

Transforming University-Community Relations:

The Radical Potential of Social Movement Rhetoric in Prison Literacy Work

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Applying the framework of coalitional rhetoric, this paper seeks to consider the rhetoric of prison literacy work and its implications for university-community relationships. Through an examination of four academic publications—three peer-reviewed articles and one published conference paper—that advocate or reflect the possibility of coalition-building between prison education programs and prison abolition. The selected texts represent how scholars of prison literacy and public rhetoric bridge abolition and prison education ideals by (1) mobilizing other scholars to join the prison abolition movement as well as (2) making a case for how prison education programs can contribute to the prison abolition movement. This essay explores how activist prison education scholars employ and adapt coalitional rhetoric within their scholarship, such as publishing incarcerated students' writing to challenge dominant narratives, encouraging students to critique the PIC through critical pedagogy, helping other prison educators recognize the ways in which we are complicit, and much more. Considering the role of coalitional rhetoric in our work suggests the continuation of such coalition-building in directing prison education work to create social change beyond the university.

In seeking to understand the circulation of writing and literacy practices within the discursive and material environments of the prison, we might expose practices that are hidden, or that are not meant to be read as literacy practice... We might subject writers to punishment.

—Cory Holding, Pitt Prison Education Project

Cory Holding's reflections provide a powerful example of the complicit-activist conflict prison literacy educators face: although we may approach our prison education work with visions of social transformation, our engagement with vulnerable incarcerated populations has the potential to induce harm, compromising the positive impacts of our work. The identities of activist-scholars who work in prison education are fraught with tensions, contradictions, and setbacks; as prison literacy scholar Tobi Jacobi (2011) notes, many prison writing teachers are "simultaneously complicit and activist," an unavoidable facet of attempting to fight oppression within an institution steeped with systemic injustice (47). I am interested in how these scholars work to productively acknowledge their complicity and push for social justice through their scholarship and pedagogy. While this complicit-activism contradiction in the complex work of bridging higher education and carceral communities can never be "resolved," how can we, as scholars and teachers, create social change despite the challenges and risks?

Although I explore these irresolvable tensions entrenched in university-community relations, my purpose is not to emphasize the setbacks but instead the affordances that these tensions bring, enabling the spread of diverse ideas between the different communities. While service-learning scholarship and pedagogy within rhetoric and composition studies has made highly valuable contributions to the field and beyond (Adler-Kassner et al. 1997; Schutz and Gere 1998; Taggart 2005) as well as in inspiring my own work, I situate this project within a "social change approach" (Edwards 2006, 41) to community engagement, which Edwards argues is "necessary to change the structures in institutions and society that perpetuates systems of oppression" (41). Rhetoric and composition scholars like Dave Coogan and others echo this emphasis on social-change-oriented methods of community engagement. Coogan (2009) found that "stumbling backward into social movements through service-

learning projects challenged [him] to see the rhetorical work of movements differently” (151). This pedagogical reconceptualization demonstrates the potential for social movement rhetoric to promote moving away from “service” to social change in community-engaged pedagogies. Thus, social movement-oriented university-community partnerships have the potential to provide transformational pedagogical experiences and enact social change beyond academia.

Although prison education is not a movement itself, viewing prison literacy work through a social movement lens can inform models of university-prison and university-community relationships in the midst of inequity and uncertainty. Through an examination of prison literacy scholarship, I consider the significance of the upsurge in social movement rhetoric within recent prison education literature. More specifically, I investigate the manifestation of what I refer to as “radical coalitional rhetoric”¹—derived from coalitional research in rhetorical, feminist, and sociological studies. Such radical prison education research suggests the potential for social movement-university coalitions and enables us to rethink our work’s orientations to rhetorical and power structures within university-community relations—including and more specifically, university programs within prisons and jails.

