of Urban Girls, I wrote about *Echoes* with two of the young women from the project and Michelle Fine:

> From the larger *Echoes* collective, four of us – Natasha and Emily, María and Michelle – decided to write together for *Urban Girls*. We write across, through, and at times, from within our differences: two youth performers, two social psychologists, all researchers committed to social change. This essay was produced with the same guideposts that steadied our counterpublic space: commitments to a justice of redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 1990), an interrogation of difference and collectivity (Torre, 2005), and a developmental aim of moving from a "safe space" for critical work (Evans & Boyte, 1992; Pastor, McCormick, & Fine, 1996) toward a series of public and performative demands for action. To reflect our critical praxis of interrogating power and difference in our work, in this essay, we move between "we" and a rotating "I," analyzing interview and written data from the young women who participated in

> *Echoes* as well as our own (four) experiences of the work (Torre, Fine, Alexander, & Genao, 2007, p. 223).

It seems to me that in participatory work, hard-line positions about whether or not to write about co-researchers are not so useful. Hard positions mask what is truly at stake, the necessary conversations and negotiations within the collective around issues such as research purpose, power, and vulnerability. Those conversations that when ignored, give rise to violations of trust, solidarity, and politics, replicating colonial and/or patronizing relationships which make readers and audiences cringe. In *Echoes* and the Opportunity Gap, a concerted effort was made to construct radically diverse research collectives – to create contact zones. Part of the research was testing (if you will) an epistemology of contact. I entered the research collectives interested in studying this aspect of our work and as a result it was part of the riches I added to the research table. My co-researchers knew I was interested in what we were learning and creating together (the research and later the performance), as we all were, *and* that I had a particular interest in *how* we were learning and creating, and if it made a difference to us as a whole, to us as individuals, and to the knowledge/products we produced that we were researching and creating in a contact zone. Because the PAR process we embraced assumed/invited all collective members to indulge their particular interests within the larger project, this was not out of the ordinary.

More and more in participatory research the focus is on the research and not the process or what happens within the collective. I think this makes sense, as I would argue there are many instances that participatory work produces stronger, more valid data and it is the research and findings that are of interest. However, given that many PAR projects

are organized around questions of injustice and place historically marginalized knowledges at the center, there are still many instances where collectives want to "speak back" to long held beliefs that only members of the ivory tower can conduct research, i.e., that [insert] prisoners, special ed. students, urban youth or 'colored girls from the lower east side' are not capable of producing smart writing or rigorous analyses (Cahill 2004; Cahill, Arenas, Contreras, Jiang, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2004; Payne, 2008). In the case of the Opportunity Gap and *Echoes* there was at times a desire to demonstrate that research collaboration itself could occur among a group so diverse. In these cases, writing about the experiences of the collective, at the intersections of method and as part of theorizing the dynamics of larger research questions seems important – whether the reporting is for an academic press or a school presentation. Again with these writings, as in all participatory work, what is most important is the negotiation of how they come to be, what form they take and what purpose they serve.

Chapter 2

Intergroup Contact Theory, Intercultural Education, and the Emergence of Contact Zones

A cursory look at intergroup contact in undergraduate psychology textbooks reveals little or no mention of the work that preceded the research and writings of Gordon Allport. Over time, his 1954 text *The Nature of Predjudice* has become the starting point of any conversation about intergroup relations (Torre, 2006). Though the 1940s and early 1950s was a vibrant period for social research in the United States, the action oriented studies and writings of researchers such as Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (1943), Goodwin Barbour Watson (1947), Robin Williams (1947), Claire Selltiz and Margot Haas Wormser (1949); Morton Deutsch and Mary Evans Collins (1951) and countless others are commonly overlooked. This research, motivated by the atrocities of World War II and lingering racial segregation in the US, sought to unite theory and action in order to better understand and respond to the potential extremes of intergroup hostility. The work of these impassioned researchers though much celebrated at the time has been dismissed over the years, relegated to footnotes in dusty texts.

An Overview of Intergroup Research

At the end and after World War II, researchers were freshly reminded of the horrific consequences of extreme racial and ethnic hatred and there was a palpable urgency around building and protecting democracy. It was in this political atmosphere that Robin Williams (1947) published *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions*, a careful review of a series of programs and studies on the "problem of reducing tensions among

ethnic racial and religious groups" (p. 1) that Allport cites periodically in *The Nature of Prejudice*. Williams uses the text, not so much to weigh in on the debates but to generously illustrate the broad need and opportunities for research in the area of intergroup prejudice, conflict, and hostility. In the hope of sparking such research, Williams proposes sets of operational definitions, relevant social science theorems, as well as assumptions, principles, and hypotheses that have emerged from previous work. After a final chapter that outlines nearly 50 possible research projects, he includes a 26-page appendix in which he reviews research approaches and techniques that intergroup relations research have utilized, commenting on each method's potential and limitations. It is interesting to note that while there is substantial attention to questionnaires and "paper and pencil tests," Williams (1947) begins the section with a lengthy discussion of the challenges inherent in intergroup research that make strict attitude scales inadequate (p. 122). He writes, "one of the most pressing needs is for studies of which will grasp and reveal *relations between responses obtained through questionnaires or interviews* and responses evoked by various types of 'real' situations" (p. 114, emphasis added). Unfortunately overtime, the discipline's desire to prove itself a "science" outweighed such calls for methods that determined to search for evidence in the inbetweens of complicated human relationships (Harris, 2009; Teo, 2009).

The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions was prepared by Williams under the direction of the "Committee on Techniques for Reducing Group Hostility," a committee of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), a group organized in 1923 to promote

applied research in the interest of justice, prosperity and democracy.[7] The council included such member organizations as the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Sociological Association. The SSRC insisted on the pragmatic as well as the broadly intellectual value of social science. In seeking to apply empirical knowledge to the public good, the Council's founders assumed that

> government agencies, most notably at the federal level, offered the most appropriate venue for social and institutional change. Rather than pitching their tent on the terrain of individual values, local communities or civil society, Merriam and others contended that social planning through coordinated government action was central to the task of reforming and modernizing society. Informing public debate and raising public awareness was also critical, but the federal role was deemed essential. This reflected the impact of Progressive Era notions of clean government, informed citizen participation and the importance of objective social analysis for informing policymaking on the generation that established the SSRC. It also, perhaps, sprang from the recognition that informed participation in the policy environment could enhance the legitimacy of the social sciences, which were still in the process of consolidating their position within the research universities. (Worcester, 2001, p. 35)

The SSRC reminds us that the solving of social problems was understood as central to the project of social science, and that social scientists sought active participation in the development of effective social policy – both locally and globally. Also notable about this time is the partnerships between academic societies, universities and foundations and their shared commitments to social justice.

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[7] Still in existence today, the council's mission statement reads: "The Social Science Research Council leads innovation, builds interdisciplinary and international networks, and focuses research on important public issues. Independent and not-for-profit, the SSRC is guided by the belief that justice, prosperity, and democracy all require better understanding of complex social, cultural, economic, and political processes. We work with practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers in all the social sciences, related professions, and the humanities and natural sciences. With partners around the world, we mobilize existing knowledge for new problems, link research to practice and policy, strengthen individual and institutional capacities for learning, and enhance public access to information. We bring necessary knowledge to public action." (http://www.ssrc.org/ssrc_mission.page)

The foreword to *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions* was written by SSRC Committee members Charles Dollard of Cornell University, Carl I. Hovland of the Carnegie Corporation, and Leonard S. Cottrell Jr. of Yale University:

> It is now only too obvious that we are again confronted by a world seething with tensions and open conflicts among all kinds of racial, cultural, economic and political groups. It seems perfectly clear that the rapid discovery and application of practical effective techniques for the control of intergroup tension and hostility is one of the crucial needs of our time. This is equally true for intranational and international communities.
>
> Societies which are oriented toward the achievement of democratic goals have a particularly vital stake in the discovery of effective techniques for resolving group conflicts and reducing group hostilities. *Implicit in democratic theory and practice is the acceptance of the fact of conflicting interests and even the positive encouragement of the expression of divergent views, aims, and values*. However, there is the equally important assumption that conflicts that can be resolved or accommodated by nonviolent means…The survival of a democratic nation, therefore, depends on the invention of techniques for resolving its internal group conflicts in such a way that welfare and interests of *all elements of the community are given adequate consideration in the community*. (Dollard, Hovland, &Cottrell, Jr., 1947, p. vii, emphasis added)

I emphasize Dollard, Hovland and Cottrell, Jr.'s insistence that difference is implicit in democracy, as it is among the early references that explicitly states the *necessity of difference* for democracy. In building an understanding of the potential of a contact zone, I would add that what is implicit to democratic practice is not simply the presence of divergent views, aims and values, but the *contribution* that each makes to the larger social (democratic) project, or what could be called the *participation of difference.*

To better understand the social psychological significance of participation, particularly the participation of difference that occurs in contact zones, this chapter will examine social psychological theory and research on intergroup relations that led to (and influenced) Allport's formulation of "the Contact Hypothesis" as well as the decades of research that resulted from Allport's work. I will include research and writing from the

literatures of democracy and justice, as there has been recent overlap in theorizing participation and difference.

Gordon Allport and the Contact Hypothesis

In 1954, months before the United States Supreme Court decided that separate was not equal in the case of *Brown v. the Board of Education*, Gordon Allport published what was to become a seminal text in field of group relations, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Responding to the aftermath of two world wars and the growing urgency within the United States and abroad to better understand the dynamics of human prejudice, he opened his 1954 volume with:

> Civilized men have gained notable mastery over energy, matter and inanimate nature generally, and are rapidly learning to control physical suffering and premature death. But, by contrast, we appear to be living in the Stone Age so far as our handling of human relationship is concerned. Our deficit in social knowledge seems to void every step our progress in physical knowledge. The surplus in wealth accumulating to the human race through the applied natural science is virtually canceled by the costs of armaments and war. Gains in medical science are widely negated by the poverty that results from was and from trade barriers erected largely by hatred and fear. (p. xiii)

With a fierce sense of responsibility and purpose, Allport thought it necessary to review, organize and clarify what was known in the field of group relations in order to support future research, theoretical development and practical application aimed at the reduction of group tensions. He wrote *The Nature of Prejudice* in an accessible, yet academic voice with two declared audiences in mind. His first audience was college and university students around the globe concerned with the social and psychological foundations of human behavior and interested in developing research and practice to facilitate the improvement of group relations. His second audience was a broader

population of "older citizens and general readers" who, while potentially interested in the theory, were more focused on the practical implications of the work (Allport, 1954, p. xvii). Dedicated to each constituency, and committed to both his scientific goals and democratic ideals, Allport (1954) cautions his readers:

> It is fallacious to take exclusively an academic point of view without checking what we say against practical action. At the same time it is wasteful for practical people to invest time and money in remedial programs that have little scientific support. The successful development of a science of human relations requires the bridging of basic research and active operation (p. xiii).

It is interesting to note that while Allport is concerned about the connection between research and action, he clearly understands them to be two distinct activities, represented by two different audiences.

The central theoretical contribution of *The Nature of Prejudice*, beyond the important categorizing of the literature of group relations, is Allport's assertion that while intergroup contact is essential to reducing prejudice and increasing racial justice, *contact itself is not enough*. Allport warns that contact across difference, or to use his language, between groups, merely sets the stage for change – what is important and in need of formal scientific attention, is the situational conditions of the intergroup interaction. After reviewing studies of educational programs designed to reduce group tensions, Allport hesitates to say which of the various approaches are most effective, however he agrees with other researchers (see Lewin, 1946; Watson, 1947) that the evidence favors indirect approaches which neither focus on the study of the "minority group" nor the phenomena of prejudice as such. "The student seems to gain more when he loses himself in community projects, when he participates in realistic situations, and develops, as William James would say, *acquaintance with* the field rather than *knowledge about* the

field" (Allport, 1954, p. 485, original italics). With this comment we can almost see Allport conjuring up the idea of a contact "zone" not in the politicized manner of Pratt (1992) but in the idea that there is a space that surrounds contact that is psychological, intellectual and physical.

Allport expresses serious concern about the use of direct methods in improving contact and cautions practitioners to think through ethical consequences of working through prejudice and discrimination with children. On the one hand he asks readers, "why sharpen in a child's mind a sense of conflict?" and on the other he reminds us that as they get older, it may be both required and valuable to deal directly with these injustices as youth are likely prepared by life experiences to face such issues head on (p. 487). Echoing this point is an experience I had with Nikoury, a youth researcher, after a presentation of the Opportunity Gap data. The audience member wanted to know if it felt depressing for the young woman to study injustices that were negatively impacting her life. The youth researcher responded by saying,

> Not really. I learned about racism long before I met María and Michelle. But investigating how it is that schools in the suburbs have more resources and more money to spend on their students than city schools – learning first-hand how politicians think about students like me – has *changed me permanently*. *Being a researcher, I see the world differently…now I see it beyond the flat*. (emphasis added)

In my work with the Opportunity Gap study, I have found that young people are commonly aware of the injustices that shape their lives and experiences. Naming the injustice and dealing with it directly provides a language for talking about, as well as a way of understanding the experience. It also opens up a theoretical framework for developing a critique or response.

Allport's theory of contact rests on the assumption that acquaintance and contact will "increase friendliness." However, he insists that not *all* contact has a positive impact, citing that "contact between groups in a hierarchical social system, or between people who equally lack status, or between individuals that perceive one another as threats, are harmful rather than helpful" (p. 488). After a lengthy review of the literature and a careful evaluation of how these studies of prejudice and discrimination have been translated into remedial programs, Allport's (1954) "Contact Hypothesis" begins to emerge:

> To be maximally effective, contact and acquaintance programs should lead to a sense of equality in social status, should occur in ordinary purposeful pursuits, avoid artificiality, and if possible enjoy the sanction of the community in which they occur. The deeper and more genuine the association, the greater its effect. While it may help somewhat to place members of different ethnic groups side by side on a job, the gain is greater if these members regard themselves as part of a *team*. (p. 489)

Allport (1954) recognizes that when diverse groups come together elements of cooperation should be present. He urges, acknowledging the wisdom of Kurt Lewin (1946), that people ought to be brought together in a manner that encourages and engages mutual respect, concern and interest, recognizing that committees on race or community relations are too often not organized as such (p. 488). He highlights a particularly effective model used in some communities whereby intercultural "retraining" is organized around volunteers coming together to do a community self-survey on group relations in their city/region. Sounding almost like a proponent of participatory action research (or what he refers to in another section as "so-called" action research), Allport (1954) claims that the experiences of designing the study, framing the questions, conducting interviews, analysis and particularly the follow up work of

presenting/addressing the results are extremely valuable in supporting positive intergroup relations among the participants.

The Nature of Prejudice leaves readers with four basic recommendations for beneficial intergroup contact. The four conditions – equal group status within the situation, the presence of a common goal; intergroup cooperation; and the support of authorities, laws, or customs – that form the basis of the Contact Hypothesis launched generations of research on intergroup contact and intergroup relations (see for example: Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Miller & Brewer, 1986; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pettigrew, 1986, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp 2000; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, 2000; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). And while these core conditions have been consistently supported by research around the world (Pettigrew, 1998) the decades since their initial formulation have witnessed their expansion, refinement, limitations, and further development.

The following pages will examine the psychological history on contact, looking first at the literature prior to the publication of *The Nature of Prejudice,* which informed the development of Allport's contact hypothesis. This 'pre-Allport' research begins in the early 1930s, when the United States was struggling under the depression and moves through the US involvement in World War II. Both the depression and the war had significant impact on social science, particularly in clarifying a sense of national purpose for applied social research. I will examine highlights of this inspired research throughout the 1940s, following its rise and later decline, as the victorious determination to fight for a more democratic world, produced by the end of WW II, faded in the face of the anti-

communist crusaders of the 1950s. I will then fast forward past the publication of *The Nature of Prejudice*, to the 'post-Allport' research, to look at how Allport's conditions of contact have been built upon. Beginning with the Sherifs in the early 1960s through the present, I will highlight turns in the field of contact research that have been helpful in understanding the possibilities and potential of crafting social inquiry as contact zones.

Early Intergroup Research

Though Allport is often recognized as first presenting the Contact Hypothesis, the notion that intergroup contact was an effective way of reducing prejudice was already appearing in the literature by the early 1930s with research like that of Rose Zeligs and Gordon Hendrickson (1933) on racial attitudes of school children. Using the Bogardus Social Distance Test, Zeligs and Hendrickson measured self-reports of levels of relationships (from "would accept/like to have as my cousin, best friend, roommate, neighbor, in my same school" to "none of these") with "various races" and compared them to measures of social tolerance of the same groups, finding a positive correlation – the higher the level of 'acquaintanceship' toward the outgroup, the higher the level of tolerance. However, they noted the relationship was high across all groups, with the exception of towards African Americans (Zeligs & Hendrickson, 1933). In the 1940s, research on racial attitudes began to emphasize context, looking at intergroup contact in more natural settings – commonly in social programs and the military. For example, F. Treadwill Smith (1943) found that attitudes of White Columbia students toward African Americans greatly improved after a series of weekend-long social and intellectual events with African American leaders in Harlem. Shifting to military settings, it was found that White US servicemen who fought in integrated troops and found themselves mutually

interdependent with Black servicemen during the war held more positive racial attitudes afterwards than White servicemen who did not (Singer, 1948; Stouffer, et al., 1949). The same was found to be true among White seamen in the Merchant Marines (Brophy, 1946). It is important to recognize that these early studies demonstrated not only the importance of the *context of contact* but also *relationships* or type of contact. These researchers create a foundation for theorizing the conditions of contact such as extended interaction over time, introducing/building knowledge about different groups, interdependence, and working towards 'superordinate' goals.

The 'natural setting' of World War II had a tremendous impact on social science in general and on contact research in specific. Social scientists were reframing their work as central to the war effort – in other words, to the project of democracy. Anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (1943) reflect on this imperative in the opening of their pamphlet, *The Races of Mankind*:

> In any great issue that concerned the war we turned to science. When we needed new fuels, substitutes for rubber, lighter metals, or new plastics, we asked scientists to tell us what was possible… The chemists told us how to make the plastics we needed, the physicists told us how to detect and locate an approaching airplane…
>
> We needed the scientist just as much on the race front. Scientists have studied race. Historians have studied the history of all nations and peoples. Sociologists have studied the ways peoples band together. Biologists have studied man's physical traits passed down from one generation to the next. Anthropologists have studied man's bodily measurements and his cultural achievements. Psychologists have studied intelligence among different races. All that the scientists had learned became crucial to us as this crucial moment in history. …This booklet cannot tell you all that science has learned about the races of mankind, but it states facts that have been learned and verified. We need them. (p. 3)

Benedict and Weltfish had been doctoral students of Franz Boas at Barnard College, where Weltfish had also studied with John Dewey. After Boas died each felt an

intellectual and civic responsibility to continue working for racial equality (Pathe, 1988). Weltfish described the period, "During the first four years of my graduate training at Columbia, Hitler rose to power in Germany, bolstering his heinous operations with racist theories developed from distorted anthropology. The books of Franz Boas were burned in Germany. In 1942, after [Boas'] death, Ruth Benedict, my senior colleague in the Anthropology Department, and I felt that we should carry the banner on the race question" (Weltfish, 1988, p. 375).

With thirteen printings from 1943-1949 (continuing a year after Benedict's death in 1948), *The Races of Mankind* was referred to at the time as one of the most successful and important contributions by anthropologists in translating years of careful social scientific research on race differences into popular education (Mead, 1948). Published by the Public Affairs Committee, the 32-page pamphlet was a part of a government effort to educate the public about contemporary economic and social problems and provide the "the facts behind the headlines" every month to 13 million readers (Weltfish, 1988, p. 374). *The Races of Mankind* was turned into a series of cartoons, a script, and a film. The pamphlet was originally written at the request of the United Service Organizations (USO) for distribution to men in the armed forces who were going to be fighting alongside allies from countries such as the Philippines and the Solomon Islands. At the time, segregation among military units was the official policy of Washington, although there were instances such as the US involvement in south east Asia where combat "necessitated" integration and members of Black and White troops fought together for "strategic reasons" (Weltfish, 1988, p. 375).

In *The Races of Mankind* Benedict and Weltfish (1943) detail the ways all people are biologically "much the same" stating that all cultural groups share the same range of blood type, height, head size, and intelligence (p. 6). Though they reflect contemporary beliefs that there are "three primary races", "Caucasian", "Mongoloid" and "Negroid," they argue that race differences amount to little more than the varying amount of melanin and carotene in people's bodies, pointing out that most people in the world are not the "extremes" of white, yellow, dark brown, or black, but "in-betweens" (p. 10). In plain, widely accessible language that is supplemented with cartoon-like drawings, Benedict and Weltfish refute extreme Nazi ideas of racial supremacy: "Aryans, Jews, Italians, are *not* races… As Hitler used it, the term 'Aryan' has no meaning, racial, linguistic, or otherwise" (p. 11). Their text also debunks popularly held prejudices regarding correlations between head size and intelligence, varying racial aptitudes, racial superiorities/hierarchies, and notions of inborn race-based character traits. Rather than looking to individuals and their racial/ethnic makeup, they argue that it is poor schooling, housing, diets, and wages that account for differences in results on intelligence tests between test-takers in the US north and south (p. 18).

Looking through the pamphlet for the first time in 2008, it is striking to read such a clear, matter of fact debunking of common place racial myths and stereotypes – many of which are eerily familiar today – and realize it was written in 1943. The idea that thousands of servicemen read *The Races of Mankind* at the *request* of the US Military is almost unbelievable to a contemporary mind. What happened? Why has Ruth Benedict rarely been written about and Gene Weltfish been practically erased? Where did this research go? Why did ideas about the mythology of race sound so radical and 'new' in

the in the early 1980s, when scientists like Stephen J. Gould (1981) published texts like *The Mismeasure of Man*? The answers to these questions lay in the politics of history.

It is interesting to note that the social historical moment both fueled the widespread use of *The Races of Mankind* and contributed to its censure. A little over a year after the War Department commissioned its writing, it was banned from armed forces libraries. The controversy around the pamphlet was sparked by the concerns of Southern congressmen who felt the text made claims that Northern Blacks were more intelligent than Southern Whites (Watson, 1947; Shipp, 1980). Weltfish explained that the section in question was actually making a structural argument, showing how economic and educational advantage affects intelligence scores. However, a special subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on Military Affairs stated, "The committee is convinced that wartime is no time to engage in the publication and distribution of pamphlets presenting controversial issues or promoting propaganda for or against any subdivision of the American people" (Lee, 1966). While the reaction of the US Congress did not deter world distribution of the pamphlet – which was reprinted for the 13th, and last, time in 1949 – it did mark the beginning of a longer struggle between Weltfish and the US Government.

In October 1952, Weltfish was called to Washington testify before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee about her leadership in two women's organizations (Women's International Democratic Federation and Congress of American Women, both critical of the Truman administration) and whether or not she was, or had ever been, a communist. Weltfish refused to testify citing the Fifth Amendment, and five months later she was dismissed from the Anthropology Department of Columbia University, where

she had taught untenured since 1936. While at the time Columbia officials denied any political motivation in dismissing her, Grayson Kirk, then president of Columbia, recalled 30 years later that felt strongly pressured by the board of trustees to fire Weltfish (McCaughey, 2002). Her persecution continued when she was called back to Washington by Senator Joseph McCarthy to testify – this time before the Senate Permanent Investigating Committee – about whether she had been a communist when she wrote *The Races of Mankind* or while she worked Columbia. Again she refused to answer, believing herself to be a 'good American' whose actions were determined by her conscience and knowledge (Pathe, 1988).

As I have described, early contact researchers were influenced and motivated by the times, focusing their studies on attitudes and behaviors (Zeligs & Hendrickson, 1933; Smith, 1943; Singer, 1948; Stoufer et al., 1949) as well as debunking racialized and racist myths (Benedict & Weltfish, 1943). In the following section I will highlight three important shifts that took place during this period of contact research: an emphasis on action-oriented research, an interest in difference rather than tolerance, and an attention to democratic group processes.

Shifting towards Action

Goodwin Barbour Watson, another important researcher working on contact and intergroup relations at the same time as Williams and Weltfish, published *Action for Unity* in 1947. Like the texts I have profiled earlier, *Action for Unity* has yet another impassioned foreword. I have included these passages as they have been the pages of each text where authors and publishers have allowed the most explicitly political contextualization of the research. Like William's work, and that of Benedict and

Weltfish, Watson's *Action for Unity* is the result of support from a progressive organization, this time the Commission on Community Interrelations of the American Jewish Congress. Charles E. Hendry, the former director of the Commission, introduces the text with words that echo the openings of the *Races of Mankind* and William's *Reduction of Intergroup Tensions*. Reflecting on the influence of the social political moment on the direction of social science, Hendry (1947) describes *Action for Unity* as,

> [A] social topography, as it were, in the battle against bigotry and bias. This book surveys the strength of the forces of hate and takes the measure of the forces now pitted against them. It supplies a strategic guide to the war against prejudice and persecution.
>
> There are limitations implied in this military analogy. Group tensions and hostilities are the symptoms of a disturbed, distorted, and diseased group life. To bring such under control requires not only revenge and retaliation, but rigorous research and realistic therapy. Militancy, to be sure, is needed, but it is the militancy of the socially sensitive and politically astute medical scientist, not the militancy of the military scientist. …It requires the both individual and community diagnosis and treatment. It requires basic and extensive experimental research. It requires the unprecedented teamwork of specialists, technicians, and citizens. (p. ix-x)

Like Benedict and Weltfish, Hendry cites the World War II as the moment in which social scientists took their place next to physical scientists, and argues, as does Watson throughout the text, that it is their rigorous research and action that will undo the evils of prejudice, discrimination and inequality.

