PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) WITH LGBTQ+ & GNC YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES: AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHELLE FINE, MARIA TORRE, AND ALLISON CABANA.

PESQUISA-AÇÃO PARTICIPATIVA COM JUVENTUDE LGBTQ E "GÊNERO NÃO CONFORME" NOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: UMA ENTREVISTA COM MICHELLE FINE, MARIA TORRE E ALISSON CABANA

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Michelle Fine is a Distinguished Professor of Social Psychology, Women's Studies and Urban Education at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). Fine completed her undergraduate degree at Brandeis University and her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University. After 12 years as The Goldie Anna Chaired Professor of Human Development at the University of Pennsylvania, Fine joined CUNY in 1992. Fine's work integrates critical psychological theory with feminist and post-colonial theory, participatory designs, qualitative and quantitative methods with a strong commitment to research for social justice, with special attention to Participatory Action Research (PAR) engagement. She is also co-founder of the Public Science Project (PSP).

Fine's research is considered highly influential and, is also, extremely well cited within four academic fields: urban education policy; prison reform; theoretical justice studies within psychology, and mixed methods/participatory action research. She has authored, co-authored and edited many chapters and articles in books and journals in the U.S. and in European psychological journals. Recent publications include "Just Research in Contentious Times" (Fine, 2017) and "The Changing Politics of Education: Privatization and the Dispossessed Lives of Those Left Behind" (Fabricant & Fine, 2013). Fine has also published works in Brazil, such as: "Para quem? Pesquisa qualitativa, representações e responsabilidades sociais" (Fine et al., 2006), "A prática da liberdade: pesquisa de ação participativa da juventude para a justiça na educação" (Fine & Fox, 2014), and an interview with Karla Galvão on, "Feminism, Psychology and Social Justice: A Possible Meeting?" (Adrião, 2015). In this interview, Fine speaks about feminist psychology and PAR engagement. In 2012, Fine gave a lecture in Pernambuco, Brazil at the VI Simpósio Internacional sobre Juventude Brasileira - JUBRA (VI International Symposium of Brazilan Youth).

Over the past decade, Fine's scholarship has been recognized nationally and internationally with awards, fellowships and prestigious invited lectures. Highlighted among these are the 2018 STAATS Award from the American Psychological Foundation for Lifetime Achievements in Science; the 2017 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Qualitative Methods from Division 5 of the American Psychological Association; the 2013 Strickland-Daniels Mentoring Award from the Division of Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association, 2013 American Psychological Association Public Policy Research Award, the 2012 Henry Murray Award from the Social Psychology and Personality Society, 2011 Kurt Lewin Award from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

Maria Elena Torre is a faculty member in Critical Social/Personality Psychology and Urban Education at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). Torre received her Ph.D. in Critical Social Psychology from CUNY. Torre was Chair of Education Studies at Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts. She is now the Director and co-founder of The Public Science Project, a research institute dedicated to engaging research to interrupt injustice. The Public Science Project conducts participatory research with communities with the aim of informing social policy, social movements, educational equity and human rights. (www.publicscienceproject.org).

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For the last 20 years, Torre has been engaged in critical participatory action research projects nationally and internationally with schools, prisons, and community-based organizations seeking to further social justice. Her work introduced the concept of 'participatory contact zones' to collaborative research, and she continues to be interested in how democratic methodologies, radical inclusion, and notions of solidarity impact scientific inquiry.

She has authored, co-authored or edited many chapters and articles focused on qualitative research methodology, mainly PAR; Youth studies; Educational studies and Feminist psychology. Torre's recent publications include: "PAR EntreMundos: A Pedagogy of the Americas" (Ayala, J., Cammarota, J., Rivera, M., Rodriguez, L., Berta; Avila, M., and Torre, M.E. 2017); "Participatory action research (Torre, 2014); and "Critical participatory action research as public science" (Torre, M.E., Fine, M., Stoudt, B. & Fox, M., 2012). In 2015, Torre was a visiting scholar at the Pernambuco Federal University, (UFPE) where she took the course "Participatory Action Research (PAR) Psychology and Social Justice in Recife and New York".