Recent activist-oriented initiatives and scholarship in prison literacy suggest the coalitional possibility² between prison literacy and social movements. Driven by prison education scholars who orient their scholarship, teaching, and/or program administration within broader social movements, these research and pedagogical initiatives call for more radical university-community partnerships (Jacobi 2011; Scott 2013). Many activist prison education scholars, including Meghan McDowell and Alison Reed (2018), network their “teaching into ongoing social justice movements” (150), which they enact in prison classrooms through abolitionist pedagogies that encourage students to critique and defy the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). Moreover, Coogan (2009) advocates for “moving students into social movements” through community literacy work, arguing that “our

1 Term inspired by Dr. Peter Campbell at the University of Pittsburgh.

2 Rhetorician Karma Chávez’s (2013) term “coalitional possibility” emphasizes coalition as a “shared commitment to social and political change” (7) rather than “an avowed relationship” between social movement groups (8).

responsibility as teachers, students, and scholars is to form those publics that can perceive a more inclusive imaginary” to increase the impact of their work (164). These scholars and others approach their work through the perspective of prison abolition, aiming to contribute to the movement through their teaching, scholarship, and program administration, suggesting the potential for coalition formation between prison education programs and scholarship and the prison abolition movement (Jacobi 2011; McDowell and Reed 2018).

BRIDGING THE RHETORIC OF PRISON EDUCATION AND ABOLITION

Although both prison education and abolitionist rhetorics intersect in their desires to take action to create change within the prison, there is also what prison education scholar Robert Scott (2013) refers to as an “unfruitful schism” between the two rhetorics (401). I argue that while this “schism” may be more outwardly apparent, there are more similarities than differences between the two rhetorics. Prison education and the abolition movement differ in their conceptions of what constitutes positive social change. First, a common frame within prison education scholarship is the notion that prison education has the potential to influence positive social change (Davis and Roswell 2015). This sentiment that university education can have a positive impact within the prison is not always shared within the abolition community. The prison abolition movement opposes the PIC in its entirety, including interrelated entities (Critical Resistance 2019; Scott 2013; Jacobi 2011), which may arguably encompass prison education programs. Prison abolitionist Dylan Rodríguez (2006) asserts that institutional “vectoring of power” between the educator, correctional officer, and warden diminishes the “possibility for the humanistic goodwill” of prison educators (94), undermining the possibility of social change within prison education programs.

Many prison education scholars experience this complicity in working within the prison system as contradictory to their worldviews (to a certain extent) yet still strive to enact positive social change in the prison abolition movement and within their scholarship and teaching. Reflecting upon this inevitable negotiation between institutional compliance and social change within prison education, Jacobi (2011) asserts that in the fight for social justice, “some [institutional]

boundaries must remain; some rules are inflexible;" therefore, prison educators must "recogni[ze] and work with the status quo" of the prison system and "come to terms with the repressions and rules" this sacrifice entails (47). Such sacrifices, social movement scholar Fred Rose (2000) finds, occurs "when bridge builders act on their different ideas and challenge the rules and beliefs of their own organizations," yet they are "inevitably pressured by their colleagues to conform" (181). While some institutional concessions undoubtedly conflict with abolitionist goals to some extent, abolitionist prison educators choose to work within the institution because they value making change through available means and circumstances, taking advantage of university privilege to combat mass incarceration.

Abolitionist prison educators argue that we must accept this inherent institutional complicity affecting the possibility for social change within prison education programs. Jacobi (2011) echoes Rodríguez's (2006) concerns of institutional symbiosis by asserting the inherent complicity of prison educators: "When one enters a correctional facility as a teacher or programme facilitator an alliance with the institution is formed" (47). However, Jacobi (2011) argues that "engaging literacy activism through coalition-building" enables the possibility of prison educators to "to remain within the gaze of both abolitionists and the correctional facilities whose partnership we require to engage in effective literacy work" (50). While there are undoubtedly disagreements here between prison abolitionist and prison education's conceptions of social change, the process of coalition-building has the potential to bridge these differences, as rhetorician Karma Chávez (2013) argues, from the social interactions enabled by the act of coalescing, "people cannot see seemingly disparate struggles as anything other than related" (27). This intersectional perspective orients individuals toward a coalitional emphasis on solidarity-building across difference. Engaging in coalition-building work enables prison educators to envision and facilitate efforts to combat mass incarceration. To theorize the possibility for bridging the rhetoric of prison education and prison abolition, I will draw upon a range of social movement coalition theory to consider how prison education scholarship has employed coalitional rhetoric to orient toward the abolition of prisons—envisioning a just world where prisons are "obsolete" (Davis 2004). To communicate such

abolitionist ideals, these scholars coalesce rhetorics of prison education and abolition, reflecting radical coalitional rhetoric.