Watson (1927) was involved in race relations research as early as the late 1920s when he worked with the Institute of Pacific Relations on examining attitudes of White Americans towards Asians. In *Action for Unity*, he is interested more in contact (rather than simply attitudes) and the book surveys a wide range of programs, organizations and agencies dedicated to reducing intergroup hostility and improving interracial and interfaith relationships, with a heavy emphasis on African Americans (Negroes),

Japanese Americans (Nisei), Jews, and Catholics. Watson makes important contributions to the field with his careful analyses of the activities of various organizations he surveyed, his insistence on the value of action research, and his argument for the establishment of a program of research around "some such slogan as this 'no action without research; no research without action.'" (p. 151)

Watson stresses, like Williams (1947) and Benedict and Weltfish (1943, whose work Watson cites) the importance of education in dispelling racial myths and prejudice, but he cites several examples that also remind readers that ending racial inequities requires more than a cognitive solution. One such example was the rejection of an anthropology course specially designed by Ethel Alpenfels for the Chicago public schools. The Board of Education felt that the material was "too advanced" (p. 32) for the high school students, a comment I have heard 60 years later by teachers and school administrators unsure their students are ready for participatory research projects on racism, homophobia, and other social oppressions. The longevity of the fear-filled projections of the powerful astounds. And as Susan Opotow points out, this type of institutional stalling in the name of 'protection' mirrors the rationales that have been used to maintain large-scale systemic injustices such as apartheid (personal communication, February 3, 2006). In addition to the possibility of censure, Watson (1947) worried that the techniques of "spreading knowledge" while important, rarely "stirs the heart" or provides the level of emotional engagement necessary to sufficiently for action (p. 54). Aware of these limitations Watson was a strong advocate of participation. Citing his survey of youth programs at YMCA and YWCAs as well as community groups and fellowships, Watson argues that an important intergroup strategy is to organize diverse

groups of people to work on common tasks or problems that are not directly related to race relations. His section titled "Working Together on Common Problems" became one of Allport's four recommended conditions for positive intergroup contact (p. 58). For later researchers interested in participation, Watson's *Action for Unity* is among the 'founding' documents alongside the work of Lewin (1946, 1951).

Recognizing Difference

A point of departure from literature at the time was Watson's (1947) recommendation at the end of his text to "defend difference" (p. 148). The sixth bullet point in a list of nine "Next Moves," argues that "It is not enough to build tolerance. The need in many communities is for a positive, affirmative appreciation not only of the right of that other fellow to be different, but of the fact that the *world is richer and more interesting because of such differences*" (Watson, 1947, p. 149, emphasis added). Here Watson pushes just slightly past the goal of interracial harmony and the elimination of prejudice – reaching towards an understanding of the significance of difference, falling just short of a statement about the importance of diverse contributions and participation for democracy to flourish. However Watson's ideas, alongside those of Dollard, Hovland, & Cottrell, Jr. above, suggest that such a conversation was not far off.

Among Watson's many examples of action oriented projects is the Springfield Plan which took place in Springfield, Massachusetts. Cited later by Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice,* the Springfield Plan was a district-wide initiative with a mission of eliminating prejudice and intolerance by fostering engaged citizenship through a k-12 program of "education for democracy" (Johnson, 2004). Led by a progressive superintendent John Granrud and Teachers College Professor Clyde Miller, with the

support of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the nationally noted experimental program spanned all of the City's schools. Watson (1947) initially cites the Springfield plan for its incorporation of anthropology and another 'innovation' – a course called "Religions of the World – their values to Democracy" (p. 31). The "omnibus" program, however, included much more (Allport, 1954). The Springfield Plan centered around a project-based curriculum that brought together many of the methods or "patterns of action" that Watson highlights in *Action for Unity*. It was "integrally related to the local community" and grew "out of its [the local community's] unique traditions, resources and special needs" (p. 33). Further, it incorporated and respected teacher participation, and focused on a participatory process between administrators, teachers, students, and the community (Watson, 1947).

The Springfield Plan emerged from efforts to hire "a more representative teaching staff" for the district (Alland & Wise, 1945, p. 10). After facing community tension and prejudice, superintendent Granrud organized the Committee on Education for Democracy to study the growing intolerance and to recommend "steps to promote democratic citizenship" (p. 10). The curriculum used in all of the city's schools incorporated the recommendations of the committee and focused on cooperative learning, student research on the cultural and historical contributions of local and ethnic groups, and classroom experiments in "democratic living" (Chatto & Halligan, 1945). While there was an obvious focus on knowledge building, Granrud and the committee emphasized that knowledge and techniques were not sufficient without practical democratic experience. Elementary school students investigated the workings of their school and immediate neighborhood. Junior high students conducted oral histories of Springfield residents from

diverse cultural backgrounds and produced illustrated books that they read to elementary school classes. Songs and cultural traditions from various ethnic groups were collected and murals painted on classroom walls that depicted the contributions of Springfield's major ethnic groups. School councils were established in each school where students discussed controversial issues and problem solved solutions to school-wide issues. Students played active roles in parent teacher associations in all of the schools. Relationships were forged between the schools, community groups and local businesses to encourage equal hiring practices, integrating employment opportunities that had long been segregated. The Plan was also mindful of the role adults play in the ideological patterns of children and included films and community forums about race relations and democracy, which were attended by thousands of residents from all over the city. In all of these activities diverse groups of people studied and worked side by side in the hopes of creating an experienced citizenry committed to the principles of religious, political, economic, and social democracy (Chatto & Halligan, 1945).

The Springfield Plan began in 1939 and lasted into the 1950s when Granrud, Miller, and Alice Halligan – who directed the adult education program of the plan – fell prey, like Gene Weltfish, to the 'red baiting' of the Cold War. The pressures of the anti-communist investigations began to choke the project. Granrud took a leave in 1955 and died the following year. While the Springfield Plan was far from perfect – the Youth Council of the NAACP declared it a failure in 1950 due to the persistence of discrimination in housing and employment in the community (Bresnahan in Johnson, 2004) – it is a striking example of a city-wide commitment that schools should be sites of inclusive, *participatory* democracy. Learning about the plan was particularly interesting

to me as I attended the Springfield Public schools from kindergarten to 12th grade, my mother taught in the district, and neither of us, nor anyone that I have since talked to in Springfield had ever heard of the effort. As I read through the two books written about the plan, saw the many references to it in the 1940s intergroup relations texts, and learned that there were two movies made about it, I found myself amazed and frustrated that this history had been washed away from public memory.

The story of the Springfield Plan embodies Weltfish's (1988) and Watson's (1939) beliefs that the public was in need of both education and mobilization. Watson (1939) was a strong critic of mainstream psychology who advocated for a psychology whose epistemology and professional practice was organized around effecting social change. He believed that psychologists could be heavily involved in politics without losing a sense of 'detached objectivity' associated with 'good science,' arguing that the role of psychologists was to "help the average citizen see through the efforts to misconstrue our economic and political predicament" (p. 103). Motivated by his interest in reframing psychologists as politically committed activists rather than "dispassionate observers of objective truth," Watson helped organize the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) in 1936, becoming the society's first president (Nicholson, 1997, p. 44).

Watson's (1939) ideas about psychology and social change underwent a marked change over the course of World War II when he was employed as a government expert. Like Weltfish and the organizers of the Springfield Plan, Watson came under heavy scrutiny by the anticommunist hunters of the late 1940s and early 1950s, facing accusations and monitoring by the FBI. In 1954, the State Department refused to issue

him a passport until he submitted an affidavit stating that he was not, and had never been a member of the Communist Party (Nicholson, 1997). In an extremely sad turnaround, Watson withdrew from his radicalism during this period and began advocating a model of "value-neutral" psychology similar to that which he once so heavily criticized.

Another casualty of the McCarthy witch hunt was Rachel Davis DuBois, the founder of the Workshop for Cultural Democracy – a project that began as the Intercultural Workshop in 1941 and lasted until around 1958. However, unlike Watson, her experience with Senator McCarthy and the Senate Subcommittee on Government Operations in June of 1953 only strengthened her resolve to continue her work on intercultural relations (Dubois, 1984). While she lost a fair amount of work due to the fear of working with or associating with someone who had been called before McCarthy, Dubois refused to be intimidated. An activist and scholar, Dubois dedicated her life to pacifism and intercultural education. She pioneered 'the group conversation method' a cornerstone of the Workshop for Cultural Democracy based on social psychological theories of group dynamics as well as on the creative arts work of mime and dancer Dvora Lapson and ballad singer Wallace House. The group conversation method was designed to improve interracial relationships and help diverse groups of people recognize common values, meanings, and experiences in order to facilitate cross cultural collaboration and problem-solving (DuBois & Li, 1955).

Engaging Democratic Processes

DuBois' Workshop for Cultural Democracy was dedicated to the idea that "the very diversity of America's people, in race, creed, and ethnic origin, creates the widest opportunity for the development and growth of the individual" (DuBois & Li, 1955, p.

18). Partnering with communities and school districts, the Workshop emphasized theories and methods of "bringing people together so that they can proceed to their common task of building a better community" (DuBois & Li, 1955, p. 22). The group conversation method begins with the assumption that all Americans are conscious of belonging to some culture or group, while simultaneously being 'real Americans.' The sub-group can be based on a person's race/ethnicity, religion, region, learning style, or anything that the person feels connected to as group or category. In recognizing this dual consciousness or multiplicity within an individual, Dubois underscores that *all* Americans' lives are made up of ingroup and outgroup experiences. Building on these shared experiences, her method reframes the 'problems' of African Americans, immigrants, Jews, Catholics, as vital, creative aspects of America – stressing a consciousness within the larger group that recognizes integration and diversity as essential if America is to realize its full potential.

Dubois, a White Quaker, and her collaborator Mew Soong Li, a Chinese-Hawaiian American, traveled across the country teaching the group conversation method in places such as community groups, organizations interested in intercultural education and practice, YWCAs, Jewish community centers, and Parent Associations. They insisted that Workshop participants should be diverse as possible, by class, education, race/ethnicity, religion, etc., and that organizers should make an effort to make sure there each group had representatives of "old line White Americans" and "so-called minorities groups" (Dubois & Li, 1955, p. 48). They argue further that groups are most effective when they come together around issues of common concern. Like Watson (1947) and Lewin (1946, 1951), Dubois and Li were proponents of a participatory activist approach

whereby interracial groups come together to solve neighborhood or community concerns, such as fair housing and equal employment opportunities. Yet they recognized that too often these groups were unable to come together due to racist attitudes and discrimination. Believing that people and groups have the capacity to best solve (or fight) the social problems that face them, Dubois and Li argued that the first step necessary to build interracial coalitions was one that helped groups past this prejudice.

Allport (1955) and Margaret Mead (1946) were both advocates of the group conversation method, recognizing its potential as a simple method for quickly bringing people – even strangers – together for social thinking and action. In the foreword of *Know Your Neighbors,* DuBois and Li's handbook for group-conversation leaders, Allport (1955) wrote:

> One session employing the group conversation technique of the Workshop for Cultural Democracy seems to me to teach more about the common ground of ethnic and religious groups than could many hours of lectures. What is more, the lesson sticks. It is learned not merely with the mind, but in the deeper strata of emotion and action. The spontaneity and participation that the method entails make the lesson vivid and permanent. To my mind the technique seems especially valuable when viewed as a first step in various sorts of programs to improve human relations. Initial stiffness and rigidity are swiftly overcome. Then follows the realization that people we have always regarded as "different" have backgrounds, values, and hopes like our own. Without being too personal the technique then etches in rapidly the cultural framework of each life, and discloses helpful bits of information concerning the personalities present. Probably no more efficient method has been devised for bringing about good initial group sympathy and rapport.
>
> What this first step may lead into depends, of course, upon circumstances. … It provides a painless introduction to the more strenuous processes of group therapy, role playing, retraining and re-education. (p. 6.)

The important use of Dubois' method as a "defrosting process," as she refers to it in *Neighbors in Action* (1950, p. 4), which in addition to creating a climate for more involved problem solving, discussions and action, has the potential to begin friendships

across difference, should not be dismissed. Her reference to the method as defrosting calls to mind Lewin's (1951) notion of when people "unfreeze" and are ready for change. While my interest in Contact Theory is not so much for the creation of friends or a consensus of ideas, it has been well documented that the development of friendships and empathy can play a critical role in reducing bias, and that people with outgroup friends have significantly lower bias towards those groups (Pettigrew, 1997, 1998; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Batson & Ahmad, 2009). In this vein, Dubois argues that "tolerance" or "justice alone" is not enough to transform the rash of hatred against African Americans, Jews, Catholics, and others. What is needed, she insists, is a *feeling* of kinship, or what at times she calls "neighborliness" among all people from all walks of life (Dubois, 1950, p. 5). While this language may sound simplistic to cynical ears of the 21st century, what Dubois is calling for is a method that evokes a psychological investment, an engagement of emotions, and empathy among people across groups. Dubois asks questions (echoed in Watson's *Action for Unity*) about the emotional purpose that prejudice serves, suggesting that people will not let go of biased beliefs that are emotionally valuable. In doing so she is not simply saying that people need to empathize and better understand each other's lives and contexts, but she is arguing that people become invested in the social hierarchies that not only inform prejudice and discrimination, but also their social positions. In other words, if someone is poor and White, they may be emotionally invested in discriminating against non-White people in order to protect their White privilege. This shift politicizes the group conversation, as it facilitates a process by which individuals can reposition themselves into larger social/structural contexts.

The Politics of History and Science

Hopefully by this point it is clear that while Allport is held up to be the proverbial father of contact, he was within a broader intellectual community of thinkers, writers, and activists who were asking similar questions. It is not insignificant, however, that Allport is the name most associated with ‘contact,’ or intergroup relations. My early research on the history of contact lead me repeatedly to citations for Allport. And while there were occasional mentions of Watson and Williams, there were no references to Benedict, Weltfish, Alpenfels, Dubois, Li, or the countless other women I have not cited here that were teaching, researching, and writing about intergroup contact. Ironically, I initially learned about most of these women in the pages (or more accurately, in the footnotes) of Allport’s *Nature of Prejudice*. I was surprised at first to find so many women in the field, conditioned not to think they were present by their systematic erasure (see Tuana, 2006) in the reference sections of contemporary psychological writing on contact. However, the more I read the more it made sense. Reminded by Mari Matsuda’s urging to look “to the bottom” for critical thought that emerges from the context and experience of marginalization (Matsuda, 1995, p. 6), it seemed quite possible that the large numbers of women working on applied research with the aim of remedying the causes and consequences of prejudice and discrimination might have been motivated at least in part, by their own experiences of sexist oppression.

The field of intergroup relations that matured from the collective work of these researchers, the same work that was meticulously gathered, categorized, and analyzed by Allport, Williams, Watson and others, continued to grow – furiously at first – with studies of people and groups in schools, housing, neighborhoods, the work place, and the

military (Stephan, 1985). Researchers were, for the most part, interested in how people in their everyday lives and activities experienced intergroup contact, prejudice and discrimination. As we have seen, after World War II, this work was often framed within a political ideology of democracy, civic participation, and inclusion. Unfortunately as the political climate shifted from the 1940s into the 1950s, this ideology – once understood and embraced 'patriotic' – was redefined and shunned as 'communist.' This dramatic (and frightening – particularly with its familiar contemporary sound) shift of public thought during the cold war carefully silenced a once determined and inspiring period of research (Nicholson, 1997; Pathe, 1988). Morton Deutsch, who completed a study with Mary Evans Collins on the positive impact of interracial housing in 1951, reflected on this period in an interview in 2004:

> In 1948, I worked for the American Jewish Congress, the Commission on Community Interrelations. Along with Mary Evans Collins, we set out to study interracial housing patterns and the interracial relations within these settings. We compared public housing in Newark, New Jersey, which was segregated, with public housing in New York City, which was integrated…and we found that race relations were significantly better in integrated settings than segregated settings for adults and for children. At the time, many policy officials indicated that this study had a big impact on the desegregation of public housing. …I remember that some newspaper, in the South I believe, ran an editorial that cited our study as the reason to avoid integration because integration could promote friendly relations between Whites and Blacks!
>
> Kenneth Clark was a key figure on the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues Committee, trying to pull together evidence of harmful effects of segregation. But then McCarthy and his people chilled the research environment. Those who were in favor of integration were suddenly suspected of being Communist. Many foundations started to withdraw support for such research. As a result of McCarthyism, there was a strong anti-research sentiment, and an attack on research that found favorable results from desegregation.
>
> [I remember a meeting at] the Marshall Field Foundation. The meeting was called because there had been systematic attempts to discredit the Deutsch and Collins housing study by a Chicago social scientist. During those years, there was certainly a pulling back from this kind of research – pulling back of monies, the head of the Defense Department was against social science… Nevertheless, [in] those days we understood the importance of this kind of research. You have

> to remember, we were a generation who came out of the Depression, fighting fascism and Nazism. We were exposed to Marxist thought, concerned about the Spanish civil war… We knew that psychology had to be a part of a larger context of social movements. (p. 506)

Whether or not this shift in methods, values, and content was solely due to the social climate crafted by anti-communist crusaders like McCarthy and his various committee and sub-committee investigations into ‘un-American activities’ or to the ‘scientizing’ of the social sciences that favored the ‘rigorous’, ‘objective’ measures of quantitative designs, its impact was lasting (Cherry & Borshuk, 1998; Teo, 2009). The years that followed in the field of intergroup contact were filled with studies that tended to dismantle people, reducing them into highly specific attitudes and behaviors (see Pettigrew, 1998, for a comprehensive review). Too often researchers’ microscopes were set to such high magnifications that applying the findings to ‘whole’ people in the context of in their ‘natural’ environments became difficult.

This is not to say, however, that there have not been significant contributions to the field of intergroup contact – particularly to understanding the *how*, *why*, or the process by which contact leads to and sustains positive changes in attitude and behavior, areas that Allport said little, if anything, about (Pettigrew, 1998; Fine, Weis, & Powell, 1997). The following section will select from the substantial contemporary research on intergroup contact, reviewing specific pieces of research that are useful in thinking about contact in terms of contact zones.

Critical Revisions to Contact Hypothesis

Building on the work of Watson (1947), Williams (1947), and Allport (1954), which emphasized the importance of working cooperatively towards a common goal –

contact conditions that were initially theorized as separate, but later found to be interdependent (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami, 2003) – researchers have looked closely at effects of cooperation and competition. Marilyn Brewer's review of the experimental contact literature in 1979 suggested that when cooperation was defined by a goal or reward structure rather than by the type of interaction, it was not sufficient to reduce ingroup bias or intergroup competition (Brewer, 1979). However, when the task of the group was cooperative in nature not only was there a reduction in hostility between the social categories of the participants, but also an increase in intergroup friendships (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). A powerful example of this was witnessed in the 1954 Robbers Cave experiment when Carolyn and Muzafer Sherif and their colleagues (1961, 1988) brought 24, 12-year-olds, "normal, healthy, socially well-adjusted boys who come from families with the same or closely similar socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds" (p. 208) to an overnight camp in Oklahoma for three weeks to study the conflict and cooperation in an environment free from "preexisting positive or negative interpersonal relations" (p. 208). They found it was not simply cooperation, but interdependent cooperation, and the presence of 'superordinate goals' – goals which appeal to and are necessary for both groups but which exceed the resources and efforts of one group alone – that were the most successful in reducing intergroup hostility and developing relationships across groups. They found further that these activities had even greater and more lasting effects when they were repeated over time (Sherif, 1966). It is interesting to note that in the Robbers Cave experiment, the researchers thought it was necessary that the demographic differences between the groups be 'controlled out' in order to study cooperation.

Another useful contribution to our understanding how the condition of cooperation facilitates intergroup relations, but this time in more ‘natural’ settings and with different (by race and ethnicity) youth, can be found in the work of Eliot Aronson and colleagues (1978) who developed a model for cooperative learning called the jigsaw classroom. Created in 1971 in recently desegregated schools in Austin, Texas, the jigsaw technique was designed around cooperative interdependence, whereby diverse groups of students work collectively in small groups, sharing individual expertise, toward a common goal (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978; Aronson & Patnoe, 1997). Originally the jigsaw method was used in elementary schools whose classrooms where newly mixed with African American, Chicano, and White students with varying academic histories. The technique involves dividing up the class into small groups of 5-6 students. Each of these groups are given a learning assignment that is broken down into the same number of steps or ‘interlocking’ pieces as there are group members. Each student studies their piece of the material individually, becoming an ‘expert’ on it for the group. Each expert then leaves their home group to meet with the other experts that are studying the same ‘puzzle’ piece of information. Reminiscent of Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal development, this step allows experts with differing grasps on the material to learn from and help each other. The original groups then come back together, and each expert/member of the group teaches the others about their specific material. At the end of the activity the class takes a quiz on the entire learning assignment to reinforce the interdependence of the cooperative learning they have just experienced – reminding the students that they need each other in order to learn all the required material (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Rosenfield, & Sikes, 1977).

Since its first demonstration in the 1970s, the jigsaw classroom has been used in hundreds of classrooms settings across the nation ranging from elementary schools to high school and college classrooms (Aronson et al., 1978; Perkins & Saris, 2001; Slavin, 1980). Cooperative learning techniques have been one of the most widely used strategies in schools to respond to and build on the strengths of classroom diversity. The use of such methods has repeatedly shown student improvement in academic achievement as well as intergroup relationships (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Slavin, 1992; Slavin & Cooper, 1999).

The friendships that are created through the use of cooperative learning activities, whether they are used with diverse participants (the jigsaw classroom), or similar participants (the Robbers Cave), are not merely incidental. Thomas Pettigrew, a student and colleague of Allport who has spent much of his career dedicated to understanding the ways contact theory can be useful in reducing bias and prejudice between groups, has proposed the potential for friendship as a fifth condition for successful contact. Building on Allport's (1954) interest in intimate rather than trivial contact and expanding Stuart Cook's (1962) "acquaintance potential," Pettigrew (1998) suggests that "the contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends" (p. 76). He argues that intergroup friendship has the potential to positively impact "four interrelated processes underlying contact effects: learning about the outgroup, changing behavior, generating affective ties, and ingroup reappraisal" (p. 80) and therefore should be recognized as an essential, not simply facilitating, condition. While it has been demonstrated that contact is more effective when there is the opportunity for participants to make acquaintances (Brewer & Miller, 1984) which encourages the disconfirmation of

negative stereotypes of disliked groups and, in turn, breaks down monolithic understandings of an outgroup, Pettigrew's (1997, 1998) research reveals that this effectiveness is even greater when there are opportunities for friendship.

Attempts to better understand how the processes *within* the common contact conditions – cooperation, interdependence, and equal status reduce intergroup bias – have given rise to models of intergroup dynamics that look specifically at how people categorize each other, the role of personalization, and possibilities for larger more inclusive group identifications (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Marilyn Brewer and Norman Miller (1984) developed the Personalization Model to explain how people in beneficial contact situations differentiate or decategorize group members. As individuals note differences among members of the group, they are able through personal interactions to assess the ways in which they are similar and dissimilar to others thus readjusting their understandings and relationships to members of the outgroup. The experience then lends itself to expanding participants' notions of group variability which, in turn, leads to more porous understandings of group boundaries. Sam Gaertner, John Dovidio, Phyllis Anastasio, Betty Bachman, and Mary Rust (1993) developed the Common Ingroup Identity Model, which looks at the factors that facilitate people to transform their representations of group memberships from distinct groups to a common one. Group or 'team' identities that emphasize a sense of 'we' replace categories such as 'us' and 'them.' Newly formed common ingroup identities do not replace individual's original group memberships, rather they allow for an understanding of 'dual identities' (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). What makes these findings interesting is that after extended contact the process of decategorizing and recategorizing can help people begin to think of

themselves with more complicated, layered identities with connections to larger social groups. In addition, these processes may encourage the adoption of more inclusive categories that highlight similarities among people, while holding onto individual distinctions.

Much of the recent contact research has focused on reducing intergroup bias, prejudice and conflict, and increasing positive feelings, friendships, and relationships (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). While all of these are extremely worthy goals, their role in supporting the inherently political nature of intergroup contact – that which motivates the vast majority of the research – has for too long been pushed to the margins, written into introductions and footnotes, or excluded. One of the places this can be seen is in the little critical attention the condition of equal group status has been given. Allport (1954) emphasized equal group status as a crucial condition that should exist and be expected *within* the contact situation, one which has been consistently supported by the literature (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Interestingly, what is often overlooked is the strong language that Allport used when insisting on the condition of equal group status. In *The Resolution of Intergroup Tensions,* a pamphlet put out by the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1952 – two years prior to *The Nature of Predjudice* – Allport (1952) writes:

> Until [artificial segregation] is abolished equal status contact cannot take place. And until they take place cooperative projects of joint concern cannot arise. And until this condition is fulfilled we may not expect widespread resolution of intergroup tensions. Hence nearly all investigators agree that the attack on segregation must continue. Gandhi, it will be remembered, called for the elimination of untouchability as the first point in his program of non-violent reform. (p. 23)

Reconciling the Contact Hypothesis with Power and Privilege

In introduction to the 1958 volume of *The Nature of Predjudice*, Allport shares his frustration that making segregation illegal did not end its practice. And while there has been significant progress in civil rights since the 1950s, one look at the resegregation trends in public schools documented so powerfully by Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee (2004) makes the project of achieving equal group status seem futile. This fact leaves us with the question: how do we understand equal status contact, a central condition of the Contact Hypothesis, when we (and our participants) have lived lives constituted by a world wrought with deep social inequalities?