Torre was a recipient of the American Psychological Association Division 35 Adolescent Girls Task Force Emerging Scientist and the Spencer Fellowship in Social Justice & Social Development in Educational Studies and is also the 2013 recipient of the Michele Alexander Award from the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues of the American Psychological Association for Early Career Excellence in Scholarship, Teaching, and Service.

Allison Cabana is a Ph.D. student in the Critical Social/Personality Psychology program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), where Maria Elena Torre is her advisor. Prior to CUNY, Cabana completed her Bachelor of Arts in Intensive Psychology at University of California, Santa Cruz. Her focus is Participatory Action Research and Youth Participatory Action Research (PAR and yPAR), production of knowledge and epistemology, social identities, and intersectionality. Her current research within the program is grounded in working with the Public Science Project on a National Participatory Study with LGBTQ & GNC Youth.

With a long history of research carried out together, Fine, Torre and Cabana are part of *What's Your Issue?* (WYI), a Public Science Project. The project conducted a participatory survey designed by and for LGBTQ+ & GNC (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, plus and Gender Non-Conforming) youth. This participatory survey gathered data from 6,000 young people in the United States. On the morning of

December 19th, 2017, Fine, Torre and Cabana joined me to discuss epistemological and ethical PAR principles and the challenges and results found during their WYI research process. Below is our dialogue:

Luciana Miranda (LM): First, I would like to say thank you, Michelle, Maria, and Allison. Thank you for this opportunity to meet with you today and discuss the PAR process, general epistemological and ethical principles and, also, your individual and collective engagement in building research with a social justice approach. I would like to divide our discussion into two parts; first, we will discuss PAR's history, process, and particularities and second, we can focus on the WYI research performed with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, plus and Gender Non-Conforming youth. How does this sound to all of you?

All: That is okay, sure.

LM: As we know, Participatory Action Research has an extensive history rooted in Kurt Lewin's legacy, but also in that of Latin American theorists such as Orlando Fals-Borda (from Colombia), Paulo Freire (from Brazil), and Ignacio Martın-Baró (from El-Salvador). More recently, there have been notable contributions from Post-Feminist theories in PAR research. Could you tell me about your relationship with these various influences and how they might have helped to build a frame for your Participatory Action Research?

Michelle Fine (MF): My academic story is that I am an academic granddaughter of Kurt Lewin, through Morton Deutsch. That's how I come to Action Research. So, early in at Columbia University, I was exposed to the ideas of research in practice and the notion, I think it's a notion by Mao [Tse Tung] that we "only know an apple by biting it". So, that you only know change, and social processes, by opening them. I would never say Kurt Lewin was participatory, although a lot of the women who worked with him were. I think what we will see is a big lineage of men with big ideas about participation, but not practice. And then women whose names do not get attached, doing a lot of the critical practice work. So, that is one piece of how Kurt Lewin plays here but, we are also very influenced by Paulo Freire whom I got to know while he was alive[1]. I was with him on a number of occasions so, he opened the door for thinking about the pedagogy of the oppressed, liberation theology, liberation psychology... We all, certainly Maria and I and Allison, through inheritance, were influenced by Maxine Greene who was a feminist philosopher. Who wasn't simply interested in documenting the terrible forms of oppression, but who was also interested in imagination, and in research to provoke transformation. Orlando Fals-Borda I met, conceptually, through Paulo Freire. Again, when we were in Columbia this summer we

heard a lot about Cristina Salazar, his wife, who was engaged in the practice of participatory literacy work, on the ground. So, there is a way in which the story gets told, on the ground, through great men and, they were all great—but, a lot of the participatory praxis was engaged by women. We work from an intersectional feminist lens, where we take seriously questions of class and race and gender and sexuality as they are located in structures and in lives. I think the work that we do, this is the last thing I will say, takes very seriously the expertise of the communities most affected by injustice. That expertise, that wisdom, that knowledge has to be at the forefront of the questions we ask, the methods we use, the analyses we develop, and the products we create. We are not interested in speaking for the people, or even alongside the people, we are interested in creating spaces that Maria would call "contact zones", influenced again by Gloria Anzaldúa, another tributary I want to add to this river. Spaces where different kinds of knowledge come together about social problems and radical possibilities.

