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# Between sites: Critical convergences at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels in a service learning course

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BETWEEN SITES: CRITICAL CONVERGENCES AT THE PERSONAL,  
INTERPERSONAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS IN A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE

by

KENDRA BREWSTER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York  
2014

2014

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
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dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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**Abstract****BETWEEN SITES: CRITICAL CONVERGENCES AT THE PERSONAL,  
INTERPERSONAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS IN A SERVICE LEARNING COURSE**

by

Kendra Rashaun Brewster

Adviser: Professor Michelle Fine

Set within the context of the increasing emphasis on civic engagement and transformative education, this work addresses service learning as a form of civic engagement that holds both the risks of acriticality and critical potential. This study examines the capacity for the critical consciousness and relationality that define the primary commitments of critical service learning (see Kinefuchi, 2010). Thus, this study is grounded in the ways that the circuits of privilege and dispossession were breached in a service learning course where college students travelled to mentor adolescent girls who were in a secure residential facility. The narratives of former service learning students were analyzed to excavate the service learning experience at three sites which contextualize moments of critical dialogue: the personal, the interpersonal, and the institutional level. Three themes emerged from the analysis: (1) the position of the mentor between being an agent and recipient of transformation; (2) the discourses of sameness and difference deployed to forge solidarities; and, (3) the negotiation of the boundary between the inside and outside as a marker of the personal-societal dispossession of the service learning site and those within it. The findings indicated that people blur the line that separates self/other as they acknowledge mutual

impact, implicate themselves in constructing a vision of girls' well-being, and grapple with counter/representations of the facility and the girls from their temporary position as 'insiders' within the facility. These findings are held in tension by participants' intermittent recognition of the facility as a space of dispossession, however, and their resistance to writing themselves into it. The findings suggest that the positions, discourses, and critical meanings are moments across this service learning experience that can be 'visual aids' for intergroup processes. The future directions based on this work suggest intentionally deploying these moments in order to explore the flows of comfort, connection, remembrance, trauma, loss, and disintegration on which circuits of dispossession and privilege run (Ayala & Galletta, 2012; Fine & Ruglis, 2009).

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## **Chapter 1: Surfacing the Challenges of Criticality in Service Learning**

Service learning courses provide an opportunity for socially-relevant education to enter the university, and the lives of students and instructors. As a site where the university and community meet, these contexts represent a point where the circuits of dispossession and privilege that encompass the personal and structural merge. These courses often, for example, lead college students into community sites that are marked by structural disadvantage, and the social group differences in race, class, gender, and able-bodiedness which inequality often travels across (Carrington & Iyer, 2011; Desmond & Stahl, 2011; Santos, Ruppert & Jeans, 2012). In the classroom, students may be engaged in learning theories that address the needs within the service learning site and reflecting on their personal experiences (Desmond & Stahl, 2011; Kinefuchi, 2010). The critical potential of such courses for bridging biographies, institutional affiliations, and social locations with the theories that students learn in class has been taken up by service learning literature to address how students negotiate critical consciousness and participate in relationships that presume equality across difference.

The following work explicitly bridges the potential of socially-relevant education, service learning, and critical consciousness by examining a specific service learning course: Mentoring and Adolescent Development. This service learning course was offered to students through the Psychology Department of a small state college in the Northeast for more than twenty years. In this engagement, students were paired with court-involved adolescent girls who were residents in a minimum-secure residential facility that was run by a state agency. Students attended weekly sessions where they worked with their mentees on a variety of activities (e.g. a career exploration research project). Approximately five times throughout the semester, the entire class also went to

the facility to participate with the residents in workshops (e.g. media literacy, self-portraiture in visual art and writing, neighborhood resource surveys), which were facilitated by the instructor.

The classroom experience of this course included readings about the theoretical underpinnings of helping adolescents who have been abused, and the socio-political elements that constructed the need for and administration of girls' incarceration. Additionally, students completed a series of reflection assignments about these readings and their experiences. Students also completed formal research and expository papers about the history of juvenile corrections and their proposed interventions at the service learning site. In navigating between the classroom and the facility, the service learners crossed the boundaries of two state institutions. These institutional spaces scored racial and class lines in ways that conspicuously surfaced the intergroup nature of most service learning courses - as students who were mostly White and middle class entered a residential facility that mostly held poor girls of color.

Educational contexts like this course surface social inequality and present students and instructors with the opportunity to counter stereotypic representations of others, acknowledge privilege and oppression as lived processes that guide everyone's life, and approach critical consciousness as continuous work (Buckley & Foldy, 2010; Kinefuchi, 2010; Langstraat & Bowdon, 2011). From a pedagogical standpoint, a sense of psychological and identity safety within the classroom is necessary for creating an environment where students feel supported in experimenting with assumptions about their relationships to power and the lives of others (Buckley & Foldy, 2010). However, service learning courses may trouble this sense of safety because the coursework extends beyond the classroom. The extension into a different institutional culture can expose service learners to (what is sometimes) the bleakness of others'

lives, institutionalization, guilt and anger and sadness, or even the reflection of their own privilege in that of another's dispossession. As such, the applied nature of such service learning courses expand the field of practice for a/critical meanings and relationships to others in ways that call for a broader understanding of the positions, discourses, and critical meanings available in such contexts. This understanding may serve to shape the pedagogical strategies that can support service learners' negotiation between sites.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In a culture where healing personal and structural oppression is a constant commitment, the liberation of individuals who are well-intentioned and social justice-oriented is integral to the liberation of others (Allen, 2002; Duran, Firehammer & Gonzalez, 2008), especially if co-liberation is imagined as possible, whole, and sustainable. This study originates from a deep commitment to using humanistic and liberation psychology to address extraordinary moments of oppression and equality in social life. In transitioning from extraordinary moments of dispossession and privilege, this work seeks to emphasize the ordinary moments of navigating difference that most everybody has access to every day – particularly educators and students. As such, the purpose of this study is to critically engage with the conceptual understandings and lived experiences that arise within service learning courses that are often rife with conspicuous differences in power, although they have the critical potential to address concerns about social justice by working in intergroup contexts.

Specifically, the present study seeks to identify the discursive and critical positions that service learners take up in relation to their own privilege and dispossession, to others, and to public institutions designed to “protect” or divert court-involved adolescent girls. These relations

are dynamics that service learning courses can explicitly contest and encourage. As such, this study addresses the practical challenges of students and educators who seek to establish understandings of social justice that can be practiced in moving through the implicitly and explicitly difficult landscape of intergroup difference. Intergroup contact is alluded within service learning literature, however, it is not often framed as such in ways that underscore the lived experiences and small moments of privilege and dispossession. Thus, the service learning experience and literature about it may run the risk of interring the silenced discourses of difference, yet they simultaneously grapple with the sharp effects of inequality.

To extend work about critical service learning, the present inquiry combines the definition of criticality in service learning with the desire to excavate the articulation of power (Kinefuchi, 2010). This study, however, focuses on the articulation of privilege and dispossession as it is represented in participants' discursive constructions of their experience. This study conceptualizes moments where the circuits of dispossession and privilege touch along the service learning experience and create tension at the 'sites' of the personal, interpersonal, and institutional. To alternately narrow and expand the focus on power between these sites, this analysis attempts to theorize the practices within this course with the help of work that situates personal and social growth as processes of figuring worlds, contesting discourses of sameness and difference, and reckoning with the ways that social inequalities are inscribed on the biographies and mobility of every body.

The immediate context of this study is set within the larger frame of the neoliberal disinvestment of the state from such facilities and education, more generally (Ayala & Galletta, 2012; Fine, 2012; Mayo, 2003). Thus, beyond addressing the ways that service learning

classrooms may best support students, the purpose of this study is to present a meditation on the capacities for union across institutional affiliation, the interrelationships of interpersonal solidarity, and the permeable lines that relate the personal and social spheres.

### **Literature Review**

Service learning courses provide the opportunity to resist the neoliberal impulse towards interpersonal insensitivity and social understandings that decontextualize individuals through experiences that combine intergroup contact with a commitment to civic engagement. These courses reposition the membrane that lay between the university and the community and, thus, call for an understanding of how increasing the permeability of institutional membranes surfaces the (dis)ease of attending to questions of power, dispossession, and privilege across institutional sites. As a form of learning that may be the quintessential expression of transformative education and critical consciousness, the capacities within the theoretical and applied nature of these courses emerge from the convergence of the dialogical spaces between privilege and dispossession, old and new selves, self and other, as well as agent and structure. Travelling these binaries seems to be a necessary foundation for establishing a sense of civic engagement where people can learn from and practice forms of interrelatedness across social difference. At the personal level, the dialogical space presented by an individual's self-reflection can engage how they perceive the social locations of others as an entry point to understanding their own – and whether this facilitates or inhibits a sense of responsibility to promote change. At the interpersonal level, the dialogical space provided by empathy and self-relevance emerges as a phenomena that connects people separated by social distance. Last, the institutional level

engages the dialogical space where personal experience meets the larger social context in which the self and other operate.

The following section presents a review of the literature that positions the service learning experience as a site of transformation, particularly within the neoliberal climate that surrounds universities and service learning sites. The review will then transition to discuss the goals and outcomes that bridge literature on transformative education to critical consciousness. Then, the studies that surface and describe each site as an entry point for criticality will be reviewed to complete the contextual foundation of the specific service learning opportunity that is addressed in this text.

### **Neoliberalism as the Transformational and Transitional Context**

This study sits within the larger context of the present moment of neoliberalism – both within the rapid disinvestment from the public sector, and the proliferation of ideologies that emphasize individualism over context and interdependence. Many social theorists have addressed the impact of neoliberalism and have called for a resistance to it within educational spaces. Fine (2012), for example, has suggested that it is necessary for civic engagement to pierce and shift the membranes between the university and the community in order to fulfill the ethical duty that education has in preparing students to meet the needs of the community and a sustainable social future. In addressing the vitality of educational moments that engage and provoke, Fine (2012) shares the critique that the commodification of education as a product must be resisted (Mayo, 2003). As points of resistance, other scholars have critiqued the invisible curriculum of formal education as one that produces numbness and interpersonal insensitivity, fortifies fantasies that individuals are free from structural dis/advantage, and devalues care and

the politics that surround it (Amsler, 2011; Ayala & Galletta, 2012). These scholars point to the closing of public spaces and funding streams that literally shelter and feed people's minds and bodies as another front where neoliberalism is incapacitating the public body.

As an introduction to the larger significance of this study, the neoliberal context shapes the importance and timeliness of higher education that seeks to engage, provoke, transform, connect, and mobilize personal and professional sensibilities towards social justice. The urgency with which this work must be done is underscored by the dissolution of the service learning site that this text examines. That is, in the midst of this collaborative teaching experience, the State and City decided to close the facility. While the facility was long recognized as a problematic space, ironically designed to "protect," it had the potential to intervene in the further dispossession of adolescent girls. The "loss" of the facility provokes a critical moment where the civic engagement and healing relationship that the course produced was threatened and dissolved. This event ripples back through the university, the lives of people who were engaged there, and the lives of people who could have been engaged between sites. In effect, the closure erased and dispossessed a part of everyone who came in contact with the space. Reflecting on the experience of the service learning site, including its closure, can provide a greater understanding of the ways in which individuals are prepared to de/construct meanings that can grow and sustain resistance. This resistance takes the shape of direct advocacy and policy making, growing back the capacity to form community, thinking critically about one's social position along with another's, demanding provocation, and/or recognizing and acting according to a sense of interrelatedness across difference. Each one of the aspects in this list draws lines of tension between the power invested in education "for" and education "with" others. These lines entangle



to construct the politics of who is authorized to teach, learn, and transform – the very entanglement that social justice is meant to contest. The dialogical processes inherent within the theorization and practice of transformative education, critical consciousness, and service learning provide the space to begin to “organize ourselves to disentangle conditions and products of oppression” (Fine, 2013, p. 697), even as these opportunities are shifting in front of us.

### **Constructing bridges toward transformation across disciplines**

The diverse literature about transformative education, critical consciousness, and service learning shares the emphasis on developing situated knowledge, linking the personal to the structural and societal, shifting perceptions, blending cognitive and affective engagement, and mobilizing reflection with socially-relevant action (Dirkz, 1998; Mezirow, 2003; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). For example, transformative education indicates the necessity for one’s reflection on themselves and their worldviews (Garrity, 2011; Mezirow, 2003). Meanwhile, work on critical consciousness refines this necessity by promoting individuals’ reflection about the racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia that are historical, social, and political phenomena that structure social life (Bowers, 2005; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). Similarly, transformative education indicates the importance of an emotionally evocative moment that disrupts individuals’ notions of the world and fuels action, where work on critical consciousness indicates the necessity of emotional engagement to facilitate a commitment to social change and advocacy (Carlson, Engebreston & Chamberlain, 2006; Van Gorder, 2007; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011).

The similarities between work on transformative education and critical consciousness are also shared by service learning literature. As perhaps a quintessential context for the union of

transformative education and critical consciousness, service learning courses can provide students with the opportunity to learn about inequality and its amelioration in ways that defy abstractions (Carrington & Iyer, 2011; Dharamsi et al., 2010; Kerssen-Griep & Eifler, 2008; Nandan, 2010). Service learners may also evolve their attitudes towards social responsibility, dissimilar others, and the contexts for their future professional work. Service learning is unique, however, in its capacity to present a context for learning about one's personal and social standpoint as individuals interact across the divides of privilege and dispossession.

### **Education as the Dialogic Convergence within the Self and between Others**

As a dialogical process, critical consciousness and transformative education facilitate an opportunity in which individuals may confront their worldviews, acknowledge their structural location, and emotionally engage with differently-positioned others. Literature about the role of identity transformation, multicultural education, and multicultural service learning provides the greatest insight about the intergroup nature of service learning courses. This section provides a brief overview that uses these literatures to foreground the affective and cognitive work of critical consciousness and relationality at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels.

Education can help students can grapple with their perceptions and values because it provides “a space and time in which to re-position oneself, or negotiate multiple identities” (Farnsworth, 2010, p 1448). Literature, for example, suggests that being a student provides a transitional identity in which individuals can be informed but not over-determined by their biographies, social locations, attitudes, or beliefs (Fine et al., 2004). The transitional nature of the identity of ‘student’ surfaces conceptual binaries that individuals must negotiate across including the real and ideal self, the past and the present self, representation and actuality. The ability to

travel these binaries provides individuals with the opportunity to narrate, reconfigure, and work toward subjectivities that reflexively engage the self, biography, and social surroundings (Fine et al., 2004).

Education also provides the opportunity for a critical convergence between the self and other wherein relationships to privilege and dispossession can be acknowledged and repositioned. These learning moments may reinforce stereotypes, confirm stratifications, provoke distance from others, and overwhelm or intimidate students - particularly among those with little experience reflecting critically on their own (un)earned privilege. However, education may also subvert patterns of relationship between self and other that contribute to inequality. Work about anti-oppressive social work, for example, suggests a convergence whereby critical awareness grows as a person “regards ‘the other’ as a mirror upon which an individual can see the outline of their own personal, professional, ideological, and cultural profile” (Furlong & Wight, 2011, p 39). Such a reflective practice encourages people to decentralize the belief that the individual is autonomous and free from the constraints of context. This practice may encourage students to consider the mutually-constructive nature of self and other, and also point to the relationship between self and other as one that prefigures an individual’s attributions about another’s biographical and social circumstances.

The relationship between the self and other may prefigure the related processes of empathy and attribution, which have the capacity to shift the social distance between people with different social locations. A span of social psychological work has theorized and experimentally tested the relationship between empathy and intergroup relations. Empathy has been defined as the ability to take the perspective of another, implicate the self within the others’ life, and to

engender a sense of shared-fatedness. Work about empathy in the context of decision making across intergroup divides, for example, suggests that it helps to bridge the social distance that often results in dispositional attributions for others' behavior rather than contextual attributions. This attributional shift decreases the harshness of judgments about others (Haney, 2004; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003). Additionally, the sense of a common or shared fate can contribute to the psychological experience of co/victimization in ways that engage problem solving at the individual, intergroup, or societal level (Subasic, Schmitt & Reynolds, 2011). Here the translation of personal injustice to a collective sense of group level injustice is mediated by the development of a social identity just as the translation of subgroup injustice for a sense of social injustice that implicates all people is mediated by the development of a higher order identity. As such, this work strings together empathy or a sense shared-fatedness with solidarity (Subasic, Schmitt & Reynolds, 2011).

While empathy is an affective mainstay of intergroup relations literature within social psychology, however, it is troubled in other literatures. Scholars who address empathy in educational settings, including the service learning environment, suggest that empathy may be a limited construct. A sense of shared fate may be inhibited among the relatively privileged as they become anxious at the possibility that their future is as tenuous as the relatively dispossessed (Langstraat & Bowdon, 2011), for example. Additionally, the practice of empathy may encourage people to imagine that they understand others based on a "superficial simulation or even observation of" people or their othering (Boler, 1999; Langstraat & Bowden, 2011, p. 8).

While the service learning literature surfaces anxieties about empathy and its potential disadvantages, few scholars specifically discuss the role of empathy in service learning.

Langstraat and Bowden (2011), however, suggest that empathy is over-privileged as people think about service learning although it is understudied and under-theorized. Langstraat and Bowdon (2011) theorize empathy from the standpoint of critical emotion studies and suggest that it is most useful as an entry point for developing compassion. This positioning underscores the need to understand empathy as it becomes a conduit for a sense of relatedness, critical reflection, and action.

In an intergroup and neoliberal context where exploitation is rooted in structural disinvestment - and amplified by personal insensitivity and the denial of interconnection - the capacity to grow community and share oneself is equally important for the dispossessed and privileged, although these dynamics may enter the process from different social locations. In positioning educational contexts as moments that encourage critical convergences between the self and other affect is positioned as the primary mechanism through which relationships between the self and other are approached, made visible, grappled with, and pushed towards a/criticality. Particularly, as empathy and compassion are catalysts for critical and just relationships between the self and other a sense of interrelatedness may emerge across the service learning experience in ways that suggest where and how the critical potential of service learning may be facilitated.

### **Locating studies of critical consciousness at the personal, relational, and institutional levels**

The personal, interpersonal, and institutional are sites at which differentially-positioned individuals can develop a socio-political awareness alongside the capacity for community and solidarity. Studies about the development of criticality inside and outside of service learning opportunities address these capacities with explorations about the dialogical negotiations that

individuals face. These inquiries indicate the ways in which an exploration of each site can provide increasingly comprehensive insights about the development of criticality. At the personal level, one study indicates the importance of considering individuals' social identity as only one of many identity positions available across sites where privilege and dispossession are contested. At the interpersonal level, studies suggest the ways that relational discourses emerge in intergroup settings and can promote a sense of connection. At the institutional level, studies indicate that critical positions develop as critical reflection and emotional engagement are applied to understand the problems and solutions that arise out of the relationship between individuals, communities, and institutions. The brief review that follows indicates the potentials of educational spaces as convergences where people reckon with relationships to themselves, others, and critical meanings. Thus, the review concludes with a study that integrates aspects of each site in order to ground the present study.

While studies about service learning typically discuss benefits at the personal level, analyses rarely highlight how individuals negotiate experiences where dispossession and privilege merge. Farnsworth (2010), however, provides insight about this negotiation through the examination of the experiences of pre-service teachers. This inquiry suggested that the positional identities of service learners formed a dialogical, critical convergence that can be used to understand the relationship between identity and the meanings made from the service learning experience. Farnsworth (2010), for example, forwarded a functional model of three positional identities in service learners that included their: (1) institutional identity based on their status as a teacher, (2) discourse-identity that was based on individual personality traits that emerged from

social interactions, and (3) affinity-identity that was based on the common experiences of group membership (e.g. Latino, student).

These identities were conceptualized as crucial resources for negotiating an experience within communities that differed from those of the service learners' given linguistic, racial, and ethnic differences. This study revealed that the salience of each identity was influenced by the situational content that the participant narratives described. Additionally, the salience of identities that shifted within the narratives indicated that intersectionality is a resource that helps individuals navigate the intergroup contexts. Rather than representing a confluence of social group identities alone, however, this sense of intersectionality included race, gender, language, and role. For example, one participant recounted her experience of being a racial minority when she was the only White person attending a church service by using the discourse-identity that referred to her personal traits in a social context, rather than the racial aspects of her affinity identity. When this participant narrated the meaning of this experience, however, she used her affinity-identity as a teacher to forward the academic importance of this experience. Here, it is noteworthy that race is referenced but not necessarily communicated about; it is visible, but may mostly work through the participant's identity as a teacher. This model is important as a demonstration of the complexity of narratives where identity is dynamic and context-dependent.

At the relational level, several studies address how service learning contexts can increase service learners' ability to create caring relationships with (dis)similar others. For example, Carrington and Iyer (2011) approach service learning as an embodied process that can illustrate the extent to which service learners participate in the inclusion, civic responsibility, and ethical practices that are components of social equality. This study examined the reflection logs of pre-

service teachers who engaged in a variety of service learning roles including facilitating playgroups for single mothers and children with disabilities, tutoring in adult literacy programs, and providing academic support for children. Over time, service learners developed the ability to share themselves and develop caring relationships. For some, this process included perspective taking to the extent that one service learner indicated that without inclusion and care the children that she worked with would not survive. With this understanding service learners advocated for the value of building just and caring relationships as a practice that is integral to teaching, as is the practice of advocating for funding so that students would not be shut out of schools.

Kerssen-Greip and Eifler (2008) addressed the role of intergroup communication in a study of White pre-service teachers and the African American adolescent boys that they mentored. These authors systematically observed and analyzed intergroup communication styles by focusing on the ways in which service learners provided social, emotional, and academic support to their mentees. Across the eight months of this engagement, these service learners' improved on the majority of the communication dimensions that were observed as they displayed more empathy, expressed deeper respect and positive regard, and tolerated ambiguity while communicating with others. This study was also foregrounded as transformative in that almost all of former participants taught in diverse schools, and reported higher levels of confidence and competence in facing the challenges of multi-culturalism at the conclusion of the study.

Santos, Ruppap and Jeans (2012) also conducted a study of service learning with a focus on critical consciousness and relationships. This study examined the experiences of service learners who were paired with high school students who had disabilities, and analyzed students' growth in terms of their knowledge of disability culture. As a mixed-methods study, students



completed reflection papers during the course about their service learning experience and completed surveys about being paired with people with disabilities to help local community organizations.