FRAMING RADICAL COALITIONAL RHETORICS

To investigate how abolitionist prison educators employ radical coalitional rhetoric within their scholarship, this paper examines four academic publications—three peer-reviewed articles and one published conference paper—that advocate or reflect this coalitional possibility (see Table 1). Within the four texts, I am interested in exploring appeals to radical coalitional possibilities arguing for engagement with anti-prison communities and movements outside of the university.

In each article, these scholars advocate for introducing abolitionist ideals within prison education scholarship, pedagogy, and/or programs. It is this bridging of differing arguments that demonstrates coalitional possibility between prison education and the abolition movement and, thus, functions as radical coalitional rhetoric. Because the purpose of this analysis is to examine scholars' utilization of radical coalitional rhetoric, I selected only articles in which the primary intent is to coalesce prison abolition and prison education rhetoric. These four articles are some of the most cited sources in which prison education scholars explicitly propose abolitionist ideals.³ Providing further context about each article, Table 1 comprises publication details and summaries of their respective purposes:

³ Some scholars reference abolition in other publications, but it is not the primary focal point as in these four articles.

Table 1:

Abolitionist Scholar Frame Alignment – Primary Sources

Author(s)	Source Title	Publication	Article Purpose
Tobi Jacobi	“Speaking Out for Social Justice: The Problems and Possibilities of US Women’s Prison and Jail Writing Workshops”	2011 article published in Critical Survey 23(3)	To mobilize prison literacy scholars to contribute to the abolition movement through their work by combatting social stereotypes of incarcerated individuals
Stephen John Hartnett, Jennifer K. Wood, & Bryan J. McCann	“Turning Silence into Speech and Action: Prison Activism and the Pedagogy of Empowered Citizenship”	2011 article published in Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies 8(4)	To argue for the integration of critical pedagogy (CP) practices in communication instruction to empower student agency through communication projects challenging the PIC

Author(s)	Source Title	Publication	Article Purpose
Robert Scott	"Using Critical Pedagogy to Connect Prison Education and Prison Abolitionism"	2013 article published in Saint Louis University Public Law Review 33(2)	To demonstrate how CP provides language connections between prison abolition and prison education and how prison educators can employ this language to disrupt the PIC
Laura Rogers, Wendy Hinshaw, Cory Holding, and Tobi Jacobi	"Bending Bars: A Dialogue between Four Prison Teacher-Researchers"	2015 CCCC ⁵ conference paper published in 2017 in Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine 3(1)	To encourage prison literacy scholars to pursue their teaching and scholarship from an abolitionist perspective to combat the oppression inflicted by the PIC

5 Conference on College Composition and Communication

Each of these texts represents how prison education scholars bridge abolition and pedagogical ideals by (1) mobilizing other scholars to join the prison abolition movement as well as (2) making a case for how prison education programs can contribute to the movement. Through varied arguments, each text engages in radical coalitional rhetoric to advocate for the role of prison educators in promoting an abolitionist perspective in their work.

Radical coalitional rhetoric approaches framing differences from a perspective of productivity, as Chávez (2013) suggests that differences may not always hinder a coalition. Through a metaphor of musical dissonance, she illustrates how coalitional dissonance may actually bolster rather than injure a coalition: “dissonance potentially causes problems for relationships within movements, but it also instigates, agitates, and informs; dissonance disturbs and creates energy around some issue so that it remains altered in our consciousness; dissonance produces the necessity for movement” (131). This suggests that dissonance in coalition work might be framed as an opportunity for solidarity-building between the groups through “coalitional subjectivity” (Rowe 2008; Chávez 2013). Chávez (2011) considers “coalitional subjectivity” as the process in which activists “move away from seeing one’s self in singular terms or from seeing politics in terms of single issues” and pursue “a complicated intersectional political approach that refuses to view politics and identity as anything other than always and already coalitional” (3). This coalitional commitment to intersectionality as opposed to individuality enables an understanding and acceptance of multiple—perhaps differing or contradictory—experiences or perspectives. Therefore, coalitional subjectivity is especially important in coalescing the differing rhetorics of prison education and the abolition movement.