Maria Torre (MT): To add to that a little bit, in terms of the work that we do at the Public Science Project, here at the CUNY Graduate Center, would be to highlight that our commitment to engaging how power operated in the ways knowledge is produced and developed. And, so, its that we, as Michelle said, take very seriously this commitment and it informs our commitment to working with communities that have been most impacted and, often, most marginalized, and therefore place them at the center of our work. I think that we have spent a lot of time over the years thinking about the conditions necessary so that a true collaboration across sometimes very differently situated people, can occur. That has really built off of a lot of Michelle's work. Early on, in her writings, that was coming from a feminist perspective, critiquing the production of knowledge, looking at who gets to be the expert, what the relationship between the researchers and the researched, and the spaces between. As more and more people entered the academy who were not your traditional academic students; more women, more people of color, more people with disabilities, they/we brought experiences that provoked a lot of critical thinking about how it is that knowledge is produced. And it is this thinking that we draw on in our participatory collectives, in the participatory contact zones we create, where very differently situated people are brought together to ask—what needs to be in place so that people can participate as equally as possible?

Allison Cabana (AC): I do not actually know that I have that much to add to this, having been one of the younger scholars to be brought into this tradition - hearing what Michelle and Maria have both just said, it

has been really great to build on these legacies of the great men and women, and people, of different genders. Being, in part, because of the knowledge that is located in communities that we are working with, and those folks sometimes go on to become scholars, and the field grows and continues to grow from there.

LM: How can we define PAR? What are the leading principles?

MF: I will say two principles, and then, Maria has written on this, but I think there are two principles that are in conversation with South Americans—one is, a commitment to epistemic justice, right? What Bonaventura [Santos] would call epistemic justice, a commitment to a radical re-imagination of where knowledge, where expertise, lives. The second is, for us, critical PAR; designing research, the challenges and the power hierarchies, and making visible both the consequences of oppression, but, also, the unfair accumulation of power, and worth, and land, and rights for elites. That we are not interested in just demonstrating a buried story — which is really very important. We are interested in demonstrating how power and resources are being redistributed to white people, to wealthy people, to elites, to corporations. And the third is that we are interested in producing research that can feed resistance.

LM: Do you agree?

MT: Yes! Often, when you look for definitions of PAR, what gets focused on, is that non-traditional researchers - people who have not been classically trained in research - switch roles and become the designers of research. So, there is a focus on participation, and there is a focus on inclusion, but there is not always a focus on relationships of power and the challenge that a participatory collective put towards the whole process of research. Thinking about purpose, as Michelle just said, it is not just engaging in research for research's sake. Yes, a research collective is interested in producing new knowledge and challenging ways of thinking and speaking to academic literatures and disciplines, but usually that's a secondary - or just one of the many agendas of the work. - The leading agenda is very often about engaging the injustice that people are living, re-imagining relationships to power and privilege and vulnerability, offering new possibilities, unearthing buried histories… There are multiple agendas within the work that is about challenging and transforming a larger set of social relations.

LM: In certain published works such as, "Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion" (Cammarota, Fine 2008) or "Critical participatory action research as public science" (Torre, M.E., Fine, M., Stoudt, B. & Fox, M. 2012) you have said

that PAR can be a formal resistance that leads to transformation and promotes social justice. How do you analyze the possible relationship between academic research (made in the University and from University) and social work (outside of University walls)? How can university research contribute to social change?