Importantly, this study documented trends in relational behaviors that may relate to empathy across social groups. The service learners' reflection papers, for example, described their relational experiences as they found that people with disabilities "are just normal people like me," in the words of one participant (Santos, Ruppap & Jeans, 2012, p. 57). One student indicated that she noticed how people with disabilities were treated differently by some community members and she subsequently became more mindful about treating the disabled people she worked with as equals and peers. Additionally, the findings indicated that the students were actively grappling with their prior representations of the people they worked with and were somewhat embarrassed about their initial low expectations of people with disabilities. These findings begin to suggest that the cognitive and relational impacts of developing critical consciousness are facilitated by reflection, and perhaps moderated through the experience of care and empathy. Such findings also suggest that service learning provides students the opportunity to 'test' stereotypical representations of others against their lived experiences (Santos, Ruppap & Jeans, 2012). Last, the study documented increases in students' awareness of disability culture - including media representations, activism, and quality of life.

In terms of the effects at the institutional and community level, several studies indicate the relationship between critical consciousness, the analyses of social problems, and a growing awareness of the potential for advocacy around their solutions. For instance, experimental studies have shown that critical consciousness is negatively related to false consciousness, ideologies

that deny the existence of racism, and dispositional or cultural attributions for unequal opportunities and dispossession (Brown, 2011; Diemer, 2003; Neville et al., 2005). Research has also demonstrated that critical consciousness is inversely related to empathy, altruism, and a tolerance for diversity - each of which may be increased or decreased as the salience of participants' identity is manipulated (Neville et al., 2005). These findings are paralleled and contextualized in mixed-methods and qualitative studies.

Watts, Griffith and Abdul-Adil (1999), for example, examined the development of critical consciousness and developed a five-level model that highlighted the affective and attributional components of socio-political development. The five levels were successively critical as they evolved from participants' descriptions of what they saw, what it meant, what evidence they based their analysis on, how they felt about it, and what they could do to create a better situation. The researchers applied this model to examine the development of critical consciousness in young men who participated in an eight-week program that was designed to teach them to deconstruct gendered and classed representations in hip-hop and rap media. Analyses of the transcripts of the eight sessions demonstrated that the amount of critical discussion increased across all five levels.

This research also articulated a model of socio-political development comprising five steps that ranged from acritical to liberatory. Here, Watts, Griffith and Abdul-Adil (1999) theorized a significant relationship between critical consciousness and emotional engagement such that critical consciousness increases as individuals transition from a sense of complacency to active involvement in strategies for achieving change. In addressing how emotional engagement facilitates critical reflection, Watts, Diemer and Voight (2011) indicated that critical

reflection has not been widely measured. However, critical reflection is related to attribution theory in that situational attributions for another's behavior or circumstance may be contextualized by structural dis/advantage, whereas dispositional attributions problematize people and their behaviors. This element of their work is supported by literature about the relationship between attribution and empathy, which indicates that people who have a high level of empathy for differently-positioned others are more likely to make situational attributions for their behavior and biographical circumstance (Haney, 2004; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003).

In further extending the roots of attribution theory into critical consciousness, Carlson, Engbreton and Chamberlain (2006) examined the relationship between emotion and critical consciousness by analyzing a photovoice project in which participants' emotional charge in describing their community was related to their sense of collective responsibility and engagement in improving its condition. The researchers identified three stages of cognitive-affective interpretation among community members that indicated their critical consciousness. At the first level, participants discussed and illustrated the problems in their community with expressions of anger that paralleled their belief that others were responsible for the problems. At the next level, participants expressed a sense of sadness that paralleled their understanding that they were also responsible for the conditions. At the third level, participants expressed a sense of empowerment that paralleled their understanding that they could positively impact the conditions in their community. These three stages indicated that a shift towards an internal sense of responsibility also shifts the interpretation of the problems and potential solutions. This finding may extend to service learning because it ultimately suggests that when people make external attributions for community problems and solutions their own critical analyses and advocacy is

forestalled. However, a growing sense that the responsibility for problems and solutions are related to the self encourages a sense of agency and commitment. These findings extend those in intergroup relations literature by suggesting that self-relevance must also be combined with a sense of responsibility for social problems and solutions in order to result in critical action.

The last study discussed in this review blends the personal, interpersonal, and institutional aspects of the service learning experience and, thus, is most instructive for the present study. Oriented by a commitment to critical service learning, Kinefuchi (2010) indicates that service learners can develop critical perspectives insofar as they: (1) challenge representational discourses about others; (2) create authentic relationships that acknowledge power differences and use collaboration to create equality at the interpersonal level; and, (3) “examine the structural roles in inequality played by institutions, individuals, groups, histories and even the service itself in perpetuating or transforming the problems” (Kinefuchi, 2010, p. 79).

The service learners in this study engaged with several agencies that matched them with group and individual settings where they helped immigrants learn English. The classroom experience of students included reading, research projects, and engaging with media and guest speakers that exposed the service learners to some of the structural and social challenges that immigrants faced. Additionally, classroom discussions were used to help service learners reflect on their representations of immigrants, their prior experiences, and the ways in which their own privilege might emerge in their interactions. Outside of the classroom, students reflected on the links between their experience at the service learning site and what they were learning in class.

Service learners completed a paper that included an analysis of their experience in terms of a theoretical concept from the course and their reflections about what they learned themselves and their community. These papers comprised the data of this study, which were analyzed in close readings that surfaced a continuum of critical consciousness. In terms of challenging representations, some service learners acknowledged the anti-immigrant prejudice of others. Some of these service learners discussed these representations as belonging to other people, while others engaged in a discussion of their own stereotypes and prejudices. In terms of the relational aspects, Kinefuchi's (2010) last dimension of critical service learning, some service learners acknowledged interpersonal similarities and grappled with differences in social location and power by engaging in authentic relationships. The relational aspects were demonstrated by service learners' ability to critically unpack how language perpetuates inequality. The relational aspects also extended beyond the service learning classroom to demonstrate the extent to which it permeated their personal understandings as students broached the issue of addressing racism among their friends and family. In terms of acknowledging how structural inequality is related to the types of support and barriers that immigrants face, some service learners also discussed how expectations about assimilation perpetuated the marginalization of immigrants. Among these students, some addressed how representations and institutional practices created inequality.

Overall, Kinefuchi's (2010) findings suggest that common relational grounds and critical analyses must coincide for service learning to have a meaningful and critical impact. Specifically, the results indicated that service learners could address the similarities between themselves and the individuals they worked with, but were less often also able to articulate the different relationships that each had to power. Thus, an instructive tension that emerges from this

study is the acknowledgement that the “challenge of critical service learning...is to respond to this student heterogeneity while attempting to move students toward “thicker” engagement with the community personally and structurally” (Kinefuchi, 2010, p. 91).

### **Positioning the present study**

The personal, interpersonal, and institutional sites that emerge across the literature indicate convergences where service learners can negotiate new or refined understandings of dispossession and privilege. In the preceding discussion of these convergences, the role of one’s position emerged as a method of engaging the personal meanings available within service learning courses. The interpersonal aspects of the experience surfaced the role of empathy as a source of intergroup connection and reflection on some of the larger social contexts faced by differently-positioned people. At the institutional level, both attribution and emotional engagement emerged as ways in which individuals gain fuller access to understandings of how socio-political power is refracted in the lives of the self and the other.

The present study seeks to extend work at each of these sites by examining the experiences of former students in the service learning course Mentoring and Adolescent Development. Thus, this study offers an analysis that surfaces the critical convergences at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional levels through the respective analysis of the micro-processes of the service learner’s positions, discourses, and critical meanings.

## Chapter 2: Methods and Analysis

### Aims of the Study

The present study seeks to answer three questions about the personal, interpersonal, and institutional experiences of former students in an inside-outside service learning course. The questions are: (1) How does the positioning of mentors, through their identities as service learners, limit or facilitate the critical potential of service learning?; (2) How do discourses of sameness and difference open up and inhibit the possibility for how solidarities are done?; and, (3) What meanings were available at the boundary between the inside and outside and how can they be negotiated towards critical reflection and relationship, rather than projection and distance?

To answer these questions, participants who were former students in the service learning course Mentoring and Adolescent Development were recruited for an online study. Interested participants completed a survey comprised predominantly of open-ended questions about their most memorable moments across the service learning experience. Participant responses were analyzed with an emergent coding scheme, and then the coded passages were closely read with a phenomenological lens that focused on repetition, recurrence, and emphasis. While each chapter of data analysis includes a methodological grounding, the following section details the participants, materials, and analytic strategies that run across this dissertation. This section closes with a statement of the researcher's positionality.

## **Recruitment and Participants**

An announcement that requested former students in the Mentoring and Adolescent Development course was distributed by email to the forty former students who completed the course with the researcher. The other three instructors who taught the course distributed the announcement to former students for whom they had current email addresses. Additionally, the announcement appeared online on the website of a local newspaper. All students who completed the course were invited to participate and there were no rules of exclusion.

Thirty-one participants completed the study in an average of thirty-eight minutes. Almost half of the participants completed the course between 2012 and 2010, while the remainder took the course between 2009 and 2005.

The majority of the participants identified as female (83.9%). Two males were in the sample (6.5%) and three participants who skipped the item or ended their participation without responding to this item (9.7%). The sample was predominantly White (74.2%). The sample also included two Latinas and two people who left this item incomplete (6.5% respectively). The remainder of the sample consisted of one South Asian, Black, Middle-Eastern, and Middle-Eastern/White participant (3.2% respectively).

The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (80.6%), while the remainder identified as lesbian, bisexual, or questioning. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 52 years old, with an average age of 25.9 years old.



## **Procedures**

Participants accessed the survey, which was administered online, using the link provided in the announcement. At the beginning of the survey participants read the description of the study that appeared in the announcement and provided their consent to participate by continuing to the survey items. This study was exempt from requiring a full informed consent procedure because it was anonymous and the participants did not belong to a protected population. Participants did not identify themselves in their responses and provided only a mailing address so that they could receive their compensation. Participants who completed the survey were mailed a thank you note along with ten dollars as compensation for their participation.

## **Materials**

The online survey was broken into several content areas that included: (1) basic information about the course and brief descriptions of the experience; (2) memorable and impactful moments across the course; and, (3) participant's perceptions of the facility and the girls who resided within it. Descriptions of the items within these sections are described below.

**Orienting the Course.** Participants were asked to provide a few details about when they took the course including the instructor, and the year in which they had taken the course. Participants were then asked to briefly reflect on their experiences of the course from beginning to end. In an optional item, participants were advised that they could list such experiences within the online form. Additionally, all participants were asked to describe their experience of the course using one word.

**Memorable and Impactful Moments.** The survey primarily asked participants what they thought and felt about a series of events. The first triplet of questions asked participants to recall a “memorable moment” during the beginning, middle, and end of the course. Participants were also asked to write about two moments that had “a strong emotional impact” on them.

**Characterizations of the Girls and the Facility.** The remainder of the survey asked participants to respond to items about their mentees and the facility. Broadly, these questions addressed social distance and the construction of the self and others, how outsiders might represent girls, attributions for girls’ incarceration, and the participant’s perceptions of the facility.

The items that addressed social distance included a graphic with two circles where circle represented the mentor and the other represented the mentee. This image of the circles depicted them at three distances that ranged from the two circles being fully apart, moderately overlapping, and slightly overlapping. Participants selected the circle that represented the relationship between the mentor and the mentee at the beginning of the semester. Participants also indicated the set of circles that represented their relationship at the end of the semester. Additionally, another image followed that depicted two large circles overlapping. The participants were asked to write three brief lists of characteristics and/or social groupings. In the first list participants wrote about their characteristics. In the second list, participants indicated the characteristics they had in common with their mentees. The third list asked participants to indicate characteristics that related to the mentees alone.

Participants were then asked to create a list to address their attributions for girls’ incarceration. For this, participants responded to the item: “Based on your experience at the

facility what are the top three reasons that you think most girls end up in places like this? List and rank these reasons below.” An image accompanied this item with the intention that participants could select attributions directly from this list, or use it as model for their own attributions (See Figure 1: Societal to Personal Attributions).

| <b>SOCIETY</b>   | <b>INSTITUTIONS</b>  | <b>COMMUNITY</b>   | <b>FAMILY, PARTNERS, PEERS</b>  | <b>PERSONAL</b>   |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homophobia</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Racism</li> <li>• Representations of Violence</li> <li>• Sexism</li> <li>• Violence against Women</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health Care</li> <li>• Incarceration</li> <li>• Job Opportunities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Recreation</li> <li>• Everyday Homophobia</li> <li>• Everyday Racism</li> <li>• Everyday Sexism</li> <li>• Models of Violence</li> <li>• Neighborhood Lacks Resources</li> <li>• Police Harassment</li> <li>• Sense of Danger</li> <li>• Sexual Trafficking</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absent Parent(s)</li> <li>• Abuse//Neglect</li> <li>• Financial Need</li> <li>• Gang Affiliation</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Issues/Incarceration</li> <li>• Legal</li> <li>• Mental/Health Care Needs</li> <li>• Parentification</li> <li>• Substance Abuse</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitudinal Patterns</li> <li>• Behavioral Patterns</li> <li>• Mental/Health Care Needs</li> <li>• Thought Patterns</li> </ul> |

*Figure 1: Societal to Personal Attributions*

The next item appeared to solicit representations and counter-representations about the girls from the participants’ perspective. The item was: “What should most people know about the girls that they probably don’t?”

The last item introduced participants who were not in the final course to the fact that the facility would be closing. This event was used to engage participants in the hypothetical situation of being able to leave a physical mark at the facility. Specifically, participants were asked to respond to the item: “The facility is slated to close soon and what happens in the space next is uncertain. While it is uncertain if the space will continue to exist at all, efforts have been made to provide services for the girls who were here or would have ended up here. If you had the chance to write a few words on the facility walls to memorialize what happened in the space what would you write? What would you write about the kind of place it was?”

**Demographics.** The remaining items solicited basic demographic information about the participants including their age, gender, race, and sexual orientation.

### **Research Questions**

Three questions guided the analysis at each site along the service learning experience, including: (1) the personal level, (2) the interpersonal level, and (3) the institutional level. The following section introduces the analytic context of each site, the research question, and the theories that underpin each inquiry.

Chapter Three, “Positioning the Mentor between Transforming and Transformation,” seeks to trace the tension held between privilege, knowledges, and the potential for reciprocal exchanges in asking the question: How does the positioning of mentors, through their identities as service learners, limit and/or facilitate the critical potential of service learning? This chapter takes inspiration from the identity positions and relationships of service learners (Farnsworth, 2010), and examines the ways that participants are represented aside others in the service learning experience (Rubin, 2007). In analyzing how mentors positioned themselves in their retrospective narratives about their experience, their roles under the institutional affiliation with the university or alternatively the facility emerged as the binary tension that the participants negotiated across.

Chapter Four, “Forging Solidarity and Separateness,” situates the service learning course within intergroup relations literature in order to address the question: How do discourses of sameness and difference open up and inhibit the possibility for how a sense of solidarity is forged? This chapter is inspired by the troubling of empathy as an intergroup emotion upon which solidarities can be formed (Haney, 2004; Langstraat & Bowdon, 2011; Vescio, Sechrist &

Paolucci, 2003). In transposing MacPherson and Fine's (1995) analysis of discourses of sameness and difference within relationships between differently positioned women into the context of this course, this exploration is framed by the analytic binary of solidarity and separateness.

Then Chapter Four, "Navigating the Inside and Outside," most explicitly grounds the service learning course within critical consciousness literature while building off of the critical and relational foundations of the preceding chapters. Inspired by the theoretical work on critical reflection and its emotion, (Carlson, Engebreston & Chamberlain, 2006; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011; Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999), this chapter explores the service learning opportunity as a point where the circuits of dispossession and privilege (Fine & Ruglis, 2009) cross in order to answer the question: What meanings were available and constructed at the boundary between the inside and outside and how can they be negotiated toward critical reflection and relationship, rather than projection and distance? This chapter is led by the analytic binary of the inside and outside as a way to explore attributions and representations about the construction of girl's incarceration.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher coded the open-ended responses of the survey using a grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The researcher conducted initial reviews of the data in order to identify a start-list of words and subthemes that fit the primary phenomena of interest in the study: what mentors did in their roles at the facility and in the classroom, interpersonal connection, attributions about the girls as well as their characterizations of the girls, and descriptions of the facility. These reviews were performed with the goal of tracing the processes described in the literature about critical consciousness, service learning, and critical service learning in mind. The researcher then used the resultant start list of codes, sub codes, and specific words as a scheme for subsequent close readings and coding of the data in a series of spreadsheets that facilitated multiple readings, clustering, and isolation of the texts. Here, the researcher created a tab for each phenomena that included all of the data in rows. All data were color coded for sub themes which enabled the research to look across participant responses and across the aggregate of responses for patterns. After coding all of the data, the data were reviewed again to ensure that the emergent sub codes were applied to all of the responses.

The researcher then analyzed the coded data to flesh out the positions, discourses, and attributions within the narratives – according to the specific inquiry of each chapter. Additionally, the narrative ‘presence’ of the participant, class members, instructors, girls, and the staff was also operationalized and coded as participants’ use self-referential words, names, and pronouns. The researcher then tied these close readings to the conceptual grounding of each chapter which sought to address were the discourses that emerged in the narratives could be

placed along the continuum between three binaries: University-Facility Affiliation, Solidarity-Separateness, and Inside-Outside.

The researcher generally selected texts that had highest word counts for presentation within this dissertation because some of the texts that were coded did not include enough context to understand the broader themes of this study. Thus, while the participant responses with lower word counts were coded and appear in the summary of codes within each chapter, context was privileged over brevity within the analysis presented in this text. Thus, the contextual meanings may be more representative of the participants who most fully articulated their responses in writing.

### **Trustworthiness**

The researcher made several attempts to establish trustworthiness across this work that ranged from the methods of analysis, close reviews of the writing with colleagues and non-academic peers, and the presentation of the main themes that emerged in the work to three unique audiences who were both friendly and critical. For instance, the researcher conducted readings that stayed as close to the text as possible with a phenomenological analysis of the repetition, recurrence, and emphasis of words related to how participants narrated their relationship to the activities, people, and environments that surfaced across each cluster.

In terms of outside audiences, the researcher asked several people to review this dissertation at various stages of its development. These reviews were conducted by academics and non-academics. During this review, the interpretation of one participant passage was troubled and was revised to include the alternate meanings raised by two readers who are

academics. Additionally, one of the outside readers for this dissertation had experience with the service learning course and the site for more than a decade, which included her experience as an assistant to one of the course's founding instructors and as an instructor herself. This reader reviewed the text with an eye toward confirming and troubling the emergent findings and interpretations based on her experience. Last, the researcher also presented the abridged content of this dissertation to three audiences who raised comments and questions for the researcher's consideration.

### **Positioning the Participants**

Throughout this work the former students in this study are referred to as participants, mentors, and service learners. While these terms refer to the same group of people, they carry different meanings depending on the context. "Participants," for example, is used to denote the context of participating in this study. "Mentors," for example, is used to contextualize the experience as it related to the specific course and work within the classroom and the facility. Last, the phrase "service learners" denotes the ways in which participants' experiences parallel and extend the meanings generally associated with service learning courses.

While the adolescents at the service learning site were only spoken about and not 'heard' from, they are referred to throughout this work as mentees and girls. The use of "mentee," connotes their relation to the mentor(s) across the course. The use of "girls" is intentional although it problematic for some because it may be considered diminutive or disrespectful. In this work, the word "girls" is used as a reminder of the precarious situations that young women have been placed in as people who have been pushed out of schools and homes, abused, violent,



prostituted, and transferred through the adoption and incarceration circuit. The use of “girls” here is not so much about who they are as brave, hilarious, angry, traumatized, and healing young people. Rather, it is about “us” as a society and what we have allowed to unfold within and around these adolescent women who were often no more than sixteen years old.

All names used throughout this work are pseudonyms, except where individuals have provided the research permission to use their names.

### **Positioning the Author**

The research questions and analytic interests of this study are bracketed by my position as the researcher. I am an African American woman of the middle class who believes both in prison abolition and the generativity of inside spaces. I participated at the site for four years during which time I was a teacher’s assistant and then an instructor. This experience allowed me a number of vantage points. I witnessed students who were mostly-White and middle class enter a residential facility where they would work with girls of color who were mostly poor, and sometimes queer. I spoke with students and residents separately and together. I formed congenial relationships with most of the facility staff. I supported the students in debriefing their experiences in the classroom and in their assignments. I was also supported in my development as a person and professional through the opportunity to grapple with my own identity and my emerging role as an educator – inside and outside of the classroom and the facility.

My social location inflected my participation with the course and also inflects my relationship to these data. Specifically, the biases I have towards these data engage my privilege towards the explicit excavation of race and class as a way of defining one’s position. At the same

time, my attunement towards interpersonal sensitivity and compassion as the potential roots of trans-locational processes in solidarity makes these themes salient for me.

Across the analysis and writing of this dissertation I wrote and audio-recorded a critical auto-ethnography as a way of providing a space for the reflections and meanings of my experience to artfully exist aside the participants. Portions of this auto-ethnography appear throughout to explicitly claim my personal perspective and reflections.

## **Interchapter: An Experience of Teaching Mentoring and Adolescent Development**

### **Course Materials**

The first day of every class I showed up having prepared a long syllabus. As each semester went by I got better at outlining the objectives of the course, expectations, and the assignments. The objectives, which hide by all accounts the alchemic nature of the course for me, included a basic understanding of the social context of adolescent girls' incarceration, the exercise of building rapport across social group intersections, as well as a basic knowledge of therapeutic constructs and techniques.

The expectations introduced my belief that we would all be learners and teachers who would listen deeply to ourselves and others and that we'd all try to be insightful and curious. Last, were the course assignments which included *Girls in Trouble with the Law* and *Treating Abused Adolescents* - the standard texts of the course that I adopted from a long-time professor of the course. *Girls in Trouble with the Law* was a critical, ethnographic view of girls' incarceration based on the author's exploration of girls' lock up facilities. This ethnography juxtaposed facts and figures about girls' incarceration with reflections about the biographies of girls who found themselves in these places which were all held together by an analysis of sexuality, gender, race, and class. Meanwhile, the text *Treating Abused Adolescents* was psychoanalytic in nature and included content about the challenges that adolescents face. The ease in which it discussed ways in which trauma affects people and can be unpacked and unfolded along with illustrative dialogues between therapists and young people made this resource accessible in ways that encouraged students' affective engagement.