Radical coalitional rhetoric is driven by activists sustaining the coalition—rhetors crafting arguments to enable coalition-building. Sociological literature considers the role of “bridge builders” who form and/or sustain coalitions by functioning as conduits between—in the case of this project—prison education and the abolition movement (McCammon and Moon 2015; Robnett 1996; Obach 2004). Although the bridge builder role is both material and rhetorical, I focus on the rhetorical agency of these activists—prison education scholars doing

abolition-oriented work—in enabling coalitional possibility. These actors are vital, Chávez (2013) points out, in “creating opportunities to communicate in order to build bridges across lines of difference” (130). Bridge builders must have “an intimate understanding” of the two perspectives, learning to be “bilingual, capable of translating between different classes and movements” (Rose 2000, 167). For example, abolitionist prison educators understand the needs and values of the abolition movement, the university, other instructors, and prison administration, and are thus in a unique position to “translate” between the differing rhetorics.

Through the utilization of radical coalitional rhetoric, prison literacy scholarship advocates for a coalitional possibility between the prison education and abolition movements, which suggests an alternate model for community partnerships that seeks to address university-community power imbalances. Ideally, a radical coalitional framework may orient community-engaged pedagogy away from service and toward action. Therefore, the potential for social movement coalitions between university and community groups enables community literacy scholars to conceptualize the potential to engage students in critical consciousness development *and* enact social change through community partnerships.

To explore recent prison literacy scholarship’s rhetorical framing processes to bridge diverse perspectives on social change, I utilize the sociological theory of frame alignment. The concept of frames, derived from sociologist Erving Goffman (1974), are the “schemata of interpretation” that people draw upon to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” their individual life experiences within a broader context, such as society or the world (21). Within social movement studies, frames pertaining to social action are considered “action-oriented,” meaning that individuals and groups utilize frames to “organize experience and guide action” (Benford and Snow 2000, 614)⁶. As social movement action is influenced by both individual and collective frames, framing is a significant component of prison abolitionist

6 While the noun “frame” refers to an individual or group’s meaning construction that leads to social action, the verb “framing” concerns the process in which social movement actors develop, generate, and articulate frames (Benford and Snow, 2000).

scholars' coalition-building efforts. I investigate how these rhetorical framing processes introduce prison abolitionist frames to the field of prison education.

Within the four texts, I examine frame alignment processes that bridge "interests and interpretive frames" (Snow et al. 1986; 624) between prison abolition and prison education, particularly those that constitute the discord between prison literacy's conception of social change and abolition's stance on institutional complicity. To understand how these complementary yet divergent perspectives of social change impact frame alignment processes within the literature, I limited my analysis to frame alignment that responds to this contradiction. Thus, my intention was to select frames thematically in terms of this tension, as opposed to categorically locating each instance of frame alignment. Because of this method of frame selection, my analysis likely reveals more about the bridging of complicity/social change frames within the four texts than the extent to which frame alignment occurs.

I am interested in how abolitionist prison education scholars utilize frame alignment processes to minimize frame disputes between prison educators and abolitionists. Frame disputes, introduced by sociologist Robert Benford (1993), arise within coalition-building due to the inevitability that "not all movement participants will necessarily share the same frame or interpretation of reality" (678). As Chávez (2013) reminds us, a framing dispute—or dissonance—between groups or movements does not "necessarily refer to a contradiction or opposition" but, more importantly, "calls for attention and must be addressed or it can create divisions that may hinder or immobilize a coalition" (131). Thus, bridge builders are essential to this work in utilizing dissonance productively to enable prison educators and abolitionists to "connect issues and minimize divisions where divisions might otherwise be expected" (14). Emerging from Benford's study are three categories of frame disputes—diagnosis, prognosis, and frame resonance (see Figure 1):