MF: It is a particularly important question for psychology because psychology has been adopted as the ideological justification for stratification, hierarchy, oppression, "they deserve it", you know? We are doing work on Muslims now, and so much of the psychology is about "are they radicalizing" rather than, how does Islamophobia change young people's sense of belonging? In schools, there is a lot of academic work that justifies this; that if only you "work hard"— it's called "grit"— you will get good outcomes, when we know that race and class and opportunities are so stratified! It feels like academic psychology has been used badly. Academic psychology has been used very badly to justify stratification. It used to be eugenics - racial differences, gender differences, the pathology of gay people, etc. We see our work as reparations, as obligation, and as a resource that can be shared with social movements to tell a different story. Maybe, that story goes to the courts, or to Congress, maybe it just circulates in the community, or maybe it gets taught to Freshmen at the university. Maybe it just moves through communities and people see the academy as a potential and fragile ally, rather than just a predator, and maybe it gets taught in classrooms. It is really to tell a different story about the shape of injustices, the causes of injustice, the consequences of injustice and for me, the unfair accumulation of privilege in some communities and bodies and the sustained assault on others. I think Maria is absolutely right that the academy is always in the air. The question is how do we navigate that? We try to do the research to raise up a different set of questions.

AC: I would build on that, that part of the work of telling a different story--with many of us being both within the academy and outside of the academy - having our commitments to social justice on the outside - asks us to ask a different question. To have a different perspective and to have a different set of commitments means, that the work that we are doing is asking different questions and there is a commitment to use both the resources, that the academy has and our work in the University towards that end.

LM: I believe PAR is beyond a methodological approach; it is an ethical posture and an ethical way to build a relationship with the Other. However, as Maria said, it is not for the Other but, alongside the Other—these contact zones that Maria spoke on are related. You build data together with the youth—in

Brazil, our intervention-research is similar. How do you define ethical PAR principles? How do these ethical principles play out during PAR, how do you construct an ethical process during PAR?

MT: It is essential that once folks come together, and have a shared desire to better understand some kind of social dynamic or social injustice, that there needs to be a collective process whereby people share the knowledge that they are bringing, the histories that they have lived, their experiences that they have had, the things that they have learned from their lives, their friends and families lives, from living in the situation. In our work, because we believe that there is a strength in bringing together people who are differently positioned around what everyone is collectively looking at - to better understand how power operates, how privilege operates, how vulnerability is moved through – we structure in a process for collective knowledge building. Those of us who come from the academy - those of us who are traditionally trained researchers - part of the gifts that we bring to the collective is our understanding of methodologies, maybe our familiarity with relevant literature and data. The people we are collaborating with, if they have never done research before, bring their experiences and histories and then together, in conversation, we exchange these knowledges and we start to build on each other's "expertise". We ask questions and then challenge each other's understandings. We then, together, seek other places to build our understanding; sometimes we collectively look at existing data sets that are relevant, or other literatures, sometimes we interview folks to deepen our understandings as part of the process before we develop our research tools. We engage in lots of different kinds of methods and we do not assume that everyone is comfortable with looking at numbers, or reading, or speaking, or sharing. All of that then also has to be thought so that we come up with different ways of building each other's understandings and knowledge. And then, from there, we revisit; why is that we want to do this research, who is it that we want to talk to, what is it that we are hoping to impact, or shift, or change? What are the questions that we really want to be asking, how does this connect to other struggles that are going on - historically, contemporarily - and then once we get closer to what it is that we want to better understand, we look at what kinds of data we think would be most powerful to impact the kinds of changes in understandings, in actions, and in everyday life. Then, we make decisions. Some projects have leaned towards big surveys because we want data that will represent experiences of large groups of people or because we want to speak to a conversation - or dominant narrative - that is being fuel by big data produced by the state.