This very question is taken up by Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, and Linda Powell (1997) who argue that our understanding of equal status contact must be scaffolded by what we have learned from the writings on community, difference, and democracy. From their collective work with students and teachers in multiracial schools and communities, they contend that

> in order for multiracial youth relations to flourish, three political and social conditions – none natural or automatic – must be intentionally set in place: a sense of community; a commitment to creative analysis of difference, power, and privilege; and an enduring investment in democratic practice…To create these conditions requires deliberate counter-hegemonic struggle by educators, activists, and youth to invent and sustain multiracial intellectual and social sites for everyone – what integration means after all. (p. 249)

Fine, Weis, and Powell take up the challenge up the laid down by Dubois (1943, 1955), Watson (1947), and Williams (1947) moving methodologically from participants back to participation and asking “What structures and practices, by adults and youth, enable young people to work with – not around or in spite of – race, ethnicity, and power-based differences?” (p. 252).

If we are looking to expand Allport's findings to practical applications in everyday lives and conflicts (as Allport intended) it seems impossible to imagine scenarios where social hierarchies are eliminated and status is truly equal. As race, feminist, queer, and indigenous theorists have long written, our social positionings are ever-present among us (Anzaldúa, 1987; Crenshaw, 1995; Hill Collins, 1991; Lorde, 1984; Matsuda, 1995). Even in the 'cleanest' of laboratory settings our relationships to social hierarchies will not wait for us patiently at the door. Instead, we must attend to the invitation offered by Fine, Weis, and Powell, to practice true integration and bring diverse groups together to specifically "discuss, voice, critique, and re-view the very notions of race they feel so [as defined by the contact literature] fixed, so hierarchical, so damaging, and so accepted in the broader culture" (p. 251). In other words we need to reorient our work and remember the lessons of Dubois (1943), Watson (1947), Lewin (1947), and even Allport (1952), who encouraged us to contact from our subject to our method. Our theory and research must not only be committed to a creative analysis of difference, power, and privilege (Fine, Weis, & Powell, 1997), but we must organize around these differences and *work* them (Torre, 2005). Reoriented as such, contact will be used not just serve to reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations but grow the unexpected. In other words, participatory relationships in contexts that engage difference hold the potential to spark new thought, build new knowledge, and chart the unseen.

'Contact zones' as a Critical Participatory Epistemology

In *Echoes* we drew from much of the learning on contact and intercultural education detailed above (though we had yet to learn about Weltfish, Watson, or Dubois and Li), as well as from the writing on participation (Cahill, 2004; Fals Borda, 1979;

Freire, 1982; Fine, Torre, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, "Missy," Rivera, Roberts, Smart, & Upegui, 2003; Hart, 1997; Lykes, 2001; Torre, Fine, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, "Missy," Rivera, Roberts, Smart, & Upegui, 2001), power/democracy (Alcoff, 1995; Greene, 1988; Fraser, 1990; Smith, 1999), and justice (Opotow, 1995). After gathering a radically diverse group of young people, academics, artists, and elders we utilized interdependent cooperative learning; introduced knowledge that contradicted stereotypes and exposed injustice (in the form of history, youth collected social science data, elder interviews); re-membered resistance; and seeded possibility. Our work was organized around a commitment to recognizing analyzing and *using* our differences across power and privilege; creating openings for and theorizing intersectionality, working towards common attainable goals (the performance and book), as well as – and this is an addition (to recent literature but perhaps only a gentle push to Watson, 1947 or Dubois 1943, 1950) – towards a larger common, dare we say moral, *social justice* goal. We also unwittingly resurrected a call Allport (1954) made in *The Nature of Prejudice* that contact should occur around "ordinary purposeful pursuits, [and] avoid artificiality" (p. 489.) While fighting for educational justice may not always be understood as ordinary it gave great purpose to the youth researchers/performers. Moreover, it provided a real-life context for us to join together in a contact zone – a radically diverse collective of mutually implicated people with similar concerns, *engaging contact as a critical participatory epistemology*.

A Pause to Worry Contact

Critiquing assumptions embedded in White Liberalism, antiapartheid activist Steven Biko (1978) remarked,

> Does this mean I am against integration? If by integration you understand a breakthrough into White society by Blacks, an assimilation and acceptance of Blacks into an already established set of norms and codes of behavior set up by and maintained Whites, then YES, I am against it. (p. 24)

While I have devoted this chapter to the promise of contact and participation, it would be naïve to overlook the instances where both have resulted in the death and destruction of indigenous people, practices and knowledge (Smith, 1999; Zinn, 1980; Marker, forthcoming), the rewrite/whiting of histories and cultures (Fanon, 1967; Zinn, 1980), and the silencing of entire peoples and nations. How do we understand contact and participation under such contexts? John Dixon, Kevin Durrheim, and Colin Tredoux (2005) writing with the 2001 race riots that disrupted urban centers in North West of England in mind, argue that the contact literature offers little in the way of addressing the people and places where "racial segregation and inequality are deeply entrenched" (p. 697). Their critique centers around a profound lack of understanding among researchers about inequality and injustice from the perspective of what Matsuda (1995) calls "the bottom." They propose a methodological framework that is based on a "bottom-up analysis" of participants' everyday understandings of categories and intergroup dynamics as they apply to their particular social contexts, rather than the usual top-down framework that imposes a pre-set categories, dimensions, definitions and measures. Their analysis points to the limits of trying to understand racial and social inequality solely through the lens of contact theory, and perhaps even social psychology. Anthroplogists, sociologists, historians and political theorists can lend us frameworks to broaden our levels of analysis, reminding us to recognize not just the individual and the group, but also the histories, structures and practices of the state and beyond. However, we are still left with moments

when participation is simply not possible or not wanted – remember that the original context of Pratt's (1992) contact zones was the unwanted contact of colonization. In the *Echoes* and Opportunity Gap projects we addressed this in our advocacy for 'same-only spaces' within or alongside larger integrated ones.

In truth, I hold onto contact, try to radicalize it in the form of contact zones committed to participation, power and difference, because I am not sure where we are left without it. The national and global divides between the haves and have-nots are staggering – growing wider daily, overly determined by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, age, education, nation. I am keenly aware of how contact has been misused and hold this awareness as a constant reminder that radically inclusive participation is an imperfect, ongoing struggle – a continual work in progress. Yet as a headache-ridden bilingual lesbian granddaughter of immigrants, with more education than most in my family, my analytical lenses are too fractured to imagine a singular 'self'/role/place from which to engage in the struggle for justice. So while I have a strong respect and understanding for the need for same-only spaces, my life and work continually return to the methods, theories and practices of integration.

Researching the literature of intergroup contact brought me the gifts of past generations. Though I am cautioned by potential negative consequences of contact, I was compelled by the writing of elders in the field. Their undeniable passion that something must be done – that we, as social scientists, as psychologists, need to be engaged in the public political world, theorizing, writing, researching, analyzing, and acting! We must because, as one of the titles of the fragile books I pulled off the shelf screamed at me, *Democracy Demands It!* (Van Til, DeBoer, Burnett, & Ogden, 1950). The writing I

rediscovered reminded me of a history of applied activist research that mattered. So there you have it. With all that we face these days my need for hope and possibility is ever growing. And the incredible, if difficult, magic that contact zones can produce continues to amaze. The potential of contact zones to open up analyses that move between individuals and groups to structures, systems and ideologies, has yet to be fully realized as a method that is well integrated into social psychology. Shifting our understanding of contact to a way of knowing, to a way of learning and conducting research, will have an exciting impact on individual, group and nation levels, for knowledge production, increased freedom, deeper levels of civic engagement and stronger more equal democracies.

Chapter 3

Echoes of Brown: A Case Study

A glimpse of the spoken word from *Echoes of Brown*:

I think I missed something –

"The Policy of Separating..."

There was a policy?
A strategy to segregate?

Yeah, there was.

And now it has moved from policy

to *normalcy*.

Subway tourist maps don't go further than 125th Street = I'M NOT HERE.

No you shut up!
You—the miseducator and misinformer
You—the history rewriter that tries to contain my generation
to one-sided tongues
You shut up because I've shut up so long
my down is wide open
gaping for voices hungry for words unspoken

Whose genetics exactly are *inferior*?
Whose genetics exactly are missing a few crossbars on the double helix?
Whose genetics are *you* examining though *your* microscope?

Now it is time for <u>OUR</u> revolution.

The *Echoes* project culminated in an evening performance of spoken word (poetry), dance, and social science for an audience of 600 educators, civil rights activists, family members, community members, friends, and colleagues. Surrounded by elders and

Ron Brown's Evidence dancers, youth performed the poetry they had drafted during the week of the Institute and perfected over intermittent Saturday afternoons. I opened this chapter with quilted patches from the youth spoken word in order to provide a sampling of the ideas that streamed through the youth performances. Extended versions of these poems were performed by (in order of excerpt) Ariane Ashley Gilgeous, Iralma Osorio Sorondo, Annique Roberts, Emily Genao, and Tahani Salah in the performance and for the DVD: *Echoes of Brown - Youth Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown v. the Board of Education*

The *Echoes* project was born in the summer of 2003. A new form of participatory public scholarship aimed to unite (and ignite!) social science, the arts and social action through performance, it was inspired by what was felt to be limitations of the more traditional research presentations of the Educational Opportunity Gap data (see ,, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, Payne, Perkins-Munn & Torre, 2005; Fine & Torre, 2007) as well as the upcoming anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the historic U.S. Supreme Court decision that declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

Thirteen youth aged 13-21 were recruited from community arts and summer youth programs in New York and New Jersey (see Appendix E for recruitment flyer).[8] The youth joined social scientists, spoken word artists, dancers, choreographers, and community elders, and a video crew to collectively learn about the legal, social and political history of segregation and integration of public schools; pour through data from

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[8] Out if the 13 that applied, all but one was accepted. Three young women applied from the same school. In our attempt to create as diverse a group as possible we decide not to have more than two students from the same school.

the Educational Opportunity Gap Project (Fine et al., 2004); and create – through poetry and motion – a integrated data driven-response. The collective goal of *Echoes* was to create an evocative contribution, based in large-part on the youth PAR Gap project, to the conversation of the 50th anniversary of *Brown* and to the chilling *re*segregation trends within public schools across the nation (Orfield & Lee, 2004).

The bulk of the *Echoes* project took the form of a week-long "Institute for Arts and Social Justice" which was held, July 28-August 2, 2003. The group met daily from 9:30am to 5pm, in a dance/exercise space in the basement level of The CUNY Graduate Center, with participants often staying later at their own desire (see Appendix F for an outline of the week). Each young person was given a weekly subway pass and stipend of $50. After the Institute the group continued to meet 1-2 Saturdays a month until the following May to practice and refine the production, meeting more frequently as the performance date neared. The final performance was held May 15, 2004 to at the John Jay College Theater in New York City. This chapter will introduce the participants of the *Echoes* project, across generation, and discuss the impact of its design as a contact zone. Revisiting the conditions for optimal contact outlined in Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis, I will demonstrate how we utilized Pratt's (1992) notion of contact zones to build the ideas of Allport and other early contact theorists (Watson, 1947; Williams, 1947; Dubois & Li, 1955) and create a critical epistemology of contact to identify new conditions in order to foster individual and collective development and participatory knowledge-building.

Welcome to *Echoes*

> It was the most diverse group I've ever been in. At school, I have friends that are Arabic or Palestinian, and Black and Hispanic and White and all of that. But there..I never seem to be with all of them at the same time. Like when I am at school, I'm mostly with Black kids from like Jamaica and Guyana and Barbados, and that's it. Then, when I go to my acting class, I'm the only..there's like there's two Black kids. It's just me and [Janisse]..." (Arianne, post-Institute interview)

The youth researchers/performers were a purposely diverse group recruited from wealthy and economically depressed communities of the New York City, Westchester County (NY), and northern New Jersey. As a collective, the group represented rich wisdom from experiences in Advanced Placement classes and as well as that from Special Education classrooms. Youth identified as Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular; and held European, African, Caribbean, Palestinian, Latino and blended ancestries. Some in the group were headed for the Ivy League while another member received a GED at a juvenile facility. Some enjoyed two homes, and others had experienced nights without one. All were interested (but not necessarily experienced) in writing, performing, and/or social justice. The result was a radically, and again, intentionally, diverse group of young people – by gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, 'track'; by experiences with racism, sexism, homophobia, school administrators, social service agencies, 'the law'; by (dis)comfort with their bodies, dance, poetry, groups; and so on. This level of diversity was crucial for the depth and breadth of analysis we wanted to tap into and the knowledge we wanted to produce. Table 3 briefly introduces the main players of *Echoes*, the youth and adults who worked together for a concentrated week (at the Arts and Social Justice Institute) July 28th through August 2, 2003 and periodic Saturdays until May 15, 2004.

Table 3. The Echoes players (at the onset of the week-long Institute)

(Youth)

Natasha Alexander, 16, African American, attends Urban Academy, a small, non-tracked, progressive school in New York City. Natasha is very open to new people and is comfortable in mixed groups, talking, and expressing her ideas. She has a wide variety of interests from sports management to history and hopes to be a college professor or maybe go to law school.

Amir Bilal Billups, 17, African American, attends Columbia High School in Maplewood, a large, tracked , desegregated school in New Jersey. Amir was one of the original youth researchers in the Opportunity Gap Study. He identifies as a philosopher and activist; loves words in all forms, music and teaching others. Founded and runs Messengers of Black Cultural Awareness (MOCA) at his school. He plans to study history in college and hopes to become a high school history teacher.

Yasmine Blanding, 21, African American, attends York College in New York City. Yasmine is Ron Brown's sister and the Evidence dance company office manager. She decided to join *Echoes* after participating in the first day of the Institute. A lover of words and poetry, she has a very loving spiritual side that inspires action in the face of injustice. She hopes to become a high school guidance counselor after she finishes her degree in psychology at York.

Malan Bullock, 19, African American, attends Saint Peter's College in Jersey City, New Jersey. Malan was involved in a PAR project at St. Peter's on experiences of first generation college students. Poetry comes very naturally to Malan who says she never thought of herself as a poet until the Institute. A lover of fashion and popular culture, Malan plans to study law after she finishes her degree in communications.

Emily Genao, 17, Latina, attends East Side Community High School, a small non-tracked school in New York City. Emily was one of the original youth researchers in the Opportunity Gap Study. She is very independent and responsible, loves writing and music, and is interested in politics and popular culture. Emily hopes to be a writer for *The New York Times* or for magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*, after she finishes her degree in Communications with a concentration in Journalism.

Ariane Ashley Gilgeous, 14, Guyanese American, attends Science Skills Center High School, a small school in Brooklyn, New York. Ariane is the youngest of the *Echoes* collective. Full of energy and curiosity she is quick to overcome her initial shyness. She plans to study psychology, theater and music and hopes to become a journalist or an entertainer.

Elinor Marboe, 17, White, attends Mamaroneck High School, a large, tracked, desegregated, wealthy suburban high school Mamaroneck, New York. With a dry sense of humor, Elinor loves words and debating ideas. Often quiet, she's always listening and figuring out her point of entry. Elinor plans to study history and religion in college and is unsure what will follow.

Annique Roberts, 21, African American, attends Howard University. Annique was a dancer with the Evidence dance company and decided to join *Echoes* after the first day of the Institute. She brought an important perspective to the collective about diversity within having been a student at a historically Black college. Annique plans to continue studying and performing dance, and has been accepted into the Garth Fagan Dance Company in Rochester, New York.

Joanna Roberts, 16, White, attends Mamaroneck High School, a large, tracked, desegregated, wealthy suburban high school in Mamaroneck New York. Joanna is very energetic, excited to work for social justice, and to participate in the space with everyone. She plans to study languages, law, political science, and international relations in college and hopes to be a civil rights lawyer or a journalist.

Tahani Salah, 17, Palestinian American, attends Brooklyn School for Global Studies, a small non-tracked high school in Brooklyn, New York. Tahani is active in the New York City spoken word and youth writing scene. She is also an activist committed to Palestinan liberation, and peace in the Middle East. Tahani plans to study English in college and go to law school and hopes to become international business lawyer.

Iralma (Iri) Osorio Sorondo, 17, Latina, attends The Beacon School, a small non-tracked progressive school in New York City. Iri is passionate about her ideas, loves to debate and is deeply committed to integration. She plans to study theater and performance in college and hopes to become and actress.

Travis Staten, 20, African American, not currently in school. Travis took classes and completed his GED at Rikers Island. He came to the Institute from another youth PAR project which documented community activism through the history of Mothers on the Move in the South Bronx. A natural poet, Travis works very easily with the group.[9]

Kendra Urdang, 17, White, attends Montclair High School a large, tracked, desegregated high school in Montclair, NJ. The daughter of a White South African, Kendra

[9] Travis participated with the group for the full week of the Institute, writing poems and collaborating with other Echoes members. However due to life complications he decided not to continue working towards the final performance the following May. Because he did not participate in the follow-up interviews that happened after the first week, I do not have data on his long-term plans.

has a strong sense of justice and passion for human rights. She plans to study English or cultural anthropology in college and is interested in public health and perhaps going to Nursing school.

(Adults)

Roger Bonair-Agard – Caribbean American, National Slam Poet Champion, Poet Educator with Urban Word.

Ronald K. Brown – African American, Artistic Director/Founder of Evidence Dance Company.

Celena Glenn – African American, National Slam Poet Champion, Poet Educator with Urban Word.

Michelle Fine – White, Jewish, Distinguished Professor of Psychology, Women's Studies, Urban Education.

Rosemarie Roberts – Latina, Professional Dancer, Doctoral student in Psychology.

María Elena Torre – Hispanic, Doctoral student in Psychology.

Jen Weiss – White, Poet Educator, Director of Urban Word, Doctoral student in Urban Education.

(Visiting historians, lawyers, and adult allies in order of visit)

Robert Perry – Director of African American Studies, Saint Peter's College

James Campbell – Associate Professor of American Civilization, Africana Studies and History, Brown University

Tiffany Joseph – Brown University

Carol Tracy – Executive Director, Women's Law Project

Clare Tracy-Stickney – Assistant Principal, University City High School in Philadelphia

Lisette Nieves – Co-Founder, ATREVETE!

Marinieves Alba – Hip Hop LEADS Latino Youth Inc.

Patricia J. Williams – James L. Dhor Professor of Law, Columbia Law School

Echoes as a Contact Zone

As Sonia Sanchez (2003) reminds us, "Integration is not just putting bodies next to each other…" (*Echoes of Brown* documentary) we must think seriously about what happens in such spaces. In other words, what are the contexts, conditions, and consequences of contact? Allport's Contact Hypothesis was concerned with *when* intergroup contact leads to positive changes in attitude and behavior, but said little if anything, about the processes – the *how* and *why* – that bring about or sustain the change (Pettigrew, 1998; Fine, Weis, & Powell, 1997). The collaborative work of the *Echoes* fundamentally embraced the learning of contact theorists from before Allport to the present, and provides an opportunity to look inside an extended moment of intergroup contact in a real world setting. Remembering Allport's often overlooked call for the study of contact to "avoid artificiality" and his claim that "The deeper and more genuine the association the greater its effect," (p. 489) *Echoes* offers a natural context for an examination of his contact conditions as well as for the discovery of new conditions.

In 2006 Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp conducted a meta-analysis of Allport's contact hypothesis and determined that his optimal conditions – equal group status; common goals; intergroup cooperation; support of authorities, laws or customs – while not always necessary, are still found (52 years later) to generally enhance positive effects of intergroup contact when established in the contact situation. They further found that Allport's optimal conditions continue to be understood as most effective when functioning together in the contact situation, and that the support of authorities, laws, or customs is a particularly important condition. Their analysis of the literature demonstrated that contact can reduce anxiety and threat about future cross-group

interactions, and that the further this anxiety is reduced, the more positive intergroup outcomes can be achieved (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

At the end of chapter two, I introduced the limitations of Allport's conditions if one takes power into account and heeds the lessons of Fine, Weis, and Powell (1997) to recognize the embeddedness of social/historical/political hierarchies. In this chapter, building on the work of Fine, Weis, and Powell, as well as Williams (1947), Watson (1947), Dubois and Li (1955), and Allport (1954), I will use *Echoes* as a case study to demonstrate how designing research-based contact zones contributes to our understanding of the conditions necessary to facilitate positive contact and productive intergroup relations. For the architecture of the theoretical legacy I am building my analysis on, see Table 4 below.

Table 4. A legacy of contact research in social psychology

Scholar	**Date**	**Contribution for Understanding/Improving Intergroup Relations (Contact)**
Benedict & Weltfish	1943	Need for (re)education research & products to interrupt dominant racist narratives
Williams	1947	Call for relational studies in natural settings; less attitude surveys
Watson	1947	Call for action-oriented research and programs; Favored recognizing potential in difference rather than tolerance
DuBois; Dubois & Li	1943; 1955	Group conversation method engages a difference as a Democratic practice
Allport	1954	Contact Hypothesis with 5 conditions: equal group status, common goals, cooperation, support of authorities and customs, & natural settings
Fine, Weiss, & Powell	1997	Insist on the integration & analysis of social structures and power

Allport (1954) argues that for contact to be maximally effective, participants should feel they are cooperating as part of a team. Working with a participatory framework for *Echoes*, Allport's condition of cooperation was reframed in terms of participation. As a result, we initiated the design of the project by asking what needed to be in place for maximum participation? Our central task then was to create a space with the Institute that would invite the maximum contributions/participation of the different knowledges, expertise, histories, political/family/social commitments of each group member. We developed a set of working assumptions to guide our participation; conditions that would ideally encourage a context that allows individuals to experience the range of their identities as well as the psychological, intellectual and physical space that surrounds contact. Drawing on participatory theory, Pratt's (1992) notion of contact zones, and Anzaldúa's (1987) ideas of Mestizaje, we conceived the *Echoes* Institute as a contact zone, and constructed a space with the following conditions of collaboration:

* each participant was understood to be a carrier of knowledge and history,
* everyone held a sincere commitment to creating change for educational justice,
* power relationships were explicitly addressed within the collaborative,
* multiple identities were recognized,
* disagreements and *choques*/'clashes'[10] were excavated rather than smoothed over in the interest of consensus,

[10] *Choques* represent both moments of contestation and creative production. Originally produced from the violence of colonization, the experience of cultural collision, or *choque*, is fundamental to a *Mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldúa,1999/1987). Within a PAR framework, *choques* emphasize the importance of incorporating conflict and disjunctures that arise in the research as potential analytical resources.

* individuals and the group was understood and expected to be "under construction."

These conditions were operationalized with the following methods and commitments:

* collaborative knowledge-building
* layered activities
* purposeful inclusion
* shared expertise
* honest engagement

All of these conditions, methods and commitments allowed our radically diverse group to build the respect and trust needed to collaborate in ways that, as Emily articulates, felt new and different.

> *Participating in something like Echoes and the Arts and Social Justice Institute was the first time where I had to work as closely and as intensely as I did with people who were so different from me. The project brought youth from very different racial, economic, academic, and social backgrounds into one space to be creative and to most importantly just be themselves. The comfort and safety that was established in the very beginning was instrumental in allowing for the work to get done and for the performance to be shaped and constructed.*

The youth participants uniformly described the Institute as the most diverse group that they had ever worked with. Tahani put it, "*So many different minds, so many different points of view..just having so many different people, so many ways of thinking…it was intense*." While we specifically worked to bring together youth with a wide variety of life experiences, we did not realize how unique such a space would be. The post-Institute interviews revealed that the uniqueness of the space was not simply in the level of diversity but also in the way the space was structured. Participants reported feeling a profound level of respect and commitment, in the way their opinions and

experiences were equally discussed with those of the adult workshop presenters, through working side by side with respected youth and adult artists who shared their desire for social justice, and in knowing that their efforts would be presented before local and national audiences. All of these structures translated into a space where youth demonstrated a tremendous dedication to working through a diverse, challenging set of ideas individually and collectively. This dedication was reflected in near perfect attendance even with several youth working long hours after their 9-5 day at the Institute. It should be noted that after the Institute, one young person, Travis, stopped participating as he was struggling to meet life responsibilities. All of the other youth remained with the project, some with free and open schedules; others juggling the rehearsals amid after-school jobs and serving as family translators.

Maximizing participation within and among the *Echoes* members was facilitated in part by an attention to the ways we were all different. Following in the footsteps of Watson (1947) and Dubois and Li (1955) we not only recognized this difference, but used it. It was our differences that bring us an important range of experiences and expertise, key to our collaborative process as we explicitly noted on the first day of Institute in our introductory circle. This practice was our way of reframing Allport's (1954) notion that in the contact situation all members should enjoy equal group status. Unfortunately, as I have argued, it is impossible to simply pronounce people or a group "equal." As Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) remind us, equality is a relationship. Further, differences in power and privilege do not wait patiently at the door, they are a part of, and inform, all aspects of living – our histories, language, analyses, interactions, imaginations, and so forth. As I argued in chapter two, equal group status within a

contact setting becomes an interesting question when it is conceptualized in terms of participation. If equality is relational, an activity, and participants are engaged at variously unequal points, what then must be in place to make for more equal participation? How do you recognize unequal distributions of power and then work collectively to share access and resources? What knowledge do these participatory negotiations offer intergroup contact at the larger level of society?