APPENDIX: Frame Dispute Coding Categories

Diagnosis:	Involves the identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality. Focus here is on what is reality.
Prognosis:	Suggests solutions to the problems, including how to achieve the solutions, i.e., the identification of general strategies (e.g., direct action, legislative, electoral), tactics (e.g., sit-ins, strikes, boycotts, petitions), and targets. Focus here is on how that reality should be changed and on what is to be done to change that reality.
Frame Resonance:	Concerns the factors that affect the mobilizing potency of frames including the extent to which the framings are congruent with the audiences' observations, experience, and cultural knowledge. Focus here is on how a movement's diagnoses and prognoses should be presented so as to strike a responsive chord and mobilize people to take action on behalf of the movement.

Figure 1: Benford's (1993) categories of frame disputes. Reprinted from "Frame Disputes within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement," by R. Benford, 1993, Social Forces 71(3), 699.

In applying these frame disputes within my analysis of prison education scholarship, I argue that the social change/complicity frames reflect two distinct differences between how university prison education programs and the prison abolition movement define and combat prison injustice. Throughout the four selected texts, bridge builder scholars address potential frame disputes concerning diagnoses and prognoses of prison injustice—in the realm of possibility within prison education work—through frame alignment methods. This coalescing of prison education and abolitionist frames regarding diagnosis and prognosis suggests possibilities for frame resonance to further mobilize prison educators to fight against prison injustice within their teaching and scholarship.

DIAGNOSIS: DEFINING THE REALITY OF PRISON INJUSTICE

In terms of coalescing frame disputes of diagnosis, prison abolition emphasizes the systemic oppression as the problem, while prison education programs tend to focus on rehabilitating the individual. Within the published conference paper, prison literacy scholar Wendy Hinshaw contends that individual narratives of rehabilitation are the basis of much (particularly published) writing by prisoners. While

personal and testimonial writing can be empowering, especially for writers whose voices have not previously been heard, a focus on the personal can also be damaging to incarcerated students, who may feel:

compelled to reconstruct their understandings of themselves and the stories of their lives along narratives of crime, punishment and individual redemption. The focus on individual transformation in prison discourses and prison programming is intense, and they reshape the stories that prisoners tell themselves and tell others about themselves. (Rogers and Hinshaw 2017, 79)

Emphasis on individual stories can undermine efforts to reveal and address the systemic oppression within the criminal justice system that is the basis of the prison abolition movement. Hinshaw bridges dissonance between traditional prison education and abolition frames in order to combat the limitations of individual discourses of education and reform. Many prison abolitionists, including bridge builder Tobi Jacobi (2011), advocate for prison literacy programs to promote counternarratives “beyond the usual rhetoric of individual responsibility and rehabilitation” that diagnose the larger problem of systemic injustice (45). Therefore, bridge builders are prison educators who communicate the importance of diagnosing systemic injustice and straying away from perpetuating individual rehabilitation narratives through their teaching and research.

Aiming to reconcile these differences in framing, Scott’s (2013) work demonstrates that the prison abolitionist and prison education framing of diagnoses are not so different. He asserts that:

Abolitionists need not be divided from prison educators who have similar critiques of the prison system. Furthermore, they may find that they share an uncompromising commitment to the disenfranchised: whether they are viewed as incarcerated scholars or political prisoners, the common denominator is opposition to the social order that views people only in terms of their criminal convictions (i.e. as “offenders”). Both movements share critiques of the racialized criminal justice system, the bottom-line approach to policing, and an absence of critical consciousness of the political economy of incarceration. (408)

Through bridging language such as “common denominator” and “similar,” Scott’s argument underscores the commonalities between diagnostic framing within prison abolition and education, including their mutual critiques of the prison system and emphasis on developing critical consciousness. Thus, there are similarities in what both ideologies consider to be wrong within the PIC, and these commonalities have the potential for coalition-building. Chávez’s work highlights the possibility for reciprocity and compromise in radical community partnerships, arguing that radical coalition work “take[s] up the needs [activists] see present in their own communities that require challenging division and building relationships” (144). As many prison education scholars aim to coalesce their activism and work, more intentionally performing within a coalitional context will enable the integration of diverse perspectives regarding methods of combatting mass incarceration and, thus, increase the development of coalitional subjectivities among activists.