The community group might then want to produce community- based data to speak back to that narrative. So, sometimes it is oral histories—we use a range of different methods and then, once we have our data, we collectively think about and try to make sense of it. We look for the contradictions, we look for the loud stories within it, the silent stories, and then think about what kinds of research products will be most powerful.

LM: Anything else? Ok, let's talk about "*What's Your Issue? [* (WYI) project - with LGBTQ+ & GNC (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, plus and Gender Non-Conforming)]. Can you briefly explain this background research and when you realized the importance of building research with these groups?

MF: If you look at the history of our work, we have agreed to do research on struggles- not populations. We never wanted to just do "Jewish women", "tall people", "people who are deaf"… We do not believe that populations are—to use Bruno Latour's notion-- that populations are just "smooth objects". Part of the epistemological violence of social research has been to smooth out and homogenize categories of people. Maria and I have stayed away - we did not do research on "women in prison", we did research with women in prison on the state disinvesting in college and over investing in criminalization. We have always studied institutional dynamics, not people. Alright, then these funders came to us and said, [Ford Foundation, ARCUS, Anonymous and Borealis Philanthropy] "Please study people!" and we were like, "Ehhhh, we don't really want to do that…", but they were compelling for three reasons; one is they said the research that has been done on these young people only focuses on depression, suicide, sad, horrible, broken, oppressed, mostly focuses on white, mostly focuses on young people in school. We know that this is a broader range - this is not a "smooth object". This is a complicated ocean of bodies. That was the first, that they were willing to challenge the category. The second is that they wanted research that was deeply intersectional, that understood that because young people were raising questions about gender or sexuality, they were more likely to be on the streets, in foster care, homeless, thrown out of school, beat up by the police… They were interested in seeing this "category" of person as an outcome of structural conditions as well as, a subject before that. And, the third is that they were very excited about us doing participatory research. We agreed to do this in a way that would destabilize the category, that would insist on intersectionality, that would never talk about the category as a homogeneous group and, that would always attach negative outcomes to structural conditions, not personal object aspects.

MT: In some of our projects we've seen how

surveys can be a real political action. We draw on the ideas of Ignacio Martín-Baró, who was not a participatory researcher yet, but he had a very subversive understanding and relationship to research. He was convinced that you could use very traditional methods for the people, in order to reveal state hypocrisy and expose the cracks in dominant narratives and dominant stories that were seducing people into believing governing lies about their own lives. So, building and drawing from him and others, we were able to craft a survey with LGBTQ youth. Youth who have never really been invited to the table to design a survey that would document, broadly, the conditions of their lives, their needs, and their struggles and, also, their joys, their creativity, and their activism—at a national level. We created lots of openings for young people to express themselves, we created lots of openings for self-determination, and as a result, we have national-level data that tells a very different story. That offers very different imaginations that now can be used by local youth activists and organizers all across the country, that can be used by policymakers, that can be used by funders, and that can be used in the Academy. To deepen, broaden, and make more complicated what it means to grow up LGBTQ or gender-expansive in a country where our president just banned the use of the word transgender…

LM: Every PAR process is a challenge, but "What's Your Issue?" (WYI) revealed a particular methodological challenge that I would like you all to speak more on; how do you engage participatory tools and participatory strategies in a survey of this size (6,000 individuals) and in different states throughout the U.S.?

AC: I really like this question and want to take it to what Maria was saying in the last question about making these stories and, also, making these stories for other young people. In getting the sample [of 6,000], in getting this national sample, that people are really interested in sharing their experiences because there are not a lot of narratives of themselves out there. So, by facilitating their [the young people's] creation of the survey, their taking of the survey, and their spreading of it, they are creating a community in and of themselves and stories for themselves and for each other. While it is important to speak to policy, to speak to the Academy, and to speak to all these other folks who do hold real power in our lives, there is [power], also, in those connections that are being made - "I am not the only who feels this", "I am not the only one who is experiencing this", "I am not the only one who is hoping for this"- and in sharing that, what do we build going forward?