Depending on the semester, I added research articles that specifically addressed mentoring. These articles interjected an understanding of traditional mentoring programs such as the Big Brother, Big Sister program and provided the language for articulating the role of social and instrumental support (via authenticity, empathy, companionship and collaboration) in mentoring, and broached the subject of socio-political difference in mentoring contexts. In addition to the readings, the course assignments included a log of weekly reflections and a three-part ethnography of students' experience with their interests and positionality, their perceptions of the facility and its impact on girls, and their proposed intervention for improving the facility.

### **Longitudinal View of Class**

As a service learning course the class was composed of a collection of interactions in the classroom and at the facility. The following section includes a review of the discussions and exercises that marked the flow of the course experience from beginning to end. It features the moments that were among the most memorable and impactful for me so that it runs parallel, in some ways, to the methodology that participants in the present study responded to.

#### **My memorable curricular moments at the beginning of the semester**

The beginning of the course focused on establishing a class culture where we set the expectations for interacting within class and how we wanted to conduct ourselves within the facility. The process of getting to know one another was filled with stories from our experience as adolescents, practicing empathic listening and speaking, and articulating our assumptions about the adolescents we would meet, and sometimes ourselves. This nascent time was intended

to create a classroom community where we could practice authenticity in ways that would lead us to lean on each other when challenges and difficulties arose in the facility or when we needed to debrief an intense moment that happened in class, at the facility, or within the mentors' individual work with the girls after school. Thus, as the first step, the initial class was used to conduct a life-mapping exercise where people drew or represented what led them to the course with colored markers and pictures, symbols, and words (thanks, Dr. Michelle Fine). Each class member was invited to share any part of their maps that they wanted as part of their formal introduction to the group.

In terms of founding the path for our relationships, this time also provided an opportunity to reflect on our experiences as gateways to the ways in which we interact with people, including the fears or anxieties opened up by the needs we had as adolescents, in order that we could be with the girls as they were rather than who we might want them to be to fit our needs. As we worked through our experiences, students wrote a letter to their adolescent selves in an exercise that Reverend Dr. Kathleen Cumiskey used to make space for students to recast their adolescents by thanking themselves for whatever they did when they were young – positive, negative, or indifferent – so that they could grow into adults. In talking about or reading excerpts of our letters around the room the role of family disintegration, parental absences caused by incarceration or substance abuse, personal struggles with substance abuse, negotiating situations of bullying, and burrowing oneself into academic work so that one seemed fine emerged and were held within the room.

Part of the beginning work also included brainstorming and discussing our assumptions about who the adolescents we would meet were and why we would meet them in a facility. This process was not as implicitly coded as I imagined (or could intuit), although I indicated that we'd meet mostly girls of color who were poor and non-gender conforming or pregnant and mothering. Instead, as we brainstormed our assumptions the class indicated that the girls might be angry, may not like us, and probably wouldn't want to listen to adults – all seemingly normal stuff for teenagers. While privilege and dispossession were never termed as such in brainstorming and discussion, at least one student in each class would say something to the effect that they, a friend, or a sibling did something wrong or illegal as adolescents and either didn't get caught or had a form of social support or resource that ensured that they were not incarcerated.

### **My memorable curricular moments towards the middle of the semester**

During the middle of the semester, students were beginning to be set in the routine of visiting the facility for their one-on-one time with their mentees. While exercises and discussions continued to grow community their emphasis was decreased, and debriefs about students' experiences at the facility were primarily discussed. With the growing stability of being in the service learning site, the course began to bridge in other aspects about the context of trauma and incarceration that entered the classroom primarily through the readings.

One activity that engaged the text illustrates how the classroom worked with material about personal trauma and structural inequality. In “Animating the Macro to the Micro” a series of concentric circles was drawn on the chalkboard that included the levels of: society, institutions, community, family and peers, and the person. Then, again students blindly chose a

printed excerpt from the texts that I pre-selected. Additionally, selected a passage from the book including a quote or statistic that helped them understand or question something and abridged the content of this passage on a post-it note. As I discussed each of the layers for the ways in which they structured girls' lives, including their opportunity for incarceration, students came to the board, read and explained their passage and posted it within the ecological level (see Figure 2). Discussion was encouraged in this process, particularly as the placement of certain variables was debatable.



Figure 2: Animating the Macro to the Micro

### **My memorable curricular moments at the end of the semester**

The end of the course was a time of culmination as the materials across the course were integrated, the final workshop was planned, and the semester party at the facility was arranged.

The primary content during this time focused on how people processed trauma for healing based on the readings which were alternated with discussions about the institutional supports and failures around girls. Here, the school to prison pipeline was discussed along with

the conclusions of the text which called for a reframing of girls' incarceration and well-being. The themes of the last workshop differed by semester. In one course, the group completed the social support mapping exercise, a collective art project, and a resident talent showcase. In another course participants completed a research packet that included neighborhood mapping and resource collecting. In the last semester, students formed small groups to produce a workshop on a pre-selected topic related to gender and activism. Students were asked to consult with their mentees about which topic they would be interested in and groups worked during class time with a 'starter' set resources that I had compiled to structure the workshop time. In my last course, the class prepared materials (e.g. cut paper, postcards, cardboard backing, etc.) that we would use during the last workshop to create accordion-style books. These books were intended as physical spaces where the girls could document their personal and social dreams, which ranged from getting married and having lots of money to going back to school and ending police brutality (See Figure 3).





Figure 3: Accordion Style Dream Books from a Course Workshop

After these workshops, the mentors planned and hosted a party at the facility where they brought food and treats for the girls. The room was always filled with food and laughter, the hum of eating, silence and occasionally music. There were often hugs and sometimes tears. The remaining period that the class had together was spent in reflection along with writing the mentee's cards of hope and encouragement, packaging Christmas gifts to drop off at the facility, and our own hugs and sometimes tears.

## Looking Back

As I look through these materials they seem much too thin to be applied to such a rich context and it occurs to me that they don't reflect the ways in which they came alive in the classroom, but maybe that's always in the case. The living part of the class was in the dialogical moments – the whizzing of energy around and between us, the utter discomfort of some activities, the moments where people seemed to crumble under a new realization of how bad things were and those where people seemed to light up in hope about how they could be better. A large part of these moments seemed spontaneous, but likely emerged from the synergy of the class as we visited the discussions, activities, readings, and workshops across the semester.

A mash up of some syllabi and my longitudinal view of the course can't hold the amount of time and love that I put into and got out of the course. I have piles of reflection papers and final ethnographies, slips of paper with "someone I love..." scrawled on, handwritten post-it notes, and one unopened thank you letter to someone's adolescent self. I have the notes that I prepared on class that I had written on construction paper and some images from magazines, a few neighborhood maps, and a collection of course evaluations that I created and asked students to complete. Too, I have handwritten notes from mentors about the things they know how to do, or that they want to teach others – the things they think that adolescents need, particularly the girls we met. And there is a box of markers and pastels, metallic 'mirror' art paper that I bought because we couldn't have real mirrors on the unit, too many flashlights for one household, and large newsprint pages that we used for the self-portraits in pastels in 2010. I finished using the last of these pages while mapping parts of this dissertation. All this stuff still seems not enough

heft or evidence of those few semesters. They don't capture my experience of everyone's (sometimes intermittent) willingness to try to learn from and teach each other. All of these things, however, are some comfort as I look at the plans and sheets of paper and projects that didn't make it into any course, or critique the syllabi, and how I'm a better person and professional having shared these experiences.

### **Chapter 3: Positioning the Mentor between Transforming and Transformation**

“I am not going to trust you until you let yourself be as affected and transformed by my experience as I am by yours every day.” --Victor Lewis (The Color of Fear, 1994)

In discussing privilege among a diverse group of men, Victor Lewis suggested that one of the psychic impacts of privilege was the ability to be disaffected by others. Victor critiques this privilege with his indication that the capacity for mutual impact and transformation provides a sense of trust between people that becomes the grounds of equality. This chapter opens mid-point in this dialogue to trouble the ways that service learning opportunities might re/position service learners and thereby democratically redistribute the potential for transformation.

Within the service learning experience, the relationship between the hierarchy inherent in helping others and the ways in which service learners ‘show up’ at the service learning site is not well examined. An understanding of the position of service learners within their institutional capacity as students, and their work within the community can provide insight about the critical potential of service learning. These positions may prefigure the construction of knowledge, relationships, and exchange - and may thereby influence how service learning can be used as a tool for developing critical individuals, generative intergroup relationships, and effective inter-institutional partnerships.

As a form of learning that is increasingly gaining popularity to increase education with a sense of social relevance and philanthropy, service learning joins other acts of volunteerism that draw on humanistic tropes. Students are discussed as making a difference, giving back, and

distributing privilege as they transmit cultural capital to the service learning site through their tutoring, mentoring, and counseling. In return, students are discussed as receiving an appreciation for social service and developing stronger directions for their future professional work. These advantages are useful across sites, however, they may also fortify a sense of superiority and inferiority between people who are differentially placed by their relationship to structural inequality because these advantages honor the knowledge and values of the service learner and make those of the 'service recipient' problematic. To address this possibility some literature politicizes the service learning opportunity by placing it within the contexts of a general disinvestment of state resources from the social sphere, and the specific racial and classed dynamics of disadvantage. In applying this recognition to the service learner's relationship to the site and the people within it, literature on critical service learning emphasizes students' capacity to articulate critical consciousness and to participate in authentic relationships where all parties are fundamentally considered to be equal (Kinefuchi, 2010).

In emphasizing critical analyses and authentically reciprocal relationships, this literature outlines the potential of service learning to address and create instances of equality. Such work, however, does not currently address the micro-processes by which service learners negotiate and draw meanings from their positions at the service learning site. An understanding of how these roles or positions may be inflected in service learners' narrations about their experience can provide insight about the cognitive, affective, and behavioral entry points for such critical work. As figured worlds (Rubin, 2007), service learners' narrations can draw unifying lines across the cultures of institutional spaces, the roles that service learners can construct in those spaces, and

the a/critical potential of these positions. A figured world represents the agents who are sketched into an institutional scene, the meanings that are assigned to their actions, and the value given to the outcomes of their actions (Rubin, 2007). Thus as a framework for examining the position of service learners, the figured world provides a contextualized field of the meanings from which students can construct roles. At the same time, figured worlds constitute the field in which these roles can interact with the immediate and larger social contexts that the service learning opportunity brings to the surface. Situating the service learners' narratives as figured worlds works to politicize and psychologize these positions in order to provide insight about the sorts of exchanges that were available in this experience.

This chapter, then, examines the narratives of service learners who mentored court-involved adolescent girls in a residential facility. The work traces the tension between privilege, knowledges, and the potential for reciprocal exchanges by way of exploring the question: How does the positioning of mentors, through their identities as service learners, limit or facilitate the critical potential of service learning? In answering this question this chapter explores how participants sketched a figured world in which other class members, instructors, facility staff, and residents were positioned as people who can be transformed or who had the capacity to transform as one effect of privilege or its disavowal.

This chapter will be foregrounded by a brief review of literature that addresses service learning as a site of transformation and exchange. Then it will discuss the institutional breaches afforded by service learning in terms of how service learners shift between the university and the facility through the discourses, practices, and interactions of each institution in order to build a

variety of positions that the course made possible and necessary (Rubin, 2007). Moving towards the analysis, the methods applied to the narration of the participants' experience will be detailed and followed by illustrations of the themes that emerged to characterize the positions available for mentors. To close, the discussion will highlight the critical affordances of each mentor position and provide suggestions for pedagogical strategies that may increase their critical potential.

### **Locating Exchanges in Service Learning Literature and Experiences**

Service learning opportunities are framed as holding a gamut of advantages that range from the personal to the social. For example, the experience may lead service learners to insight about their personal strengths or fortify their sense of identity (Molee et al., 2010). Service learners' attitudes about social responsibility may also become increasingly positive because of their work in particular settings, or with particular populations (Desmond & Stahl, 2011; Kerssen-Griep & Eifler, 2008; Newman & Hernandez, 2011). Most important for developing criticality, service learners may learn about the realities of inequality in other people's lives in ways that defy the abstractions in a theoretical understanding of inequality that is not also grounded with lived associations (Carrington & Iyer, 2011; Kerssen-Griep & Eifler, 2008). A growing awareness of the impact of structural inequality may arise as service learners acknowledge and question the relative privilege and dispossession that circulates between the university and the service learning site. These reflections may ultimately be used to formulate a critique that includes the social construction of problematized institutions, people, and bodies (Carrington & Iyer, 2011). Together these advantages indicate that service learning can provide a

context in which students can challenge their assumptions, beliefs, and representations about themselves and others (Desmond & Stahl, 2011; Molee et al., 2010).

While some of the above advantages build on themes related to critical consciousness, one exploration explicitly framed criticality in service learning as a function of three activities: 1) challenging representational discourses, 2) “examin[ing] the structural roles in inequality played by institutions, individuals, groups, histories and even the service itself in perpetuating or transforming the problems,” and 3) creating authentic relationships that acknowledge power differences and use collaboration to create equality at the interpersonal level (Kinefuchi, 2010, p. 79). The findings of this study indicated that participants could address the similarities between themselves and the people they worked with, but faced difficulty in articulating their personal relationship to privilege and dispossession (Kinefuchi, 2010). Evidence of this difficulty emerged in data which largely did not explicitly address nationalism, racism or classism, the commitment to resist how inequality flowed through these, or a sense that commitment mattered (Kinefuchi, 2010). A few narratives did indicate these critical analyses and commitments, however, and thereby affirm their possibility. Thus, the forms of criticality that can arise from service learning are rare in ways that suggests that service learners may require additional pedagogical supports to reach critical or liberatory levels of consciousness.

Relatedly, one of the primary disadvantages of service learning is the potential for students to draw meanings from the experience that reinforce power differentials at the personal (e.g. mentor and mentee) and institutional (e.g. university and community organization) levels (Desmond & Stahl, 2011). As service learners learn about other individuals’ personal and



structural biography they may “absorb the actual experience of individuals into a categorical one-dimensional designation of neediness” (Van Gorder, 2007, p. 16). Under this positioning a sort of paternalism may develop in service learners that fortifies static representations of others, and encourages them to construct a narrative of acritically having helped the other. Absorbing the experience of others may result in the service learner’s assumption that their role is to help ‘the other’ to properly assimilate to a set of cultural values – a perception that makes other individuals problematic, instead of troubling the dispossession that shapes their lives (Farnsworth, 2010; Sharma, Phillison & Malewski, 2011). Thus, as with the advantages of service learning, the disadvantages seem expansive.

How can people move between these advantages and disadvantages in order to open up the critical potential of the experience? Potential responses to this question may arise from troubling the fundamental tensions in the relationship between the self, structure, and the other because this tension underlies how the impact of service learning may be construed. This tension points to the potential impact of the student’s role within the service learning site and to the possibility of exchanges, which are represented as reciprocal in discussions of the advantages of service learning and as uni-directional in reference to the disadvantages. Most research, however, positions service learners as transmitting privileged knowledges and emotional profiles to disadvantaged others. In return, service learners gain the opportunity to define their professional goals and whether they are drawn to a particular population, institution, or problem set. Beyond, the service learner is rarely represented as participating in a relationship with reciprocal exchange, whether what is exchanged is in-kind or not (e.g. mutual emotional support and

encouragement or instrumental support for appreciation and care). The social-psychological or personal antecedents of critically grappling with un/equal exchanges are also under-studied.

Reconciling the span between the advantages and disadvantages of service learning may require insights about how the position of the service learner might prefigure their actions, which in turn sculpt the available meanings. Rubin's (2007) analysis of educational spaces provides the analytic framework of a figured world to understand hierarchy and meaning. The figured world is a social setting for actors, actions, and values within a particular institutional space that (1) mediates the translation of larger systemic inequalities into social interactions, and (2) illustrates identities as they respond to the environment in ways that affirm and contest ascribed roles.

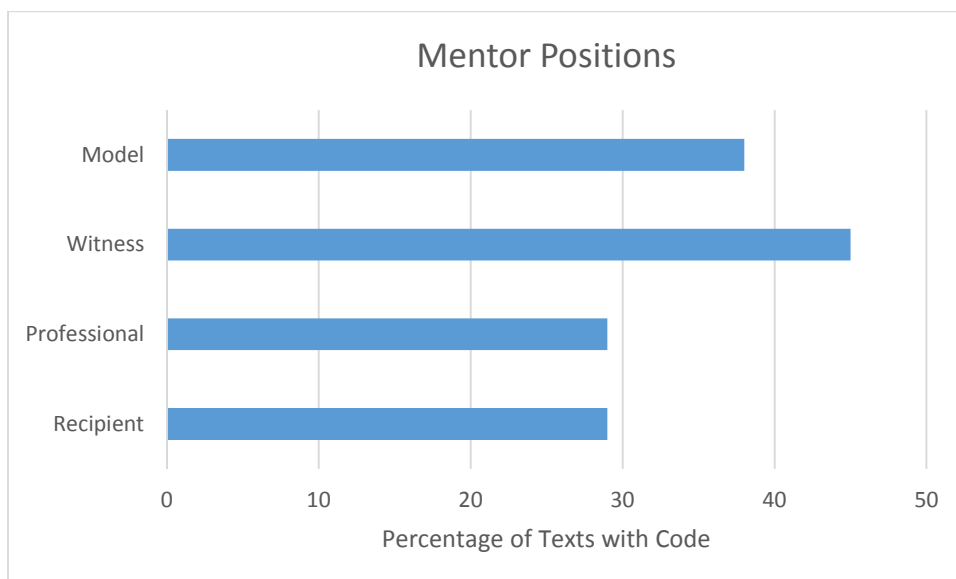
The present analysis uses the figured world narrated by mentors to politicize and psychologize the service learning experience and, thus, provide insight about the micro-processes involved in critical service learning. In terms of service learning, the relative positioning between actors within the figured world may signal the discursive construction of positions of privilege in which individuals are made impervious to others. Conversely, discursive constructions may point to positions of dispossession (or divested privilege) in which individuals are made permeable to others. These relative positions reflect the situated perspectives that service learners can inhabit as they shift across the institutional spaces of the service learning site and the university – a shifting that provides for deeper institutional and relational understandings (Rubin, 2007). The significance of these constructions is in their potential to provide insight about how the conception of self and other is prefigured by embodiments of privilege and dispossession which can be traced to the immediate context within the service learning

experience. These embodiments help to surface the structural-personal inequalities that are shaped by race and class as they are animated through the ways in which individuals, groups, and histories are active at the site (Rubin, 2007).

### **Methods**

To understand how the positioning of mentors within narratives inhibits or facilitates the expression of critical consciousness and equal relationships, the researcher coded the data for language that critiqued or reinforced power differentials between people and institutions as a way of figuring the worlds of the facility and university as institutions (Desmond & Stahl, 2011; Rubin, 2007). The researcher coded a span of data that included open-ended responses where participants summarized their overall experience of the course, described memorable moments, or moments that had a strong emotional impact on them. The researcher isolated passages that described what the mentors did in their roles within the facility and then coded these passages for how they positioned the role of the mentor (e.g. as paternal body, as collective member, as humanitarian). Secondly, the researcher coded for the positioning of the participant, classmates, instructors, facility staff, and residents within the text (e.g. representations of different people as present, active, agentic, transforming, or transformed).

The coding and subsequent analyses identified four themes that characterized the general position of the role of a mentor: (1) the mentor as a role model; (2) the mentor as a witness; (3) the mentor as a future professional; and, (4) the mentor as recipient of transformation. Figure 4: Mentoring Positions across Texts, shows the percentage of participant texts with each position.



*Figure 4: Mentoring Positions across Texts*

In discussing the four discursive positions for mentors, the remainder of the chapter will outline the interactions at each position as a reflection of the meanings they make available at the service learning site, and more generally within the classroom community.

## **Findings**

### **The mentor as a role model**

The discursive construction of the mentor as a role model suggests a flow of knowledge and experience that indicates a hierarchy between people where one person is framed as the giver and the other as the recipient. Mentoring programs generally affirm this dynamic by positioning adults as giving back, guiding young people, and imparting the cultural capital necessary for others to succeed. A number of narratives within this sample describe this dynamic as thirty-eight percent ( $n=12$ ) of the participant texts included references that positioned the mentors as

role models. All but two of these excerpts emerged as participants discussed a moment that had a strong emotional impact on them and, thus, suggest the personal meaning of this role. The language of such narratives included prepositions and directional terms or explicitly referred to the participants as role models, or positioned the girls in the residential facility as having received advice or lessons that will pave their paths to brighter futures.

Many of the passages that comprised this theme left only a salient glimmer of the mentor as a leader or role model, as illustrated in phrases like “if they apply themselves and use the advice we had provided that they will go far.” Similarly, the first example in this section combines the distance of the mentor and her perceived impact on the mentee. This participant recalls the moment when her mentee left the facility as having a strong impact as the participant begins:

When my mentee left I didn't realize I would come to care so much for her. I was thinking about our short time together and that I hope she sticks to all that she said she would. I felt sad to see her go, since I had only had one mentee. But I also felt hopeful because she had a plan and I hoped she would stick to it.

As the mentor references her mentee's departure she weaves sadness and hope together, but does not claim the significance of the relationship between the two individuals. After opening, for example, the mentor suggests that she didn't know that she “would come to care so much for her.” This statement communicates a similar sentiment as suggesting that she cared for her mentee, but constructs social distance with the use of additional words as well as the mixed tense phrase “would come.” Then, the participant proceeds to suggest that she was sad that her mentee left because it meant that she no longer had a mentee - as opposed to suggesting that she missed her original mentee or their relationship. This turn has the effect of positioning the girls

within the facility as interchangeable, rather than unique in their personages. As the text continues so does its insistence on the future as the participant indicates an implicit contract between the two whereby her mentee would change her life for the better. In the passage, this contract became a final source of hope – a word that was conjugated multiple times and functioned to ground the experience and balance any sadness in the passage.