In accentuating dissonance between prison education and the prison abolition movement’s diagnoses of injustice alongside their shared desires for social change, abolitionist prison education research bridges abolitionist frames to connect to pedagogy and research within carceral settings. For instance, Cory Holding introduces the abolition frame of complicity by arguing that prison education programs are “predicated on pedagogy that takes place under the authority of U.S. carceral control” (Rogers et al. 2017, 85). This framing diagnoses institutional and research complicity as an inherent component of prison education work, consequently disrupting the liberatory possibilities of our pedagogies. Matching this sentiment, Jacobi maintains that “a progressive pedagogy aimed at the justice system cannot be divorced from the institutional realities of working inside jails and prisons” (Rogers et al. 2017, 85). These examples highlight dissonance between prison education and abolition’s understandings of social change productively rather than harmfully (Chávez 2013). By amplifying both the abolitionist frame of institutional complicity and the social justice desires of prison educators, bridge builders introduce the role of reflecting upon complicity in diagnosing prison injustice within pedagogical work. These instances of coalescing abolitionist and prison education rhetorics demonstrate the development of coalitional subjectivities through diagnostic

framing—expanding prison educators’ conceptions of what it means for a pedagogy to be progressive and social-justice-oriented.

In addition to pedagogy, bridge builders further utilize this frame to amplify the prison abolition diagnoses of prison injustice—researcher complicity. Holding emphasizes the inequitable nature of research, arguing that “the prison context begs the question of whether free (not incarcerated) researchers should be undertaking such projects in the first place” (Rogers et al. 2017, 83). She fears that research can harm students through increased surveillance, possibly “expos[ing] hidden practices” (83). Holding’s argument frames institutional complicity as an instigator for much of these ethical issues, as the “institutional realities of academic labor” may result in research that “contributes to the greater effective working of the prison itself” (83). This rhetorical strategy once again employs dissonance to promote prison educator reflexivity, an important step in coalition-building.

Illustrating the interplay between commonalities and dissonance can be another strategy of coalitional rhetoric that may inspire both instructor reflexivity as well as hope for the possibility of social change. Engaging in this interplay, Hartnett et al. (2011) exemplify prison education’s potential to empower as well as hinder student agency, arguing that their research:

foreground[s] the inescapable fact that [their] imprisoned students, correspondents, and political collaborators face difficult and sometimes harrowing situations wherein the very act of communicating with us may place them in danger. Still, despite the hardships they face, the incarcerated men and women chronicled here desperately need to communicate with us, not only as means of maintaining their own senses of humanity, or of advancing their educations, or of trying to save their lives, but also to help those of us on the outside to see more clearly the many ways our incarceration nation is warping the fabric of democracy. (337)

This passage reveals how Hartnett et al. frame prison education within social change, asserting that critical pedagogical practices can still empower students despite the harm of the PIC. Hartnett

et al.'s amplification of prognosis framings once again demonstrates the interplay between dissonance and commonalities as a strategy for promoting both awareness of complicity and an abolitionist vision of social change.

Each of these instances reveal that recent prison education scholarship has appealed to diagnoses of prison injustice through the employment of coalitional rhetoric, which extends abolition framing to encompass the social justice frames of their audience: prison educators. This reflects common ground between the two disparate frames of social change. Although the differing diagnostic framing of social change and complicity appears to be incompatible, frame alignment enables bridge builders to forge ties between the frames to expound upon how prison educators can consider their pedagogical practices from the perspective of the abolition movement. In aligning prison education and abolitionist frames of diagnosis, bridge builders make space for the two ideologies to coexist, to work together to imagine a world without prison through prison literacy work.