MT: It was an enactment, again, in drawing on

Ignacio Martín-Baró's idea that surveys could be "social mirrors", both in the interpersonal level, in the small group level, and to larger societal levels—[in] understanding yourself in relation to others and in relation to your broader social context.

AC: We had a couple of young folks and youth researchers on our team. And, we ended up spreading the survey through social media: Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter - in networks that youth are in already. There was a lot of outreach and then it took on a life of its own in being shared and [in] people asking if the survey was still open, if "we can take it". We had folks from other countries asking if we were going to make it in another language and in another country because it was only for the folks in the U.S. That social media presence really took off [that] and people also sharing it to their groups and to their schools, asking if they could take it at their schools—and that is both in high schools and at university levels. Which is interesting, too, to also have teachers who were supportive. We had survey parties—which were groups of young people taking it [the survey] in the same spot so, you could take it on a tablet, or a phone, or a computer. The young people were able to have these pizza parties to be in solidarity and take their anonymous survey but, be with other folks, too.

MT: I would just add, for Michelle and me, it was a wonderful challenge to think about how to do a critical participatory action research project, nationally. I think some of the ways that we did that is we took strategies - or ways of and methods that we used in projects in local communities—and we tried to magnify them. We knew that when we developed participatory surveys, part of the process after an exchange of knowledge is thinking about; so, what are some of the issues that we really want to focus on, what are the categories? We did that-instead of just with one small group of people around the table that we all live near- we did that over and over, again! On phone calls, on the computer, sometimes in person, with groups, in states all around the country. Once we had categories and desires about what young people wanted this survey to be able to speak to, or to reflect back, then we all, in conversations, came up with questions that fell into these categories. In many ways, we did what a traditional researcher who is creating a survey does; we borrowed some questions from standard scales, and we tried them out with each other and made sure that they worked and that people could understand them, and that they were reflecting what it was we wanted to learn more about. In many ways, so we used a very traditional process but we just had to think creatively about how to engage people in lots of different locations - that took time. It took time to have genuine conversations, to cycle back, to go through

drafts, and to share those drafts, but we knew that in order to be successful we had to create a survey that would speak to young people in a variety of settings. We had to make sure that as many points of view and as many different young people living LGBTQ lives had an opportunity to shape and craft the survey.

LM: It was so hard but so amazing!

MF: So, amazing! We developed a sample that we do not believe to be—our goal was not for it to be representative. We do not believe this is a category where you could say, "okay, now we have every tenth". Our sample was rigorously inclusive—so we would pay attention to; do we have every state? Do we have urban and rural? Do we have north and south? Do we have too many white people? Do we have enough trans or gender-expansive folks? Are we getting folks with some history of homelessness or juvenile justice? We did not always make our goals, but that was our motive. Our motive was for really rigorous inclusion and so, you will notice that we do not just give percentages as the simple idea, "what percentage of gay students drop out of high school?" What we will do is look at proportions or disparities, by race or by gender - given this very broad ranging sample, are there discrepancies for white young people and people of color? For those who are trans or gender-expansive? For those who are cis—in the north and in the south? That feels like a really different way of thinking about research that represents the range of a community rather than just studying those who are available, as do traditional institutions, as if that were representative. Does that make sense? It would be like only studying domestic violence by going to a shelter. Right? The women in shelters are some of the people but, lots of us have experienced violence. We went for expansive and then, that was a challenge to think through, how do we still have valid research?

LM: The next question is about the research's findings. Are there any particular findings that you would like to highlight?