Across these lines the participant is positioned to think, feel sad, and hope for the future from a place that is unbound by the facility or any particular moment. The absence of the participant from any place parallels her mentee's absence, and perhaps affirms that the construction of the mentor as a role model or leader clearly relies on the presence of someone to lead. This interdependence is not surprising, but the inability for the mentor to enter the space as an individual reflects the mutually constitutive nature of this position and the inability for the mentor to endure in the space outside of this role. In insisting on leadership, an unseen contract of compliance, and the disappearance from the space, this narrative suggests how protective this role was in holding a space in the facility for the mentor who seemingly evaporates without it. The importance of the role and the sense of the empty space created when the capacity to lead disappears indicates the importance of the discursive construction of the mentor as role model as a position that necessitates, not only the presence of a mentee, but the presence of a certain type of mentee who is capable of being perceived as inhabiting the role of a willing follower.

The second text also includes the sense of the mentor as a leader that was communicated with a vague sense of what the mentor did. Instead of relaying her specific actions, this participant summarizes the intent of her leadership using biographical elements from the lives of

her mentees as a counterpoint to the role that she played in providing the girls with an alternate path for being “successful.” The participant states:

I tried my best to guide them towards the right path, one where they could be successful and help them see why punching their teachers and selling drugs were not good ways in which to behave. I gave them alternative ideas about how to go about becoming successful other than those they knew about such as college, scholarships and jobs.

The participant opens with the suggestion that she tried her best in order to both emphasize the importance of the position as a leader or role model and emphasize that she was a good example. The participant, then, positions herself as orienting the mentees to new ways of thinking, new behaviors, and new aspirations. The construction of this passage supported the content which positioned the mentor as a compass through the use of directional words like “guide,” “towards,” “right path,” and “how to go about.” Throughout, the content and construction come together with a sense of timelessness given the lack of a specific time or an example of guidance. This timelessness provides a sense of omnipresence such that it reads as if the mentor provided a constant stream of re-orienting thoughts.

In terms of the differential placement of the mentor and mentees in the construction of the passage, it is noteworthy that the participant uses the first person to refer to herself and that she refers to the girls using words that impart distance like “they”, “their”, and “them”. These words suggest that this participant had two mentees, as some mentors did. The point of interest in the use of collective pronouns in this context is that it suggests that the mentor regarded the mentees with the same advice – clustering them together in ways that make it impossible to discern whether one or both of them were violent, or sold drugs, and could not see an alternative. The juxtaposition of pronouns and the mentor’s actions suggest that she filled the gap between

herself and her mentees with discursive elements of goodness and success, economy and mobility, as well as qualities of being and life goals. These elements hang around a mixture of events that are unfailingly bad - hitting one's teacher and selling drugs – and events that are unfailingly good like college, scholarships, and jobs. To underscore her role as a mentor, she frames the girls' behavior as “not good ways to behave.” This participant conflates behavior with attaining upward mobility and, thus, rationalizes the need for the mentor to transmit an embodied sense of decorum or values that would help the girls.

The good and bad outcomes that the participant references are presented as choices that the girls made without knowing the full array of options such that this passage suggests that girls don't have to commit acts of interpersonal and community violence because they can get jobs, or go to college. The logic that different knowledges lead to different outcomes works to project the importance of the role of the mentor/ing. At the same time, however, it obscures the structural barriers to the girls' success and thereby hides the socially-constructed nature of the lives of all three individuals in the passage. In the absence of a socio-political analysis of success, the mentor is framed as the mediator between a life of crime and legitimacy. In effect, the lack of criticality functions to obscure privilege and to frame the participant as a decontextualized agent in a field of individuals who lack a sense of either agency, possibility, or direction. By narrating herself as the mediator between crime and legitimacy, as a compass and leader, the participant's body is positioned as the bearer of social solutions in ways that free social inequality, structural opportunity, community, family, and the girl from any responsibility.



The last example in this section differs from the others by its suggestion that the mentee's self-concept is an additional barrier to her success. In this excerpt, the mentor indicates that her mentee did not know what she was worthy of, and that she was "so much more than that." Ending thus, the participant shifts from the beginning of her text where she introduces her mentee as a static character, "a girl in trouble with the law," that she got to know. She begins:

I got to know a girl in trouble with the law, Lannah. When I was with her, I made sure to get her to think about what it is that she really wanted out of life, and it was clear that what she wanted was not to be found through the criminal justice system. When I talked with her, I brought myself down to her level (as far as vocabulary and thoughts go) because I wanted her to feel understood, as I did understand her, but maybe she would not feel understood if I acted like I was too much older than she was. I wanted her to feel that she had someone she could level with who understood her. I gently tried to get her to think "outside the box" when it came to her personal decisions, to send her in a more positive direction that ultimately only she herself could make the choice to follow. It was really interesting to get a look into the reasons why she did the things she did that led her into the facility... I got her to think outside that and realize that she was so much more than that; that was just a group of people she had gotten caught up with and she had the power to remove herself from the situation.

Across this text the participant is positioned as a role model who is able to reach her mentee, help her understand her decisions, and how her decisions could impact her life in the future. While a semblance of egalitarianism leads this narrative, it is also punctuated with decisive turns where the participant "brought [herself] down to" her mentee's level, could "send" her mentee into a new direction, and "got her to think" about herself on different terms. This blend of egalitarian and authoritative stance is used to communicate the belief that the mentee's peer group was responsible for her incarceration and that given a better peer group the mentee could lead herself out of the criminal justice system and stay out.

What marks this narrative as exemplary is that the mentee and mentor both appear, almost equally as if they were in conversation. Not only does the participant position herself as a role model, but she also alludes to what she communicated to her mentee that made her feel like a one. Following this description, the mentor implies that the mentee was as ready to accept her guidance and direction as she presumably was to accept the guidance and direction of a negative peer group that was composed of gang-related cousins and peers. The perceived and immediate impact of the mentor's intervention troubles the sense of agency and individualism of the mentee, and makes the right path little more than a shift from one group's values to another's – albeit a group whose values are consistent with what the mentee wants out of her life. Aligning this text with an acritical or critical path is impossible without information about what the mentee wants out of life, what incarcerated people want out of life, and the shape, size, and nature of the box the mentee is supposed to think outside of, however. Overall, the content of the narrative parallels its construction and maintains the sense of the mentor as a guide with the directional language of space and mobility that are provided by references to the criminal justice system, level, outside the box, direction, follow, outside, and remove – as in the preceding text.

Across this section, the content and construction of the texts positioned the mentor as a role model who had the capacity to infuse mentees with the cultural capital that is necessary to succeed. As examples of this position, the narrative distance of being a bearer of cultural capital with the power to transform while remaining untouchable may be suggestive of the privilege associated with whiteness, middle-class aspirations, and mobility. In lying inexplicit, however, these meanings avoid being acknowledged, troubled, and/or moved towards resolution. The

impact of this erasure may be interpreted as an avoidance of acknowledging, troubling, and resolving the hierarchies in service learning as well as the societal-personal privilege and dispossession that shaped the positions of the mentor and the mentee.

Instead of an explicit socio-political analysis, the girls were positioned as having internalized the model of their mentors and as having the capacity to mold themselves upon it. The exchange of transformation, however, is unequal as participants did not position themselves within these passages in ways that expressed how they changed or what being a role model meant to them. The limitations of this position were represented here, as well, through the construction of the passages that largely did not ground the relationship in the facility or in a specific moment along the experience. This quiet removal from the context in which the relationship was set diminished the potential for an explicit exchange between people and positioned the participant as untouched.

### **The mentor as a witness**

A subset of the narratives discursively positioned the mentor as having seen injustices within the facility in ways that could encourage their advocacy for better resources and treatment in the institution. These texts emphasize the institutional nature of the service learning opportunity and suggest ways in which the mentors became institutionalized through their direct and indirect experiences. Thus, the lasting impact of the experience is institutional rather than relational in nature and represents the exchange of knowledge about in/humane spaces rather than individuals. The positioning of the mentor as a witness emerged across forty-five percent

(n=14) of the participant narratives as they wrote about moments that either had a strong emotional impact on them or memorable moments that occurred in the middle of the semester.

The first text is framed as a report from the inside where the mentor critiques the quality of resources distributed through the facility. The participant recalls this moment as having a strong emotional impact on her:

Another time the girl was telling about the food and the treatment they are getting. How the food was on par with fast food quality wise, and how they just weren't getting proper attention and the right kind of attention. I felt the system wasn't really doing anything for them except keeping them in for the time being. I was thinking that with better funding and staffing and education in general this mess wouldn't be such a mess.

The construction of this passage emerges first as an entry point to understanding the content of what the mentor witnessed and her relationship to what she saw. In this passage, the participant positions herself as a witness who has access to knowledge about the facility, although she is positioned as being far away because of her use of the definite article 'the' that objectifies and distances everything in the beginning of the scene. The participant refers to her mentee as "the girl" who interacts with "the food" that is served in "the system." As the participant enters a direct conversation about the system that uses the first person, the passage turns to a more intimate critique. She suggests that the poor food and improper treatment that the girls received was evidence that the primary function of the facility was related to "keeping them in for the time being." As her critique continues, it widens to address the funding, staffing, and education that should be available for the facility.

Overall, the construction of distance between the participant and her mentee in the beginning of the passage is compounded by the distance constructed between the mentor's

narrated position outside of the facility and her critique. This juxtaposition communicates the challenges of voicing critiques from within a system, which may have contributed to the participant distancing herself from the system and her mentee in the beginning of the passage. Additionally, the framing of this passage as a moment that had a strong emotional impact on the participant that relies on a sense of distance may suggest a resistance to directly personalizing injustice. A more intimate sense of the impact that others, resources, and systems have on the self may be necessary to fully articulate a critique.

The remaining two examples in this section place the participants within the facility, although they still maintain a sense of distance from the situations described. In the first, one participant positioned herself as a witness who learned that the facility was a place of violence. The participant opens her narrative and explains that she was at the facility when a fight broke out and then positions herself in the scene as if she were watching it on a screen rather than participating in a live moment of fear and discomfort.

One day when I was at the facility. There was a fight that broke out and the girls were attacking each other. It was the first time I was at the facility and saw this happen. The girls would tell me about the fights they got into, but it was a totally different experience seeing it happen in front of me. I saw how it bothered some of the other girls. They were upset, some of the girls felt like they should get involved and others felt like now they're going to have side with the girls who fought. I was thinking this is an uncomfortable situation for some of these girls. This happens on a regular basis for some of them. Some of the girls are trying to keep their heads down but in the end they all get involved. I was nervous for the girls. It made me feel upset that this was going on.

Across this text, the participant drew the moment of witnessing violence into the series of unseen moments of fighting between the girls. As a witness she narrates what was happening without reference to what she could have been thinking or feeling in the moment. Her position as

a witness seems to be fortified by a sort of isolation from which she can access what the girls are thinking, doing, and feeling. She is not in the scene, however, aside from her witnessing eyes. With the use of the first person, she depicts how she was at the facility one day, she was there during a fight, she heard about these fights, she saw how it bothered the girls, and that she thought that it must be an uncomfortable situation for the girls who also witnessed the fight to be in. The participant indicated that she was nervous for the girls, and did not mention her personal nervousness. The participant then shifts completely to describe how the girls processed this moment – some were bothered, upset, feeling they should fight, intervene, or take sides. Her distance from the scene is illustrated by her feeling ‘through’ other people rather than narrating her own feelings. This distance may indicate a sort of privilege that is simultaneously claimed and ruptured as the passage suggests a capacity (1) to witness violence but not be afraid that it will affect her directly; (2) to be shocked that violence is refracted on one’s body and those of others that one cares for; and, (3) to learn that the facility could be a place of violence rather than a haven from it.

In the last turn, she suggested that she was “upset that this was going on.” This final phrase reverses the participant’s disappearance throughout, but imbues the scene with a rippling sense of shock that may have contributed to a lack of personhood, agency, or critique of the violence. Thus, the construction of the narrative in these time-bound moments may suggest that moments of peace within the facility were punctuated violence, rather than the other way around. The violence she witnessed is not regarded as an event but rather something that was going on that could be attended to, without an expression of one’s own fear or outrage, by retreating into

the absence of feeling that one is socialized to associate with trauma. As a witness, this participants' critique seems frozen in her response to the reality that the facility was not a safe space, and may have affirmed the necessity for distance.

In the last narrative of this section, a participant cites a moment within the facility that she actively engages in. In this narrative the class arrived for a workshop and was turned away because an administrative scheduling error. The participant extends her experience of feeling disgusted and sad because of this incident to a critique that suggests that institutions like these are inhumane. The participant begins at the moment of finding out about the scheduling error:

When we showed up to the facility for our scheduled time but the employees/coordinator of their program made some sort of error and we weren't able to see the girls. I was frustrated. We all were. I wouldn't make a blanket statement about all of the workers being apathetic or rude, but there was a general sense that they didn't care as much about our time there as we did; i.e. it was no big deal that we lost some valuable time that could have been spent doing some cool stuff with the girls. It made me think about the big picture of these sorts of systems, mental hospitals, prisons, etc. I thought about how what a shame it is that human beings in these institutions aren't treated like human beings sometimes. Disgusted, discouraged, angry, annoyed, sad.

In transitioning the turns across the text, the participant starts with the group as they are all outside, moves into her feelings, and uses them to open a critique of the staff. She prefaces her critique by indicating that she does not want to generalize statements about the staff and thus ambivalently suggests that the staff were "apathetic or rude" and that they didn't care about the time, attention, or effort that was put into the mentoring program. The participant also uses her perspective on the staff to suggest that it was significant that the class could not meet with the girls. In addition to the class having lost time, the girls lost the opportunity to participate in "some cool stuff." Although inexplicit, the narrative seems to pull up a thread that suggests a

willful mistake and confusion on the part of the staff that detained the girls from outsiders and outside activities. The narrative indicates ways that people inside and outside of the facility become punished in systems where “human beings in these institutions aren’t treated like human beings.” The participant, thus, problematizes institutions including mental hospitals and prisons as using their staff to circulate a lack of respect for humanity. While this participant does not extend this sense of outrage to narrate what happened next or what she thinks should have happened – the linkages she started to draw between this incident, staff, and similar institutions have the potential to inspire her advocacy long-term.

It is noteworthy that this participant problematizes the staff and couches them within a system rather than suggesting that the individuals were entirely at fault. In doing so, she draws a dividing line between people and the institutions in which they operate. On one side, there was the university who brought attentive people and cool stuff for the girls. Meanwhile, on the other side, there was the facility and people who mis-administered the resources they were given – perhaps, out of the motivation to establish power and control.

As the texts in this section show, the participants moved towards advocacy to the extent that they narrated an increasing sense of presence at the facility that was communicated through the construction of their passage. The content of the passages provides elements of the experience that encouraged critiques of the provision of basic necessities like food, safety, and respect that were available at the facility. In positioning the mentor as a witness, two participants constructed distance between the facility and their relationships with the residents through the objectification of the girls and themselves. Meanwhile, the last participant engaged a more



intimate view of her experience where she allowed herself to enter the passage as a witness and agent in that moment. From this position, this participant engaged a critique of the facility that she could generalize to other institutional spaces.

Regardless of the immediacy of the sense of advocacy across these narratives, each inherently couches the participant within the university as their institutional context. The institutional context of the university seemed to enable their capacity to distinguish the resources afforded to the girls and shelter themselves from feeling the totality of a moment of violence – structural, physical, and relational. Thus, these passages work together to suggest that positions of critique necessitate presence. Further, they suggest that transforming a critique to a form of advocacy may be catalyzed by presence and a personal sense of injustice.

### **The mentor as a future professional**

Consistent with findings that indicate the sharpening of professional goals as an impact of service learning, twenty-nine percent (n=9) of the participant texts narrated the participants' experience as teaching them about the juvenile justice system, working with a specific population, and building their potential for advocacy and professional goals. This content mostly emerged in participants' general introductions to their course experiences and therefore serves to contextualize the entirety of the experience. While some of these narratives feature a sort of sterility that parallels the disaffection that can permeate institutional spaces, others also describe a transition from disaffection to affection. Affection alone is important as a marker of the relationship and care, but gains a greater depth of meaning as it is discussed as a mediator through which the participants gained access to ways that they could impact other people.

The content of the first text describes a mentor's journey into the facility by citing her initial apprehension and excitement of being in a lock up facility for the first time. This participant makes a space for herself and rationalizes her presence at the facility through her interest in psychology and counseling, and thereby positions the girls as inmates or a population of potential clients. As this narrative continues, the participant expresses that she developed an emotional connection to her mentee and later indicated that this connection and the care that it facilitated had the potential to teach the mentee that people can care about her. Part of what the mentor received in exchange for this emotional support was an acknowledgment of the girls' agency and ability to learn from her own mistakes. The exchange also registered a sense of the potential for reciprocity as the mentor reflected on how her mentee encouraged the mentor's aspirations to become a counselor. The mentor begins:

When the experience began I remember being nervous and excited as I had never been in a locked facility before. I was interested because of my interest to further my education with psychology and counseling. During the experience I feel that I became emotionally connected in a way with my mentee feeling that I desired the best for her and only hoped that she would progress after being allowed to exit the facility. After I furthered my education in Psychology I became more familiar with accepting that my mentee even though I did care for her had to make her own decisions and learn from them I just hoped that the same way she encouraged me to pursue counseling I made if even a little impact on her life showing her that someone can care for her, her fears, feelings, concerns and struggles.

Throughout, this text is constructed in ways that hold the mentor in focus and provide a sense of the mentee moving in the background. The mentee only appears as herself in the last turn as a collection of "her fears, feelings, concerns and struggles" which is presented as split from yet parallel to the participant. Thus while the content and construction of the passage allude to moments of agency, they also obscure them in ways that hide any clear and agentic

leader. As such, the participant describes a journey that starts at the facility doors and ends with the mentor reaching to try to make “even a little impact” on her mentee – a journey that seems to position them as equals, as people who travelled the same institutional inculcation albeit to different ends. In this way the institution is framed as superordinate to the mentor and the mentee and their relationship becomes a setting for mutual support, vulnerability, concerns, struggles, and encouragement.

Another participant also discusses the relationship she had as an inspiration for her professional future. The participant opens by referencing the time between semesters that she used after the course was officially over to keep visiting her mentee:

The last day I had my individual meeting with my mentee had a strong emotional impact on me. It was in January during the winter session and we were allowed to keep visiting up until the new semester began. On that last day we drew each other cards and she crocheted me a bag. I still have that and always will. She told me how much our meeting meant to her and hoped that we will someday get into contact again. I thanked her for the opportunity to meet her and learn from her. I continued to worry about her time in the facility and when she will go home. I was also thinking how I can continue doing work with girls such as these in the future. I decided to apply to the Master's program in Mental Health Counseling at CSI for the fall semester with the goal to work with at risk adolescents. I felt apprehensive yet confident that all that we did together will stick with her and show her that she can have positive relationships with peers and people slightly older.

In this passage the mentor narrates the final moment of the relationship when her mentee indicated that she was grateful for the experience and hoped that they would meet again one day. In response, the mentor indicated that she was also grateful for the opportunity to form a relationship with and learn from the mentee. The moment of both mentor and mentee thanking one another is rare in its direct and in-kind reciprocity and suggests the culmination of mutual learning across the relationship. From this point, the participant indicated that her thoughts were

still with the mentee even after she was no longer visiting her. Later, she indicates a hope that the relationship will impact her mentee by way of paving her path towards more positive relationships with older people. Her hope for her mentee parallels what she took from the experience in finding that she could read her capacity within this relationship as an invitation to continue to work with “girls such as these in the future.” Along with the few other participants who indicated solid plans to transform their desire into a professional path, this participant indicated that she began a Master’s program with the intention on working with at-risk young people.

In terms of its construction, in the first half of the narrative the mentor and mentee show up almost equally within the facility as if they are in conversation to parallel the hint of a reciprocal impact within the content. In the last half, after the engagement is over, the participant moves into her own future with the exclusive use of the first person that implicitly includes the girl as an internalized image of reciprocity as the participant imagines future relationships with at risk adolescents. The last turn, her wish for the girl, includes both of them again and brings the impact of the relationship full circle from the beginning as the mentor grapples with the possibility that their time may not “stick with” her mentee and the resultant mix of nervousness and surety that brings up.

The last text in this section provides an example of a participant who described the impact of her experience as well but, unlike the other two narratives, she did not ground her experience with references to her presence within the facility. The participant begins narrating at a point in time close to her participation in this study:

I recently graduated from my Masters in Mental Health Counseling and can thank the mentoring class for inspiring me to pursue a career in counseling. I took the mentoring class with Rev. Dr. Cumiskey and found it to be one of the best experiences. This class broadened my knowledge of adolescents and issues of social justice. I was assigned to two girls at the facility and followed them from September through January. During our sessions, we discussed coping skills and ways in which they could stay safe while serving their time. Throughout my field work experience, learned how to set boundaries with clients, which I later learned would be very important. I also gained a broader understanding of the justice system. This class set a framework for my future work.

This participant opens from where she is currently at as a graduate of a Master's program in counseling. In doing so, she traces a line from her present and back to the experience of taking the course and indicates that her experience was an inspiration. The participant inserts Reverend Dr. Cumiskey into the passage to anchor the experience along with an indication that it was "one of the best experiences." The participant does not qualify the experience as educational, personal, or social which may suggest that the experience was beyond the qualification of such contexts. As an indication of the variety of transferable lessons the course presented her with the participant lists boundary setting with clients, learning about coping skills, and safety within the facility as elements that she learned and practiced through this experience.

It is noteworthy that the construction of the passage positions the mentees, who are otherwise invisible, as clients and refers to the course as field experience in which she followed the girls for a few months. Such terms allow her to draw links between this experience and her professional work, and also suggest relationships that are prefigured to privilege the knowledge and power of a competent and distanced service learner. Relatedly, the mentor is positioned to observe more than to interact; to engage professional embodiments rather than engaging the mentees as people who are equal or otherwise. The absence of the girls, the facility, and her

specific actions align the mentor and the instructor in an educational privilege that includes knowledge about adolescents, social justice, and the justice system. Thus, this participant positions herself as being outside of the facility as a witness who can intervene to help the girls through the system while maintaining strong psychological boundaries. In ending, the participant referenced this experience as setting the framework for her career. As the scaffolding for her career, she also implies that she was provided a sense of personal boundaries, social justice, and understanding aspects of the justice system that contribute to danger and safety - all of which continue to live on in her life.

