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“THE MORE CONNECTION THE BETTER”

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of the classroom conversation itself and in the urgent work of examining dynamics of harm and punishment.¹⁰⁶

We believe in this urgent work and that Inside-Out can be part of it, but we do not believe Inside-Out is a panacea. We are working on our own campus to provide a broader menu of educational offerings that do not depend exclusively on the Inside-Out model, including those that are designed and offered to incarcerated students only, in order to meet their expressed needs. We join other scholars of prison education who previously documented the “power of relationship building for incarcerated individuals”¹⁰⁷ and call for careful attention to the impact of bounded relationships on students, especially Inside students, and for instructors to bring that awareness forward into pedagogy, evaluation research, and the design of prison/university partnerships. Future research must also examine differential barriers to access for prison education, especially as it varies by race and ethnicity, immigration status, and gender,¹⁰⁸ which our small sample prevented us from addressing, but nonetheless needs documentation to fully weigh the implications and impacts of supporting prison education at the risk of legitimizing racist systems of control.

Returning to the broader context of uneasy alignments, we remain uneasy with alliances between coercive systems. Peterson cautions,

While ever powerful, when the community we build inside the classroom dissolves, individuals are left alone to battle structures that have not made the same transformations they have. This illuminates an age-old argument about the limits of internal transformation against a backdrop of systemic oppression.¹⁰⁹

As we consider other examples of soft spaces within hard systems, especially those that provide mental health assessment or treatment to people made

106. Jobe et al., *supra* note 35, at 404.

107. Flores et al., *supra* note 45, at 5.

108. Niness, *supra* note 55, at 11. Despite the overrepresentation of White Inside students in our classroom, there is surprisingly positive data on trends in differential access from emerging research. Analyzing the 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates, Niness finds that

members of minoritized groups are reporting significant levels of involvement compared to their counterparts holding less stigmatized, and perhaps more advantageous, identities. This does not mean research on participation, the expansion of access to programming, or the removal of barriers related to persistence and completion should end. On the contrary, incarcerated people with violent controlling offenses are likely still facing such issues. Identifying as queer, not being a United States citizen, and not holding a high school degree were also negatively associated with participation and require further investigation into if this trend persists today and into why this might be. The 2016 Survey of Prison Inmates is now six years old, and since its release, the world has experienced a global pandemic which greatly affected incarcerated populations. A future avenue of research will need to explore program participation of incarcerated adults following this global catastrophe to assess who is and is not involved in education courses now.

Id. at 30–31.

109. Peterson, *supra* note 4, at 179.