Engaging power, privilege, and resources: Reframing Equal Group Status

Power dynamics are always in play. They were already shaping all of our lives and experiences before *Echoes* began, and certainly as each of us set foot in the windowless exercise room that would serve as our workspace for the week. At one level we were coming together to study and perform a social injustice within which we were differently positioned. Some of us were doing quite well within the educational system as it played out in our schools. Others of us were being failed by this same system, only one town away. Some of us came to the came to the first day of the Institute full of uncompromised enthusiasm. Others of us were excited but cautious; waiting to see what would unfold. An example of this is illustrated in the experience Natasha shared in an interview after Institute week was over:

> Natasha: *"I just want to be honest with you guys, after the first day in the group, my mother warned me about what to expect. She said 'Natasha, I want you to just be aware that sometimes White folks when they are working with you are caught up in a White man's burden kind of thing. They're wrapped in guilt and just want to do good for Black and Latino students, like make things right in school. Sometimes you might run across this.' So I kind of had this in mind when we started. But then it changed. I saw that people here weren't really like that."*
>
> María: *"How did you know?"*

Natasha: *"It's hard to say. The kinds of conversations we had. The way you talked about high and low power groups, and how we weren't just talking about race. And then when we were talking about some groups wanting schools for just one kind of people, how Michelle said that although she really believes in integration, some of us in the room might feel strongly about the need for separate spaces. And that she'd be willing to work for low power groups to have spaces of their own—like a school for African American students, or all girls—but that she wouldn't do it for a high power group. That they wouldn't really need her help."*

Natasha's decision to trust the space despite her mother's important warning that those organizing the week might be rooted in charity rather than solidarity was in part the result of our commitment to explicitly address the complicated layers of power and privilege. In the opening circle when we introduced ourselves and the project, Michelle and I spoke about our relationships and commitments across low and high power groups. Using these terms rather than specific identity categories, introduced and signaled a commitment to a power analysis of social inequalities. Additionally, in that first morning we discussed the ways we had varying relationships to power and privilege once all of our various identities are taken into account. This communicated our orientation to a multiple understanding of self as well as an intersectional analysis. As a result of Michelle's specific sharing about her political commitments to justice and equality that then lead her to ally with low-power groups, Natasha was able to identify that the space we were collectively creating would move beyond simplistic "Black and White" conversations or "White guilt" motivations.

Engaging equal group status rather than controlling it encouraged us as a collaborative to theorize how power produces and reproduces racialized (and other) relationships – and imagine them otherwise. In the example Natasha shared, one can see

how she tried out what Lani Guinier and Geraldo Torres' call "political race," which they describe as

> a political project that does not ask who you married or who your daddy was. At its core it does not ask you what you call yourself, but with whom you link your fate. It is a fundamentally creative project political project that begins from the ground up, starting with race and all its complexity, and then builds cross-racial relationships through race and with race to issues of class and gender in order to make democracy real. (Torres, 2002, p. 9-10)

Another example of how differences in power and privilege – and their socio-historical consequences – were in constant conversation right from the very beginning can be seen in an interaction between Iri's initial response to the "White girls from Westchester."

> Iri: *[B]asically you know how their people are. And it's not labeling them, or I'm not being a racist or anything, and that's a ... [LAUGHS] ... like some people would be like, "You're so racist." I'm like, "No, I'm not." I'm like, "I'm light-skinned. I understand what white is or white privilege is and everything like that. I understand like what's the meaning of that." ... But when I saw her [Joanna] and I was like "Are you from Westchester?" and she was like, "Yeah, how did you know?" And I'm like, "I know you guys." And she was like, "Oh, what's that mean?" I'm like, "I don't know." She's like, "Well, where are you from?" And I'm like, "I'm from Brooklyn."*

As Iri relates her encounter, she both recognizes her own white privilege as a light-skinned Latina as well as distinguishing herself as someone without the economic power associated with "Whiteness in Westchester." Mixing assumptions about White, young women from Westchester with her knowledge that the racially segregated, overwhelmingly White region is one of the wealthiest in the nation, we see the complexity of race/ethnicity and class unfold. Reflecting back on the incident a week and a half later, Iri noted its importance to the *Echoes* project as a whole.

> Iri: *[Afterwards] we had this long discussion how she [Joanna] visited Brooklyn and everything like that. ... [Y]ou know to work with them [Joanna and Elinor the other White young woman from Westchester] and to have that opinion, you*

know, with the different opinions of like the not-privileged students, it just showed. It just gave you more, you know, of what we were doing and what we were working on. Because you can't have one side and not..and not have the other. Because we're like almost telling a story. And you can't tell the beginning of the story and not finish it. You know, or you can't have the..have the beginning and like each of us, you know, the Westchester kids and the, you know, the Brooklyn or Manhattan, or, you know, Queens kids are from the less privileged, you know, societies, community, you know. You can't have, you know, one or the other. You have to have both of them. ... Like it shows you what..what we're fighting for in the schools..I don't know, I don't know how to put it. I think it was better that we had someone from that perspective here, you know, to defend where they come from and to show that they are thinking about it and it's not just an oblique, you know, not even like fathomed idea back, you know, in Westchester. There are kids there that are thinking about this. That do go to privileged schools and do have the money and do have the education that..that we want here, you know, in less privileged communities, you know. It's just, I think..I think it was better that we had them.

Iri demonstrates how contact alone can result in a negative experience just as it can a positive one (Putnam, 2000). However, she goes on to narrate the interruptive power of a contact zone. Being in a space where she was *engaging intellectually and creatively* with others who were differently situated in terms of their relationships to educational and other material resources, enabled her to complicate her initial analysis.

Collaborative knowledge-building

In order for all of us to participate as equally as possible across our various differences, it was important for us to not only trust and respect each other but be versed in a common set of languages and knowledges. In other words, those of us from The Graduate Center needed to share analytical frameworks, our language of research, and other knowledges we held from our different communities, and youth needed to share their knowledges as young people, students, targets of police and other forms of surveillance, members of different communities, etc. In order to accomplish this, we began each Institute morning in a circle on the floor after bagels, juice and music, to

discuss the day's agenda and relevant current events. A knowledge-building session followed until lunch. On Monday this took the form of a careful review of the Opportunity Gap data. The days that followed were filled with presentations and discussions with lawyers, activists, historians, and writers about the struggles for educational justice. Afternoons were spent with artist educators working on writing activities (e.g., "write a poem using a piece of the survey data that you found surprising"; "write a poem to an administrator about what you would like to see changed in your school") and with dancers and choreographers working on dance and movement exercises (e.g., "communicate your poem to the group without using any words"). Youth went home with reading and writing assignments that they completed after taking care of household responsibilities, while working night jobs, or sometimes as Milan describes, on the train to and from the Institute:

> *I was inspired, I think. Because I ... [??] ... from the meetings or whatever we had, when I'd go on the train. And I guess the input would like simmer in my head or whatever, and then I would just get ideas and I'd just start writing. And most of the poems that I brought in or was doing, I did them all on the train. I mean…Two hour ride, you have to do something. But, most of the time, I did them all on the train and just, my hand just kept on moving, and I did..so every time I came on the train, people thought I was crazy, but that's all I was doing was just writing.*

Following this structure, the Institute week braided knowledge-building, writing and social movements and dance movement. Youth participated in workshops with visiting historians, lawyers, and adult/elder allies on the history of Brown v Board, civil rights law, the activism of the Young Lords party, and the Opportunity Gap research. These sessions worked to provide the group with the common set of languages and knowledges to draw from, enabling us to more equally participate. The process was facilitated by our regular group conversations, check-ins, poetry read-arounds and group

feedback sessions. In all these activities everyone (from youth participants and coresearchers, to workshop presenters and invited adults) had the opportunity to comment and contribute ideas.

The racial/ethnic and class diversity of our workshop facilitators matched the diversity of our group and their professional status was recognized, not to reify hierarchy, but to add to the collective potential power of the group. Our time together was designed so that youth and adults were learning and creating with resource-filled people dedicated to the collaborative process and the outcomes of the project. We hoped/anticipated that this would reinforce the importance and seriousness in the work; that upon seeing that their efforts had the potential to make a large impact, youth researchers might take risks they may have not otherwise taken.

Layered activities

A glimpse of the Institute's opening day:

Fieldnote July 28, 2003

> *Monday, 10am. It's the basement level of the CUNY graduate center and youth are beginning to find their way down an uninviting maze of corridors. Hand drawn arrows leading them to a set of double doors that open to a large windowless space. The large carpeted room has an entire wall of floor to ceiling mirrors and an attached dance room with shiny wood floors, separated by a glass partition. We will meet in this space every day for the next week. "Can you grab that tape?" I ask the first few young women who enter. I am hanging large sheets of bright yellow paper on free standing room dividers to create a "graffiti museum" in a cordoned section of the room near the entrance. I explain later*

that the graffiti museum is a space for all of us as participants to express ourselves as we move through the week. We can use the walls to write on, draw on, paste clippings, tag [i.e.,write graffiti style], ask questions, respond, challenge each other, whatever anybody wants as long as no one is hurt or disrespected. It is a place to get out emotions and ideas, both publicly and privately. Everyone must leave something on the wall at least once a day, and more if they want to. I put up prompts on the walls from the Opportunity Gap data (for example, responses to "the worst possible school experience" survey question) to get things rolling.

Arriane:*…usually when I meet new people, I'm kind of, at first, I'm a little bit closed off, I guess. And then I start to open up. But then, I guess because, well, you know, you had us like helping the minute we walked in. You put up the giant wall of paper,*

María: *The graffiti wall?*

Arianne: *I think that was really actually very good, because it kind..I didn't really notice that I was meeting people, but I was through that. I was just meeting people and if it was just like a regular introduction session, I probably would have been really self conscious otherwise.*

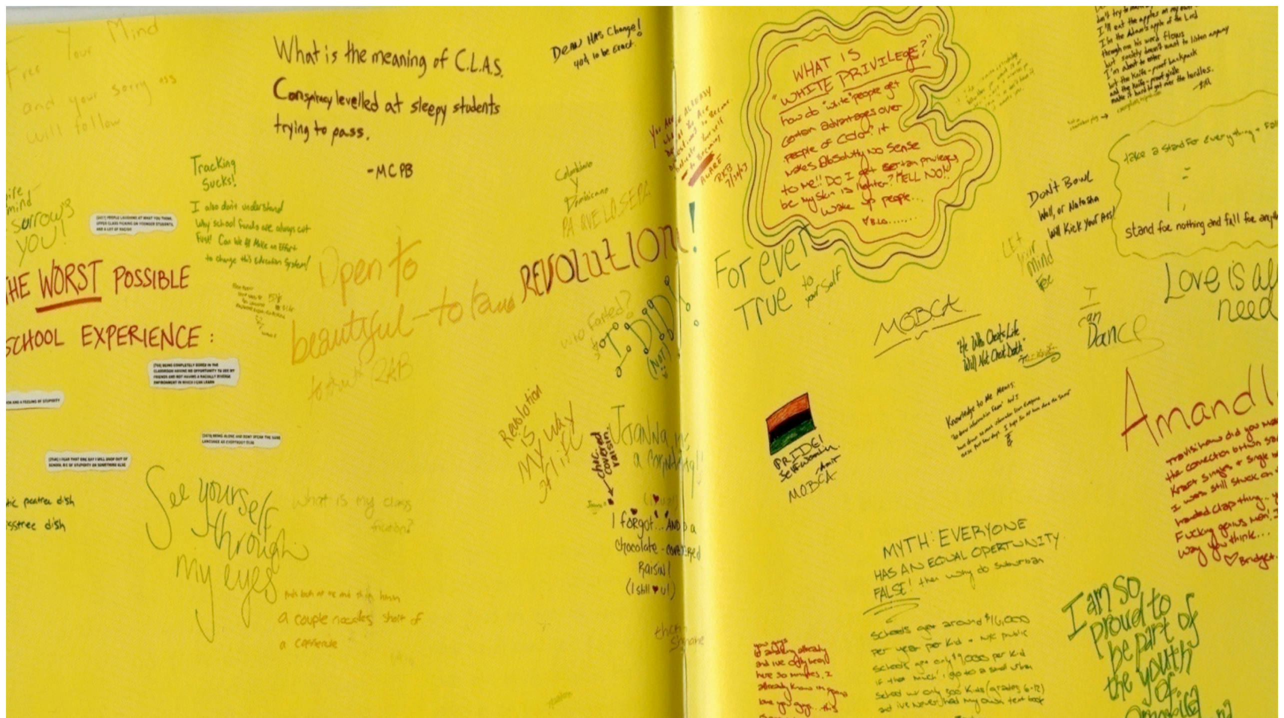
María: *Did anything strike you when you looked at the whole group?*

Arianne: *I don't know. I mean, I was just like, well here we are. This is going to be an interesting experience. So that I guess that was what I was thinking. But the second moment was when we were all sitting down around the table and we were all reading poetry. That was kind of scary to me. That was when I really realized that I was the youngest person there.*

The graffiti museum that was created on the first day of the Institute, not preset, but hung in collaboration with members of *Echoes*, not only subtly reinforced the space as one of cooperation and improvisation, but became a technology of participation. By

asking everyone to write on it daily, a public space was created for conversation and debate through words and drawings, both authored and anonymous. Moreover the graffiti museum provided a space to share and/or let go of emotions, make sense of the data from the Opportunity Gap and the information we were learning in the knowledge-building sessions, express rage, and even be silly.

Figure 2. The graffiti museum.



At times the graffiti museum provided a "dry run" for thoughts and emotions that emerged from working through the data. As Toby Fulwiler (1983) reminds us, writing allows us to make our thoughts visible so that we can interact with them. In some ways the graffiti museum provided a concrete space for what Lev Vygotsky (1962) calls "inner speech," a "dynamic shifting thing fluttering between thought and word" (p. 149). Being a collective space, this dynamic inner speech ignited ideas and understanding within individuals and also across the group.

As the week went on, some of the writings on the wall were abandoned, while others became conversations that turned into analyses and poems. One example is Emily's *Focus/Refocus* poem. After reviewing hundreds of qualitative responses to the question – "*What do you believe are the causes of the Achievement Gap*?" and discovering that many students responded with variations of a powerful refrain of "*Blacks are genetically inferior,*" Emily grabbed her pen. Pained and angered by the revelation that her peers, believed in genetic inferiority, she decided to write a poem that would challenge the "science" of genetic inferiority, the widely shared belief in a hierarchy of social categories, and the assumed homogeneity of each category. Her poem, which she later performed, speaks directly to the youth who filled out the survey, as well as others sharing a similar mind. An excerpt reads:

> You said *some people are genetically less intelligent*
> Whose genetics exactly are inferior?
> Whose genetics exactly are missing a few crossbars on the double helix?
> Whose genetics are you examining though your microscope?
> You don't need to specify
> Since it is misconceived that those people are usually the ones
> with the sun kissed skin
> The doorman who suffers through the 2-hour train ride from Queens
> The cleaning lady trying to hold down 2 jobs and a newborn at home
> The kid who plays his Slipknot CD too loud
> You wouldn't sit next to him anyway
> When you slide my culture under your power magnification you see me:
> A first generation college student
> Actress who will transcend the role of rape victim, maid, gossiping neighbor
> Poet whose grass roots are growing back in again
> Dancer with salsa in her hips and azucar in her blood
> Dreamer of Puerto Rican sunsets, Manhattan darkness,
> with a scar on her Lower East Side
> Only it isn't *your* microscope
> It was passed on to you from your ancestral scientists
> Now it's your turn
> To look at everyone through the
> Antiquated lens
> Only you don't turn it on yourself

Because you didn't inherit inferior DNA

In the spirit of Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill-Collins and Gloria Anzaldúa, Emily's spoken word piece articulates a series of feminist and anti-racist challenges to science. She weaves these critiques with the complexities of her multiple identities, linguistically and metaphorically braiding her Latina self into the text. She trumps the scientific microscope and the audience's gaze, lifting the critical lens off of her body and her community and placing it on the back of elites. With this piece, she scaffolded a platform for others to grow their ideas about privilege, responsibility and science (Vygotsky, 1978).

The layering of activities, from group building icebreakers, the graffiti museum, workshops with scholars, writing and spoken word exercises, to dance and movement sessions, and even a night of bowling, facilitated increased levels of participation in *Echoes*. The diversity of activities allowed individuals to shine in some moments and stumble in others. In other words, youth not only experienced this range, but were also able to witness others do the same. As a result, *Echoes* members often pushed beyond that which felt comfortable, inhabiting or 'trying on' parts of their selves different than those used in their everyday lives. In engaging in this more individualized activity of identity play youth in turn set off actions and reactions within the collaborative, challenging others to push their own 'selves,' evoking new thinking on both the individual and collective level. Through our conversations, writings and movement participants were able to try out new political positions, for example, and in doing so prompt others to clarify their own thoughts as they worked their ideas through, positioning and repositioning themselves. As Vygotsky (1978) might have predicted, the

interactive and improvisational dimensions of the space not only served to collaboratively create these new subjectivities, but also to produce new knowledge that each person, as a situated individual, would not likely come to on her or his own. It was for this very reason that we designed *Echoes* as a space of radical inclusion. We understood, that in order to create a context in which young people could, with trust, disarticulate the prevailing inequalities and their ideological limitations, we needed radically different situated bodies in the same room and a set of tools (i.e. the layered activities of the week) for critically de-naturalizing the science of social hierarchy and domination.

The new knowledge created in this process was then woven into the larger political agenda of the collective, broadening the depth of the inquiry and expanding the breadth of the *Echoes* performance. With the Institute, an infectious energy was witnessed, the kind that accompanies the experience of having one's ideas, creativity, and capacity not only taken seriously but respectfully challenged, stimulated and encouraged.

María: *What did you get to be or do or express that you don't normally?*

Elinor: *I guess the first couple of days like I wasn't like .. [LAUGHS] .. I don't know, incredibly outgoing. Like it wasn't really meshing. And I still like met a lot of people, like made a lot of connections. And like when we went bowling and, I don't know, Emily and I, we were going like in five seconds we'll go shopping.. Bam! you know. Like I ...[LAUGHS] .. we were just laughing so much. She was like, "Oh, man, you're hilarious." I'm like, "You're hilarious." And like..and it would be really comfortable to just..I mean, it was literally like a Norman Rockwell painting. Like we all just like said "Man, I love you so much." Like, "No, I love <u>you</u> so much." And literally, by the last two days, like that's exactly what it was like. It was like, "Man, you're such an inspiration to me." It's like, "Man, I really value like what you're saying." And that, I mean .. [LAUGHS] .. but that's okay in that you know you really feel attraction for people like you're saying it. It's such a positive environment and you don't feel self conscious at all. And, I don't know, you share things and people clap. Like, you know, there is so little..there was like no competition. And I think that's like a big force in school. And then a lot of times, you know, it's like I really don't believe in reading one kid's work aloud in class as*

like a good model, because there's the one kid whose paper it is that just feels real embarrassed, and then, you know, the twenty-eight other people in the class who are just angry that theirs isn't being read. You know, it's such a non-constructive thing. And here, it's just like everyone's work was so good! And like, you're all just like, man, that was awesome.

María: *What do you think happened at the Institute (structurally) that allowed for that to happen?*

Elinor: *I think having everyone read aloud in like morning circles was definitely a big help. Like it just got things off to, like it wasn't whoever wants to can raise their hand, you know? It was like everyone is going to do it, which I think is really important. And then also breaking down into small groups to do writing workshops and..well, and there's the fact that like the kids who were selected to do this are, you know, like artistic and friendly and interesting just as..you know, like it's just a really well gathered group of people to work with. Like who wouldn't want to work with a group like that?*

Elinor's comments underscore importance of having structures in place that encourage and assume everyone's involvement in the project. Participation does not occur automatically. Her feeling that things weren't "really meshing" shifted as she engaged in the variety of activities, opening her up to collaborate in ways that were different when she entered the space at the beginning of the week.

Purposeful inclusion

Elinor's remarks highlight how the lack of competition and purposeful inclusion of everyone's voice (not just the ones that "raise their hand") allowed a public experience of everyone's ideas and talents. These practices brought everyone's experiences and analyses into the room adding additional data to the Opportunity Gap research and the scholar sessions. These layers encouraged different kinds of participation at different moments, with individuals moving between their own lives, each other's and the variety of data before them. It is interesting to note the fact that Elinor assumed that the group

was preselected. This suggests how different the group felt to be a part of, and how, in her interpretation, exceptional it must be. The reality that there were no special conditions for participation other than commitment to justice and equality for all, a willingness to try new things (i.e. writing, speaking in front of others, and dance), curiosity and a desire to make things happen (see Appendix E for the recruitment flyer) appeared hard to believe. Sadly her difficulty believing this kind of collaboration is possible is not uncommon. I have often had to overcome this perception when discussing this project with others.

Another look at how purposeful inclusion and layered activities transformed both individual and collective participation can be found in Iri's experience of the week:

> Iri: *… And then I just put it all together, and it went through a lot of revisions. And, you know, I came up to you like every five seconds, and "Okay. I added to this, and I did that." And that was great. And I never revise my work. Never. Because I'm so stubborn. And I never want to change anything. But this time, I just kept on changing it and I just opened myself to changes, and I, you know, worked with [Roger] like to edit my whole work. And at first I was like, "What are you doing? What are you doing touching my work?" And then, I was like, "Oh, okay. I see where you're going with it. I see where you're going with it." And it made perfect sense after, you know, I read it. And then I read it to you guys. Then I read it to you, you know, and I just thought that was great. Everyone coming up to each other, like, "Okay, I changed this. I changed that." And "What do you think about this and what do you think about that." And that's what made everything so much more comfortable, because nobody was in their own world. You know what I'm saying? And I'm usually like that. And that's why I think I had my own poem, because I'm usually always in my own world. But I found myself relating to a lot of people here. So it was a lot easier for me to just come up to whoever I wanted to and say, "Hey, can I read you my poem?" And they're like, "Yeah, absolutely." And just drop everything and just listen, you know. That was great.*

> María: *It's interesting. That's one of the things I'm really interested in is what happens when you bring all these different people together? And you're not the first person who's said that ...*

Iri: *Oh, yeah?*

María: *... that they're usually in their own world and kind of like to do their own things when they're being creative or writing. So I'd love to hear more about what that was like for you to be in this space when you're usually someone who sort of sticks to yourself with an idea, and now all of a sudden you felt comfortable to open that process up. Can you tell me more about what that was like for you?*

Iri: *Well, I mean, everyone was there because they wanted to be. You know what I'm saying? So it wasn't like school where you go in and you're sitting down, I mean, you're next to someone who you don't really share experiences with and you're both in a bad mood because you feel like you are in a situation where you don't want to be in. ... [W]hen we come together by choice and we feel so strongly about a certain subject, everyone feels like it's okay to let go, you know. And if someone doesn't agree with you, it's okay, because it's your thoughts and they're still special to you. And that's what happened when I came in, you know. When I came in, I was so..I was just like okay, I'm just going to be in my own little world and do what I have to do and write a poem and share it, and that'll be the end of that. But, and then I..I just found myself like falling in love with everybody, you know. Like, I don't know, I thought the chemistry that we had was so perfect, and like the atmosphere was so perfect. And like there was no negative attitude whatsoever at all at any point. Like there was no one telling us that we couldn't do something, and there was no one telling us that we have to do something. And it just made it so that we knew we could work together because we wanted to work together. And that's what made everything so cool, and that's what made everyone just like go around asking if they could read their poems and stuff, and I thought that was great for all of us.*

Like others, Iri was initially hesitant to fully participate or "let go" as she phrases it. She describes two important distinctions about the space. Unlike many activities in young people's lives, *Echoes* was not mandatory. The fact that not only she chose to be there but others chose to be with her lent a level of mutual commitment and engagement that encouraged her to be more fully present. In addition, the community that was created, facilitated in part by the high level of respect and collegiality from the adult and youth poet educators and the other *Echoes* youth, enabled her to step outside her "own little world." As Iri continued to explain the impact of stepping out she described a deep

sense of collectivity in her understanding of her intellectual and creative process. By the end of the week, she moved from "why are you touching *my* work?" (emphasis added) to:

> Iri: *Like when we were sharing our poems, everyone had something to say about it, you know? And we took that and we converted it into something that we could use in our writing. And because of that, there are so many feelings put into it. There are so many different opinions put into it, because it's coming from everybody, not only yourself, then. Like everything that I wrote down, like my poem, if you really think about it, it's not only my poem anymore. It's Roger's poem, it's your poem, it's Michelle's poem, you know. It's Natasha's poem.*

Shared expertise

Informed by the writings of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Nancy Fraser (1990), Amatrya Sen (2004), bell hooks (1984) and others, we attempted to create with *Echoes* a context in which youth and adults could come together, importing very distinct situated knowledges, within very differently marked bodies, carrying diverse biographies of privilege and oppression, and with a range of experiences with racial injustice in schools. In the spirit of Fraser, *Echoes* was a "counterpublic space that 'contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech" (Fraser, 1990, p. 75). It was a space where everyday concerns of contemporary youth could be elaborated alongside the vibrant, idiosyncratic stories of a few, or even one, which, we learn through the process, represented so many others not in the room.

The counterpublic we created was not simply a safe space for demographically similar peers to challenge toxic representations or a precious, protected corner to critique stereotypes and the micro-aggressions (Franklin, 2004) of everyday life. While we have great respect for 'safe spaces' in which historically oppressed groups gather to be free of, safe from, and challenging of dominant policies and practices (Weis & Fine, 2000), that

was not our project this time. Our counterpublic space departed in two specific ways. First we built a community of difference by, in part, including 'privileged' peers (Fine, Powell, & Weis, 2004). Second we sought to create a sacred space that would then launch us toward a more public challenge/activist response/performance of contesting structural injustices. An example of how this structural move facilitated a practice of collaborative knowledge-building can be seen in what became known as the "Harvey Milk" conversation.