Across the narratives in this section participants invoked one of the popularly discussed roles of service learning from the perspective of the mentors. Specifically, these passages drew upon the service learning opportunity for the ways that it exposed participants to contexts and populations in which they can embody professional roles. The texts presented here relied on the differential placement of the mentors and mentees given the participant's professional aspirations, but can be compared and contrasted in terms of their relationship to privilege. For example, these texts mostly shared an initial sense of the interaction at the facility as a unidirectional flow from the university to the facility. Some of these narratives also, however, interjected the beginnings of a bidirectional flow through their insertion of reciprocity, gifts, and structural understanding.

While the content of these passages suggests that the experience contributed to participants' career aspirations, their construction projected some of the ways that they might inhabit their professional roles in the future through their relationship to their mentees and the

facility. In the first text, the participant positions herself as having been encouraged by her mentee and being hopeful that she also impacted her mentor – suggesting a disavowal of privilege that built the capacity for mutual transformation. The second text provided an example of how the participant’s experience moved into her future and positions the mentor as deepening the capacity to care. The last example positions the mentor as a professional who is outside of the facility and following the girls, almost as if she were constructing case studies *from* rather than relationships *with* the girls. Thus, across these narratives are examples of professional personas and ways of being that range from a critical, feminist conception of mutual transformation and the notion of the impermeable professional who facilitates transformation in others.

### **The mentor as recipient of transformation**

In turning the focus from the institutional to the relational level, the narratives in this section begin to describe a variety of activities that the mentors participated in within the facility. Twenty-nine percent (n=9) of the participant texts suggested that mentor’s role was to participate in informal and formal activities that facilitated an interjection of companionship, recreation, and skill building, as well as social and instrumental support - as forms of embodied cultural capital that moved from the university to the facility. These texts emerged almost evenly across the general introduction to the experience, the middle of the course, and in moments of strong emotional impact – perhaps as an indication of the wealth of opportunities for such roles to emerge. The participants received the experience largely as personal as they experienced enjoyment in the relationships and activities, founded deeper opportunities for collectives among themselves and the girls, and identified more inspiration for their professional path. While such

exchanges emerged in the content as ways to project the impact of the experience, the construction of these narrations highlighted moments where the mentors either made themselves visible while self-consciously questioning the reciprocity of their exchanges, and invisible within the institution of the facility - un-narrated and untouched.

The first example in this section combined a recognition of institutional lines that divided the participant from the girls, the ways in which the participant crossed this division to form collectives, and an ambivalence about the exchanges that marked the experience for her. This flow draws a path from the recognition of individual privilege, the collapse of difference for collectivity, and the self-conscious individual who finds herself on the other side of the experience. Throughout the passage there is a tension between the weight that institutional spaces – academic and incarcerated – press on individual bodies and the way that pressure is resisted by creating a sense of collectivity as a temporary shelter from the perception that transformation is an individual activity. In this passage, the participant introduces herself as a psychology student in order to position herself in the facility. Just as she narrates her position as a student in the university she locates the girls as inmates in a juvenile women’s jail as she begins:

As a psychology student I had the wonderful experience of taking a class on mentoring adolescents. The class involved visiting a juvenile women’s jail as a class group once a week and then mentoring an inmate during one on one session once a week. My mentee was a girl named Lisa. When I met Lisa she was 16, pregnant, and spending the next year in jail. I was a fresh face to her. I was there to listen and cared about what she had to say. After realizing I was genuinely interested, she began to really open up. Having that kind of impact on a person made me want to be there for others - more of the girls. That desire led a classmate and I to start a cheerleading program at the facility. Although at first it was a struggle to get them to work together, little by little egos disappeared and team work emerged. We were able to get the girls to trust each other enough to learn stunts and



gymnastics. They were able to learn an entire routine and performed it during family day. The difference between the first practice and the family day performance was night and day. Incredible. I cried tears of joy as they performed. I can honestly say that as much as I hope I had a big impact in Lisa's and the rest of the girls' lives, I think they had a bigger impact on mine.

The construction of the text begins as the participant quickly draws in the classroom community as the foundation of her work within the facility. Although she narrates herself as an individual by invoking only her reflection in the mentee's eyes, the passage relies on a sense of collectivity. The sense of being in a group disappears the sense of individual agency, somewhat, but mostly communicates an individual's initiative to enlist others to make a difference. As such, the first person "I" is present, but also melts into the group. In describing the group effort on the part of herself and some classmates, the participant indicates that as the girls formed a cheerleading/dance squad that the girls' egos, little-by-little, dissolved into teamwork. The narration of the strength of the self emerging as it joins a collective mirrors the construction of the text throughout, as her experience suggests that she also joined with other classmates in teamwork to lead the squad.

As the passage continued, the collectivity spread to include the families of the girls who attended Family Day at the facility and became audience to the girls as they performed. As a participant, witness, and would-be family member, the mentor comes through in the first person most strongly as a signal of her transition from being a psychology student placed within a juvenile girls' facility to being a collective member, and then an individual again. The difference of the positions for individuals in her narrative – psychology student to collective/team member and inmates to girls – was the difference between night and day as was the first and last

performance of the girls. The participant ends, then, with a fuller sense of self and others and with the hope that “I had a big impact in Lisa’s and the rest of the girls’ lives, I think they had a bigger impact on mine.” In this last turn, the participant seems almost apologetic for being unsure of her impact on others but very sure of their impact on hers.

As a statement about different positions and privilege, this narration illustrates an acritical and untroubled view of people and the institutions in which they sit and act. The quality of sterility in the descriptions of the facility, her mentee, and her classmates gives way to an affective tempo that ends as she simultaneously merges with classmates, the girls, and their families and she stands alone and solid. While a socio-political analysis of her actions within the facility was not attempted or realized, the narrative provides some indication of the disavowal of relative privilege and the acceptance of initiating a path by which she could become a collective member and let herself, the group, and the facility be transformed. The group orientation of this narrative de-emphasizes agency and change as lone processes and thereby challenges the model of transformation as an autonomous activity.

Another text is similar to the preceding one in its recollection of the same cheer/dance squad. Like the preceding text, this participant suggests that the team work that she initiated with her classmates expanded to incorporate the girls into a collective experience. The primary difference is that the second participant indicated that she spent an extraordinary amount of time at the facility – sometimes going there “two or three times a week and sometimes on the weekend.” This participant, perhaps because of the amount of time and effort that she spent in the facility was certain that she “made a difference or at least had a positive impact” within the

facility. She described the joy that she had in being at the facility as the exchange for her time – a joy that outshined the occasional hectic nature of the facility and working with adolescent girls. This participant narrated the most contact with the girls across the sample and thus, despite her initial intimidation meeting the girls, embodied a fearlessness about being contaminated by the space or the people within it as well as a continuous breach of the institutional space of the university and the facility.

In another passage, a participant indicated that simple, informal social acts combined with more formalized programming to comprise an important elements of working with the girls. This participant, instead of making specific claims about the value of these interactions, merely suggests that they are good and shifts to her own enjoyment of participating in mentoring activities. The participant opens with a recollection of her experience:

I remember feeling really good about the work we were doing with the girls. By the middle of the semester we were playing many games and doing a lot of self-esteem activities with them and my mentee was really opening up to me and was trusting of me. I also became involved in the Girl Scout program at this time. I was thinking I never want this to end and this is definitely something I would want to do in the future.

Here the participant suggests feeling good about working with the girls, rather than arguing the importance of the interactions by projecting the impact of them on the girls. She indicates that the games and activities she engaged in with the girls as a class were a gateway for trust and openness. Additionally, her own integration of opportunities within the facility emerged from this gateway as she began participating with the Girl Scout troop at the facility. In expanding on her enjoyment of mentoring, the participant acknowledges that she didn't want the experience to end and would participate in similar experiences in the future.

The construction of this text features the participant in the first person, the girls in the facility writ large, and her mentee. While the experience was multiply populated the individuals moved through the participant herself as they were noticed as individuals, and assimilated into the participant through self-reference and reflection. By incorporating the work, the girls, and her mentee, the mentor indicates how the experience transformed her. As she references her increasing involvement with increasingly specific descriptions of what made the experience good she also implies a measure of the potential to transform others.

The last text in this section, highlights the impact of the experience as well as the subsequent ambivalence about the experience. This participant indicates a sense of difficulty in finding a direction in which to move with what she got from the experience of having created something ethereal and tangible with the mentees and the class. In this passage, the participant writes about the last moment of the facility and opens with a reference to the presentation of the finished quilt that the mentors and mentees had worked on across the semester:

The presentation of the quilt! :) Learning that my mentee was probably going home within the next few months was both great news and sad. I probably won't keep in touch...but I hope my mentee(s) are doing alright and think of me. Wish I could be more involved but I am not sure how. Not sure what role I can serve after this experience.

After introducing the context, the mentor quickly moves into an unknown future. Here she imagined the moment of her mentee leaving and their falling out of touch and then moved into the real present with "I hope my mentee(s) are doing alright and think of me." This phrase is the defining turn of the passage that ties the past, present, and future in ways that find the mentor and mentee separated from each other and the experience. The participant hopes for the girls but does not want or need their hope. The participant wants the girls to think about her, but doesn't

think about them outside of their relation to her. She wants them to be okay and positions her ability to be okay as a given. In the remainder of the passage, the participant communicates uncertainty, desire, and ambivalence. She wishes she could be more involved but neither specifies what, who, or where she would like to help. She wants to play a role but resists articulating what it might be, what would be desirable, effective, or preferred.

The content and construction of this passage suggest that the experience opened something up in the participant that she cannot close by imagining that she will be in contact with her mentee, or by imagining her future involvement. Her resistance to forming even a dream of helping or advocacy in the future is a metaphor that traces the shape of the loss and absence of the experience being over. This opening suggests a loss that feels complacent, or a hope that is disappeared without other people to co-generate space, direction, and meaning with. This loss represents an opportunity for the society and culture that is lost given the lack of discourses for individuals to help 'alone' or groups to generate forms of helping.

Across this final section the participants positioned the role of the mentor as expanding the resources available to girls, while the participants narrated receiving something from the experience. These texts represent a reversal of the certainty with which some mentors projected their impact on the girls. Additionally these texts indicate that the experience was transformative although participants seemed reluctant or unable to articulate how and why in singular terms alone. The content and construction of these narratives is more parallel than in other positions as participants flow between their institutional alignments, take the initiative to provide different opportunities for the girls, and position themselves in the present as somehow changed, available

in memory, or wanting to find a direction for their newfound capacity. But, as in other positions the construction of the passages varies to the extent that they explicitly mark the presence of the mentor.

By superimposing the images of themselves and the mentees – not quite illustrating or disappearing either – these narratives provide the sense of being in flux in ways that point to a dynamism in institutional and relational positions, which may be indicative of transformation. Thus, these narratives may represent the destabilization of the representations of the self and other in ways that suggest that the meanings infused into and taken from the mentoring relationship challenge the discourses of soft superiority that mark some service learning experiences. Insofar as some of these narratives provide the sense of projecting the experience into the future this grouping suggests a burgeoning commitment to participating with others to transform lives.

### **Discussion**

The experience of service learning teaches students on a variety of levels – from understanding and critiquing structure to finding a better sense of themselves and how they interact with structure. Aside from projecting these impacts as outcomes, however, the literature largely does not address the micro-moments along students' trajectory to and from the service learning classroom and the service learning site. Taking inspiration from Rubin's (2007) analysis of educational spaces as figured worlds that prefigure roles or positional identities, this chapter examined the content and construction of participants' passages for how they positioned their role as mentors. Sketching the positions that were available to service learners was a strategy for

understanding how the gap between acritical and critical impacts could be filled with insight about the actions and meanings that were drawn from the experience.

In placing the narrative positioning of these mentors more generally within the context of service learning, aspects of the service learning site and the course itself may have inhibited and facilitated the capacity for critical engagement to emerge. For example, service learning sites that are thoroughly based on hierarchy, such as those set within residential or correctional facilities, may carry an additional risk of fortifying racial, classed, and gendered representations that contribute to social distance. This social distance may be compounded by the moral meanings associated with incarceration as such spaces position individuals as problematic or wayward. Thus, service learners must negotiate any formerly held representations about 'service recipients' across an experience where race and class are as conspicuous as the physical architecture of immorality within the context.

Where participants discussed what they did as mentors, they position the roles available within the context as aligning with one of four emergent themes of the mentor as role model, witness, future professional, and recipient of transformation. Further analysis of the content and construction of these narratives highlighted how these excerpts conveyed the social, emotional, and relational distance between the participant, their mentees, the facility, their classmates and instructors. As such, these narratives can be read as a potential positions for service learners to inhabit – some of which embodied the advantages that appear in service learning literature while others embodied its disadvantages.

**Working across positions: The critical values in the text**

In some cases, the mentor was identified as a position from which the participant could lead the mentees to a new way of understanding themselves, but left the mentor's permeability in the context and self-reflection about their role largely unattended to. Similarly, the position of the mentor as witness and a future professional foregrounded an impermeability that was partially facilitated by the ability to affiliate with the university. The last positioning, the mentor as a recipient of transformation, most troubled the ability to be impermeable and showed participants who grappled with having been touched by the experience and questioning if they had an impact on their mentees.

These positions carry a sense of privilege and also vary in the degree that such privilege is disavowed through participants' presence at the facility. The presence of these positions along with their affective charges demonstrate how the positions differentially interact with the critical potentials outlined by Kinefuchi (2010) as challenging representational discourses about the self and others, examining the structural role of inequality, and creating authentic relationships. All three of these potentials did not appear in any one position, but glimmers appeared throughout. Reciprocity of transformation, for example, emerged in one narrative that framed the mentor as a future professional and also the positioning of the mentors as recipients of transformation.

Additionally, the discursive potential to frame the girls as juvenile delinquents and clients evolved as mentors critiqued the facility as a warehouse for girls or as an inhumane place, were touched by their mentee's encouragement, and merged across boundaries to benefit from a cheer/dance squad. These examples largely speak to the capacity of mentors to use and work



against their roles to form authentic relationships with the mentees and, thus tie authenticity to the dissolution of representations. The dissolution of representations about one's role and the ability for the mentor and mentees to be versions of themselves appears to be a strategy for generative intergroup relations.

The co-institutionalized nature of both mentor and mentee in their interaction at the facility may have prefigured these roles. But, neither seemed to prefigure the examination of the role of structure inequality in constructing the facility, the service learning opportunity, or the positions of agents within these contexts. The social context beyond the facility laid largely unexamined and, perhaps, silenced by the necessity to also name the racial and classed components of inequality. That is, the reproduction of silence around race and class across institutions weakened the capacity for explicit, critical critique.

The meanings of racial and classed inequality that laid inexplicit, however, were intimated in some positions in which some mentors may have interpreted their mentee's experience as a caricature of personal need (Van Gorder, 2007) - like in the case of one mentor's critique of her mentees as not knowing that violence and drug dealing were not appropriate choices. In this text, the mentor and mentee were discussed as filling rigid roles that dictated that the mentor infuse the mentees with cultural capital. This role carries with it assumptions about the relationship between race, class, atomistic individualism, knowledges and affective ways of being, and mobility. The inflection of social inequality in these elements begins to highlight some of these positions as likewise complicated by structure. It suggests, for example, that privilege may dispossess its holder by eclipsing structure in ways that prefigure her body as a

mediator between crime and legitimacy, stagnancy and mobility. This notion suggests the positioning individuals of relative privilege as bearers of the responsibility to positively shape people's lives, rather than identifying needs that the state should also encumber.

### **Working across institutions: Evolving service learner positions**

The dis/appearance of the first person and therefore social position suggests that service learners may need more support finding, stating, sustaining and grappling with their presence and what to do with their dis/comfort in and across the service learning site and the university. This stands as an argument against critiquing these positions as acritical because people don't want them to be or aren't ready. Instead, this absence places partial responsibility on the service learning classroom for supporting the disintegration of the old identities out of which new selves are assumed and practiced. Such support may be achieved through pedagogical means, however, since critical reflection has been used as a method through which ecological understandings can be reflexively developed and articulated. Rubin's (2007) work indicates that the role of the learner is one of transformation and therefore may provide generative content for such critical reflection.

The following section summarizes each position and attempts to transform them into lessons that can be applied in the construction of service learning courses that increasingly support learners.

**Leading to Collectivize.** Narratives that framed the mentor as a role model or leader positioned the participants as impermeable to the institutional dispossession that marked the divide between the facility and the university. These narratives seemed to be fueled by

discourses about the atomistic individual that necessitated the narrative construction of the mentor as a leader or role model in order to prove the success of their transmission of cultural capital. Here, success as a mentors relies on the construction of the mentee as an atomistic individual who now has the knowledge to succeed in an environment that may be imagined as being as open and supportive for mentors as it is the mentees. This positioning, in short, functions by erasing social context as well as personal and social histories. This erasure is maintained by the narrative refusal to address the self and the other within the institutional space. In terms of its alignment with the processes of building critical consciousness, this position would be considered acritical as it merely describes portions of the experience in ways that deny context.

Pedagogical techniques that actively model how to create new relationships between societal representations, personal commitments, and the realities of both context and agency may provide the support that is necessary for individuals and classrooms to deconstruct this position. While this intensive work is a tall order for most courses, it may be structured in a course that extends over a longer period of time than a semester. A less time-intensive strategy may include aligning the service learning opportunity with the critical and feminist conception of situated knowledges. Deep work with situated knowledges may encourage students to provocatively seek opportunities to teach and learn with everyone along their path between and within institutions. Assignments may be tailored to engage service learners in describing their actions, critically reflecting on what they articulated, and routinely revising what these actions mean to them and the people they work with. For example, service learners might address how their narrative

constructions of service have the capacity to interact with each level of social context – from societal to intrapersonal – even towards fulfilling the service learner’s personal commitments to social justice.

**Witnessing to Advocate.** The position of the mentor as a witness prefigures the ways that service learners can bring back their experiences, advocate, and engender community around the issues that they were made aware of across the course. The texts in this section mostly worked around intuited critiques of the facility as an institutional space, yet stopped short of turning these critiques into analyses and points of advocacy - in part, because of the distance provided by being an outsider who was only temporarily institutionalized. The institutional divide between the university and the facility in these cases was present in ways that allowed participants to compare the resources afforded to the girls, and also to shelter them from feeling as if they were reeling within the facility. The participants seemed to use this divide to protect themselves from personally being encumbered by critiques about resources, violence, and disrespect.

As a shelter, this divide served an important function that may be extended more firmly into the classroom as service learners imagine that their dissociation from the facility is neither assured nor effective in reckoning with their burgeoning critiques. The positioning of the university as a shelter may enable greater and deeper critiques in reflections that invite service learners to imagine how they are institutionalized within the facility. A potential transformation of this experience may also include a project involving advocacy – the crafting of a speech, a testimony, a collaboration with a community organization. As with the former position of the

mentor as a role model, the role of a witness may be troubled by the service learners' articulation and self-critique of their location as well as their potential impact as another way to transition their experience from the facility and back into the university and beyond.

**Counseling to Politicize.** The positioning of the mentor as a future professional bridges the role of the mentor in this engagement to service learning literature that focuses on the sorts of social action and professional aspiration that such opportunities help to found. The narratives in this section contained an array of placements that may reflect the professional personas of participants who variously engaged in mutually supporting relationships or positioned those at the service learning site as clients. These narratives alternately constructed and blurred boundaries between the self and the other and were paralleled by the embodied and relational experience of criticality along with a stated commitment to social justice. Thus, these positions may speak to personal styles of relating to others through which social justice may equally flow.

As for the pedagogical structure that might support such service learning positions, formalized training in distinguishing boundaries from connection and rapport as well as content that politicizes relational approaches in the counseling field may be offered. Additionally, service learners may complete individual assignments that engage them in researching the historical underpinnings and implications of various counseling stances. This work may include assignments that help students to outline the values that underlie their relational approaches to participating in exchanges with the people they are seeking to help. For this position, more than others, the role of help and care may be explored explicitly in ways that call the service learners to trace how help can and should include the agency of others. With social justice as a guiding

framework, such pedagogical supports should also include multicultural and critical content to prepare service learners to engage others in attaining, negotiating, and circumventing the institutions and individuals that comprise circuits of dispossession and privilege.

**Expanding to Become.** The positioning of mentors to provide expanded opportunities within the facility surfaced questions about the impact of the mentor on those within the facility. As a mirror-image of a mentor with the potential to greatly impact the mentees, the mentor who questions impact may be seen as embodying a similar degree of insecurity in their role and an insistence on providing proof of a relational impact when the ‘evidence’ may be more ephemeral. These positions may also share the reliance on a sort of momentary individualism that facilitates the narration of the self in its transformation (Adler & McAdams, 2007; McAdams, 2006). The faint appearance of the mentors within the girls’ lives and at the facility is contrasted with the intermittent presence narrated across the other mentor positions. As such, these narratives lie closer to engaging critical relationships given the mentor’s capacity to change and ‘be with’ the girls in the future.

With the exception of helping service learners articulate the meaning of their positions and to critically reflect on them, no additional pedagogical strategies emerge as necessary to support these students. A bit of uncertainty is expected in new situations and as people stretch in different directions and any artificial comfort might detract from their process of becoming.

### **Conclusion**

Each narrative position holds advantages and disadvantages that are useful when put into critical conversation with another. Working within and between the institutions of the university

and the facility, these positions represent patterns of thought, affect, and action that are available within the service learning classroom to push the limits of critical consciousness and relationships there and beyond. In identifying and implementing pedagogical strategies to support the development of these positions ever towards a liberatory level of consciousness and its enactments, these positions highlight the potential for service learners to let education help them “[grow] back the capacity to join a community, engage with a community, give back, and trust” (Fine et al., 2004, p. 102). Beyond the limitations of social group membership and life history, the superordinate identity of being a student provides individuals the ability to negotiate in-between spaces – between institutions, people, and positions - where service learners can complicate their actual identities and practice their ideal selves. With additional pedagogical support, the service learner positions discussed in this chapter may be evolved towards more critical positions. These positions also bear the potential for the parallel evolution of the person and her classroom community where the alchemy of transformation lies in the capacity to collectively challenge identities and perspectives with critical reflection.

### **Interchapter: A mentor**

**A mentor.** For the entire time that I taught this course I had the enthusiastic, grounded and practical, as well as spiritual support of my dear teacher and friend Annette. She taught me, at every turn, to go deeper into my personal truth and be braver in expressing it to other people – in voice, integrity, art, and action. This sort of openness, disclosure-to-dialogue, and vulnerability is part of my way of being normally so to go deeper was the most logical thing to do – although it scared me. I spoke to her in planning the semester, before every class, and after almost every class during the weekly times we set aside for me to apprentice in her art practice.