MF: We will give you the headline highlights, but there are lots of subtexts. One is that young people define their gender, their sexuality, and their race in a variety of ways. They do not find the categories that my generation had relied on - even those of us who are activists - they don't find them useful. In fact, they find them offensive and constraining. There is an explosion of identity categories and, there is no coherence within; there is no desire. There are some who say, "I know I am a woman even though I have a penis." Others who say, "what's a woman?", and that is all within the same community. That is a big one and it has everything to do with the language we use and the comparisons we make. The second is that in this country and, I fear

globally, race really matters when young people touch public institutions. Whether it is police or schools, young white people have far better outcomes than young people of color. It is also true that those who are cis-gendered—their identity matches their biology: they look like a woman, feel like a woman—, that those young people have much better outcomes with police and with schools than those who are trans or gender-expansive. At the same time, when you look at difficulties with families, or with friends or activism, they do not look very different. There is nothing inherent in those categories that makes them all different—there is something about once they touch public institutions; some kinds of privileges and oppressions get amplified. The third is that, this is the quantitative data but, the more structurally precarious they are—they do not have housing or secure housing or are thrown out of schools—they have had to deal with the police in negative ways— the more discrimination, the more violence but, also; the more activism. LGBTQ/gender expansive youth are young people who have had to speak their minds, without usually parental "models" – all their lives; they have to fight for recognition and autonomy. Growing up they had to insist "you are not going to ignore me, or treat me like that, or misrecognize me." Most – maybe all – did NOT grow up with parents who had the same experience, who could help smooth the way with stories of trans generational resistance and support. For example there is a beautiful literature on how black families prepare their children to contend with white racism, or police, or stereotypes. Instead, the LGBTQ young people in the survey have grown a muscle of what we call "willful subjectivity" – borrowing from Sara Ahmed; they are who they… they experience discrimination and they become activists. And activism is good for their health. In fact, the more activism, the better mental health and lower suicide. We don't want to over state this – of course we may not have those who are so harmed by oppression that they did not complete the surveys, but these statistical associations are very provocative and counter intuitive. The last two findings, or three, maybe; one is that being treated badly is not good for your mental health—it is not good for your sense of purpose in life. There are far too high rates of experiences of depression, mental illness, and thoughts about suicide that really come from these structural conditions. It does not come from being gay or being trans, we don't have evidence that is true. To transgress by gender, or by sexuality; to be thrown out of one's home; to be bullied at school; to be picked on by the police— These structural experiences and betrayals have consequences for how young people feel about themselves, and whether or not they think life is worth living. The last thing I will say is that we have very

encouraging findings about young people who go to schools that we call "dignity schools" where they are totally recognized. In schools where young people have access to gay or trans teachers, where they have sex education that talks about a range of sexualities, history and language arts teaches about sexuality and gender and race; there is a gay/straight alliance; there is an adult you can always talk to; these are little things about recognition. In those schools, young people are less likely to drop out, less likely to have mental health problems, less likely to think about suicide, more likely to talk to a teacher if they have a problem, and less likely to be bullied—that is amazing. In some ways it is obvious, right? As psychologists, we know that— but it is beautiful to be able to demonstrate that with a large sample. The last thing I will say that is really very thrilling is that now we are writing about their "radical wit". They are just very funny—because they see the world in critical and sometimes ironic angle; they see and name hypocrisies; they challenge what others think is "normal", their humor is sometimes dark humor, sometimes sarcasm, sometimes irony, and a lot of solidarities - they speak of activism in solidarity with other movements because—as Maria would say—they are "drawing on all the parts of themselves". They are LGBTQ and gender activists, but also [activists] in immigration, economic change, and environmental [justice]. They are a very activist group of young people, and again, neither psychology nor sociology would have predicted that young people who are multiply oppressed would be among the most activist in their generation.

LM: Scholars, such as Walter Mignolo (2007), have noted the importance of decolonial knowledge within and outside of the Academy. Mignolo analyzes how euro-centered epistemology imposes itself as, "Universal logic". In WYI, youth criticize binaries such as heterosexual versus gay/lesbian or male versus female as universal forms - youth refuse to "check a box". What do you think is PAR's contribution to knowledge decolonization?