Field note July 29, 2003:

> *Its Late Tuesday afternoon, at 5:30, a half hour beyond the paid hours we all agreed to, yet no one looks anxious to leave. Our bodies have shifted from sitting face-forward giving full attention to invited speakers, into a loose circle. Some of us are in chairs, others are on the carpeted floor of the dance studio where we have spent the better part of the day. The conversation holding our attention is about the Harvey Milk school, an independent public school for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth that recently received money to expand into a full-fledged high school:*
>
> Iralma: *I can understand where they're coming from, but I totally totally disagree with it. Because I feel like the only way you're gonna learn about our society is if you're around different people. You can't be around the same kind of people and expect to learn about everything and anything, you know what I'm saying? Like you can't be in a school with the same people and expect to have whole different varieties of opinions…*
>
> Amir: *Yeah, but when you break someone's spirit, not always will they be able to be strong and be able to get through things—you can really cripple someone like that. I know that being in my school, my grades didn't go up until I started getting into my history and I actually found, you know, about what made me great, you know what I mean? And I had to go out of school to get that. So we should be integrated but there's nothing wrong with going somewhere that will teach you about yourself, because you need to get a sense of self worth.*

Iralma: *But if you learn along with someone who's White, then you can educate them about your history, about what makes you great and then they'll appreciate you a lot more…*

Amir: *Me and my friends we're in this organization, Messengers of Black Cultural Awareness, that we all put together ourselves, with that purpose. But we all had to go back and get these things on our own, you know, and learn about ourselves and now we're bringing it to the table and we're still learning with other people. But at the same time, like I said, I had to go to the Black bookstores, and talk to Black people about our history, you know what I mean? With my own people, and then I can go back out there and share with everyone.*

[…]

Annique: *I come from a historically Black college, basically all Black, and I think that can make you stronger too. I don't think that there's a right or wrong in this situation. I mean the diversity at Howard is crazy. I mean first off you have Black people from all over the diaspora, you have them from all over the world. So you're gonna have different opinions regardless, 'cause we're all different.*

Joanna: *Really if you're talking about learning about yourself, I think that one of the reasons we're so dependent on one another, like as humans, is because we need to learn about the people around us to learn about ourselves. Like, that's necessary. ...I need to see myself through your eyes and like…I don't know its just this back and forth thing—I need to learn about you to make myself a better person. I mean in any context…diversity of thought is just as important as diversity in terms of ethnicity. I mean no matter where you are you are going to be absorbing so much knowledge about the people around you and about yourself.*

This dialogue is an excerpt of one of the pivotal discussions that took place within in the *Echoes* Institute, where participants began to situate themselves, for the first time, in relation to a more complicated understanding of integration as a result of the varied expert knowledges in the room. Simple understandings of "we should all be one, together" matured into layered analyses of how "coming together" can be emotionally, physically, and even intellectually costly for some students marked "different" by

race/ethnicity, sexuality, etc., when they are without structural support. The engaged and supportive body language of participants throughout conversation, the level of listening and respect demonstrated during potentially tense and difficult moments, made a huge impact on the participants, one that was referred to repeatedly across the interviews. "*The conversation was so thought provoking*," Joanna, later described it, adding, "W*e started out facing forward because we were listening to [the presentation] …but then we morphed into a circle … sharing our different opinions. …we didn't really ever come up with a conclusion, but we didn't even need a conclusion*." Individual and collective identities shifted with bodies and ideas.

Having an environment where youth and adult knowledge was equally valued and shared created a dynamic that allowed all of us to reflect on our multiple identities and our varying relationships to oppression, privilege and each other. As we read history of oppression and resistance, reviewed the collective research and scribbled early drafts of possible poems, we revealed and spliced our multiple selves, re-viewing ourselves and many different identities hold/perform – identities that that are powerful in some spaces and less so in others. Throughout the week, youth called on different aspects of their identities, sometimes to better understand material, or to move away from experiences that were too uncomfortable, or to make connections across seemingly different positions. While our collective work focused on questions of race, ethnicity and class inside and beyond schools, the students inserted questions of gendered violence, (dis)ability, language, bodies, science, danger and pleasure, oppression and privilege, developing class, feminist and critical race analyses.

Reflecting on the Harvey Milk and other conversations, Elinor, recalled the strong opinions that were aired, describing the conversation as "constructive arguing," she noted that the level of respect allowed people to build on each other's opinions. Elinor remained silent during the conversation, not feeling comfortable with what she perceived as either side of a binary argument, "*I ended up writing about that in a poem, because there were like two distinct sides on it. ...School of thought A and school of thought B ...so I made..[laughs]..myself a third category in the poem."* Elinor went on to elaborate, "*..my school's integrated, but there's a lot of self-segregation, which, I mean, I don't know, is that unfortunate? Is that the best way for people to handle it?"*

Elinor, with the rest of us, came to learn that one of the consequences of contact is that low-power groups often need segregated spaces *within* larger integrated ones. This was not an easy lesson for some in the Institute, particularly the White youth – and some of the White educators – understanding the simultaneous need for separation *and* integration. Over time, Elinor came to respect and understand individuals' needs to feel the support of people like them. However, with the same breath she worries about people feeling "pressured" to only hang out within their own groups. Embedded in her concern is a search for self – if everyone stays within their group, where do those who want to live in the borderlands sit? In carving out a third category, she seeks her own meaningful role, in this case as an ally in the struggle for integration and against racism (Tatum, 1994).

In his discussion about participation and action programs designed to increase positive intergroup contact, Allport (1954) wrote that the programs

> strive to bring people of various groups together in a way that enhances mutual respect. It is not easy to do so, for artificiality may easily mar the effort. Lewin

> pointed out that many committees on race or community relations do not really engage in common projects or in mutual concern. They merely talk about the problem (p. 488).

Highlighting Lewin's (1946) call for action around mutual concerns, Allport perhaps unwittingly underscores the importance not only of action, but of a 'collective we.' Anzaldúa (1999) elaborates this notion with her concept of *nos-otras*, whereby "we" and "others" are mutually implicated, linked by a diminishing hyphen. As I will discuss further in chapter 5, *Echoes* became a space of *nos-otras* through our practice of working power, purposeful inclusion, collaborative knowledge building, shared expertise, and shared goals. This in turn challenged more privileged members, like Elinor for example, to think deeply about her ideas and experiences, incorporating some and resisting others as she came to re-understand the ways she was privileged. An excerpt from one of her poems reveals her struggle through this process.

> *It doesn't feel good to be silent*
> *Except for when it does.*
> *Can't I be my own best friend?*
> *To keep thoughts and beliefs inside,*
> *Sometimes means more power to me.*
>
> *I was given two ears and one tongue*
> *Can't I listen more than I speak?*
> *Where is the harm in that?*
> *The 'lent' in silent means that I'm*
> *Giving that space back.*
> *To be quiet in public earned me*
> *The title Self-Righteous Ice Queen.*
>
> *I'm not frozen.*
> *Nothing is as warm as self.*

Echoes opened Elinor to new levels of intimacy and vulnerability and introduced her to the power of collaborative creativity and action. She continued to write with wonder and rage throughout the week about the racialized practices newly visible to her

within her desegregated suburban high school. This work – the deconstruction of privilege – is critical to PAR in spaces of mutual implication. If privilege is allowed to sit unchallenged, then seemingly integrated spaces will dangerously reproduce the damage of social stratification and injustice.

Elinor later joined this poem with another written by Natasha. Initially grouped together by one of the Poet Educators because their individual poems used similar language, Elinor and Natasha used the writing sessions to makes sense of their different experiences and understandings of silence. Each understood silence to be potentially powerful, and used the knowledge embedded in their difference, as well as their writings and relevant data from the Opportunity Gap study to ask questions of each other's positions. What is the difference between *being* silenced and *choosing* silence? When is silence personally powerful for one's own development, and when does it result in complicity or an absolution of social responsibility? When a high-powered person chooses silence is that an active way of providing space for others to speak? The final version of their collaborative poem ended with):

> Elinor: *42% of white American teenagers in public schools speak up*
> *when they hear racist comments.*
> Natasha: Bold
> Decisive
> Be fierce
> Be confident
> both: <u>*Be honest*</u>
> Elinor: *But what kind of schools do we have*
> *where 58% of white students don't speak out against hatred?*
> Natasha: Being quiet is a strong choice
> Elinor: *– except when it isn't.*

Working collaboratively with and through new questions of position and privilege, Elinor analyzed, challenged and refined her thinking on silence. This was a

crucial educational moment about when and how well-resourced students might critically consider the larger arrangements in which they/we sit (Burns, 2004). At first Elinor looked for safety and comfort in her silence, finding a form of protection in her privilege. However this comfort shifted to a more complicated *dis*comfort, as she recognized that it was privilege, *her* privilege, which afforded her this shelter. She carried this dilemma with her throughout her work with *Echoes*. It both informed her participation and creation just as her participation and creation helped her clarify her thoughts on the issue. This example illustrates the developmental importance of allowing differences of thoughts and positions to remain ‘unsolved’ and ‘unfixed’ by the group.

Just as expertise was understood to be ‘distributed’ across youth and adults, so too were needs, strengths and responsibilities. We tried to shift, as Vijayandra Rao and Michael Walton (2004) suggest, from “equality of opportunity” to “equality of agency,” strengthening the collective “capacity to aspire” which is inequitably distributed in the broader culture (Appadurai, 2004, p. 81). Recognizing how power dynamics encourage some of us to speak and participate more than others , we transgressively worked to cultivate voices and active listening skills, both individually and collectively, among those long oppressed and those long privileged. Our aim was to help build sinews of aspiration as a cultural capacity and the enactment of responsibility as a collective project. Each day we wove streams of collective participation and engagement around issues typically represented as the problems of ‘poor people’ or people of color, and as result, these problems were reframed as historical and structural, and the solutions were understood as our collective responsibility across the *Echoes* writings and conversations.

Organizing our work around shared expertise and responsibility allowed new kinds of relationships between youth, between adults and between youth and adults. These relationships fostered both individual and collective 'identity work,' where selves and the collective grew and developed as a result of each/other. Our varying experiences, strengths and expertise produced ongoing zones of proximal development in different groupings across the week, in which we were growing into the intellectual (and I would add) social/political/creative life around us (Vygotsky, 1978).

The experience of co-creating and learning from each other in this environment was so rich, several youth desired further collaborations:

María: *Elinor is somebody that you'd like to collaborate with in the future?*

Iri: *I think she's an incredible writer. She has so many metaphors and she has..she brings you into a whole 'nother world, you know? And I admire that a lot about her.*

María: *What kind of world does she bring you into?*

Iri: *She brings you to something that you've never thought before. Like the Twinkie [poem] That [the Twinkie]was a person or whatever. Who thinks of something like that, you know? She does, and that's what makes her so wonderful and beautiful and that would be cool if I could somehow try to make my standards as high as hers and try to go in and make her work better and make my work better by collaborating, and that would be awesome. And Emily, also. Emily is so strong, and she's such a strong writer. And I think she can do a lot of things with her writing. I would like to be a part of that, too, you know. I'd like to be a part of her growing and part of me growing and we can help each other and that'd be fun.*

Co-learning and co-producing also occurred between youth and adults, which sadly too often felt like a unique or special experience. As Iri explained:

And the one thing that I loved about Roger so much was that when he gave us an exercise, he was also writing about that exercise. He was also sharing with us what he had come with, what he had written down, and that was great, you know. He wasn't there just like looking after us and watching over us, making sure we didn't touch anything or anything like that.

Roger Bonair-Agard and Celena Glenn, two of the adult poet-educators were very hands on and participatory in their pedagogy. It was not uncommon to see them stretched out on the floor with other *Echoes* members working through spoken word pieces, making suggestions, being interrupted by youth; sometimes challenging ideas and other times deferring to youth suggestions.

Our commitment to shared expertise validated a set of perspectives that were voiced, re-worked and blended, gently, deliberately and intimately. Like a jazz performance, our differences, discordances, and rough edges were on display. Within the Institute, a space was opened for strategically, and collectively, engaging in a critical analysis of dominant ideologies and structural arrangements. While no one person stood as an embodiment of either privilege or oppression, our shared knowledge enabled us to disarticulate the naturalized ideologies and embodied workings, perversions, benefits, and assaults of social injustice, and create a different vision of what could be. This analytical work paved the way for the production of the spoken word pieces and performances, what Chantal Mouffe (1979) and Antonio Gramsci (1971) might call the young people's rearticulations of social arrangements.

Moving between ideology, systems, and individuals, this rearticulation work also encouraged each of us to reach in and meet parts of our identities not often recognized, or publicly exposed. As we saw earlier, for Elinor this meant a chance to think through her relationships to power, the privilege of silence (and the silence of privilege), and the vulnerability of participation. Elinor described this as a "fresh start," a rare moment to try a new set of selves:

Well being around a group of new people, that's like a completely fresh start. Like there wasn't…I don't know, I didn't feel like I was the kind of quiet sarcastic girl, you know, which comes out more in school…[laughs] in the beginning [of the Institute] the things I wrote were kind of like humorous, or like they were [laughs] surrealist. I guess they were a little more like, safe, but they were also more prosy. …And then as the week went on [I began] writing more in the style of poetry and then writing about choosing to be silent, which was so personal and which is like something that I know a lot of my friends say about me and I've never been able to defend that much to them. Well, because we don't really talk about it. But I know they think of me as quiet or as, not necessarily quiet, but not really sharing like really intimate things with them. And to be able to talk about that and then, think about my own school and tracking was really personal too. And I don't have too many spaces where I'm really honest about things that are difficult or painful.

Elinor used much of her time during *Echoes* wrestling through the now well known, and equally well silenced, race stratifications in her school (Fine et al., 2004). In an effort to think through how she had been benefitting, if ambivalently (Burns, 2004), from the racialized practices newly visible within what she once thought of as her desegregated suburban high school, Elinor placed herself at the "purplely red" center of the "problem." An excerpt from her poem "One Hand Clapping" reads:

Self segregation in my public high school
Different colored threads, on separate rolled spools.
Is this a topic on which I can speak?
Because my skin isn't brown
versus Board.

The Hispanic kids who sit in the Post Cafeteria—do I sit with them?
Well, no.
We get along. We get along well. One hand.
One hand of the solution.
But few kids have friends of other races.
Where is that other hand?

There was one black girl in my AP American class.
One day we read a poem comparing Booker T. to W.E.B.
And we all stared at Alana
waiting for her response.
Then we realized we were staring,
and slowly turned our heads, real casual,

like nothing had happened.

But it had.

…

Kids are taught at my school that communities are divided by race—
This is the norm. This is acceptable.
This blister of a problem, turning purplely red and filling with fluid as we speak:
My education, my school is shaped like a barbell,
And I'm only at one end.

In the beginning of the week, Elinor was asking herself and others about whether or not remaining silent in the face of injustice was problematic. By Thursday she was clear that *not* speaking up against racially inequitable settings could not be justified as neutrality. In her performance, after speaking the words, "*slowly [we] turned our heads, real casual, like nothing happened*," she wrote the following stage directions: LONG PAUSE, TURN OF THE HEAD, and then, LOOKING STRAIGHT AT THE AUDIENCE, and then inserted them before saying, "*But it had*." Elinor narrated, for fellow White students, and later, audience members, the damage wrought by refusing to speak out and turning away.

Finding nos-otras in a contact zone: Reworking selves and others

At the inception of the Opportunity Gap project, and then again with *Echoes,* we knew it was crucial to have representation from as many different young people across the schools and districts as possible. Recognizing that youth would have intimate knowledge about structural practices of their schools, we recruited youth researchers from all corners of the urban and suburban high school buildings they were representing. Initially, this unifying motivation was experienced differently across the youth

researchers. More privileged youth saw themselves as "working for" or "helping" those "less advantaged" (Torre, field notes, 10/19/05). However, the research camps and the empirical material itself provided a common space to intellectually wrestle with *and respond to* the injustices that defined the schools these young people attended. Whether it was through challenging the principal and PTA to get rid of AP classes after a devastating analyses of the exclusionary practices of the high tracked classes in their district, or questioning the in-school suspension policies in a school that disproportionately suspended African American male students, engagement in PAR allowed very differently positioned students to use research to acknowledge, theorize, *and act* on the ways they were mutually implicated in each other's lives. Take for example this series of conversations, youth writing and youth actions that occurred over the week-long *Echoes* Institute and the return to school the following fall.

On the Tuesday morning of the *Echoes* Institute, the research collective sat around our big table listening as Kendra Urdang, a White youth performer, work-shopped a draft of her poem, "Go Blue!" The poem was about segregation in her large, allegedly integrated, suburban high school. An excerpt reads:

> *And in the classrooms, the imbalance is subtle,*
> *undercurrents in hallways.*
> *AP classes on the top floor, special ed. in the basement.*
> *And although over half the faces in the yearbook*
> *are darker than mine,*
> *on the third floor, everyone looks like me.*
>
> *Though dark faces paint 55% of the hallways*
> *Segregation still reigns in the cafeteria, in AP class, in detention…*

Applause breaks out as she finishes, and the first to speak is Amir Billal Billups, an African American youth performer and researcher who had also worked on the Opportunity Gap project from a similar school in a neighboring school district:

I like how you used 55% dark faces – how you put in there, but how in the cafeteria it's very segregated, because in my school its like 51% Black and when you go in to the cafeteria – we have two cafeterias – and most of the White kids go out to lunch, and I mean, the rest of them [the White kids] stay in the new cafeteria and the rest of us are in the old cafeteria. That part of your poem really got to me.

Natatsha Alexander, an African American youth performer from New York City jumps in immediately after Amir, agreeing:

Yeah, it was easy for me to imagine your school, I went to a junior high school that was just like that. We didn't even have that tiny percent in between. There was the White kids and the Black kids. That was it. There was no in between. It was very segregated. We had the track system. The White kids and Black kids even had separate busses—because we went to different neighborhoods.

Later in the week Ariane Gilgeous, an African American youth performer, the youngest member of our collective and a student in New York City, shared a draft of her poem, "Tell Me if This Makes Sense?" An excerpt reads:

Tell me if this makes sense
I think I missed something
"The Policy of Separating..."
There was a policy?
A strategy to segregate?
Yeah, there was and now it has moved from policy to normalcy.
...
It's normal now for kids like me
Urban kids, Minority kids
To ask:
...
"Why am I the only Black, Asian, or Latina girl in my AP class?"

The following October, Elinor, a White youth performer from the wealthy suburb met Natasha and me for lunch to discuss an article we are coauthoring. She tells us of her frustrated efforts to convince her school to eliminate AP classes. Several weeks earlier, Elinor and classmate Joanna Roberts, another White youth performer from *Echoes*, were asked to join their assistant principal and the school PTA to address the small number of students of color in AP classes. Elinor recounts:

> "*They wanted us to help them think of ways of attracting more Black students into AP classes. And we told them that they should get rid of AP classes all together! They had it all wrong. We explained to them how tracking works and how it ends up segregating students and lowering expectations for the majority—but they didn't want to hear it. The parents were getting really upset*."

Having both benefited from the tracking systems at their school, Elinor and Joanna came to *Echoes* never questioning the unintended consequences of having a limited number of AP classes at their school. However, after being steeped in the Opportunity Gap data and work-shopping the poetry of peers with radically different experiences, they began to see their mutual implication – in this case the collateral damage of the system supporting their privilege – and their analyses of tracking began to shift.

By creating an environment of nos-otras within *Echoes*, one that valued and purposefully surfaced the history and expertise that each of the youth performers held about their local school environments, we soon had an aggregated set of experiences that could no longer be described as fair or neutral. Working together in our purposefully diverse group, Elinor, Joanna and others formed analyses that cut across their individual schools and left dominant explanations of educational injustice being randomly distributed lacking. Further, as Maxine Greene (2008) might have predicted, their collaborative critical thinking interrupted general understandings of the inevitability of inequality in large public school systems. Having studied tracking, high-stakes testing, and the Opportunity Gap data in the context of each other's experiences, inevitability faded to social/structural production. "To imagine is to think of things being otherwise," (Greene, 2008, p. 4) to create openings for critical thought. With the Echoes project we see how this critical thought, when developed in communities of nos-otras, can invite

social critiques that destabilize dominant (often oppressive) narratives and ideologies and produce new ideas and understandings.

Another example of this expansive analytical shift can be seen in the experience of Joanna. At the beginning of the Institute, Joanna described herself as "*feeling totally comfortable, and totally allowed to be myself in every situation.*" Yet, like many of the participants, she still felt a little unsure about her writing:

> *On Tuesday morning when we had our first read around, I felt like my piece kind of stuck out as like a kind of la-la fluffy piece. …Everyone else's poems were so powerful and kind of hard, like with sharp edges. That night I remember being like so frustrated that I couldn't get any hard edges out of myself to put on paper.*

However after one of the read-arounds when one of the Poet Educators pointed out the value in Joanna's point of view, she began to see her contribution to the whole:

> *That was like the moment where I realized that I can't doubt my own contribution to the project, because I was contributing a lot and so was everyone else. That all of us together made up the whole thing, not just any person, or any one writing.*

On the last day of the Institute, a reading of the youth spoken word was held at the Nuyorican Poets Café. Joanna's family came to the performance and later took her out for a celebratory dinner. Part of the ensuing family conversation was a challenge, echoing Amir's concerns in the "Harvey Milk conversation," that sometimes integration is implemented on the backs of particular populations. In recalling the discussion with her family, Joanna resists this argument,

> *I can't think of it that way, because that's not.. a constructive way to look at it. It's not like, I'm not..we're not sacrificing a certain group of people by keeping ourselves integrated … its not like minorities are outside looking in or inside looking out at this whole fight for social justice, because we're—what I learned this week, even though I'm not Black, or I'm not a minority, racism is still my problem, because its affecting me. And so its affecting everybody. So how could it be a sacrifice of just one group of people if we're all in the same situation? …[T]hat's the only way we can do this … it really is a together movement.*

Refusing a language of sacrifice, she continues on, learning from Amir about the importance for people who have been marginalized to "*hold on..or live in, your amazing culture, and, like Amir did, be so proud of your history, or start a club to find more about your history*." But she questions that effort when it takes place in separate spaces. "*Removing yourself from like..I don't know, I just don't think that's forward thinking, or moving as we need to get to where we want to go*."

While Joanna talks about an understanding of one's history and culture as something valuable, there is a sense of this knowledge as something 'extra' to pursue, like an extracurricular "club." Amir on the other hand, talks about this knowledge as life sustaining, describing his learning about his history and culture as an essential part of his education. However, for Joanna to share a similar articulation, she would have to sit with what it might mean practically – on emotional, physical, and academic levels – to attend a school that at best ignores, and at worst derogates, her history and culture. While she comes to recognize that racism and inequality negatively impact her even though she is White – and therefore the struggle to end segregationist school policies is her's as well – she slips into a position that shies away from how these policies differentially impact students, based on their race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, etc.

In the opening conversation Joanna talks about creating a sense of self through learning about others. She later adds another layer asking how to understand oneself not only in relation to others, but to injustice. Locating herself within the struggle for social justice was central for Joanna throughout the Institute. It is, in part, what informs her resistance to anything but a "together movement." If individuals choose to separate themselves, even for vital reasons, where does that leave the integrated space that she is

fighting for? Where does that leave White students from well-resourced communities, like her?

> *[I came to the Institute] being really accepting of everyone else, and then coming out [at the end], I felt like I was really accepted.* …[T]*hrough the week I thought, wow, I'm really lucky that these people are as open as I'm being, because I technically was, like me coming from where I am from, and being [a] White person, could have been..strange.*

A critical turn came for Joanna when she moved from understanding herself as working for justice *for* others to working *with* others for justice. In an interview she stated that working with "*the most diverse group in terms of ethnicity and 'diversity of thought'"* made her "*more of a genuine person."* For the first time she had the opportunity to work, fully supported, through complex thinking about integration, privilege, and social movements, and begin to articulate her role and responsibility to the larger struggle for educational equity.

> *[W]hen you're all fighting for the same thing having such different experiences and such different world views, and you're all coming together to work for the same goal. ..[I]t just adds …so many different levels. [You] ask more questions and come up with more solutions when you're coming from different experiences*.

From a common goal to shared goals

Allport (1954) theorized that intergroup contact would be most effective if it were centered around a common goal – though he clarified, and this has often been lost in the work that followed, that the goal need not be focused on intergroup relations itself. The *Echoes* project underscores the importance of having a common goal that is not necessarily intergroup relations. Though our work was interested in equality and justice across race, ethnicity, and other forms of difference, group relations within the collective itself was not the focus. Our common goal was multilevel. We each shared a desire for educational justice and together we were organized around an effort to create a

performance of legacy of Brown v the Board of Education through data, dance and spoken word. Both of these commitments were requirements of participation. In addition we explicitly stated that we assumed and expected each of us as collaborators to have our own intellectual/political/family/social commitments and interests that would inform the project as a whole and/or directions it might take. Tahani, for example, brought her commitment to Palestinian liberation and desire to speak back to racist treatment towards Arab people. Amir brought his commitment to African American civil rights and concern for young Black men. As a result our common goal shifted to *shared goals*. And our goals required sufficient flexibility so that they could be determined by the group.