PROGNOSIS: PEDAGOGICAL AND RESEARCH PRACTICES

In addition to diagnosis, prison abolitionist scholars bridge frames regarding the prognosis—how we “fix” problems of prison injustice—through pedagogical and research practices. Abolitionists maintain that we must dismantle the PIC, which means that prison reform efforts are not enough (Critical Resistance 2019). However, prison education programs tend to see the method of addressing the problem—at least the method in their power—as enacting social change through pedagogy and research. Thus, abolitionist prison educators align these differing prognosis frames through frame alignment methods, often resulting in a compromise between the two perspectives. For example, Hartnett et al.'s (2011) framing illustrates a compromise between the two prognostic frames, as they acknowledge their own complicity but maintain a determination to enact social change through their work despite this obstacle. Although they express “concerns about the power of the prison-industrial complex to co-opt [their] pedagogical efforts, [they] nonetheless” attempt “to illuminate new pathways to empowerment and, ultimately, social change” (333). Through this framing of social

change as obstructed yet possible, these bridge builders demonstrate the possibility for compromise in radical coalitional rhetoric.

Bridge builders communicate this rationale for this compromise to institutional complicity by emphasizing the value of their prison literacy work to the abolition movement. For example, Jacobi's article (2011) extends the boundaries of abolitionist framing of complicity within the PIC to accommodate prison education. She contends that her prison programs "do embody much of the spirit embraced by [Critical Resistance's] core work (international coalition building, grassroots organising, and public education) through an emphasis on local community outreach, teaching, and publication" (46).

Bridge builders also view the multiplicity of prognoses as working in harmony rather than discord. Hartnett et al. (2011) and Scott (2013) frame critical pedagogy as a tool for extending prison abolition ideals to pedagogy through its emphasis on student empowerment, dialogue, and problematizing established norms—suggesting that all of these have the potential to disrupt the PIC. Although different liberatory methods are applied throughout prison education programs, Scott sees this as beneficial rather than conflicting, arguing that:

Critical pedagogy is not the only avenue for exploring how progressive education can inform education in opposition to the prison system itself. Critical race theory in education, freedom schooling, and the Highlander Folk School are all sources of educational philosophy that link teaching practice to struggles for freedom and justice...Rather than dilute our different approaches, we could think of ourselves as multiplying our tactics...We have to organize against the prison system without assuming we know which levers and dials we are trying to manipulate. (414)

This prognosis framing advocates for variety in approaches to abolitionist pedagogy through an emphasis on the commonalities in the various methods. This framing sees dissonance within these varying methods as beneficial, reflecting an orientation toward coalitional subjectivities, incorporating multiple perspectives on methods of dismantling the PIC. Providing a tool for prognosis—how we can work toward an abolitionist prison pedagogy—bridge

builders extend abolitionist frames to incorporate pedagogies and methods that are possible for prison educators to strive for.

As bridge builders have suggested abolitionist methods that prison educators can adopt, further representing abolitionist prognoses, they also make a case for tactics prison educators should *not* employ: disseminating dominant narratives of individual transformation and rehabilitation. Maintaining that writing can counteract social change if we are not careful which institutional narratives we are contributing to, bridge builders align the abolitionist frame of complicity and the prison education frame that argues that writing influences social change (Rogers et al. 2017; Jacobi 2011; Scott 2013). In emphasizing complicity within the prognosis of research, bridge builders illustrate that a key component to how we combat prison injustices through our research is examining our positionality and combatting normative ideologies. Many prison educators, including Jacobi (2011) and Hartnett et al. (2011), do so through publishing and circulating incarcerated student writing. Jacobi argues that circulation of student writing can empower student agency and challenge social perceptions of incarceration through the production of “counternarratives” (Jacobi 2011, 41). While some bridge builders advocate for circulation as a social justice tool, Holding asserts that this is a “tool of the weak” due to its high risk for promoting oppressive narratives (Rogers et al. 2017, 85). This disagreement among abolitionist prison educators reveals the importance of researchers’ reflexivity of their own complicity to prevent the perpetuation of dominant narratives. Despite her cautioning against circulation, Holding considers how this method can function as an abolitionist tool, but it must be purposefully anti-prison. Extending abolitionist frames such as these within prison education research promotes researcher reflexivity as well as conversations imagining abolitionist methods of social change.