**A daydream.** One thing notably remained unsaid between us about the course. It was my grand vision of some sort of quasi-performance or demonstration of opening during class. In my daydream there would be music that I would dance to. As I danced, turning in circles layer upon layer upon layer of my costume would unravel and whirl away. This would mostly be a silent illustration of what I wanted to do as a teacher and what I hoped my students would learn to do: strip themselves down – deconstruct themselves from what meets the eye to some deeper human truth of who they were becoming. Dancing for the joy of twirling and the joy of the feeling of the fabrics we shroud ourselves; for the joy of layers coming, one-by-one, off. And in my daydream, I'd go from long robes to faux animal fur, to a simple flannel garb, to white linen unraveling still into gauze in bright red new blood colors and brown dried blood patches, down to an illusion of near nudity less the scabs that held together old experiences and the promise of new selves.



Certainly, all of this was inspired by my yet new and tenuous experience of my own life – growing more solid and whole with equal speed as it was deconstructing.

I wanted to dance, old outside layers off, stripping down to the truth of myself. This daydream seemed to be about more than the sake of performance or my quiet exhibitionism, but for the joy of being liberated from myself, from my thoughts, from my habitual ways of being. I didn't want to do it alone though. And I didn't want to do it with an audience, but rather to do it with people who had already, were in the process of or about to do the same thing.

I never danced that dance. But, I hope that I did that in class sometimes for the joy of letting go of those layers, and also for the joy of finding oneself at the edge of a difficult experience, not only standing, but *dancing* in one's new skin.

**Experimental.** What I wanted to do in class was co-create a community to be in with presence, missteps, competencies, reflection, difficulty, fear, and play. In teaching, this class and others, I've always had a social justice/equality underlay to the course. As each semester goes on and things get tense as we discuss difficult topics, I will say to my students at least once that *a classroom is a gift because there is no other space I can imagine where we can grapple with issues of justice and practice new ways of being. If we can come to terms with ourselves and others in a classroom across social groups, myths, and personalities – we can imagine and make peace, justice, equality, and the end of war.* I didn't continue speaking about it in class, but I always believed that if we really did that in many classrooms that something would shift (eventually and with other means of making justice), and in the practices that circulate among groups of highly-resourced people who negotiate the terms of law, sentencing, surveillance,

education, growing poverty, and localizing wealth just outside the classroom would be altered – even ever so slightly. I still believe that.

For me being in class is experimental, it is home and community and I have deeply loved every student I have come into contact with. This is not to say I have liked or appreciated everyone, or anyone at all times. I had moments of disappointment, anger-to-rage, and dismay. I've had deep sadness in and around the edges of the hours we spent in class.

Through the example of that love and working through difficulty I am forever changed. People showed up, for the most part. I'm forever changed because people trusted me enough to take my 'invitations' into exercises, to close their eyes in class, to breathe, to paint, to do fishbowl discussions, to lead them into the facility with its chaotic waters that always felt new. And I trusted myself, clearly deep down somewhere - regardless of my real and founded fears about the facility and some of the things residents experienced while there, and more unfounded fears of some rageful class mutiny. I take the generosity of trust and suspicion that I and my students had (and hell, the residents and the facility staff, too) seriously. I take it very seriously as the stakes in my own personal growth. Stakes, not as in what I have to lose or gain, but stakes as in what you put down next to a weak plant to make sure it grows always upward.

**Inside.** The first time I went to the facility with a class was like no other. It was my first time being the instructor and I squirm to say authority figure charged with leading the class. As with other first days Janice Loo, a volunteer coordinator at the facility, lead us through the locked doors into the cafeteria that seemed to have too much metal and too much pink for what were 6 square tables with rounded edges, each with four chairs – everything bolted to the ground.

An enclosed Plexiglas space called the control room was at the back of the cafeteria. Two doors on either side of the cafeteria and the twinned control room led to Unit A for the adjusted girls who had been at the facility a while, and Unit B for the newer girls who were usually more (loud, boisterous, upfront, funny – more of everything). Janice lead us through what felt like hours of paperwork, brochures, the contraband list and a preface for the girls – which was always this strange mix of you can't trust them because they'll manipulate you and they're really lovely. Then we were escorted to Unit B where all of the girls were assembled. We moved all of the couches and tables and plastic chairs into the best circle that we could and went around the circle with introductions and the name of our favorite musical group.

I was allowed to keep my cell phone on the unit so Annette and Anthony - a vetted healer, artist, and musician couple - could call me when they arrived. They called and I asked someone to open the Unit-Cafeteria door, the Cafeteria-Lobby Door, and the front door and when outside to help them bring in the drums. After signing in and going through the doors to the unit, I introduced them and they both said a few words, the girls were handed drums and we all started playing and shaking (the week before, I spent time with the class making shakers and rain sticks out of paper, pins, toilet paper and paper towel rolls, and rice - since there were maybe eight drums and twenty girls and twenty students).

Soon after we began, the girls from the pregnancy unit came in and as they entered one girl got up to play with one of the babies. Another girl brought her baby into the circle close enough for me to see the baby's foot resting on a djembe and as soon as I saw the little foot on the drum I thought: this is what it's about! For the next 30 minutes or so folks fell in and out of

playing, the Science teacher came in and upon encouragement by the girls danced a bit for them, with them. And before I knew it we were leaving. At the front desk there were many thanks from the receptionists who were clearly excited to have heard the music vibing through all that metal and concrete and Plexiglas.

**Outside?** On the ride home, my teacher asked which folks were my students and which were the residents because when she *looked* at them they looked the same. I giggled a bit knowing that on the surface, through ordinary eyes: the girls were mostly Black, they were in blue striped shirts and blue sweats, and sandals while the students were a patchwork of shades, mostly-White, and wore whatever they had chosen. But, yet they *looked* the same. And in her turn of phrase was the truth, beauty, and sometimes tragedy that is the imaginary that argues there is some prefigured difference between us that our bodies and roles know and tell.

When I got home, I was alone and shaking and sobbing next to the cat box on my kitchen floor. I just wept and prayed. I wept and I prayed because I had never seen what I call the ‘invisible architecture of the universe’ to mean the way humanity really works underneath the fine detail of material things and social positions – which are vitally important for teaching ourselves and others something more enduring. I believed in love, beauty, the highest – with a deeply felt sense of what I had come to understand as belief that we are all just clothed or costumed and cast as characters with no other reason to come together and try to fit pieces of some mystery together ... to help us remember bits of ourselves that we have forgotten. I wept.

#### **Chapter 4: Forging Solidarity and Separateness**

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up. --Martin Niemöller

If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you in the night. -- Angela Davis

Moving from the consideration of the figured world from which participants drew positions for the mentor, the following work focuses on the relationships between mentors and mentees. The leading quotes were earmarked to set the meaning and scope of solidarity. Solidarity is defined as a sort of interdependence, a sense of shared-fatedness that relies on affective sensibilities between people (Subasic, Reynolds, & Turner, 2008; Subasic, Schmitt, & Reynolds, 2011). The potential for inside-outside solidarities acknowledges both the fleeting and highly-fortified structures and institutions that deal inequality. This context seems to require a representational, relational, and discursive balancing act along the indices of sameness and difference. The indices of sameness and difference are necessary and hold their own interdependence between them as frameworks that are negotiated to grow the capacity for critical and equitable relationships in service learning.

Macpherson and Fine's (1995) work on building a space for solidarity addressed the construction of an 'us' and 'we' as collectivities that cross the boundaries that demarcated women, researchers, private and public voices. The implicit theory of solidarity that emerges in their work indicates what it is like to 'do' and discursively construct solidarity as they wrote

about privilege as the power to narrate, edit, interpret, analyze, reframe, and to infuse with critical knowledge. This power was used to open up a more public, generative conversation between young people and adults, women, schools, and neighborhoods within and across race and class. The reflexive construction of their work examined the social processes of solidarity and positioned it as a discursive and relational practice across boundaries. The role of discourses of sameness and difference that were identified across this work indicated some of the ways in which the subjectivities and external contexts that construct social life are opened and closed for examination and deconstruction.

This chapter uses the potential held by discourses of sameness and difference to define, examine, and deconstruct the elements of solidarity in mentoring relationships. Like the women in Macpherson and Fine's (1995) work, the participants in this study describe relationships bound and separated by social differences in race, class, and more rarely gender from the position of the privilege that being an outsider in a juvenile facility provides. As such, their narratives hold the twinned privilege of being able to speak to themselves and others given their experiences with 'juvenile delinquents' who looked, felt, and acted just like people. These narratives inhabit an us/we that is constantly shifting as the participants themselves shift through discourses of sameness and difference to describe the negotiation of forming a relationship with another: relationships with the capacity to contrast and confirm representations of themselves, the girls, and the society that holds them both.

This chapter, first, broadly situates the mentoring course within intergroup relations literature to address the ways that it informs the highly contextualized and particularistic

constructions of sameness and differences as extended social processes between people. Then the work discusses micro-processes of connection by addressing two related questions: (1) How do discourses of sameness and difference open up and inhibit the possibility for how solidarities are done?; and (2) What are the implications for these forms of solidarities as processes and outcomes? The methods that were applied to answer these questions will follow along with the primary ways of building a sense of solidarity that emerged from the analysis. This chapter ends with suggestions for explicitly integrating these discourses, the intergroup themes of empathy and self-relevance, and the intersectional theorization about forging solidarity in order to increase the critical potential of student experiences and classroom communities.

### **Making a Space for ‘Us’ in Intergroup Relations Literature**

Classical social psychological work about the minimal group paradigm, social identity theory, superordinate grouping, and intergroup contact has largely been aimed at dismantling intergroup conflict. While these theories address cooperation, they leave the interrelatedness that produces solidarity largely untouched. However, recent work that is founded on these theories lays the groundwork for solidarity by suggesting ways that a sense of common humanity emerges when individuals experience self-relevant thoughts and feelings in relation to others. The findings of experimental work addresses the need to collapse social difference, and the distance it creates, in order to unhinge individuals from using stereotypic knowledge in proscribed and evaluative settings (Austers, 2002; Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). As these phenomena become contextualized by the formation of relationship and community, however, the limitations of the mere disappearance of difference show. Even though

ideas about intergroup cooperation and evaluation emerge from different social goals and ends, they hold the psychic relationship between self-other and sameness-difference as crucial switchbacks that individuals must travel to get to a sense of equality. These themes indicate the necessity of bridging the self and the other and, thus, begin to shape the understanding of the various ways to forge solidarity in service learning courses where differences seem vast and conspicuous.

As a socially-relevant and individual process, empathy and perspective taking have emerged as ways to engender a sense of common humanity between people separated by the social distance of race, class, culture, and incarceration. Empathy, for example, has been shown to decrease the social distance through which stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination operate (Austers, 2002; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003). The expansive effects of empathy have been positioned as engendering people with a sensitivity that helps to decrease intergroup conflict, to increase intergroup cooperation, to acknowledge racial inequality, to promote advocacy, and to mitigate harsh and stereotype-consistent conceptions, feelings, and behaviors (Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Johnson et al., 2002; King, 2002; Kunda et al., 2002; Todd et al., 2011). The importance of this work is in its suggestion that empathy works because individuals imagine themselves in the place of others. This perspective shift invokes the situational attributions that individuals regard themselves with and thereby extend the consideration of social contexts, biographical elements, and immediate social contexts to others. Thus, where these effects have emerged they indicate the psychic diffusion of the boundaries of the self so that it can incorporate and enjoin with dissimilar others.



These findings address the intimacy of using the self as a vehicle to move towards the other in ways that first recognize and then somewhat disappear difference into the shadow of a larger sense of self. With their empirical aim of addressing appraisals rather than relationships, these concepts may provide valuable insights for the foundations on which relationships may be built.

In the few spaces where such literature intersects with solidarity, the capacity for intergroup solidarities emerges from the salience of the sameness and differences that is represented in intersectional identities. Greenwood's (2008) study, for example, blended gender and culture to assess the grounds for solidarity between White and Muslim women around hijab and covering practices. The findings of this study suggested that an intersectional consciousness (e.g. salience of gender and race) engendered sensitivity and feelings of similarity between the women in ways that led White women to advocate for a Muslim woman's right to cover.

While this work is largely bound in experimental approaches, the value of the negotiation of the self and other through self-relevance is inflected in work that is similarly contextualized by intersectional identity, and is also extended in social interactions. Yuval-Davis (1999; 2010; 2012), for example, writes about processes of solidarity between women as involving rooting and shifting. Here, rooting is an expression of being grounded in one's own situated perspective, while shifting is the capacity to shift to the perspective of another. This two-step process creates solidarities that rely on difference and then sameness, rather than a blind merging.

Macpherson and Fine (1995) detail such intersectional social processes in addressing the construction of a group they formed among women and adolescent girls. This group bridged generations, race, class, and conceptions of feminism. In describing the discursive processes of

connection and individuation, these authors indicated that the collectivity largely relied on sameness as a discourse in ways that erased difference in order to create the sense of a unified group. In this study, difference emerged but was couched in the larger context of the girls' different social and personal circumstances and was discursively silenced, or ambivalently dabbled in. The process by which the group coalesced and split again, constructing multiplicities of feminisms, indicates transitions between discourses of sameness and difference that provide living shapes for intergroup relations work and solidarity.

The unfolding of the concepts of empathy and self-relevance, discourses of sameness-difference, and self and other transition from experimental to contextualized inquiries and thus provide touch-points for understanding the negotiations inherent in travelling across social distance towards intimacy and a sense of solidarity. By using the tensions inherent in the need to establish a sense of common humanity while acknowledging the realities of social difference, the remainder of the chapter will address the discourses that emerged in narratives about a service learning course that relate to the potential for a sense of solidarity. Keeping the tensions between common humanity and social difference intact, the critical values implied by these ways of forging solidarity will also be considered in an attempt to enrich the contextualization of intergroup relations and service learning literature.

### **Method**

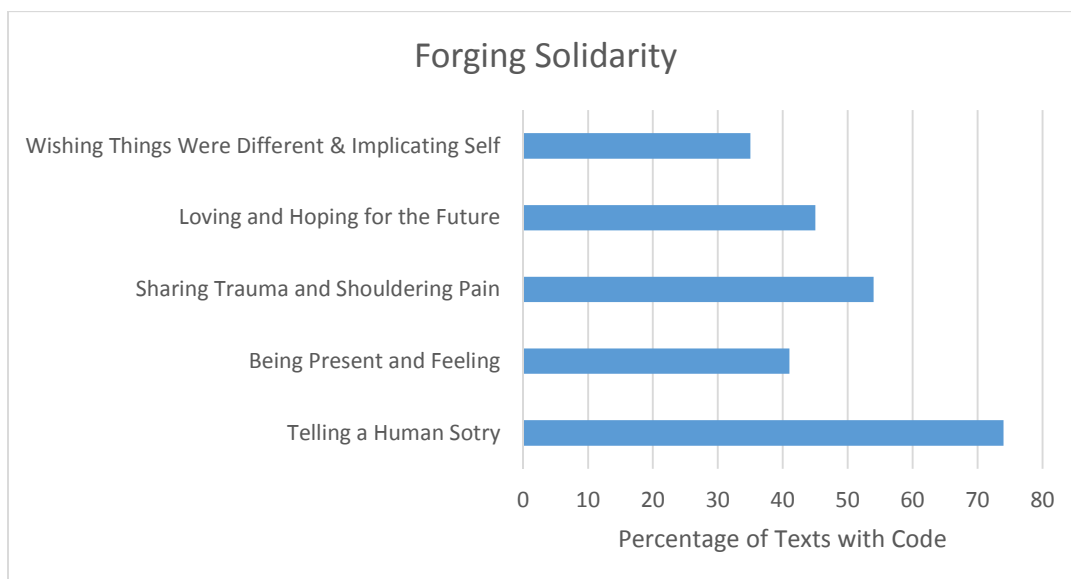
As solidarity can take the form of affective, relational, and socio-political connections this analysis draws from intergroup relations literature that addresses the role of socially-relevant emotions as means through which cognitively-based stereotypes and prejudice can be countered

(Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Kunda et al., 2002; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003).

In order to surface how the relationship between self and other operated through discourses of sameness and difference, the researcher coded for language that suggested shared emotionality, togetherness and a sense of unity, in addition to the narration of relational turns (e.g. feeling closer, disclosure, helping behaviors). In the next phase of coding, the researcher analyzed these texts for the moments in the course that they described, the extent to which they explicitly communicated interdependence, and the acknowledgement of social dis/similarities. The researcher also examined these data for the ways that the participants positioned themselves and others in the construction of the passage.

The data that were coded came from three types of items across the study, including participant responses to: (1) the three items about their memorable experiences in the beginning, middle, and end of the course (e.g. What was one memorable moment towards the beginning of the semester? What were some of the things that you were thinking? What were some of the things that you were feeling?); and, (2) two almost identical items about moments of strong emotional impact were also coded (e.g. Describe one moment that had a strong emotional impact on you). Additionally, participant responses to the item about what most people should know about the girls but don't were coded, as some of them were applicable to the inquiry.

Five themes emerged from this analysis as discourses that work within the larger framework of sameness and difference, as shown by Figure 5: Forging Solidarity across Texts.



*Figure 5: Forging Solidarity Across Texts*

The content and construction of excerpts that exemplify each discourse will be discussed in terms of the types of solidarity that they bear. As strategies of interconnectedness, these relational aspects appear separately and together across individual participant texts.

## Findings

### Identifying and Telling a Human Story

The inside-outside nature of this service learning course made curious allies of the mentors. As college students and outsiders, the service learners were given a rare glimpse into a setting of incarceration. From this perspective, the construction of the mentees may be read as explicit statements about the girls that to varying degrees implicate the mentors, their perceptions, and the society that is their audience. The blended audience of self, other, and ‘society’ facilitated a discursive sort of solidarity that positioned the girls as “normal” in order to

weave a narrative of common humanity around them. The normalcy of the girls that many participants indicated provides the sense that the girls seemed closer to the participants, more relatable, and less stereotypic than participants could be imagined from the outside. By way of its social function this discourse, much like that of sameness, does the social and political work of making others worthy of the sorts of regard and interactions that people would expect for themselves.

Finding and telling a human story was the most widely used discourse, which surfaced in seventy-four percent (n=23) of the participant texts, and mostly emerged in response to the item: “What do most people not know about the girls that they should?” The construction of this response included messages about the girls’ humanity that seemingly argue that the girls are deserving of better contexts than those they met within the facility. As a method of solidarity building, these discourses also drew in messages that the girls were loving and lovable, that the girls needed social support, and that the girls wanted an opportunity to make mistakes and amends.

The first example in this section uses the trope of common humanity to suggest the girls’ inherent worth. This text opens with the argument that people’s solidarity with the girls should be assured because they are like everyone else. This participant appeals to the readers as fellow people who are as foibled and embodied as the girls in the facility:

“Most people should know that these girls are people and should be treated as so they have made mistakes just like we all have. They still have blood that runs through their veins and a heart that is capable of more than you can imagine until you have interacted with them.”

Foremost, the participant acknowledges that the girls in the facility have made mistakes, and she suggests that mistakes should not necessarily result in their incarceration. The thread of humanity continues with references to the visceral body as a commonality between the participant, her mentee, and the readers. The participant then moves from embodiment to the girls' love and uses her insider knowledge about the girls to engage the reader in imagining the girls as undeniably good. The participant emphasizes the girls' goodness with phrasing that suggests that one does not need to do anything more extraordinary than interact with them to know or feel it. As the refrain of common humanity, the use of the word 'still' indicates that mistakes should not obscure goodness – suggesting that representations of the girls as other than fully human alongside their actual physical isolation is unwarranted, and perhaps hypocritical.

In extending the theme about the goodness of the girls, another participant humanizes the girls through their capacity to love and be loved. The participant also draws the girls' biographies into a larger discussion of what makes a human being - how this cannot be obscured by mistakes, and how everyone belongs to a network of people. This excerpt is distinguished from the others in this section given the participant's use of herself as a figure in the passage who illustrates what it 'looks' like to let oneself relate to and be transformed by a story of common humanity. This participant begins:

I remember we did an activity in which we wrote our names and then wrote things or people that were important to us or that made us, us. My mentee explained her work to me and she opened up about her life at home. Hearing about her love for her family, especially her mom, grandma and baby cousin made my heart feel warm. This led to her explaining what brought her to the facility since we were told not to ask that question (only if they told us why). This totally changed my view on not only my mentee, but all the girls because it made me think about the people they have home and maybe they got caught up in terrible situations and that they aren't "bad people" like what I thought

originally going into this class. Now as a Mental Health Counselor, I always think back to that day and remember there is always a story behind a person and you have to hear it to understand a person and what they are coming to you (or why you come to them) for. I was thinking where her family was, do they come visit, and do they know that she feels this way about them? When can she go home to them? I felt really good that she opened up to me and trusted me and I felt humbled.

Importantly, this participant opens with a reference to a class activity conducted at the facility where mentors and mentees both participated. The participant then begins a discussion about how people construct the individual – particularly the family unit – which may have been presented by the mentee in a more positive light than the participant expected. This participant references how she disengaged a representation of the girls as ‘bad people’ by getting to know their human story of connection and familial love. Hearing about how much the mentee loved her family, being able to acknowledge that situations outside of the atomized family contributed to the girl’s incarceration, and wondering whether her family knew how much she cared humanized this particular mentee and all of the girls in the facility. The participant suggests that hearing the mentee’s expressions of love entwined them in a past, a history, a positive humanity as a real thing alongside any girl’s trajectory into and out of incarceration. To close, the participant references her role as a mental health counselor and thereby brings the story into the present and her future as a helping professional where she practices finding a human story as a crucial part of understanding every person.

Some narratives in this section drew the theme of common humanity into a critique of the differential social contexts (e.g. societal representations, unequal access to institutions, immediate social sphere) that separate and consolidate social groups. The combined use of common humanity and differential social contexts blends discourses of sameness and difference

in order to construct a statement that argue for the girls' inclusion in society and the dissolution of myths about any individual's context independence. One participant used the human story to allude to the girls' lives on the outside as she opens:

They have the same aspirations as everyone else. The only difference between them and another is the fact that they were put in situations that they were not able to withstand or did not have the support that they needed. They want self-worth but look for it in all the wrong places. They want love and life just as we all do.