Having the cooperatively strived for shared goals be matters of justice and equality, engendered a profound level of respect and commitment among the group that was then translated into high levels of individual and collective engagement – critical listening, learning, imagining and creating. An example of this can be seen in the development of Amir Billal's poem "Classification" which he shared on the final day of the Institute. His poem directly addressed his personal experiences as well as the larger injustice committed to students who have been classified as in need of special education. An excerpt from *Classification* reads:

> *The classification caused me to break into tears. It was my frustration. My reaction to teachers speaking down to me saying I was classified*
> *and it was all my fault.*
> *Had me truly believing that inferiority was my classification. Cause I still didn't know, and the pain WAS DEEP. The pain—OH GOD! THE PAIN! The ridicule, the constant taunting, laughing when they passed me by.*
> *Told me that community college should be my goal.*
> *It wasn't until Ms. Cooper came and rescued me with her history class.*
> *Showed me the importance of my history and told me the secrets*
> *my ancestors held.*

She told me about the Malcolm Xs and the Huey Newtons.
She told me to speak out because this is the story of many
and none of them are speaking.
And the silence is just as painful.

With a deep understanding of the scope of the injustice and a sense of responsibility to others in similar situations, Amir decided to use the *Echoes* Institute as a forum to speak out.

> *I was thinking on the way over [to the Institute] one day, this thing is dedicated to getting people out of problems. …And I thought about how much it hurt me one day when I [realized] how they were—they were honestly segregating special education kids from the rest of the school. Like there was a constant effort to do so. It wasn't..that blatant, but that's exactly what they were trying to do. And the pain I felt that day..[my friend] Anthony had to calm me down, because I was really angry. It actually brought me to tears. So I'm like, why wouldn't I bring something like that, to the [Echoes] group? I felt that I grew close enough to them to tell everyone…Because it's a really dangerous thing. That's why I said [in my poem] that the silence is just as painful, because like no one, honestly, no one's speaking about it. And that's what's killing us. And so I wasn't just talking on behalf of me; I was talking on behalf of everybody in it.*

In a post-Institute interview, Amir, who had been a youth researcher in the Opportunity Gap study, expanded on why he chose to expose his personal struggles at the Institute rather than during our work together during the Opportunity Gap study. Prior to writing *Classification*, no one in *Echoes* or the Opportunity Gap research team had known that Amir was a special education student.

> *I just saw it as an opportunity, you know? …[I]f I get it out here [at the Institute], it'll go directly where I want it to go. To the people who are doing it. …[I]f I didn't use this [opportunity], it would be foolish of me, it would be stupid, and I couldn't call myself any type of activist or whatever you want to label me.*

Amir came to understand the space of the Institute as a supportive collective committed to educational justice (including his personal political agenda) and to working across and through power differences. In this instance Amir recognized that as a member of this collective, he could capitalize on the power networks of the higher-powered

members – the graduate students and faculty that had greater access to foundations, policy-makers, and publishers. The diversity of the power relationships within the group enabled Amir to further his political concerns beyond his individual means. Seeing this level of possibility, he pushed himself past what was comfortable and took a personal risk within the collective.

> *Things in special education, like anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, that makes you feel like you're less..has power over you. [It] makes you scared to talk about it, and it's powerful. What I was doing in the poem was reducing what special education was to me. The fact that I could tell somebody I was in it, showed that I was actually overcoming it—not just talking about it. Yeah, you know, [it's] like kind of like when someone's really scary, you don't even want to say their name. But once you keep saying their name…it shows that you're not really afraid. I felt uncomfortable reading [my poem] ... And I still kind of do, whenever I read it. Because it still has a little power over me.*

In revealing such a personal struggle and making himself so vulnerable to the group, Amir's risk allows for a poignant moment of learning for other participants. And in his participation, he shifts from a student in need of special tutors, to an educator in his own right.

In addition to working within a movement with a deep sense of purpose, Echoes members worked as leaders and inventors. Iri reflected on how this and to my view about the collective high expectations during of the Institute:

> Iri: *Everyone knew what they were doing, and everyone knew that they had a purpose in that area in the group and that's what made it so comfortable during the week."*
>
> María: *But we did have super-high expectations for you and we asked you to do lots and lots of stuff.*
>
> Iri: *Absolutely. But it wasn't something we didn't know you were going to do, you know. We knew what we were getting ourselves into and that's why we did our best to do what we could, you know. We weren't like given an essay last minute, like, oh, you have a fifteen page essay to do by the end of the week, or something, you know. Everything was steps, and we*

> *worked together, you know. It wasn't like, here, I'm going to go have a cigarette downstairs. When I come back, if you're done, you're done; if you're not, you have a zero, or something, you know. We all worked together.*

Iri describes how being a part of a respect-filled, growing community of researchers, artists, and activists, fed a collective sense of great expectations – expectations of a world that understands the profound importance of equal opportunities and resources for all people. Emily, a young Latina who started her first year of college after the Institute, eloquently reflects how she realized that she was now part of such a community during the last writing assignment of the Institute:

> *[E]veryone was really quiet and everyone was really thinking. I thought it was so cool to sit and hear the scratching of other pens and pencils besides my own. I thought that my pen was the only one moving to the rhythm of social justice. But now it's defiantly apparent that other pens and pencils are listening to the same beat.*

Solidarity: Reframing the support of authorities, laws, or customs

Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that the support of authorities, laws, or customs was Allport's condition with the most significant impact for optimal intergroup contact. In *The Nature of Prejudice,* Allport (1954) adds parenthetically, "and if possible, the sanction of the community in which they occur" (p. 498). When engaging PAR on issues of social justice, this condition is often impossible to achieve. In the case of *Echoes,* the issues we were documenting, performing, and organized around (or against) – racial and educational injustice – were the conditions being supported by authorities, laws, and customs. Our very practice could be understood as counter-work, in that we were speaking back to 'the authorities, laws, and customs' by revealing evidence of historic injustice (Apfelbaum, 2001; Carney, 2001; Harris & Fine 2001). However Allport's parenthetical, if interpreted broadly, is interesting. While it is unclear that *all*

communities that were relevant to our work, (i.e. the local communities surrounding the schools that were the focus of the Opportunity Gap project, or the communities that some of the *Echoes* members hailed from) supported or 'sanctioned' the work, a larger community – a local and national movement for educational and racial justice – most certainly did. The sanction and support of this community/movement was evidenced daily by the elders, visiting scholars, and other visitors (educators, funders, interested graduate students), that flowed through the week. Sharing in the solidarity of this movement intensified feeling of importance and urgency in our collective work. This spirit, that of participating in a larger social justice movement, encouraged *Echoes* members to expand shared goals and connect the conversations and writings that were happening in the Institute to issues of injustice they were interested or involved with in other parts of their lives. An example of this can be seen in *Rap Star* a poem about the school to prison pipeline (The Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000) that Natasha wrote after witnessing a young African American man get arrested during the week of the Institute.

> Natasha: *Writing "Rap Star" was a very interesting experience for me. My inspiration for the poem came from seeing a kid get arrested. This cop grabbed this African American kid saying to him "get in the car rap star." It hit me like a ton of bricks. Hearing the cop say that to this kid, made me think, damn is that all he really is to you--just a 'rap star? And then I thought to myself, "you know what, that's probably what that kid thinks about himself too". So I wrote about it. Unfortunately it was not ready for the first performance of "Echoes" but after I received constructive criticism from the group and reworked it in the writing workshops, it made it into the final performance. I have been really surprised how it seems to hit home with very different audiences.*

An excerpt of her poem reads:

> *Simply being gifted*
> *Was your limitation*
> *Not encouraged to be a doctor or teacher*

Made to believe that
Your only true place of success
Is in being some sort of entertainer or athlete

Talk in the staff meeting
Not about your B+ paper
But about how many yards you can throw a football
Or your three point shot
Or your beautiful tenor voice

You're behind bars now
Upon you those teachers look down
Because they say they put all their time into you
Your path is what you choose, right?
I guess they were never taught that teachers have a high calling

Oh Rap Star, the basement is just cold
No stage lights, hoes and cars
No buying rounds of drinks at bars
Just the silent memories of young men in this cell before you
Echo from window to door
You can feel it from ceiling to floor
You're dead to the core
You felt this before
About to be shipped off
Too far from the freedom
You were once used to
The liberty God gave you
The only real privilege you were born into

Gone, gone with the bang of a gavel
In a court room
Where Justice, who can't see
Points arms outstretched to sentence you
To life, to real life, to the rest of your life
To the life of so many other young men like you
Who share this same fate too.

Natasha: *People have had very strong reactions to my poem – they have told me its 'so beautiful', 'so moving', 'so powerful' which makes me wonder, how can we take this power and emotion and turn it into action? It's true that words are powerful, but they are not enough. My poem is really nothing in comparison to what needs to happen.*

After a recent performance, a reporter from a newspaper in Manila asked me to send him a copy of 'Rap Star' because he thought the issues were relevant to young men in the Philippines – which made me think about

> *young men of color all over the world and about the similarities of their experiences, the injustices they face…similar even to some ethnic White kids in the US, like Bosnians, Albanians who go to my school. I just can't stop thinking that all this came from a poem that I wrote, imagine what could come of a coalition of young people – not like the YMCA – but something like Echoes, something gives us the space, resources and partners to build and realize our dreams – to fight for a better more equal world where being a rap star is just one of many careers, where visions of our future are more than entertainment and sports. I want to be an attorney, but I don't want to have to wait 'til I'm older to start fixing this mess we are in. I've already been to Albany, I have things to offer right now!*

Erika Apfelbaum (2001) writes "*the imperative to tell – the vital urge not to forget – is driven by the imperative to transit; to the 'awakening of others*" (p. 30). By bearing witness to the ideologically normalized institutional, interpersonal and embodied webs of injustice, we hoped to plant cues for interruption. In this spirit, Natasha's poem was included in the culminating performance of Echoes as well as in a youth directed documentary about the school to prison pipeline produced by Global Action Project. She calls for action on the silently swelling prison industrial complex that is eating communities of color in the U.S. Echoing Apfelbaum, Natasha epitomized our collective desire to bear witness, and dared the audience to do the same.

In the same vein, Yasmine wrote *Call to Action* a poem dedicated to those "who have a chair in the meetings that are supposed to make a difference." In her version of 'what democracy looks like' we all must join the fight for equality. An excerpt reads:

> *You must speak up for your words are arrested*
> *You must speak up for your words are congested*
> *You cannot afford to stop here!*
> *You are not given any more than you can bare…*
> *Ah, If I could just share with you how much my generation has in store.*
> *I'm not talking about pushing others to the floor –*
> *…We have work to do, I encourage you to not die with your work balled up in your fist.*
> *Time is of Essence.*

At the end of the Institute all of theyouth members of *Echoes* wrote down their thoughts about the week (see Table 5). The reflections demonstrate a personal dedication to social change work, the sense of community created in *Echoes*, a desire to bring the justice work of the week into their home towns and communities, a determination to connect past struggles with future ones, and a call for others to join in the fight. Further, across the writings a nos-otras emerges, a 'diverse we' woven together by personal and collective commitments to social change.

Table 5. *Youth experiences after the Institute for Arts and Social Justice*

Natasha Alexander – Echoes has been an outstanding learning experience. Having the opportunity to work with such a diverse group of people, dancers, writers, other students, all who feel the same about injustice was just amazing – something I will remember forever.

Amir Bilal Billups – I'd like to bring the energy and love from this project into my town to help us deal with the issues of race that face us all. No one wants to talk about it but we must come together because it's causing problems in our school. We all have the right to a quality education. Power to the People!

Yasmine Blanding – This experience has truly been a blessing. All of us coming together full of so many differences and yet with the same motivation is just incredible. In unity desiring to speak up, out, and against educational injustices, that is being recycled…it's just exciting…wonderful…a space for hope…prosperity in its purity. Educational injustice – labeling, classifying, tracking – must be corrected or we will forever be mis-educating our future.

Malan Bullock – Our voices, echoes of the past, are designed to stimulate the future. Through our work we time traveled to a place that slipped into the present. We present here the tribulations of our journey as well as those of history. We give voice to the past and at the same time a warning for the future. Don't be afraid, Act!

Emily Genao – The Echoes project has been one of the most amazing things I have ever been a part of – intense, enlightening, inspiring, and fun. I met and collaborated with people that I would not have otherwise given a second glance. Over hours of writing and learning and talking together, we went from strangers to people I've come to love, trust, respect, and admire. I raise a glass in your honor. We need to ride this wave until it crashes onto the shore. Our group of thirteen is justice's lucky number.

Ariane Ashley Gilgeous – If you see discrimination going on around you try not to stay silent. It may be hard but try anyway. We can't give up on make the world a better place to live in.

Elinor Marboe – Though American history, I've learned that Supreme Court decisions are the only as effective as the people who carry them out. If President Andrew Jackson had actually followed John Marshall's Supreme Court ruling that the Cherokee Nation was a separate state beyond the jurisdiction of the Federal government, the United States treatment of Native Americans might have been less shameful in the years that followed. The Echoes Project has taught me Brown v. Board of Education is only as effective as I make it.

Annique Roberts – Participating in this project has been a true blessing and challenge. The stories we are telling are not just ours, they are the passed down tales of our parents and grandparents – their struggles for justice and equality in a world where classism and racism socialize our voices to speak against injustice in our schools but more so the intolerance in our minds and hearts.

Joanna Roberts – Self segregation occurs on many levels everywhere, but it doesn't scare me. In the first week of my senior year, overcome with an urge to open my world, I introduced myself to six new students from India, Milan, the Ukraine, Russia and Norway and invited them to eat lunch with me. As we sat together on the grass, sharing funny stories and highlights of summer, preconceived barriers were broken down before our eyes by our bravery. Newness is thrilling; reach out to expand yourself.

Tahani Salah – The youth of today are the footsteps of the revolution. Our work with Echoes is the vision of History and the building blocks of our honor.

Iralma (Iri) Osorio Sorondo – We must be the architects of our brighter future – this program was a stepping stone for that future that encloses the equality of all people whether dark or light. If we look outside our boxes, we can learn, together, that skin only travels so deep.

Kendra Urdang – What I feel most strongly about in this project is the opportunity we have been given to produce change. Racial injustice in education is a very important issue in America, but one that few people think about. Here we all are, kids from every background, who have come together to talk truthfully about race. This opportunity is very unique, especially as most people try so hard to be PC about race, instead of honest.

Chapter 4

Echoes of Echoes over Time

Subject: Long ramble
Date: Thu, November 19, 2009 6:14:56 PM
From: Elinor Marboe <emarboe@xxxx.com>
To: mtorre <metorre@yahoo.com>

Dear Maria,

How are you? I hope you're doing well, and I've been thinking a lot about you. In fact, I could use some advice, although I'm not exactly sure how to phrase it as a question. I had a difficult, interesting, thought-provoking conversation recently. There's been no real outcome from the conversation, but I think about it frequently. And the more I think about it, the more frustrated I become. (Quick background-- I was in Israel for a year, working for an environmental-coexistence organization. I'm back in New York now, and trying to move to DC).

I'm on a walk around DC with a friend and we pass by the National Cathedral. It's beautiful, lit up at dusk, and we start talking about the Cathedral. I've never been inside, but it's closed anyhow, so we can't go in. I say it's a lovely building, and it's a shame that it has to be called the National Cathedral, when in fact, it's just an Episcopalian Cathedral, one that does not represent our nation. My friend, let's call him Bob, says, Oh come on, it's part of our national heritage. They have state functions here, Presidential funerals, Martin Luther King gave his final speech here. So the conversation continues, I argue that, as pretty as it is, by its nature a Cathedral is a symbol of exclusion, as America is not a Christian state. He says, America has historically been

shaped by many Protestant ideas, and just because we are more sensitive to minority groups now doesn't mean we should tear down the building. I say, America has been shaped by many strains of intellectual thought. And we don't need to tear the building down, just rename it the Episcopal Cathedral of Washington. How would you feel if we used federal tax money to build a beautiful National Mosque in DC? Bob says, "That would never happen." I say, "You're right, that would never happen. There would be a public outrage over the separation of church and state." [As it turns out, no federal tax money was used to build the cathedral, I found out later, but at the time we assumed it had.]

Ok, so the discussion got a bit heated, but it's still fun, we're sparring back and forth. The walk continues. Eventually we sit down to dinner, still discussing inclusion and exclusion in the U.S. The longer we talk, the more I realize that, although I've known Bob for years, I have assumed that the way he sees society is closer to my view than it actually is. So, trying to understand more about how he thinks, I ask-- Bob, do you think of yourself as privileged? He says no. This is where things got interesting. Bob is white, he grew up in Michigan. He graduated from Harvard, and now works for the State Department. I am surprised by his answer. I ask him what he thinks privilege means. He says "Being privileged, that's like Gossip Girl. That's like my cousins in Chicago. Growing up and having everything you want. It's the top-tier."

So then I say, Ok, so your definition of privilege sounds like a tax bracket, right? I think privilege means something more like a systematic advantage you have in society. People may have privilege in some areas, but not others. People with privilege may not

even be aware they have it. And he says, Well, I don't exactly agree, but yes, I certainly can see that everyone's experience is different, and I can never fully understand someone else's experience.

So then, sort of intrigued, and also sort of dreading the answer, I ask "Do you think it's a privilege to be white in America?" He says "No. Not a privilege. Sometimes it's an advantage, sometimes it's a disadvantage. Just like being black in America is sometimes an advantage, sometimes a disadvantage." He goes on to describe a member of his high school class, a black student who Bob describes as tall and handsome and elected to student government, and the star of the athletic teams, who had an advantage when applying to college. "He was much more privileged than I was. I would have loved to be that handsome and popular in school."

This was a game changer. I couldn't quite believe it for a second. I remember pausing for a long time, unsure how to continue. What do you say to that?

Bob said being black is an advantage if you want to go into certain fields, or live within certain neighborhoods. I argued back, saying even if there were certain situations where it worked to an "advantage", still, our society at large systematically gives whites an advantage, and white privilege is at work, in subtle and obvious ways, all over, if you open your eyes.

I flashed back to other conversations Bob and I have had, about getting rid of Native American mascots, or some off-hand remark McCain made about Arab Americans. And each time, although he argued well, Bob's point had always been, Elinor, you're being too sensitive about this. And when I heard him say, point blank, he

doesn't think being white is a privilege, I thought--Wow. He's taken this to another level. If you don't really like women's colleges, fine, let's talk about it. But not understanding that being white is a position of power in the US? Are you kidding me? That's so basic. Of course we weren't seeing eye-to-eye about women's colleges. We disagree on something much more fundamental. And some part of me thought-- I respect you a little less now.

So, it went on from there. I tried to talk about different fields of privilege-- white privilege, class privilege, heterosexual privilege, able bodied privilege. He claimed he'd never heard these terms before. I was frustrated, I found that hard to believe. He wrote his thesis on differences in summer opportunities for youth in Michigan! He took sociology classes in college, more than one.

It went on from there, but it got less and less productive. He talked about economic status being much much more important than race in deciding one's fate. I tried to argue. Mostly I remember going from irritated to angry. At one point, I definitely said, "How convenient that your definition of privilege is carefully set up to describe other people, and never yourself." He said "Elinor, that was harsh." But the more I argued, the more weak and fragmented my arguments became. I remember thinking "I need backup." I tried to remember statistics for average net savings for white, black, and hispanic americans and fumbled. I started talking faster and getting more unnerved, and he was sitting calmly in the chair. "Elinor, I've never seen you this upset," Bob said to me.

"ARRGHHHH You make me so angry right now!" was what I wanted to reply. I refrained.

I was frustrated at Bob personally, but I was also frustrated by how poorly I presented my point of view. I was really baffled. When asked to explain my point of view, I was flustered, and then became angry at him. Neither of those tactics is going to make Bob think that my points have much merit. So, I want to be less flustered next time.

I picked up two books, White Like Me by Tim Wise and Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria by Beverly Tatum. I'm looking for more reading material, and while browsing online, I saw your name on Amazon. And I thought, maybe I should share this with Maria.

I have done a lot of thinking about Echoes recently, and remembering when I was presented with ideas that were new to me, and which I often, in my own head, thought were being blown out of proportion. I'm trying to keep that in mind when I think about Bob. And I want to reopen the conversation with him, but not yet, because I still feel like a burning fuse.

Any guidance you have would be very welcome. Books to read, or ideas about how to approach Bob again, or reflections on the situation itself, anything you want to share.

With lots of appreciation,

and sending good thoughts your way,

Elinor

An unintended birthday present, I received this email (presented as she sent it) from Elinor on November 19, 2009. A frustrating conversation with a long time friend about white privilege inspired her to reach out to me. At the time she sent the email we had not spoken or emailed in months. In the 5 years since *Echoes*, we had been in touch a handful of times. In our conversation she often shares what she has coined "*Echoes* moments," experiences she describes as moments that make her think about difference, the consequences of contact, or how power and privilege operate. In this chapter I will discuss the "traveling power" (Futch, 2008) of *Echoes*, or the ways it moved over time through the lives of the youth researchers and performers. In addition I will describe the ways their experiences as they narrate them echo back to the early contact research, demonstrating the potential extended outcomes from a contact zone.

Over the five years since the Echoes Institute, I have followed the experiences of the youth involved through periodic phone calls, emails (both of which were often initiated by former *Echoes* members) and then over the summer of 2009 in a round of semi-structured "*Echoes* plus five" interviews. My intention in conducting these follow up interviews was to engage a longitudinal analysis of the impact of contact, something I did not come across in the early contact literature which relied heavily on attitude surveys and later on one-time experiences. I was particularly interested in the impact of contact that had taken place in a contact zone.

As I set about the follow up interviews in 2009, my expectations were modest. After all, even though I had been talking and writing about *Echoes* regularly in the last five years, it seemed reasonable that the youth involved would have filled their lives with other things. I was confident that *Echoes* was a significance experience, but how much

impact could one week and a series of intermittent Saturdays have? I found myself somewhat self-conscious of this in the 2009 interviews, beginning questions like "Do you ever think about *Echoes*? When/how does it come up? How have you described Echoes to others over the years?" with a qualifier, "I know you probably haven't been steeped in the everyday of *Echoes*, the way I have been lately, but…" However, I was surprised to learn that the intellectual and emotional shifts and commitments of *Echoes* were still quite present across the youth involved. As you will see below, the desires expressed at the end of the Institute, i.e., for personal change, to engage their local communities in justice work, to create alliances, and to bring others into the struggle through education and activism, remain.

Three things stood out most significantly across the interviews: the impact of our social positioning on our opportunities, the amount of involvement in social justice activities, and the reoccurring yearning for integrated spaces where power and difference were engaged. As one might expect, the range of difference in our relationships to power privilege continued to play out in each of our lives, not over-determining, but most certainly influencing our trajectories over the years. Those of us who attended schools that left us less academically prepared, who had less financial support, or had fewer social networks to boost us, not only had more difficult paths to travel, but also faced more serious consequences when we miss-stepped.

Of the eleven former *Echoes* members I interviewed five years out, eight graduated from college, two are still attending, and one never went. All are employed, though three (all of whom are African American and grew up working class) are in lower wage blue collar/service industry jobs. Two are married to each other and have recently

had a son named poem! One other member has a child (three children have been born to the group altogether). Of the nine who are not married, many reported lovers but none talked about long-term relationships. However, independent of race/ethnicity, religion, education, having children, or working in a job that nourishes you, 73% reported being involved in social justice activities. Either through their jobs or organizing eight out of the eleven were working on something justice related, whether it be around education, housing, poverty, racism, food, or the environment, former *Echoes* members were still actively trying to make change.

Perhaps most striking about the 2009 interviews was the unanimous desire for more spaces like *Echoes.* Members each talked about, and some repeatedly, how unique *Echoes* was and how they have tried, for the most part unsuccessfully, to find other integrated spaces (for work, living, or socializing) where people honestly engage difference, power and privilege. Across all the interviews there was sadness about this finding, and in a few (Kendra, Amir, Natasha) there was a sense of disillusion that this was the case. However even with this sentiment there were repeated examples of members engaging in '*Echoes* moments' such as in Elinor experiences above. As a result, I was left with a feeling that work we engaged together to create the performance, in May 2004 was still in progress.

Seeking and Creating Spaces for Contact

As Elinor references in her email, the young woman I met during the summer of 2004 was unfamiliar with the range of social, economic and educational disparities common to many of the other youth participants in *Echoes.* Further, when she listened to her peers talk about their experiences, she thought they were "being blown out of

proportion" or "exaggerated" to use her words of the day. However, by the end of the *Echoes* Institute, after having read through the Opportunity Gap data and integrated her understanding of the findings with discussions of school experiences with her *Echoes* peers and with the scholars, activists and Elders who joined us during the week, Elinor's ideas shifted. She introduced more facts from the data into the content of her poetry and more lines that revealed her own wrestling with her social positionings in relation to the politics of the 'opportunity gap' as it played out locally in her school and at large (see chapter 3).

Her personality in her work remained – her clever use of words, her questioning and interest in debate – but her understanding of justice, of responsibility, of 'deservingness,' of what constitutes community, changed. In the week we worked together and in the school year afterward I saw repeated evidence of this, in the time since I have witnessed further change. As evidenced by her email above, Elinor has continued developed a keen analysis of power, privilege, and justice which adds layers to her understandings of social personal (and collective) responsibility and I would argue, a broad moral community (see Opotow, 1995).

During *Echoes*, the experience of work-shopping her poetry and that of her peers, participating in knowledge-building sessions and dance exercises to co-produce the performance, not only expanded Elinor's intellectual stance, but caused it to shift. Her experience of these layered activities that allowed her to interact in different ways – intellectually, artistically and culturally – is reminiscent of those in the workshops of Dubois and Li (1955) whose participants also engaged one another through multiple activities. Although unlike the activities of Dubois and Li, where participants followed

the lead of the facilitator, in *Echoes* Elinor, determined the course and content of the activities. Elinor's repositioning, it turns out, was just the beginning of a process for her. After *Echoes* she attended Wellesley University, an all-women's college in Massachusetts, where she majored in Classical Studies. At the beginning of one of her first summers home, I got a call from her, "*María! You'll never guess where I'm working this summer?! In Brooklyn! Want to meet for coffee?*" Elinor was living at home that summer with her parents in Larchmont, 45 minutes north of New York City, but she had decided to work at an Arab day camp in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. The trip would take her an hour and 40 minutes each way.