Additionally, Holding amplifies prison educators’ interests in social justice research outcomes by assuring the possibility that research practices can adopt abolitionist ideals. Some of the ideals she advocates for include acknowledgement of researcher complicity, conducting research for the purpose of resistance and achieving common goals with incarcerated writer, and framing incarcerated

individuals as writers rather than subjects. These abolitionist methods of research illustrate an extension of the complicity frame to amplify prison education scholars' values—research and social justice. The combination of frame amplification and extension engages both dissonance and commonalities between prison education and abolition frames of prognosis. This exchange reveals both the possibility for coalition-building and the significance of reflexivity when conducting research in a carceral setting.

Another key component of extending abolitionist frames of prognosis to prison education research entails how researchers communicate their work and the people they work with. Scott (2013) asserts that “anti-prison activists need to partake in...dialogue to formulate activism that is reflective of the linguistic realities of prison without falling into the trap of reproducing prison ideology” (412). His emphasis on how prison educators' language can perpetuate prison ideology demonstrates a tangible way that research can combat this complicity: choosing careful language to frame the work. He suggests disrupting normative prison language such as “distinctions between different classes of people: ‘prisoner’ versus ‘staff’ and ‘offender’ versus ‘civilian’” (412). Scott's suggestions for actively challenging institutional and dominant narratives within prison education research highlights connections between complicity and communicating our research. Employing language that prison literacy scholars understand, prison abolitionist scholars align prison abolition frames of prognosis and provide actionable strategies for an abolitionist vision.

In each of these texts, bridge builders' engagement with diagnosis and prognosis exemplifies the importance of anticipating potential frame disputes in efforts to coalesce ideals of prison education and abolition. Although the two ideologies are not entirely aligned, bridge builders are essential in illuminating the benefits of dissonance to coalition formation, opening up conversations about how such divisions can influence coalitional subjectivities. Through this coalition-building rhetoric, therefore, activist prison educators evoke the final framing category of frame resonance, which aims “to strike a responsive chord and mobilize people to take action” (Benford 1993, 699). If prison educators are able to see the abolitionist potential in

their work, possibilities are expanded for prison education efforts to join the movement to end mass incarceration.

CONCLUSION

In the face of institutional pressures and ideological sacrifices, recent prison education scholarship illustrates the possibility for coalition-building despite differing perspectives between social movements and academic communities. Through radial coalitional rhetoric—employing strategies such as framing commonalities and dissonance, highlighting coalitional subjectivities, etc.—prison literacy scholars act as bridge builders to establish ideological links between their scholarship and the prison abolition movement, rhetorically identifying common values and bridging gaps between conflicting ideologies through frame-bridging processes. This coalitional orientation signifies a departure from paternalistic notions of service or even critical consciousness to those of social change, increasing the possibility for reciprocal community partnerships.

While there are differences in prison education and abolitionist perspectives on social change, coalitional subjectivities enable us to see parallels and benefits of compromise to achieve common goals. Ideological disputes are inevitable in coalescing, particularly when introducing radical ideas within institutionalized settings like universities and prisons. Though many prison abolitionists question whether or not their academic activism is truly affecting the larger movement, bridge builders bridge these frames through demonstrating the activist nature of their work.

Conceptualizing these activist-scholars as social movement bridge builders highlights the social justice work of these individuals within both the prison abolition movement and their prison education ventures. As Keith Edwards (2006) insists, “the Ally for Social Justice status is an aspirational identity one must continuously work towards” (53). In aspiring for this identity, bridge-building activist-scholars experience and perform social change while at the same time acknowledging their complicity of working within the oppressive Prison Industrial Complex.

As these representative texts suggest, scholars enact coalition-building through efforts such as publishing incarcerated students' writing to challenge dominant narratives, encouraging students to critique the PIC through critical pedagogy, helping other prison educators recognize the ways in which we are complicit, and much more. Considering the role of coalitional rhetoric in our work both advocates for the development of new approaches and suggests the continuation of such coalition-building in directing prison education work to create social change beyond the university.

This upsurge in radical coalitional rhetoric within prison literacy scholarship can serve as a model for community-engaged writing work as a whole: listening to the needs of the community to curb systemic injustices rather than applying the band-aid of service work.

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