MT: It has a very active contribution in the sense that it positions those who have been studied as the ones who are asking the questions and framing the designs of the work. It opens up opportunities for self-determination; for determining what a community wants to know; what is important to better understand is what needs to be challenged—what dominant frames need to be challenged. To speak back to the ways that communities have been criminalized, have been violated, stolen from…it creates both an approach and a set of tools that, in their own hands—in people's own hands— can be taken up.

MF: The only thing I would add is, we see this as a decolonizing commitment to epistemic justice, in terms

of…it is tricky to use that language in the global north. We do not want to appropriate—and, yet, in a humble nod to the commitment to decoloniality, we recognize knowledge of community and oppression; we engage with and alongside the struggles that come from the most marginalized communities. We see research as one of many tools in social movements and we work with communities to figure out how this information might be used to mobilize towards justice. In those ways, it is a tool; a theory of method but, also of resistance.

MT: I think that, particularly for Michelle and me, it has offered us a way to take seriously and engage solidarity. Very often we are working with communities and research collectives that we share some profound experiences with. There are equally profound differences among us which allows for a space where we can create new relationships— where we can create new relationships based on our commitments; our political commitments and commitments to justice, [to] a world that should be, and [this research] gives us a concrete way to enact those commitments.

MF: I have been rereading Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and it is kind of beautiful— it was written in '61 and, I imagine them standing on the stage, back to back, with Fanon speaking to the Algerians and Sartre speaking to French. He is saying to the French— "We have to listen to this! We did this! We know we did this! We have been complicit—we must join the Algerian struggle." He is not reframing Fanon, he is not putting him in English; he is speaking to a different audience. Some South Africans ask me to write on decoloniality which, is why I feel so humble and weird writing about it from the belly of capitalism and whiteness here. So, I turned to Sartre. Then, in 1968, Fanon's wife removed Sartre's preface because he supported Israel and this reminds me of the power and of the fragility of those collaborations where, for good reason, whiteness is always suspect. Yet, it is those moments of coming together where we say; this is not their problem, this is our problem— this is not just "Algerians are violent" but, they are reenacting the colonial violence of France on Algeria. The sons watch their dads being humiliated by the French and, now, they are speaking our language. It is not a solidarity, it is like a "fragi-arity" (laughs) but, when I realized she removed it I thought—perfect, perfect. In the interview with her, the interviewer said: "Why did you remove it?" and, she said: "Well, it was very good for him to say that to the French but, then he betrayed the commitment when he supported Israel." Then, the interviewer said: "Well, don't you think Fanon betrayed the commitment when he married you, a white woman?" And, she said: "No, no, no!" (laughs). It is just like—we are all filled with contradiction!

LM: This is our last question: nowadays we are experiencing a "conservative wave" in Brazil and around the entire world…

MT: A "tsunami"…

LM: Yes, a "tsunami" … For instance, many protests arose recently against Judith Butler during her lecture in São Paulo in November of this year. A group responded to her with a symbolic bonfire, made to represent a "witch hunt" of the Middle Ages. All around Brazil, some professors have been harassed for engaging critical gender approaches in their research. How do you perceive this wave of conservatism and how can research similar to yours, in WYI, be an antidote?

MF: We have to stand in solidarity with scholars who are under attack. You know, during the holocaust scholars were attacked—this is an old story, books were burned… We have to stand in solidarity; we should be offering folks places here. When Erika Burman and Ian Parker were encountered resistance in their UK University, we offered them to come here—they did not come. It is not "nothing", it is everything for us to be standing, publically, together. Now we have censorship and political pressure and repression here, as well with the banned words, and I think we are going to have to think about, how do we enter that fight? Not only as the right of scientists to use those words, but as the right of lives to live those words— Words like diversity, transgender, evidence based, science based… - that is our work right now.

LM: The highlights of your research such as those in "What's Your Issue?" (WYI), and the lives of these youth— that can be an antidote against this "conservative tsunami". Thank you so much for your time, your research, and your insights.

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Notas

[1] About the relationship between Fine and Freire see Adrião, 2015.