> *I decided I really need to better understand what's going on with the whole Arab Israeli conflict and how Arabs are being treated here. I don't really know that much about it so I thought I should learn, and they're willing to have me, you know? I thought about Tahani when I was going out the first time on the train and what she would think. I think she would think it's a good idea.*

Elinor continued to be drawn to contact zones. After college she worked for a year (2008-2009) at the Arava Institute in southern Israel, an environmental co-existence program on a kibbutz a half an hour from the Jordanian and Egyptian borders. In an email she wrote me while she was there you can see how her analytical lenses have now come to incorporate a perspective that assumes contact zones as a critical epistemology. In other words, to deny conversations about history and power (i.e. politics) is to then deny the learning and knowing that can happen among the group. With this we see Elinor enacting a sophisticated revision of Dubois and Li's (1955) Group Conversation Method, holding on to their belief in intergroup exchange and adding an analysis of power.

> The program brings together Israelis, Arab Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanianas, and Americans to study for a semester or a year. All the course work is on

environmental issues, both hard science and policy. The professors mostly do work on transboundary environmental issues, like air quality, shared groundwater, things like that. And then the students are all required to take a non-credit course on peace-building. You'll like this tidbit—the first year they ran the program, the expat Americans all thought 'We'll bring together science students from around the Middle East to learn about the environment, and leave politics aside.' But of course, what ended up happening is that the students were polite to each other, but there was a great deal of tension below the surface, which people would whisper about amongst themselves and not address. Because environmental studies shouldn't be political, but of course they are. When you're talking about Mekorot, the national water carrier in Israel, and how they allocate water rights to occupied Palestinian territories, of course there's going to be tension! So instead of having people whispering, and the occasional heated argument break out with no mechanism for dialogue, they started this extra course. Now people talk about everything – resource allocation, the '67 war, right of return – all the time, and it doesn't have to be the pink elephant in the room.

Elinor, who once used to dodge the tensions and dynamics of pink elephants (recall the "third categories" she would carve out for herself to get out of difficult conversations), is now awkwardly attracted to them, having a clear understanding of all the knowledge and potential they hold. In her conversation with "Bob" she counters his relative and dismissive understanding of privilege which is 'conveniently' and "*carefully set up to describe other people, and never yourself*" with a strongly intersectional and structural approach of power and privilege similar that which she encountered in *Echoes*. Her frustration at both his political analysis and the recognition of their "fundamental" ideological differences, manifests itself in her body as well as her mind. Her description of "talking faster and getting more unnerved" as Bob "was sitting calmly in the chair," reveals not only how deeply felt her beliefs are, but how she has changed over time. The Elinor that I knew during *Echoes* was unusually calm. Silly and excited at times, but never flustered in a conversation. If anything she would get quiet and withdraw. Her email closes with her desire to reopen the conversation with Bob. Rather than writing

him off, she looks to build a bridge by doing more reading and by stepping back into her experience of *Echoes* and her memories of how it felt when she confronted new ideas that contradicted her worldview.

Exercising Solidarity

Joanna graduated from Mamaroneck High School and went on to Brown where she designed her own major ("*completely inspired by Echoes—how many of us were*?") in arts for social change which brought together studio arts, history, grassroots organizing, and field work. She described her experience in *Echoes* as being fundamental in shaping her interests that she further explored in college. "*I think about that work and everyone all the time*." Joanna is now in Louisiana, working in a nonprofit in New Orleans' 7th ward, called the Porch 7th Ward Cultural Organization. In her 2009 interview she described how she moved down to New Orleans to "*do physical rebuilding work*" but just before getting there,

> *I began to learn about the complicated politics of who benefits, who's being impacted by all the new building, who's being displaced and so on. You have to look at whose interests are being served. I decided to work for a small grassroots community based cultural organizing project instead. It's made up of people who are mostly in public housing, so it turns out that I am doing work with housing – but through the arts. Right now I'm in the middle of running our summer camp.*

In her decision she reveals that her reorientation to work *with* and not *for* that occurred at the end of the Institute has had a lasting impact. Further she has maintained and continued to develop a critical social justice perspective, resisting what was once her liberal impulse "to help," that produced a structural analysis of what it meant to 'rebuild' New Orleans.

Like Joanna, Kendra determined her own pathway in college, majoring in Human Rights and Creative Writing, two departments whose courses "didn't really talk to each other" at Bard. Making the connections between her courses on her own, Kendra got involved in teaching poetry workshops to men and women in New York State prisons. She carried out this work for a couple of years before graduating and described it as among her most meaningful experiences in college. Kendra echoed others in her frustration and sadness in not being able to find the integrated communities she desires to be a part of. Her friends in college, who were mainly studying arts and literature, "*did not engage politics or the world around them much, like it wasn't in their daily consciousness*." As she continued to describe her experiences at Bard, it was clear that not only was there a lack of physical diversity, honest engagement of difficult conversations – discussions that allowed participants to engage disparate views – were also scarce.

> *A really big problem I had with Bard was its lack of diversity. That and how it was a political school, fair amount of activism, but the people involved were always the same group of people, and it didn't reach out to the community at large. [Being in college] just reminded me; it made me realize how much of a bubble I lived in. I think, like, coming to Echoes from a place like Montclair, where that sort of platform for discussion was already established for me, I don't think I realized how special Echoes was until I got to college. And, like, I was in a similar academic institution and like nothing like that [Echoes] existed. And there (in college) I didn't have many 'Echoes moments.' I had a lot of times where I was like, I don't really know what they're talking about. Or like, maybe that teacher should let them speak, instead of shushing them because they thought it wasn't going to be politically correct, or whatever it was. I don't know, I think there was a lot of tip-toeing around issues and not wanting people to get upset. Or like really wanting to upset other people. So, I don't think there was much communicating going on.*

In her comments, Kendra holds an expectation of connection – between disciplines, between her college and the community it sits within, between disparate, even unpopular

points of view. After experiencing what radical diversity can produce, when expertise is legitimated across difference, conflicting contradictory ideas are engaged and histories and communities are incorporated, Kendra finds the alternative problematic. As she describes, the politeness and fear of "tip-toeing" shuts down meaningful "communication."

In the summer before her last year of college Kendra worked in a florist shop in London, an experience that shifted what she wanted to do after graduation.

> *I loved how people responded to flowers, how they brought such joy and happiness into people's lives. It's even better with vegetables, because now you get to eat it! … It's really different from what I was doing but the core sentiment is the same, you know? The things I love about writing and about teaching and about working with people all apply to farming and gardening and getting people exciting about where their food comes from. It's all the same passion for community, and nature, and observing what's around you.*

Kendra has since worked at the New York Botanical Garden, growing vegetables with kids and teaching community members how to do container gardening. From there she farmed for a season on Martha's Vineyard. Currently she is living and working in Brooklyn.

Building Bridges for Action

Amir became the history teacher he imagined in 2004, after graduating from St. Peter's College. Like Kendra, his few critiques about college revolved around the challenge of finding activist oriented people who were involved in meaningful ways with the surrounding community. As he described his experiences, he mentioned the many people he encountered whose world-view was very different from his. His response to these situations was almost uniformly to reach out and build a bridge between himself and those who "*were not quite there yet*." One instance occurred in one of his Urban

Studies courses. A White, female classmate made a statement about how people on welfare should not have children they cannot support. Amir turned to her and asked her if she meant he should not have been born.

> *My Mom was really bad off when I was born; really she's always had to struggle – even now. And I come from a big family. I wanted this girl to understand what she was really saying, you know? So I asked her a question, I said, do you think my mother should have aborted me?*

After the class Amir had lunch with her and continued the conversation. When I asked why, he said that what she said bothered him and he knew she needed more time to "*think it through*." Then he added, "*People have said some really crazy things to me, just to get me mad. But I don't ever really get mad. Usually I just laugh. And I just take it and say 'ok,' and then we talk about it.*" Like Elinor, Amir is invested in the democratic possibilities of an engaged conversation (Greene, 1995). With a deep understanding of the relationship between individuals and the collective good, they are interested not only in their growth and development, but others' too.

Amir is now in his second year of teaching at Central High School a large comprehensive in Newark, New Jersey, where he feels fortunate to have a supportive administration that is taking the school in a "*progressive, revolutionary*" direction. The principal, Raz Baraka (son of poet and critic Amiri Baraka) allows Amir to weave his interests into the history curriculum and in his first year of teaching he began a small PAR project with his freshmen on the conditions facing young Black men. Amir has remained involved with participatory action research, working as a facilitator on research methods with several other youth PAR projects in the Jersey City, Newark area (see Ayala, 2009).

For Amir, *Echoes* reverberates not so much in the context of integration, but in terms of spaces where power, vulnerability, and difference were engaged, which in turn enabled new levels of solidarity for liberation.

Amir: *I feel like I always have some kind of* *Echoes* *moment. Whether its conversations I'm in or like recently, I got a call from one of the Teach for America people – you know I was caught up with them, right? Actually I have mixed feelings about teach for America, but that's another story. Anyway she called me up because she was reading* *Revolutionizing Education**, was that the name of it? You know the recent book we're in? She came across my name in it and so we had a little discussion. It was real cool, because I didn't realize her perspective on education – Teach for America isn't really that great when it comes to 'Echoes moments.' They should be, they talk about it, but it's not really there. The kind of people that are involved, they're just not that diverse, you know. But Echoes moments? They happen all the time – even when I'm teaching and working with the kids, I've even brought up that poem, Classification.*

María: *Really?*

Amir: *Yeah. I mean I tell my kids all the time, look man, I was in special ed when I was in high school (laughs). I tell them about labels and people's expectations of you, and you have to decide if you're going to bow down to their expectations of what you're capable of, or you're gonna prove them wrong, and rise above that. I get in to it – my kids would tell you I remind them all the time.*

María: How do they respond when share the poem?

Amir: *I tell them about the experience more than I share the poem. But when I do share the poem, I can tell you a lot of them understood a lot better than when I explain to them that I was in special ed and what that was like. Cause at first they're like "wait, you were in special ed?" and they find it funny because, you know the stigma that's attached to it, so they're responding to that. … I just want them to know I'm a human being too. I had my struggles, they have their struggles, and they need to know they're the only ones going through these struggles and there's strength in that. When they connect with other people that have had these struggles, there's strength in that. Because, you recognize where one another's coming from. You know what I'm saying? So they'll be more inclined to listen to me. Actually when I told one class, some of my special ed students – who don't necessarily know that I know that they're in special ed, but of course I know –they came to me and started talking to me about what was going on with them and what it was like to be classified and how they don't want*

to be there. I mean they came to me! To talk to me! When you can identify with something, when, when two people can identify around the same thing that brings them closer, and then, it opens up a door for dialogue and then you can move forward.

Convinced of the power of contact, Amir builds bridges not only with people who are different than he is as he did in college, but also with those who are demographically similar. Unlike many new teachers who cling to practices that separate them from their students, Amir takes risks and makes himself vulnerable to his African American and Latino students by sharing his story of being 'classified.' At the end of his interview he emphasized how the level of honesty made such a difference in *Echoes*. One can how this carries through in his teaching, by being honest about his experiences he creates "an open door for dialogue" that might not have appeared otherwise. Though Amir does not assume the equality of subjects that Hegel (2003) begins with, his approach is reminiscent of Hegel's belief that a socially recognized identity is a necessity to the self in order to operate as a valid participant in civil society. Amir offers himself as the reflective mirror and then creates the space to co-author a different future. Similar to the epistemology of contact he remembered in *Echoes*, Amir's practice underscores the unexpected knowledge, analysis and potential action (the moving forward) that can occur in contact zones. He recalls:

[Echoes] was special—I swear that was special. It really expanded my awareness about the issues in education, because it was truly diverse. I mean, for instance, look at Tahani [Amir and Tahani were the only two practicing Muslim youth in Echoes], I didn't realize how much awareness she was contributing to us about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, until later. When I was later learning more about it, I was able to look back and remember some of the things she was saying in her poetry, and in the conversations we were having, you know, and I understood on a different level. A lot of people that were involved with Echoes their lives, their identities helped me understand new perspectives, you know what I mean? It made me – even Kendra – we live in the same county, different towns that are not far away from each other, but she gave me a glimpse into Montclair [the town

> *Kendra lived and when to high school in] that I've never seen. Because I had only ever seen Montclair from one perspective and that was the outside looking in. That's what Teach for America should be like.*

Encountering Hostility

Not all experiences of contact have been easy. Some, even when strongly desired and sought after, have come with tremendous cost. Natasha graduated from a nationally recognized small school, seemingly equipped to succeed in college. She chose a small Christian school in Florida attended by the son of her minister and several members of her church. Comfortable in personal learning spaces, and a spiritual person, Natasha thought this would be a good match. Unfortunately her family and the remarkable education she received at Urban Academy high school over-prepared her to be an independent, free thinking young woman, able to finely craft her ideas in writing and speech and stick up for others; and under-prepared her to be docile, obedient, follow rules without reason, or stand silent in the face of injustice. In the Christian college Natasha came head to head with the limitations of tolerance. Carrying forward the work of Watson (1947) who argued that tolerance was not enough, that difference needed to recognized and engaged, Natasha found the absence of both impossible to grow in. And after a semester of persecution and monetary fines for being tattooed, wearing a Palestinian scarf (a black and white kuffiyeh), making speeches about gay marriage and equality in her public speaking class, and refusing to take down her John Kerry poster, she quit school.

> *I had been wearing my scarf for years, way before it was trendy to wear. You remember I probably had it on when I auditioned for Echoes! But the republican right is pro-isreal and pro-war and so people had a very negative response to it. They would say to me, 'You know that's what terrorists wear?' And I was like 'No its not.' But that's kind of like their attitude, and I used to wear it on stage and*

everything. I would tell them 'If this was a prayer shawl, like the kind Jewish men wear, would you have a problem? The kuffiyeh is basically the same kind of thing.' Basically there was a lot of racism down there. They pretended that we were one big happy family, but it wasn't. And I'm not bad mouthing the place – it just wasn't for me, it really wasn't for me. I mean, even my roommate. We spoke on the phone before I got there but I guess she didn't realize I was Black. I guess she must have thought she knew what Black people sound like. Anyway when I walked in the room, she was <u>shocked</u>. And I heard her discussing it with her mother just outside the door – I was like, oh my God! She was a nice girl, from a small town in southern Florida, and I don't even think she knew how racist she was. She would look at me like I was sad, confusing me with her charity work that she did back home. We all have our preconceived notions about race, so I'm really careful not to peg people as racist. I mean we grow up and we only know the experiences we have – if you grow up white and privileged than you just might not know what it's like to not be in your skin. So I can't even go to say someone is really racist right off the bat. But after we were in the car and she pointed to a Black man across the street that was really well dressed in a suit and said, 'Oooh there's a Black man, lock your doors!' I just looked at her and was like 'why did you say that?'…she just laughed and said she was joking. But she wasn't. That's not a joke. You know it says in the bible out of the abundance your heart speaks. You know? So whatever's in you, it will come out. It really, really bothered me, and she would make comments like that all the time. I think she sincerely thought she was playing, but for me, it was really hard. I would speak up when I heard racist things, but I would check myself because I didn't want to be the angry black woman – we're always pegged that way, the angry minority, every time someone from a low power group speaks out against something that isn't ok. You know what I mean?

Natasha's experience at the southeastern university (described on their website as a "Christ-centered University") was full body assault. The racism and narrow, unbending fundamentalist ideology and zero-tolerance that pervaded teachers, students and administration, left no room for a young woman with a strong sense of self and an intersectional perspective on power and privilege. In this case the cost of contact was steep, "*I probably would have finished college if I had gone somewhere else.*" Everywhere Natasha turned, she encountered hostility. New or different ideas were rejected and as she embraced them, she was told she was wrong.

I felt like, at lot of times I was made to believe that there was something wrong with me. Just because I had piercings and stuff – I still owe these people money for the piercings I have. My RD (Residence director) told me 'You have some

> *nerve, you walk around this campus like you can wear, do and be whoever you want.' I and I said, 'You know what? I can wear and do and be and do whatever I want. Because, honestly, the God that we both serve is giving me the liberty to do that.' It did not match her ideas of who a Christian was.*

As Natasha narrated her experience of the Southern college and the fall out that she endured at her church upon her return, her frustration with people's inability to tolerate difference was palpable. It was almost as if during those parts of the story her blood pressure would rise. And then, I almost could see her experience a physical sense of relief as she talked it over with me, someone she believed, from our history together – our collective work, thinking and writing – would understand. She detailed scenes in her public speaking class, conversations and comments between students; scenes from church, from ladies who "*supposedly believed in God*"; scenes from the bar where she works; all with outrage, critique, then would pause for my response. She was not seeking approval, she wanted a witness, a witness who she knew understood racist and oppressive dynamics, and who valued contexts where people could engage their *whole* selves in their wild diversity, together. Like many of the former *Echoes* members, Natasha craves contact zones, places where she and others can express and work their multiplicity. And sadly since *Echoes*, she has rarely found them. She remains convinced however of the "power" of such spaces. "*I still hear every now and then from people who've read or seen Echoes.*" She describes moments as reminders of how important it was to

> *take the risks I took and make myself vulnerable. Sharing my poetry and being video-taped, that wasn't easy. But then later hearing from these kids about what they're now writing about, how they see themselves as poets, talking about the conditions in their neighborhood and what they fear. Seeing them use their voice, knowing that they are figuring out who they want to be, and how they want things to be, and knowing that it's connected to something we did. That's moving.*

While leaving her evangelical college was healthy for her mind and spirit, it left Natasha with heavy debt from a defaulted year-long housing contract and soon after

defaulted student loans. She is now working full-time as a waitress and bartender to save money and to help her two younger sisters go to college. She is optimistic about returning to school, but feels responsible to her family, "*I know I'll go back, but it's really important that my sisters get a good start. I have to help them pay for college*." Natasha has rejoined her church and asks them to address the racism and homophobia embedded in their practice. Like Tahani and Amir who strongly identify as Muslim, and yet stand up for gay rights, she has integrated her ideas about justice and equality into her spirituality. And like others from *Echoes*, Natasha is committed to reaching out to others, "*As scary as it is to put myself out there, if there's learning at stake, if I can help someone understand that the world is bigger than just what their eyes can see.*"

A Note on Love

I opened this dissertation with a confession of sorts about how my desire for hope, for windows of possibilities draws me to participatory action research. In a similar spirit, I want to close this chapter with a note on love.

The *Echoes* youth repeatedly used words like "love," "family," and "best friends" in describing their relationships with each other. Recall Elinor's description of the group as a "*Norman Rockwell painting*" and Iri's comments, "*I just found myself like falling in love with everybody, you know. Like, I don't know, I thought the chemistry that we had was so perfect, and like the atmosphere was so perfect*." To be truthful, I was initially dismissive of these expressions of emotion. Though I thought their sentiments were lovely, it was never my intent (or even my care!) for *Echoes* members to become life-long friends. Their experiences do confirm the contact literature which suggests that intergroup contact within positive contact conditions enhances the likelihood of

intergroup friendships (Pettigrew, 1998; Schofield, 1979; 2008). However, our collective intent with having such a diverse collective in *Echoes* was focused around how it would enhance the strength of the knowledge we would produce, and the power of the performance we would create. Our particular and collective knowledges and expertise were necessary to push our methods, our analyses, interpretations, products, etc. – this was the frame work that I was operating under, and to be fair one which I still hold dear. Love and friendship in my mind, were nice, but didn't constitute the 'hard science' I was looking for. Buying into the rhetoric that surrounds, I was not so interested in documenting that intergroup contact was important for growing sweet relationships of trust and friendship, I wanted to say it produced more valid research! As a result I repeatedly brushed aside the endless comments about what an amazing family we had created and the constant love. And in so doing I may have missed an opportunity to think more deeply about what this love, family and friendship meant.

It took an interview I heard with the writer Wallace Stegman in which he reflected on the few things that really mattered in his long and acclaimed life, for me to recognize my blindness. Stegman talked about love and a sense of responsibility as two of the most important things in a human life. As I listened I immediately agreed. And yet, even though the *Echoes* youth screamed these priorities at me, I was not able to process them. What I have witness with *Echoes* is that the project – the space and the work – produced a lasting sense of responsibility and a kind of love that was deeply felt by those involved because they chose it. Over their time together, they listened to each other, felt heard, took each other's ideas and efforts seriously, built on each other's creativity, co-produced writing, and created a collaborative performance. Stumbling and shining through the

week and the Saturdays that followed the youth experienced their own and our collective development. This produced a deep sense of caring for each other. It *is* a family love, as they describe it, in that members can go a couple of years not seeing each other and then jump right into as if it were yesterday. The way one might do with a cousin. They developed a social and supportive network among each other – a solidarity of sorts – that they carry internally, and though I haven't seen it accessed as of yet, there is something to be said I think for the intensity of it, of how it shapes their understandings of what might be.

The now not so young people of *Echoes* continue in the spirit of our collective work, and with their lives build added meaning to the historical and contemporary contact literature. Amir, like Watson (1947) presses us towards action; he, Elinor, and Natasha persist like Benedict and Weltfish (1943) in trying to reeducate; and Kendra and Joanna craft their lives in solidarity. Each shift the conversation of contact to one, beyond tolerance, beyond recognizing, to *engaging difference.* As they struggle, imagine, and work for change, their lives have been reoriented through a lens of contact. I chose in this chapter to highlight the experiences of youth that represented themes and dynamics that repeated themselves across the eleven interviews. However, to have a sense of where *Echoes* members are as a collective, Table 6 below provides a brief update on each one.

Table 6. *Youth biographies five years after Echoes*

Natasha Alexander, 21, spent a semester at a small Christian college in Southern Florida, and then returned home to New York City where she is a bartender and waitress. She has had a few acting jobs in small (very) independent films. She is saving money to help her two younger sisters go to college, trying to pay off her college debt, and hoping to apply to a CUNY college in 2010.

Amir Bilal Billups, 22, graduated from St. Peter's College with a major in history and is working as a History teacher in a large comprehensive high school in Newark, New Jersey High school. He and his high school girlfriend, Crystal, had a baby girl, Amirah, who was born in 2005.

Yasmine Blanding, 26, had a baby shortly after *Echoes* and has been working on finishing her degree in psychology from York College, with the goal of becoming a high school guidance counselor. She and Travis Staten reconnected four years after *Echoes* and got married. They are now the proud parents of Poem, a baby boy born in 2009.

Malan Bullock, 19, graduated from St. Peter's College with a major in Communications and is currently a freelance writer and editor. She lives in New Jersey and continues to write poetry and has her own fashion blog *Milan Malan Word on the Street*. She also writes regularly for Glitterbuzzstyle.com and Designlookout.com.

Emily Genao, 22, graduated from Fordham University with a degree in Communications and works for an advertising company, Innovation Ads, in New York City. While in college she interned for Spin Magazine.

Ariane Ashley Gilgeous, 19, is a junior at Penn State where she is majoring in Communications. She is passionate about journalism and in her free time pursues free lance writing jobs, acting and the theater.

Elinor Marboe, 22, graduated from Wellesley with a degree in Classical Civilization. She spent the following year working in Isreal for an environmental co-existence organization. She is currently living in with her parents in Westchester, NY and working part-time.

Annique Roberts, 26, graduated from Howard University in 2004. After *Echoes* she joined the Garth Fagan Dance Company in Rochester, NY, where she became a senior dancer and teacher and was featured in *Dance Magazine* in August 2008. In January of 2010 she joined Ronald K. Brown/Evidence as a dancer.

Joanna Roberts, 21, graduated from Brown with a degree in Arts and Social Justice. She lives in New Orleans, is actively involved in community organizing, and works as a program director for a community-based Arts program.

Tahani Salah, 22, graduated from Columbia with a degree in English. She works as the Youth Outreach Coordinator at Urban Word and continues to write and perform poetry. She was a member of the 2007 Nuyorican National Slam team, was the feature of a full-page spread in the New York Daily News, and performed her poem *Hate* on HBO's *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry*. She is the author of the forthcoming book, *Respect the Mike*.

Iralma Osorio Sorondo, 22. I was not able to track her down for a five-year post interview.

Travis Staten, 25, continued to write poetry and found work as a security officer in Brooklyn. He reconnected with Yasmine Blanding four years after *Echoes* and got married. They are now the proud parents of Poem, a baby boy born in 2009.

Kendra Urdang, 22, graduated from Bard College with a degree in Writing and Human Rights. In college she taught poetry to men and women in prison for two years. After working as a florist in London and with youth in the New York Botanical Garden, she got involved with organic farming, and is now pursuing work in urban agriculture around New York City.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Subject: Contact 56 years later
Date: Tues, January 12, 2010 6:14:56 PM
From: María Elena Torre <metorre@yahoo.com>
To: Gordon Allport <gallport@thegreatbeyond.com>

Dear Gordon,

Years back you wrote with fiery passion about the need for a science of human relations, arguing that the study of intergroup contact was a key element to building a working democracy (Allport, 1954; 1955). With your spirit I recently completed a longitudinal study of real-world contact; contact in what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has called *contact zones*. The shift to zones brings an awareness of the context of contact – of history, power, and place. It encourages an analysis that braids individual moments to the larger sphere of social relations. I was interested in building on intergroup research in two ways. The first was to clarify which of your conditions might need revision in natural contact zones – where power relations are acknowledged and integrated in to the space. The second was to articulate how contact contributes to knowledge production, particularly within the framework of participatory action research.