As read, the pacing and tone of the text are polemic with the insistence on beginning sentences with the word "they." In these statements the participant contrasts the position of the girls with other invisible and unnamed people who are distant at first, but end in the solidarity of "we". Across the flow of the passage there is "they" and "everyone else," "they" and "another," "they" and "support," "they alone," and "they" and "we." The things that lie between the people in each phrase illustrate the evolution from being someone like everyone else, like another, to being like "we" are. The distance that is created, eclipsed, and surged may be indicative of the participant holding the border between the inside-outside, standing on the hyphen and bridging audiences.

Turning to the last example in this section, the participant places the girls within a wider ecological scope to contextualize their lives. She blends an ecological critique that interjects difference with the discourse of sameness, and thereby leverages the discourses in order to advocate on behalf of the girls.

They are normal young girls! They have the same needs of any average teenager. They are smart, funny, curious, and resourceful. There needs to be more time spent working on the girls' personal issues as well as providing supportive counseling. The girls should be given the opportunity to act like average teenagers and be treated less like prisoners. The girls should be informed that most of the courses they take while attending school at e



facility will not transfer back to their high schools. The girls should be informed of GED processes. There should be more of an effort to decrease recidivism. The staff needs to be better trained and understand their boundaries.

The participant prefaces her statements by suggesting that the girls are “normal” and positioning them as individuals with positive characteristics who should be treated like teenagers who have needs that can and should be addressed in counseling rather than incarceration. The participant also references education as something that links the girls to the world outside in a critique of the politics of educational status that ran between the state and the city, which invalidated the transferability of school credits earned within the facility. The participant advocates for the girls’ opportunity to take the GED, and for them to know the truth about the educational paths that are in front of them so they can presumably engage their agency. The last sentence grounds the analysis back in the facility in a critique of the dynamics between the staff and the girls. Here, the participant indicates that the dynamics between the adolescents and adults in the facility could be transformed by training. Thus, the critique envelops the community at the facility in an insular, traumatic circuit as if the lack of impulse control, care, and respect that people characterize the girls by was embodied by the staff. The transitional turns through the girls’ personal, institutional, and interpersonal context creates a wraparound critique of girls’ incarceration as one that is undue given their humanity. This participant’s critique spans the circuits of dispossession that imprison the girls’ in their prior lives and future paths and, at the same time, it relays the unfair distribution of educational and personnel resources within the facility.

Across these three examples the surface simplicity and underlying complexity of the discourse of finding and telling a human story work to appeal to the thoughts, feelings, and viscera of the audience, and also to formulate a critique of the facility and a society that makes facilities for 'normal' girls the best possible option. Aside these critiques, however, is the lack of a structural analysis which obscures the purpose of representations position the girls as conspicuous and undeserving of freedom, access, and care on the outside. In this way, this discourse obscures racial and classed explanations about why these normal and lovable girls are incarcerated.

### **Being Present and Feeling**

Moving into the relational aspects of how solidarity is forged, two moments from mentors' experiences can be read as demonstrating the power of being present and feeling. Here 'showing up' and acknowledging the feelings of oneself and others represents an affective and relational quality of "we" inside and out of the facility. It is important to stress that 'showing up' was a value promoted within the course in terms of following through with commitments to the girls and being authentic in and across sites. Thus, the forty-one percent (n=13) of participant texts where this code emerged included ordinary moments of being with the girls: playing games or waiting in the lobby to see them. These texts also include special moments or milestones across the course including relational turns, classroom activities, the end of semester celebration, and some mentors' attendance at Family Day within the facility. In such texts, the participants are not only utterly and simply present, but they also reported a contagion of emotion that they exchanged with the girls.

The first example in this section describes a relational turn where the mentor was present for one of her mentee's milestones. In addressing her experience within the facility, this participant outlined her presence as a physically grounded and emotionally-supportive act of solidarity. In this experience the participant narrates going to the facility to provide her mentee with emotional support as she took her GED exam:

When my mentee was scheduled for the GED I was hoping and thinking of how long she had prepared, how nervous she was and how hopeful we both had become of her ability to pass...For the day of my mentees scheduled GED exam I remember feeling excited and nervous for her. I was able to meet with my mentee during a short break between parts of the exam and remember asking her about how she was handling the exam thus far my mentee had similar mixed feelings of excitement and nerves. I remember reminding her of how hopeful we had become and now the time was here to see what would happen after the end of the exam.

Here, the mentor's presence enabled her to enact a ritual of refueling with her mentee whereby she stayed present and consistent while her mentee left and resurfaced during the test for encouragement. Aside from the simple weight of the mentor's presence, the shared emotionality that the participant draws upon moves from the moment of the test to what the two of them thought and felt before the exam and what would happen after. The openness of seeing "what would happen after the end of the exam" is a curious alternative to being explicit about whether or not the mentee would pass or fail. The openness around the outcome may indicate that the participant felt that she would be supportive of the mentee regardless of the outcome to the extent that she resisted directly naming either. Throughout this passage the hope, openness, and the use of time provides for a sense of enduring as integral to solidarity.

Shifting from the facility to the university, the second example is one of two in this group of narratives that refers to presence within the classroom community. The participant in

this text narrates a moment of presence and shared emotionality that emerged from an experience of participating in a class discussion where students were invited to reflect on their adolescence.

The participant begins:

During one of our class sessions we had a discussion about our factors that shaped our life. I remember being in class and everyone telling these story's that were so personal and really inspiring. We had a veteran in our class and hearing his story was so emotional. There was another girl who went into detail about her coming out to her parents. It really made me examine my life and go deep within. It made our class so close and it really felt like a safe space where you can tell your stories and feel secure. I was thinking this is a really cool class to be a part of, I was never in a class where you can express yourself openly. Well at one point during the class, I was trying to keep myself from crying. It was really highly uplifting and refreshing to be a part of.

This narrative illustrates the participant's ability to sustain the emotions that surfaced as class members spoke of their life experiences. The recollection of the histories of two classmates, in particular, indicates that they still occupy an active place in her memory. Importantly, the practice of presence and feeling with others seemed to afford the participant an unexpected sense of self-reflection, which in turn seemed to deepen her capacity to be present with her own experience. Through the construction of the text, the participant also conveys that the culture of the classroom community made the space for others experiences as well as her own feelings of being touched, which she let flow back into the class as a moment that was "highly uplifting and refreshing to be a part of." The circular flow of experience, presence, reflection, and feeling may indicate the potential that showing up can contribute to solidarity within oneself and a group.

Being present and feeling helps to achieve a sort of solidarity that is affective and relational. These two excerpts exemplified the sorts of presence across the inside-outside boundary that separated the facility and the classroom. In these moments, the participants

expressed their experience of showing up to form a supportive community with their mentees and classmates. In doing so, these narratives challenge what is normal and customary in correctional and educational contexts as a statement of the unique opportunities that the course allowed. The array of emotions in these moments act as a relational currency that represents one's ability to be touched as a method creating a new space to be with another, standing by while they do their work. The shared emotions that circulated in this space included anxiety and excitement as well as sadness and reflection, depending on the moment, and as such indicated the alignment of this discourse with sameness given the lack of explicit recognition about the different interests, experiences, and stakes of each situation.

### **Sharing Trauma and Shouldering Pain**

Mentoring relationships and friendships on the outside can initially develop largely without facing the trauma and pain that either party has experienced in their lives. However, the site of girls' incarceration, and the context of a psychology course where trauma in adolescence is a curricular theme, encouraged past experiences to surface in the facility and in the classroom. Throughout the discussions of trauma that the participants in the present study engaged, the solidarity of having shared trauma surfaces almost as easily as the differences between the circumstances that shaped the mentors' and mentees' lives. The discourse of sharing trauma and shouldering pain emerged in fifty-four percent (n=17) of the participants texts as they discussed the disclosure of trauma, moments of classroom discussion and exercises, as well as shared biographical contexts and emotionality.

Across the examples that lead this section are variations of the discourse of finding and telling a human story, which primarily operate on a discourse of sameness. As most of these texts surfaced where participants described a moment of strong emotional impact, sharing trauma and shouldering another's pain may afford the capacity to form affective, relational, and socio-political solidarity. By first discussing the shared and then the vicarious nature of trauma, this section begins to outline how trauma became a currency within dyads and within the classroom community in ways that increasingly drew out a discourse of difference.

The first text in this section describes a class activity that is referenced multiple times across the data. The class exercise "Someone I Love" was designed by Reverend Dr. Kathleen Cumiskey to increase interpersonal sensitivity as the course (on the inside and outside) veered into heated discussions where people might speak without considering how what they say describes someone who is loved by a class member or girl. Here, the participant indicates that the activity highlighted a sense of solidarity with others. She begins:

One moment that had a strong emotional impact for me was when we did the somebody I love exercise. It really illustrated that we aren't so different, and we all have some baggage. Many of us affected by the same issues. That although from different cultural and economic backgrounds we are still similar, we all make mistakes, we all have loved ones, we have all had some sort of pains in our life. I felt sad hearing some of the statements, and sorry when my mentee started to cry and needed to excuse herself.

As this participant recalls her experience she describes the impact of hearing about the people who others loved as unifying. She indicates a sense of 'we' in which the group that was related by challenging life events that could be traced to the "the same issues," despite the cultural and classed differences among the group. While the participant is clear that she was saddened by hearing of other people's pain, the extent to which the sadness was merely

heightened by the distributed nature of common trauma, or whether the sadness was predominantly based in a sympathy that did not implicate the participant is unclear.

The second example in this section is based on an exchange that occurred between a group of mentors and mentees. This excerpt provides some indication that shared pain makes a sense of sorrow stronger, or easier to articulate than that which does not implicate the self. In recounting her experience of having a mentee disclose her self-mutilation to a small group of mentors and mentees, one participant wrote:

When one of the girls shared with us her experience of self-mutilation and showed us her arms. I again, felt devastated and terrible for her; not only for that, but for what in the world could lead her to doing that. I also thought about how I used to do the same thing when I felt unbearable pain. I felt connected to her. I felt connected to everyone in that room for sharing in the listening process. I felt sad that some of us hadn't learned better ways to cope with our pain. I also (again) felt inspired to keep my focus on my studies so that I could be someone to help people in these types of situations.

Here, the construction of the text indicates what one version of solidarity looks like. The participant's thoughts about the mentee as well as her growing sense of sadness and devastation pauses at her imagination of what the root of her mentee's pain could be. Then, the participant disclosed her own history of self-mutilation. At this point in her text, the participant's sadness seems to shift as she was implicated as a person who did not always know a better way to "cope with our pain." By way of transmuting the feeling, the participant suggests that the sadness is an inspiration that she will use to learn how to help other people. With this future orientation there is more inspiration than sadness and the blended temporality gives way to the discursive blending of her old self, her mentee, the people she may help, and all the people in the room. In effect, the narrative creates a solidarity of people who are "sharing in the listening process." The

participant's acknowledgement of a sense of connection to others through their listening is instructive in that it weaves back into being present and feeling as a strategy for engendering solidarity in addition to sharing trauma to distribute its affective impact.

As the relational moments rooted in trauma shift from sharing trauma to shouldering the pain of others, the expanded range and targets of emotion that are narrated in the next example provide insight to the affective capacities of the other side of 'we.' On the side where solidarity is woven through shared trauma, sadness seems to resonate deeply within memory, affect, and the projection of the future. This sadness may be distributed or shared with others. On the side where the self is not directly implicated in the trauma, and can stay in the moment of witnessing, there appears to be greater access to anger, empathy, and blame in addition to sadness. One participant recalls:

When my mentee told me some of the horror stories about the way her mother treated her and her siblings. I can't imagine having a mother who did not have my best interest at heart and didn't put my welfare before her own. I also found myself blaming her mother for the problems she is now having. Sadness, anger, empathy.

Upon hearing about the mentee's "horror stories" with her mother, the participant mixes the colloquial phrasing "I can't imagine" with a statement about her own family. She thereby uses her experience as a reference point for difference. This discourse of difference allowed the participant a position from which she could blame the mother of the mentee. The combination of thoughts and feelings evoked through the participant's soft refusal to imagine an unloving and abusive mother, the sacrifice of her own mother, and blaming the mentee's mother seemed to provide the fuel for anger, empathy, and sadness.



Together, the narratives in this section suggest that the space between the content of mentor experiences and mentee disclosures provides a more expansive affective field that can be used as fuel. This fuel can be used to examine, question, and/or address injustices in structure and inter-subjectivity. The doing of solidarity here relies on a discourse of difference in which participants can listen as outsiders, use their choice to refuse to visit another's trauma, firmly position the boundary between self and other and, therefore, access a gamut of emotions.

Sharing trauma and shouldering pain as a way of building solidarity must be contextualized by the nature of this service learning course. Specifically, two immediate aspects of the course contributed to the extent to which trauma became the currency of the relationships in ways that it might not have been in relationships that were on the outside. As 'subjects' of our carceral and classroom gaze, women and girls who are incarcerated have often been exposed to several traumatic incidences which tie their positions as structurally dispossessed to the disproportionate distribution of trauma and support among certain individuals. As instructors and students of psychology, the course uniquely privileged the relationship between trauma and healing. Thus, disclosure of trauma was prefigured by the setting, the explicit discourses of the class, and the nature of relationships that were privileged. The positions of girls, students, and instructors certainly straddled discourses of sameness and difference as they were applicable to trauma. But, difference proved to be a generative space for questioning and destabilizing structure, perhaps because of the range of emotions that people who were without shared trauma could experience and critique with.

## **Loving and Hoping for the Future**

The bureaucratic and institutional sterility that can exist in places like the facility narrows the kinds of activities and objects that people can exchange in ways that may prefigure the economy of love and hope that circulated between mentors and mentees. The section that follows presents a few of the forty-five percent (n=14) of the narratives that indicate the types of solidarities that can be strung together by love and hopes for the future. Each of these passages discusses these aspects to different extents, but the most instructive pivot point between them is whether the agent of the loving action is the mentee or the mentor. Positioning the agent as the point of distinction in these narratives highlights the tensions through which love is given in the context of power differences and the institutional barriers that affirm discourses of difference.

The first narrative describes one participant's ongoing exchange with her mentee during their one-on-one sessions in a way that surfaces their mutual care. The passage indicates the instrumental support that the mentor provided in the handouts that she brought to the facility (e.g. career interests and planning) which the mentee had kept as one of the few 'private' things that girls were allowed. As the participant writes, she explains the gift that the mentee made for her and the intention she put into the moment:

My mentee had shared with me that she began to knit the pillow half way into the semester after she had learned some new ways of thinking from me. She kept the handouts that I had brought her in a journal and read a journal entry to me explaining the pillow. In short my mentee felt that even as she tried to make all sides of the pillow even it was impossible but she tried and was still able to keep everything together even though it would never be perfect. That's what my mentee shared about what she had learned and gained from our semester long relationship. I remember feeling like I wanted to cry from feeling so happy that I was able to impact her during the short time that we were able to interact and interested in the concept of the pillow and its stitches in association to her life.

In this narrative the pillow that the mentee made, it's imperfect yet functional knit stitches, like the imperfect and functional life that she was leading were documented in the mentee's journal. The moments of knitting, the gift in the giving, and the meanings made from the experience of the relationship that they shared provided the relational context through which this interpersonal tenderness was created. The mentor indicates that she was able to teach someone a new way of thinking that perhaps made an imperfect life seem normal. The mentor also indicates that being able to form a connection in a short stretch of time touched her and made her want to cry. However, her inability to let herself cry may be interpreted as a sort of distance from the experience or insistence on the role of being a strong, brave mentor. As she turns to discuss her mentee's perspective, the participant writes: "That's what my mentee shared about what she had learned and gained from our semester long relationship." This turn seems to support the participant's role as a mentor and acts as proof of how true the moment was and to summarize the depth of the brief relationship.

As with many of the texts in this section, the participant in the next example discusses love and hope as reflections about departures – as girls were released from the facility or at the end of the semester. This participant also wrote about a gift that she received from a mentee who she endears with the description "one of our girls."

One moment that had an emotional impact on me was when one of our girls had completed her time and was released. I came into the center after and one of the other girls came up to me and gave me a gift that was left for me by the girl that went home. Attached was a note thanking me for all my help and her sadness of not being able to see me before she left. I have that gift until this day and have remained in contact with her. I was just thinking how small I thought my efforts were but how they had a big impact on someone else. I felt even more empowered to be an active role model.

In this text, the participant writes about being touched by the gift which commemorated the help that she provided. As with most things loving, the mentor cited a number of positive feelings that flowed out of this experience. However, this narrative is unique as a transition point between the past within the facility and a future on the outside which, today, includes both the gift and an ongoing relationship between the mentor and mentee. Importantly, the mentor refers to what she contributed to the relationship as emerging from a small effort that enabled her to “be an active role model,” a position that is imbued with a sense of care, hope for the future, and the contemporary present where the two still interact.

Discourses about acts of love and hopes for the future are most evenly blended where the mentor is the agent in the narrative. The blending of the two seems to have less to do with the mentors as people than the timing of the moment, which was often the last day that the class went to the facility together. As an exit point for most mentors, the last celebration marked the ending of the relationship and the departure from the facility in ways that encouraged some mentors to break institutional and class rules (e.g. to give girls objects, ask them for contact information, accept anything large or inappropriate from them). These acts draw in the sameness between the mentor and mentee implied in the relational bond and sorrow at its dissolution. However, the material impact of difference emerges as the dissolution of the relationship marks the experience as being bound by the time, space, and purpose of the course. In the final moments of the course, the institutional rules were maintained but, were somewhat relaxed as mentors were allowed to bring in food that reflected their mentee’s desires or their own hopes of

sharing a piece of themselves. In this passage, one participant recounts the final celebration and her thoughtfulness ahead of the day:

We made or brought in food and we had a big celebration with the girls including music and dancing. I remember the week before I passed paper around and had the girls write down their favorite songs for me to download and make a play list to play during the party. I remember we were all sad that we were leaving and I was really upset and worried that I wouldn't know the outcome of my mentee's fate. I was thinking I will never know what will happen to my mentee- When will she go home? Will she be ok home? Will she end up back in a lock up facility? I was hoping all that we talked about and worked on will help her in her future. Anxious, curious, confident, hopeful, loved, and optimistic.

Across the text, the participant dropped directly from making a playlist for the girls beforehand to the final moment, where she thinks about what it means to cross back over the institutional barrier to the outside for the last time and looks forward to her mentee doing the same. As the participant writes, her text embodies the unknowns of her mentee's life at the facility without her and her life on the outside. Interestingly, within the narrative, the participant joins a non-descript group of mentors or a combination of mentors and mentees whom were all sad. She distinguishes herself from the group as being upset and worried about her mentee's fate. The participant defines fate as what will happen when and if the mentee goes home, whether her mentee's home is safe, and whether her mentee will be incarcerated in the future. With all of the unknown factors the participant cites a number of feelings including anxiety, confidence, curiosity, and love which offset the concerned tenor and tone of her prior questions. Unlike the other narratives, there is a sense of finality. There is no mention of her fate or how she is curious today or whether her mentee made any indication of the lasting impact of their time. Although, the finality seems conspicuous within this small sample, it is likely standard among service

learning relationships where there is no clear desire for or path towards a continued relationship or advocacy. Thus, this passage demonstrates a situational sort of solidarity which diffuses upon the final crossing of the institutional barrier.

The last narrative of this section also describes the last day at the facility. Unlike a solidarity that is relational, social, or political in nature the strategy of solidarity most evident in this passage relates to a dynamic, floating sort of union. The sense of omnipresence is communicated through the construction of the passage including the relative lack of periods and the lower-case “i.” The dynamic placement of the participant across the passage also communicates a sense of the ephemeral, which may be encouraged by the future-orientation of hope.

On our last day of class, there was so much emotion around the room, people that were happy about the times we had with the girls, people that were upset that it was coming to an end, and just getting to be a role model and friend for the girls, i was crying my eyes out, and i just kept telling the girls that they can better themselves and i kept telling them if they ever needed me i would be there for them. i grew very fond of the girls over our short period of time together. i was worried that they would fall back into bad habits, but i was very hopeful that they would better themselves. i was happy, and sad, and in all honesty i was heartbroken to see the class coming to an end, it will always be the one class that sticks out most to me, i one semester my life and my feelings have be altered for the better, and i will always be thankful to Dr. Cumiskey, and the girls for changing my life.

The passage opens with the room as the container of the emotion and moves to suggest that there are two sorts of people within the room – those who were happily reminiscing and those who were sad that the relationships were coming to an end. The participant does not identify herself as either one of these groups of happy or sad, but as both. She was “fond,” “hopeful,” and “heartbroken.” In navigating the temporal, the participant focuses on the endpoint

of the celebration, in the future where she half-hoped that the girls wouldn't recidivate and half-expected that they might. Then she narrated the end of the class as if still present in that moment with "in one semester my life my feelings have been altered for the better." Without more than a brief pause she closes with the suggestion that she will always be grateful for the instructor and the girls for changing her life. Here, the infusion of emotion into the moment reads with a desire to be present with the girls and to impact their lives as a debt that she wants to repay. The notion of an affective, debt along with the participant's hope that the girls will "better themselves," effectively flip the expectations of mentoring by undoing the directionality of care and help. There is confluence of binaries throughout: space-people, happy-sad, group-self, mentors-mentees, present-future, hers-theirs, agentic-passive, reflective-projective, holding on-letting go. These axes convey an invitation into an experience that may have almost been disorienting in its capacity to let people feel cared for, caring, hoped for, and hopeful.

The importance of this passage is in its content, certainly, but mostly in its construction which reads additional meaning into the dynamism between sameness and discourses across sections. The narration makes solidarity a sort of movement between binaries that emerges out of care, love, and hope. These binaries suggest the dynamic, verby nature of solidarity as something that is stalled when one side of the binary or the other is emphasized, and that moves forward in half-standing and half-motion only when the body is used to shift from one side of the hyphen to the other as if each side were a roller skate. This dynamic conception of solidarity is perhaps one of the only sorts that survive institutional contexts because they stay moving, desirously incomplete and as such remain protected, and generative.