To better understand the construct you were working with, I carefully studied your book, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Inside the pages I found wonderful citations for what I am sad to report is often forgotten scholarship on contact; the writings of Benedict and Weltfish (1943), Williams (1947), Watson (1947), Dubois (1943, 1950), and

Dubois and Li (1955). Perhaps some of their work has been lost overtime because texts like yours relegated much of it to the footnotes? I know you were a fan of these works because I often encountered you as the author of the foreword or preface. Building on your ideas and theirs has helped me analyze the research I conducted on a contact zone called *Echoes of Brown: Youth Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown v. the Board of Education*.

Echoes was an intergenerational research and performance project which documented the history of segregation and integration in public schools and contemporary educational injustice. You would be heartened to know that my ethnography demonstrated well the possibilities within radically inclusive spaces for intellectual and social development. Not only did the youth and adults who participated develop new ways of thinking and being in the world; the new subjectivities that experienced the intoxicating intellectual, social and political potential of this radically inclusive space, desired more in the five years that followed.

In *The Nature of Prejudice*, you highlight Lewin's (1947) and Rachel Davis Dubois' (1943, 1950) separate calls that contact be both mutually meaningful for those involved and participatory in nature. You emphasize the potential for lasting intergroup relations when contact occurs around researching community problems, such as in the Community Self-Survey work of Margot Haas Wormser and Claire Selltiz (1951, another example of scholars you footnote but don't mention by name). The Self-Surveys brought diverse members of a community together with researchers to create and conduct community-wide surveys of social conditions. It is this work that, in part, laid

the foundation for understanding my research. I drew additional help from Pratt's (1992) notion of contact zones.

Born in the study of colonial contact, contact zones push your thinking on equal group status, insisting that hegemonic systems of power are in constant play and cannot be denied. Equal group status must then be reunderstood as a dynamic process in ongoing negotiation. However, contact zones also emphasize the improvisational nature of contact, underscoring all of the layered complicated ways we hold and are withheld power, by virtue of our situatedness. To flesh out this idea, I found Gloria Anzaldúa's (1999; 2002) theory of Mestizaje helpful. Mestizaje decribes the consciousness of Chicanas living *entremundos*, or between worlds – where complexity, situatedness, and connection, even amidst conflict, are assumed. Interrupting dominant frameworks of dualistic and hierarchical thinking, Anzaldúa (1999) articulates a *Mestiza* consciousness calibrated for multiplicity, ambiguity, and contradiction.

Introducing the early contact research to Pratt and Anzaldúa, allowed me to analyze *Echoes* as a space of *nos-otras*, and document the impact of contact zones on intergroup relations and knowledge production. *Nos-otras* is the term that Anzaldúa developed to recognize the varying relationships to power and privilege that we each carry/operate under. Disrupting simple bianaries and singular conceptions of self, the word literally reveals how the 'other' is part of us; translated *nos-otras* means 'we' - 'others.' Anzaldúa argues that after years of oppressors and oppressed living side by side, our "selves" and communities are no longer "pure," but overlapping, made up from "leakage" from our experiences with each other. We are living in a co-constituted

geography of hybridized selves, she reasons, and individuals, communities (and one could easily argue nations) are mutually implicated as a result (Anzaldúa, 2000).

Revisiting your contact hypothesis with the inherent recognition of history, power, and improvisation that the contact zone demands (Pratt 1992), the commitment to a multiple and intersectional understanding of self shaped by overlapping hegemonic systems and structures as Mestizaje encourages (Anzaldúa, 1992, 2002), as well an attention to the varied mutual and individual political community-based interests that Watson (1947) reminds of in his call for action, it becomes interesting to think about how contact, when engaged through democratic participation (Dubois, 1950) can be useful both for individual and social development and as a way of knowing. In other words, how might we rethink your original conditions in the natural contact setting of a participatory action research project?

With *Echoes* we recognized that it was our work and responsibility to carve out a context not 'vacated' by power issues, but strategically infused by and interrogating of them. I say it was our 'work' reflecting our belief that PAR collectives bring together necessary and important knowledges and expertise. What Michelle and I brought to the *Echoes* collective was an academic and activist history of research on, and experience with, justice and group dynamics work. As we were committed to the collective project, it was 'on us' to bring this knowledge to the design and practice of the space. The expectation in PAR is that everyone involved is to bring their intellectual, experiential, emotional, social, historical, familial, political riches to the table as they determine.

Our recognition and strategic use of power within the group did not employ remedial means – giving 'voice' to those oppressed, or simple counter-hegemonic challenge – encouraging those with privilege to express guilt and responsibility and redeem themselves. Instead, enacting the commitments of PAR, we began with the situated knowledges in the room and created a common project for analyzing the patterns of social (in)justice, layered this with the lessons from social history, and the data from the Opportunity Gap project. Further we positioned ourselves at all times in relation to the material before us, allowing our multiple fluid identities to move us between what seemed like "natural" identity-based alliances to more politically-based alliances.

Returning to your optimal conditions for contact, this means several shifts (for a summary see Table 7).

Table 7. Revisiting Allport's optimal conditions of contact.

The Contact Hypothesis Allport (1954)	PAR in/as the Contact Zone (Or contact as a critical participatory epistemology) Torre (2010)
Equal group status	Explicit ongoing engagement with history, power, privilege, and resources
Common goals	Shared Goals must be determined by intellectual/political/family/social commitments of group
Intergroup cooperation	Participation through negotiated conditions of collaboration Key elements that maximize participation: Purposeful Inclusion Multiple and intersectional understanding of selves Collaborative knowledge-building Shared Expertise Layered activities Engagement with differences in power and vulnerabilities Recognition of Nos-Otras
Support of authorities, laws or customs (if possible enjoy the sanction of the community)	Solidarity with meaningful communities and larger movements determined by the collective
Avoid artificiality	Center contact around meaningful social justice contexts

Let us reimagine 'conditions for contact,' starting first with equal group status. Nancy Fraser (1990) writes about the challenges of creating democratically accessible spaces that bring together preexisting inequalities – "counterpublic" spaces that contest "the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech" (p. 75). She argues that political unequals cannot simply be invited to the table with expectation that their very presence will inspire democracy. There must be a redistribution of the necessary resources to facilitate participation. Shared languages must be learned, collaborative practices and structures must be put in place, and questions of power and privilege

must be negotiated in order for "genuine participation" to take place (Hart, 1997). In his global work on youth citizenship and community development Roger Hart (1997) argues that the capacity to participate can be encouraged in people of all ages, and that through frequent experiences with direct democratic participation – participation in the identifying of community problems, setting researching agendas, engaging in analysis, decision making, and action planning – youth develop a deep appreciation of democracy, their own competence, and a sense of civic responsibility and engagement.

Since equal group status is not actually an achievable condition (and controlling for it is tantamount to ignoring it) given the omnipresent social hierarchies of power and privilege, a useful shift is to imagine equal group status in terms of an ongoing engagement with history, power, and resources. This shift pushed us to reframe the condition of intergroup cooperation as an ongoing negotiation of 'conditions of collaboration,' or *participation.* Building on Dubois (1943; Dubois & Li, 1955), if contact – or research – is organized around participation, what might it look like to create conditions for more equal collaboration? How, then, might contact inform a way of knowing? Shifting contact from subject to a critical epistemology begs a set of methods that encourages an active process within research for determining and creating the necessary conditions for participation. In *Echoes* differences of power and privilege among participants were not 'controlled' for. Instead, they were *engaged as a way of knowing,* texturing, and informing our analysis and creations. In *Echoes,* youth researchers and performers were posited as experts of their personal and educational experiences. The knowledge they each brought was respected alongside the

Opportunity Gap data and the academic conversations with the invited scholars, and understood as essential in order for us to fully grasp the landscape of educational injustice and create our final products. In our conversations and work together, youth came to hear and understand experiences of schooling that were often very different from their own. As facilitators and participants we worked to connect these personal experiences to larger systemic practices. Further we held a commitment within the collective to excavate disagreements and disjunctures that emerged, rather than smooth them over in the interest of 'friendship' or consensus. An example of this occurred during what became known as the "Harvey Milk conversation" where we disagreed with whether or not we should support a segregated school for a low power group. Though we did not all end up with the same analyses, the conversation ended up being an important moment for refining our individual (both youth and adult) thoughts and ideas. A last example of a condition of collaboration that we employed was our recognition that we as individuals and a collective were 'under construction.' This allowed us the space for misunderstandings, learning, and growth that was necessary for each of us to speak more freely, change our ideas, and grow new subjectivities.

In rethinking the conditions of common goals and the support of authorities, laws and customs (and as you added if possible the sanction of the community), I have come to realize that the goals of a contact situation should be shared and determined by the group, and support of authorities should be reframed as *solidarity* with meaningful communities and larger movements. Related to each other, shared goals

and solidarity speak to the purpose around which the contact is organized. An important addition in the *Echoes* project was the fact that the goals of the work (the collaboratively determined products of the week – a book/DVD and a final performance) were understood as part of a larger social justice goal – the struggle for equal educational opportunities. This resulted in a passion that encouraged individuals to take risks and make themselves vulnerable in the interest of further pushing our ideas and analysis. Youth pushed beyond that which felt comfortable inhabiting parts of their selves different than those used in their everyday lives. In engaging in this more individualized activity of identity play youth, in turn, set off actions and reactions within the collaborative, challenging others to push their own 'selves' and evoking new thinking on both the individual and collective level. Youth were able to try out new political positions, for example, and in doing so prompt others to clarify their own thoughts as they worked through their ideas – positioning and repositioning themselves within larger social, historical contexts. In spaces like *Echoes* participants not only reposition their 'selves' but also their understandings of personal experiences. Reanalyzed in the context of the (Opportunity Gap) data, theory, and the diversity in the room, examples such as the incident where all the White students caught themselves staring at the only African American girl in class can be reframed within larger understandings of the costs of integration.

Through this process, we can see how contact can serve as a critical participatory epistemology with the power to interrupt the drip feed of institutionalized injustice, that which is usually rendered invisible and popularly accepted as inevitable (Fine &

Torre, 2004). The effect of this interruption is not only a spotlight on the injustice, but on the processes and dynamics by which it is sustained. In addition, participants have the opportunity to take others' perspectives and deepen their relationships across groups, repositioning themselves within broader questions of social justice. Through this repositioning, they begin to broaden what Susan Opotow (1995) calls their "scope of justice," by expanding the membership of their "moral community" or of who deserves fair and just treatment. An example of this moral expansion was observed when the more privileged youth in *Echoes* (youth who had been well-served by their educational settings) began to recognize and articulate that inequitable practices like tracking, that they had not previously understood to have negatively impacted them, were 'their issues' too. Social justice goals are predicated on an expanded understanding of moral communities, so when the shared goal is one of social justice, one could argue that patterns of moral exclusion are interrupted replaced by practices of moral *inclusion*.

The last (and often ignored) condition you articulated for optimal contact was the warning to avoid artificiality. You wrote that when groups work toward social justice goals in 'natural contexts' rather than sports victories or classroom exams, the condition of having the support of authorities, laws, or customs changes in meaning. There may not be evidence of larger scale support or structural change during or after the project. You declared your outrage at this problem in the preface of the 1958 edition of *The Nature of Prejudice* and highlighted its illustration in the lack of enforcement of the Brown v. Board of Education decision four years after it was passed.

However, I would argue that this condition is still relevant if understood in two ways. In contact zones, conversations about action and change and how they occur, determines which authorities, laws, and customs they are hoping to impact, how, and on what levels. Further, in reimagining the support of authorities, laws, and customs as solidarity with outside communities and larger justice movements, as I have suggested, opens up different avenues for measuring meaningful effort, success, or validation. Therefore, one way the condition remains relevant is through local interpretation and determination. The collective decides which audiences are most important, which are 'worthy' (i.e., most likely to *listen* and take action themselves) and who they want to ally with. During *Echoes* we unearthed overwhelming evidence of the ways authorities, laws, and customs in the US both actively supported, and complacently denied, educational inequities. At the same time, we came into contact with individuals and organizations that were actively fighting these inequities. As we recognized that our collective was a part of a much larger movement for educational justice, engendered layers of importance, relevance, urgency, validation, and dedication to our work.

Before I continue, I think I should review the changes I propose to your conditions. Equal group status shifts to an ongoing explicit engagement of power, privilege and resources. Common goals are determined by the group and shaped by their collective intellectual, political, familial and community commitments, and therefore become shared goals. Intergroup cooperation is reframed as participation and separate conditions of collaboration are negotiated by the group. These separate conditions that are designed to maximize participation are facilitated by collaborative

knowledge-building, layered activities, purposeful inclusion, a commitment to shared expertise, an engagement of power and vulnerabilities, and a sense of mutual implication (or *nos-otras*). The support of authorities, laws, or customs is reframed as solidarity, whereby the group determines the meaningful communities and/or social movements that they wish to engage. Lastly the condition of avoiding artificiality is resurrected and serves as a call to locate contact in natural and meaningful activity, such as research for social justice.

With these new conditions in place we can begin to imagine contact not only in the context of improving intergroup relations but as a new *critical participatory epistemology*. Maxine Greene (1995) writes that in creating openings for ever wider spaces for dialogue, where people are able to speak in their own voices, not only might people be able to weave a community of "embodied consciousnesses…that through coming together [might] constitute a newly human world, one worthy enough and responsive enough to be both durable and open to continual renewal" (p. 59). Her hope lies in the engaged conversation, where through "speech and action from their many vantage points, [individuals and collectives] may be able to identify a better state of things – and go on to transform" (p. 59). It is in these spaces of critically engaged participation, which Greene imagines, where the revolutionary possibility of research in the contact zone comes alive.

Our challenge then as social scientists interested in the potential of contact, interested in researching *with* communities, for social change, is to re-member *nos-otras*. To remember that understanding injustice often means bringing very differently

situated bodies around the same table and recognizing what Arendt (1958) calls our "web of relations" (p. 184). Expanding our psychological understanding of contact and asserting its potential as a critical epistemology, will encourage research designs that ask questions at the intersections of everyday lived experience and intricate social systems; questions that allow individuals to remain complicated – that is allow them *to be nos-otras* – to hold multiple, even opposing, identities; questions that require historical re-memory; questions that allow people to engage and transform the injustices they collectively live (albeit differently) rather than continuing individually to ignore, resist, cope with, or simply benefit from these arrangements; questions that frequently demand to be answered collectively through research *and* action.

I look forward to contributing to this future.

Yours in contact,

María

Appendix A. Opportunity Gap Recruitment Flyer

WHAT IS A YOUTH RESEARCHER?

Youth researchers are students with…

- STRONG opinions…or medium ones you'd like to grow
- LOUD voices… or quiet ones you want to make louder--we can help!
- CREATIVE ideas
- Lots of CURIOSITY to learn more about what you don't know
- COMMITMENT to make things happen
- The ability to work COOPERATIVELY with peers
- A belief in Justice and Equality for people—no matter their race/ethnicity, class, gender, or sexuality

Youth Researchers will do a lot of…

TALKING
READING
WRITING
EDUCATING
LEARNING
AND…HAVING FUN

BUT they don't have to be experts at any of these things when you start…
We will work all together to share our skills and learn new ones!

Youth Researchers will be members of a multi-district research team that will meet for 2 weekend retreats. Our first retreat will be April 13th & 14th. All Youth Researchers must attend.

Youth Researchers will work together with other Youth Researchers and Adult Researchers to…

- design a survey that will be handed out to over 2000 urban and suburban students asking them about their educational experiences and their opinions about the opportunities available to them in their schools and communities.

- conduct focus groups—small groups of people gathered together to talk about a specific topic—with students in their schools. The focus groups address how different students view their educational experience, opportunity structures within their schools, their "options" after graduation, and social justice issues.

- interview graduates of the high school about their educational experiences and how well high school prepared them for what they are doing now.

- come up with a research question that interests them about their own school—one that they can turn into a research project and investigate as a team.

Appendix B. Pre-*Echoes* Institute Interview Protocol.

When you walked into the audition a couple of weeks ago what do you think people thought when they first saw you?

What about you would surprise them?

What do you think this week of the Institute will be like?

What are you excited about?

What are you nervous about?

What do people in your life (friends/family) think about your participating in this project?

The title of the Institute is "Art & Social Justice Institute." What do you think is the relationship between the arts and social justice? *(Note: interested in creating a bridge between above question and question of experience.)*

Tell me a story about a time when you saw or experienced something you thought was really wrong
[what did it feel like?
what did you do or want to do...]

[or... tell me about a time when you tried to change something or make a difference]

[or… tell me about a time when you took a risk, or saw someone taking a risk to try to change something or make a difference]

When you perform, what do you want the audience to experience from your performance?

Our group is very diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, people's experience in school, how much money their family has… without judgment from me or anyone else, Give me 3 words that describe how you're feeling about working with this group?

What would you like to know about the other people in the group?

Appendix C. Post-*Echoes* Institute Interview Protocol.

Tell me about one or two important things that happened this week – moments that stood out for you during the institute.

What surprised you?

How was the week different than other learning experiences or other working experiences that you've had?

Do you think that it was important for our work that we were a really diverse group? How so?

What kinds of things happened in the Institute to help create the atmosphere we had?

Was there anything hard about working in the group? Tell me about it.

What did you learn about yourself as you went through the week?

Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to talk about, or that you've been telling people about this week?

Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix D. *Echoes* 5 Years Later Interview Protocol.

What have you been up to the last 5 years? What makes you excited these days?

Do you ever think about *Echoes*? When/how does it come up?

How have you described Echoes to others over the years?

Do you think your participation in *Echoes* had any impact on your life? If so, how?

Can you tell me about any experiences you've had working/living/hanging with folks that are different than you?

You know from our conversations over the years that I am still very interested in what happens when different kinds of people come together to work on issues of injustice that impact their everyday lives… I believe that when folks come together in these kinds of spaces—like *Echoes*—there is an opportunity to provoke or create new layers of knowledge that I think we as individuals might not come to on our own…

What do you think about this?

Do you think this happened in Echoes?

Has it happened elsewhere in your life?

Appendix E. *Echoes* Institute Recruitment Flyer.

CALLING ALL YOUTH INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING WRITING & PERFORMANCE SKILLS WITH OTHER WRITERS, DANCERS, PERFORMERS, EDUCATORS & POETS

IF YOU ARE A HIGH SCHOOL **FRESHMAN, SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR** or **SENIOR**
(Seniors graduating in 2003 who will be in NYC during 2003-2004, read on!)

AND

-LOVE to PERFORM
-MOVE WELL TO MUSIC
-PROJECT VOICE AND PERSONALITY

AND you have

-A belief in JUSTICE and EQUALITY for all people—no matter what their race/ethnicity, class, gender, or sexuality
-STRONG opinions…or medium ones you'd like to grow
-LOTS OF CURIOSITY to learn more about what you don't know
-A COMMITMENT to make things happen
-The ABILITY to work COOPERATIVELY

WE WANT YOU to AUDITION on July 8 for an exciting PROJECT

We're putting together a performance about Brown v. Bd. of Ed. the landmark Supreme Court decision to desegregate schools, the aftermath and urban education in the 21st Century. If selected, you will attend a FREE Social Justice and Arts Institute from:
July 28 – August 1, 2003 (9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.).

You will work with Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, Poets from Urban Word NYC, Educators and Historians to develop your performance, writing and learning skills. There will be several performances following the Institute that will lead up to a final performance on May 17, 2004. Youth performers must attend every day of the Institute, all rehearsals and performances.
NO EXCEPTIONS!

If you're interested submit the following IN WRITING by June 24, 2003 to Rosemarie Roberts (see below):

- Name, full address, phone, email, H.S., graduation year, and any relevant writing/dance/performance experience (school plays, dance recitals/concerts, poetry slams/open mics, etc.)

AND on JULY 8, 2003 at 10:00 a.m. come to:

- The CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue (bet. 34th/35th St.) Room C412.
- Bring a monologue or poem to read. Dancers wear comfortable clothes.

ANY questions/concerns, CONTACT:

Rosemarie A. Roberts, Soc/Per. Psych.
The CUNY Graduate Center – 6th Fl., 365 Fifth Avenue, NYC 10016
rroberts@email.edu - 1.212.817.xxxx

Appendix F. Institute Schedule, July 28 – August 2.

DAY 1 – MONDAY, JULY 28

GOALS:		**SETTING UP INSTITUTE** **BUILDING COMMUNITY** **HISTORY OF BROWN v. BD. OF ED.**
Time	*Rm*	*Activity*
9:30a	C197	Breakfast JEN/UW: facilitate quick name/intro community-building exercise for entire group.
10:00	C197	Setting Up Project and Institute (Michelle, María): María: set up large themes from research/data: what's happening in schoo alienation; re-segregation; tracking (w/in building vs. w/in city); etc. Hand out readers/packets to group.
11:00	C197	History of Brown v. Bd of Ed by Robert Perry (*last 10 minutes saved for questions/feedback/interactive)
12:00p	C197	Brown Bag Lunch Speaker: Robert Perry (contd.)
1:00	C201/202	UW/writing exercise: assign small groups: brief exercise whereby 6 partner-teams take short historically-rendered prose/poetry and perform them. (Hughes, Baldwin, Jordan, Baraka, Ellison, Fanon, Morrison, transcripts from focus groups/ María to provide)
2:00	C201/202	UW/writing: writing exercise (set up parameters of form: hip hop, s/w, free verse, etc.) as start to homework
3:00	C412	Introductions RKB/Evidence (movement), Mentor team: Movement Exercises
4:45	C201/202	Set up homework assignment w/ contracts
5:00	C201	Youth Leave. Debriefing/Evaluating Day Meeting

DAY 2 – July 29

GOALS: **HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE BUILDING**
INTRODUCE ACHIEVEMENT GAP DATA

Time	*Rm.*	*Activity*
9:30a	C197	Breakfast – UW/large group read-aloud of take home writing
10:00	C197	Data Presentation (María, Youth Researchers, et al.)
10:45	C197	J. Campbell Presentation (*last 10 minutes saved for questions/feedback/interactive)
12:00p	C197	Brown Bag Lunch: UW: mentors perform 1 poem/each as example of how to integrate data into poetry. Brief discussion
12:30	C201/202	UW/writing: Personal Narrative exercise: incorporate "facts" into poems: use name, neighborhood, school, identity as starting points into larger historical relevance: 2 lists (personal vs. historical based on Campbell presentation) – exercise links them
1:45	C412	RKB/Evidence Movement Exercises
3:30	C197	Carol Tracy Presentation (Legal implications of Brown v. BOE) (*last 10 minutes saved for questions/feedback/interactive)
4:45	C201/202	Setting Up Homework: Youth expressions grounded in data
5:00	C201	Youth Leave. Debriefing/Evaluating Day Meeting

DAY 3 – July 30

GOALS:		**PERFORMANCE: WORKING WITH STUDENT MATERIAL**
Time	*Rm.*	*Activity*
9:30a	9204/05	Breakfast – RAR check in re: performance
9:45	9204/05	UW: large group Read Aloud/w/ mentor/peer feedback UW: mentors lead small group performing exercise of take home poems
10:45	9204/05	Speakers: Lisette Nieves & Marinieves Alba: Latino and Puerto Rican Activism
12:00p	9204/05	Brown Bag Lunch – Viewing of "Palante Siempre Palante"
12:30	9204/05	UW/writing: Exercise dealing with student work as it is and as it can be in response to speaker presentation, data, and/or in response to video.
1:30	C412	Movement/Staging/Gesturing
4:30	C412	General student feedback. Homework Assignment
5:00	C412	Youth Leave. Debriefing/Evaluating Day Meeting
Evening		Bowling! (María)

DAY 4 – July 31, 2003

GOAL:	**SHAPING PERFORMANCE**
Time Rm.	*Activity*
9:30a C197	Breakfast – Sharing Homework
9:45 C197	Youth Q & A Visualization Exercise about Performance (RAR)
10:45 C201/202 minute	UW: small group generating/editing/writing exercises: last fixing/touching up of individual pieces
12:00p C197	Brown Bag Lunch: Presentation by Patricia J. Williams
12:30 C412	Embodying/Enacting Visualization Staging/Partnering [UW/writing: exercises incorporating student writing/embodying performance]
4:45 C201	Homework assignment
5:00 C201	Youth Leave. Debriefing/Evaluating Day Meeting

DAY 5 – AUGUST 1

GOALS: **SHAPING PERFORMANCE**
PREPARING FOR NYRICAN PERFORMANCE ON 8/2

Time	*Rm.*	*Activity*
9:30a	C197	Breakfast – Sharing Homework
9:45	C197	Q & A –Youth focused feedback (performance)
10:45	C197	Filling in the Gaps (scripting connectors—lines/movement)
12:00	C197	Lunch
12:30	C412	Performance Work
		[UW: mentors to work one-on-one with individual students' poems for editing/improvement as needed (while others are involved in performance practice)]
4:00	C197	Youth evaluate Institute Sharing feelings about performing/performance Reflections exercises
5:00	C201	Youth Leave. Debriefing/Evaluating Day Meeting

Day 6 – SATURDAY, AUGUST 2

Urban Word NYC summer open mic series, *re-Verb*
at Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd Street, between Avenues B & C

GOALS:	**PRACTICE PUBLIC PERFORMANCE** **GET FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH and FAMILY AUDIENCE**
Time	*Activity*
4-5 PM:	Open mic, general public
5-6 PM:	Art and Social Justice Youth Performance Practice w/ audience
6-6:30:	Feedback session

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