Elements of love in the experience and hope for the girls' future emerged as ways of enjoining solidarity. In describing relational moments of connection, the mentors recalled the gifts that their mentees had given them. These moments emerged at the end of the semester or as mentees left the facility. As ending points to the relationship these moments held both love and thoughts about the future. While physical gifts seemed to solidify how memorable these moments were, the importance of affective gifts come across as well. Some form of acknowledgment of the receipt of a gift seems crucial to the forging of solidarity in these narrations. The inability to reciprocally give and receive draws attention to the differences between the mentors and the girls, and the way these differences were institutionally guided and maintained. Here a relationship to the facility is the superordinate bond that draws people together and apart, and suggests how discourses of sameness and difference partially hinged on the institutional boundary. The potential for these solidarities to be undone at the final crossing of the institutional boundary complicates the relationship between critical service learning courses and the extended impact they are meant to have on people. This complication may make connections seem transitory, unreal, or unable to survive outside of the context in which they were cultivated.

### **Wishing Things Were Different and Feeling Implicated**

In what some participants express and leave in silence by way of the types of issues their mentees faced or in their critiques of the social contexts surrounding the girls, some participants communicated in a view of how the world should be different. While some spoke directly to the



incidence of trauma and wanting to take their mentee's anguish or anger away, others also made more widely sweeping statements about the kind of world that would need to be constructed in order that the girls could survive and thrive. More than a simple wish that things could be different in the life of the girls, this section presents narratives where participants implicate themselves in that change. The implication of the self as responsible for helping to construct relationships and institutional supports, in these narratives, took the form of mentors' inter-dependent present and indeterminate future, their felt senses, their questions and critiques, and their positioning of themselves as advocates. The section that follows presents examples of the thirty-five percent (n=11) of the participants texts that communicated a wish that the world was different and the ways in which they offer themselves as containers, vehicles, and agents of that difference as the last emergent strategy for doing solidarity. The narratives presented in this section flow sequentially in time as a way of identifying the points in the experience where a larger scale of change is identified as necessary. As most of these texts emerged in recollections of the middle of the semester the participants may have perceived themselves as beginning to construct the difference that they wished for their mentors during the second half of their course experience.

A small group of participants indicated a sense of responsibility for their participants which emerged as they implicated themselves in the actions and behaviors that their mentee's participated in. These behaviors – some negative and some positive – were described as evolving from their example and presence or a sense of symbiosis that tied the dyad's feelings, thoughts,

and actions together. The first example in this section describes a symbiotic relationship that a participant intuited between herself and her mentee:

Towards the middle of the semester when I got to know my mentee more I felt very connected to her. I remember one time I went in there and saw another girl outside of the unit bleeding and bruised. I immediately had a feeling that she got into a fight with my mentee and it turned out, that was the case. At first I was thinking I may have been doing a bad job with my mentee since she got into a physical altercation. I tried to be the best role model possible while still being authentic and genuine. I later realized that this was most definitely not my fault and these two girls had problems with each other way before I got there. I was feeling sad, worried and helpless.

This participant suggests that she felt connected to her mentee to foreground her entry into the facility on a particular day, and the sense of immediacy and knowing that her mentee was involved as she saw evidence of a fight, and her initial feelings about it. The participant narrates a felt sense of sameness or connection from which she intuited that her mentee was in a fight. She also discusses an initial sense of responsibility in her mentee's fighting. The construction of the narrative expresses a chain of responsibility that the mentor claims and then shifts to the girl who "got into a fight with my mentee." Initially, her mentee was positioned as innocent and passive. This sense of responsibility later gave way to the recognition of her mentee's agency. The content and construction of the passage implies the desire to easily disappear problem behaviors, past relationships, and present responsibility. This disappearance also fortifies a sense of the direct connection between the mentor and her perception of her mentee's change or lack of change.

The felt sense of connection is also extended as a statement of empathic connection or a metaphor for closeness in another participant's text. Here, the participant writes about what she wishes for the girls who she came to know at the facility. She begins with a description of who

these girls were, and transitions to an argument of who they could become with support. As the participant turns to address her thoughts and feelings she ends with a suggestion of her felt sense of solidarity with them. The participant begins:

How absolutely resilient these girls were. That given a better environment, associations and resources, these girls could take their immense pain and struggle and turn it into great self-empowerment. How their youthful spirits transcended their adversity, and that given the appropriate and consistent guidance and attention that perhaps, just perhaps, they could find a way 'out.' Empathy, compassion, the strength to influence and perhaps effect change in their perspective toward life. I felt their potential, their gifts, their frustrations, their stifled dreams and hopes. I felt them.

Within the construction of the text the participant discusses a scope that widens from the girl to include her experiences along with her peers, environment, and resources. The participant holds the wish that the girls would have consistent directional support, empathy, and compassion. As the participant turned from her feelings, she narrowed the scope back on the girls and ended with "I felt them" - an expression of a sort of solidarity that reads as discursive, affective, and embodied.

Importantly, the participant's ecological construction contextualizes the girls' experience rather than indicating that it has a deterministic influence on their outcomes. To this effect, the text is clear in characterizing the girls as having already "transcended their adversity." It is also clear that the agency to find a way out and to stay out of trouble belongs to the girls. However, this participant also suggests that social support is an integral aspect of success and well-being. In terms of the sort of solidarity implied by the text, the mixture of pain-resilience, personal-social, and frustrations-hopes may have facilitated the participant's identification with the girls in ways that either side of the hyphen could not individually. Particularly as this participant

suggests that she had trauma in common with the girls, this may ring true - common trauma combined solely with frustration or hope might have encouraged the participant to make and maintain different boundaries or make it harder to sustain a felt sense of her perceptions of the girls.

As she continued her response, this participant included a refrain of this sort of wishing things were different and implicating the self in making the difference. She wrote:

They had become a part of me. That they were my children, everyone's children, and we had a responsibility to see that they were safe and flourishing...I wished I could protect them, and nurture them, and show them love so that they could bask in the innocence that was robbed from them.

This participant again suggests an embodied sense of connection that she then conjugates into a sense of shared responsibility for the girls. The participant indicates that the girls are part of her, they were her children, and they were everyone's children. At last turn, the participant steps fully from her symbiotic identification with the girls and into the "we" of her adult peers as advocates where she suggests that "we had a responsibility to see that they were safe and flourishing." The blending of solidarities across this text from "part of me" to "we" begins to show that solidarity may be a directional process that includes incorporation, acknowledgement of responsibility, and advocacy. Each step in the process implicates the self in creating a sense that the ideal is possible.

The last two examples find participants acknowledging discourses of difference and questioning the administration of the facility as well as the intent of the institution. As with other texts, the mixture of positive and negative affect seems to balance and steady the way for discourses of difference and power to further emerge. In the first narrative, the participant cites

how her relationship with her mentee grew. She hesitantly prefaces her other memory as negative and indicates that the staff treated her pregnant mentee poorly.

One of my mentees began to trust me and looked forward to our meetings, this was a positive memory. I also have negative memories of the staff members treating my pregnant mentee poorly. What can I do to have a positive impact on my mentee? How is it possible that a state run facility can be so poorly managed? Anger at the facility, annoyed. Happy about my relationship with my mentees.

From this excerpt it is not clear whether the participant witnessed the staff actively mistreating her mentee or whether they were passively negligent, but elsewhere the participant indicated that her mentee told her that she was kicked in the stomach during a fight with another resident. Her questions, productive and angry, insert critiques of the institutional resources levied towards keeping the girls safe: “Where was the staff members?; Why do they place pregnant women with other residents?; Will she receive proper medical care?; and Where is the facility counselor during these situations?” Caught in the institution as much as her mentee seemed to be, this participant hopes for the girls’ basic, equitable, and careful treatment. She also narrows the scope of the impact that she could have on her mentee to the interpersonal level. How the participant can bring something positive to her mentee in this context is a line of questioning that runs parallel to her question about the efficacy of institutions of state care. The parallels between the wonderings also suggests that one thing that the participant can do is question, perhaps as the first step in a discursive or activist form of advocacy.

Another discussion of the facility extended the critique to question the legitimacy of incarcerating some girls. This participant in this last text offers one of her mentees as an example of a girl who is positioned as a victim of the system.

One of my mentees was in this facility due to truancy. It baffled me that young girls were being housed and treated as criminals for such minimal charges. I hope there is a significant change in the juvenile justice system. What preventative measures are being taken to ensure that young girls do not end up in facilities such as this? Hope, sad, confused.

The participant opens with a critique that engages allusions to deservingness as she indicates her wish that the system would change and either refrain from incarcerating people for minimal charges or refrain from treating the girls as criminals. This opening is followed by an open-ended call for diversions from the system instead of incarceration. Along with the capacity for being confused by the system, this participant indicates her hope and sadness to ground her wish for “a significant change in the juvenile justice system.” The relational connection between the mentor and mentee combines with and seeming insignificance of the girl’s charges and provides the foundation on which the girl is positioned as someone who does not deserve to be treated as a criminal. However, implicit in this construction is the belief that some people might deserve such treatment.

With the last discourse of wishing things were different and feeling implicated in the change, there is again the movement between discourses of sameness and difference. This movement is created through the acknowledgement that the facility was a place that provided the context connection, and the suggestion that the impact of mentoring relationships extends beyond the immediate experience in ways that signal a belief in participants’ own power to create change. The felt sense of symbiosis that blurred the lines between the mentors and mentees appeared to contribute to the participants’ self-concept as a new part of the girls’ social contexts. This concept seemed to allow them the capacity to feel as if they were directly

implicated in the girls' future. In some instances, this relationship seems to move through a sort of paternalism that may be difficult to reconcile as purely acritical or critical. From this perspective, the paternalism of care and diversion of agency seemed to speak to both sameness and difference discourses. The transition into wishing and implicating oneself in the future carried forth the dualities of these discourses and created an opening through which participants could discursively position themselves as belonging to the girls as well as belonging to a society in which they could advocate for the girls. Thus, the sort of solidarity that emerged was discursive, and held the potential for advocating for the girls from a position of the mentor on the hyphen that connected inside-outside.

### **Discussion**

Work on intergroup relations provides important concepts that are inflected through the construction of solidarities. A sense of a shared fate between people, the empathic divide between dissimilar people and different social contexts, and empathy as a method of deconstructing representations of others, for example, all constitute ways in which a sense of self relevance precedes solidarity. Work on solidarity suggests that a psychological sense of co-victimization is a step in building a superordinate identity that translates personal trauma and challenges into analyses of social inequality (Subasic, Schmitt & Reynolds, 2011). Such work also suggests that resistance and a capacity to rework the self plays "a central role in whether or not one's experience of injustice is 'felt' at an individual, group, or intergroup level" (Subasic, Schmitt & Reynolds, 2011). Other work frames solidarity as a process of rooting to locate the self and shifting to imagine the perspective of another (Yuval-Davis, 1999). With all of the

parallels between intergroup work and solidarities, the understanding of the micro-processes in joining with dis/similar others is best addressed in work that focuses at the relational level. Such work identifies the discourses that flow between people as being “available to them serving, at once, as knowledge (sources of meaning) and power (structures, relations, and processes ‘creating’ equality and inequality, value and devaluation (MacPherson and Fine, 1995, p. 185). As MacPherson and Fine (1995) indicate, discourses of sameness keep structural inequalities intact and untroubled, while discourses of difference lead to questioning, and therefore destabilizing practiced social relations to power. Equality appears to be in the journey between both discourses.

In extending these points to understand the sorts of solidarities that are available across the service learning environment, this chapter focused on identifying how solidarity and separateness are done in the context of relationships marked by differences in social power. The differences in social power, through the investment in race, class, gender, freedom, and mobility were silenced as explicit analyses within the study. However, privilege may have emerged through the sense of varying levels of empathy and the relevance of the lives of others to the self.

The discussion of the current inquiry attempts to address the circumstances under which differences in social power can be leveraged against the sameness of common humanity in order to expand notions of intergroup relations, and surface the pedagogical strategies that service learning courses might use. The following section briefly reviews the findings of this study for their pertinence to intergroup relations and solidarity literature, and then attempts to use these concepts to suggest potential themes that service learning courses can address.



**Telling a human story.** As a discourse that the mentors used to describe their experiences of relationship across the course, these narratives focused on finding and telling the girls' human story. These texts read as being directed towards an audience comprised both of the self and the society to which the self belongs. The function of this discourse is to foreground the facility and the girls within it to make an entry point through which the experience might be viewed by outsiders. As such, humanness is an important counter-testimony to representations of the girls as delinquents or sociopaths, which are grounded in the social meanings of race, class, and gender that circulate in the representations inside and outside of the service learning experience. The insistence on sameness, however, ultimately undermines socio-political solidarity by removing any problems that could be collectively and critically addressed. Thus, while humanness bridges social distance by detaching the mentees from representations that dehumanize them, this may only be the first step if the ultimate challenge is to (1) balance the psychological experience of minimizing group differences in order to encourage self-relevance and (2) inflect the experience with opportunities for participants to ground themselves, reflect, question, revise, and speak back to the difference that marks their social realities.

The narratives in this section are instructive for pedagogies that hope to transition from sameness to difference and hold a generative tension between a lived belief in humanity and the development of critical knowledges. Specifically, some narratives positioned the girls as lovable, needing social support, and needing access to effective resources like counseling, education, and care within the facility. These arguments held up the sameness inherent in humanity in order to question the differences of resources. Such instances reflect the consideration of the external

influences on girls' lives that are detached from the dispositional representations of who they are and may suggest that the inaccurate representations of the girls signify 'who' society is.

One of the affordances of the discursive standpoint of finding and telling a human story is that the arguments couched within it are framed as basic human needs. As such, the resources that do and would help the girls are framed as rights rather than privileges of position because of the necessity of social support that becomes backlit by the visual aid of people who are incarcerated. The nature of this sort of solidarity, then, is one of advocacy for human rights notwithstanding an explicitly-worded analysis of the socio-political contexts that minimize resilience, transformation, and support at the familial and institutional levels.

In terms of pedagogical practices, this discourse can be maximized with explicit discussions and assignments that are based on notions of humanness and the hidden, obscured, obvious, and taken-for-granted aspects of social life. Focusing on humanity can serve as a transition from having an analysis of the historical and social antecedents of the service learning site, and the sorts of solidarity it can generate in ways that include discussions of difference. The both/and strategy of using a sense of common humanity to balance the pain of reckoning with and speaking about sharp inequalities may help people to articulate discourses of sameness and difference, successively, as integral aspects of solidarities that are driven by self-relevance and reflexivity.

**Being present and feeling.** Being present and feeling emerged as the second discourse and strategy for forging solidarity. The narrated moments of presence frame the immediate situation as the superordinate linkage between people. The linkages between people depend on

the moment to the extent that the present sense of togetherness eclipses both what will happen in the future (e.g. the outcome of the mentee's GED) and also what had happened in the past (e.g. a classmate's narrative of abuse). As one of the most inter-subjective forms of forging solidarity, the in-the-moment advocacy of presence and affect appears in itself to be the primary means and outcome - rather than a discursive position or argument for advocacy. Here, much like in the superordinance of anti-racism ideologies that resounded among the intersectional group in Macpherson and Fine's (1995) work, the lack of naming these larger inequalities in personal and social experiences seems to discursively inoculate the group from issues that were outside of their socio-political control. As such, these instances may signal the need to be protected from the feeling that 'we' are too few to even imagine, effect, or be stalled by structural change.

The insistence on presence here is limiting in that it resigns the people and the moment to the insular sphere of their personal influence. However, read another way, presence may become a space from which people can deconstruct and reconstruct new discursive forms of an intergroup myth of equality. These moments seem to call for a deeper understanding of the processes of relationship and solidarity because they are not quite illustrative of intergroup cooperation, or contact zones. Rather, presence and feeling speak to an ordinariness that is bounded to the service learning context that created the moment, while it is also unbounded from the larger social context through an insistence on presence. This presence suggests a relational moment that is a reprieve, in some ways, from having to be any one thing, position, or identity. Instead, presence calls individuals to being available in the moment rather than willfully fleeing from or to another moment, topic, or relationship. The relational spaciousness of presence may

afford a sort of possibility that only happens when one holds the space for oneself and others to enter. As such these moments cannot exist in quick evaluations and categorizations but seem to necessitate the space in which to fantasize that nothing aside being in the moment matters. This way of being seems to be separate from a simplistic fantasy of sameness, but instead seems to provide a consciousness, sensitivity, and accountability for co-creating dynamics that provide a glimmer of the sorts of relationships that can exist in equality.

It is also clear, however, that these moments need to be bridged with critical consciousness. In terms of pedagogy, service learning classrooms can be the context for thought experiments where students imagine and document what equality looks like from the social to the inter and intrapersonal level. These thought experiments may help service learners to articulate their personal mission or commitment for cultivating their ideal relationships within their placements.

**Sharing Trauma and Shouldering Pain.** Shared trauma, in particular, contributed to an affective solidarity that was enacted as a redistribution of sadness. Where shared trauma emerged in participant narratives so did a sense of sadness at recognizing both one's own trauma and that of another. In these narratives, the totality of sadness was buffered as participants discussed their hopes for the future. The cross-temporality of shared trauma suggested a sense of solidarity that was based on the merging of one's personal biography of survival after trauma and the present experience of another's resistance. While inexplicit in these texts, these mirrored images may be used to surface difference as people gain the capacity to question how two people with 'similar' traumas end up in different places that are differentially protected and insulated. Given the inter-

subjective nature of this relational affect and discourse, the audience seems to be a self who can look across their experience to find that trauma is superordinate connector between those on the inside and outside. Simultaneously, there is the capacity for this superordinance to highlight difference. Both of these potentials, however, are limited in that they nurture affective solidarities perhaps at the expense of politicizing personal trauma. The politicization of trauma would link the personal to the familial, community, structural, and discursive trauma in which the weight of an individual's biography becomes evidence of larger inequalities.

In terms of intergroup relations, this discourse identifies both the potential of being able to empathize with another, and questions about what happens when people find that they share troubled social contexts. The current literature does not include the possibility that the biographies of the self and other bleed together, perhaps because it is limited by the purpose of explaining intergroup relations in a proscribed time frame and purpose. Nonetheless, the conception of solidarities may discount the effect of biography on those positioned to form appraisals of the other in ways that make it difficult to extend the effects to relationships within this context.

Within this section, discourses of difference also emerged in narratives where mentors did not indicate a shared history of trauma between themselves and the mentees, but rather inoculated themselves with the refusal or inability to imagine a traumatic biography or social context. Incidences of difference – the distance between mentors and the girls' trauma – seemed to provide a space for a diversity of emotions to enter. This distance was the entry point for questions about the fairness of girls' trauma, sadness, and anger. This array of emotions may be

better tuned for active advocacy than sadness alone. Here, as indicated by Macpherson and Fine (1995), difference provided a position of critique and a source of energy to fuel solidarities. Participants also made an audience of other outsiders who may be unaware of the continuum of familial and gendered violence that surrounded some of the mentees in ways that may potentially bridge affective and socio-political solidarity. In the thickness of the awareness of trauma, however, participants narrated prevention and resolution to grapple with the feelings of sadness, outrage, and anger that traumatic disclosures imparted.

**Wishing things were different and feeling a sense shared responsibility.** When wishing things were different emerged aside a sense of responsibility for social solutions it included allusions to the participants' socio-political reasoning. However, it appeared difficult for participants to communicate affective solidarity and socio-political analyses at the same time. This difficulty may suggest that either strategy is easier to enter into or to articulate than a combination of both. Relatedly, the orientation to the future that emerges with wishing may ease the sense of the totality and determinism around the girls' biographies, socio-political contexts, and the present moment in ways that highlights their differential social and personal contexts. The span of discourses here makes audiences of the mentors, mentees, and those within and outside of the facility. The accessibility of this discourse to a blended audience indicates the comprehensive nature of solidarities which dynamically shift between the larger discourse of sameness and difference, inside and out.

The implication of the self, most clearly illustrates the self-relevance with which the participants approached the service learning experience and what they might have taken from

this experience. There is a sense of interrelatedness between the position of the mentor and the mentee within these texts, which is as critical as it is acritical. For example, discourses of sameness may be read in texts where participants intuited a symbiotic connection whereby they imagined that the mentee would think and act like them having internalized their image.

Alternatively, however, some participants implicated themselves and society as holding the responsibility for ensuring that the girls were safe, healing, and flourishing inside and outside of the facility as a personal-social ethic.

**Sharing Trauma and Shouldering Pain; Wishing Things Were Different and Implicating the Self in that Difference.** Given their positioning within the data as parallel tracks of experience in the middle of the semester and as moments of strong emotional impact, the pedagogical strategies for addressing these discourses will be leveraged against one another. These discourses can be imagined as different ways of holding and moving with the discomfort, anger, and sadness that evolved as a response to deepened relationships to dispossessed spaces and people.

Wishing and implicating the self appeared frequently in moments of strong emotional impact. Wishing and implicating suggests a critical, active form of reconciling such emotions as a social commitment, whereas shouldering trauma suggests a critical, yet somewhat inactive reconciliation between the self, the immediate context, and the outside world. Simultaneously, sharing trauma reflects the active use of the self as a mediator for the relationship with another that sometimes included a professional commitment to amend trauma. Thus, between these two categories are different positions for mentors to ‘plug into’ and use the method of solidarity to

address the sometimes horrifying aspects of biography that some of the mentees held with them at the social, personal, and professional level.

In terms of classroom work, service learning courses should be structured in ways that build towards framing the service learner as an advocate and as having the potential to effect change towards the middle of the semester. Explicitly working with how mentors can use the emotions that evolve out of their exposure to different social contexts and similar traumas can support service learners in bridging their experiences to an outside world where they can affect change within and beyond the service learning experience. Without such support, the potential for grappling with interdependence and the sameness and differences that underpin it, may be foreclosed by the cognitive and affective weight of navigating these meanings as individuals which may make additional socio-political considerations overwhelming to consider. Thus, as these courses may introduce a larger or more intensive framework for viewing the service learning opportunity, care must be taken to avoid painting a picture so vast that it washes out where the individual service learner is and where they can be.

**Loving and hoping for the future.** Loving and hoping for the future, as a discourse that most frequently emerged at the end of the semester, represents a sort of well-wishing at the close of a relationship. Where hope emerged as a way for mentors to express their care for the girls, fear also emerged about the girls' agency in a larger social context that had remained stable in the girls' absence. Hope for the girls' agency and fear surrounding the dangers of unsafe homes and recidivism combined as anxieties about the girls' transition from the inside to the outside. Discursively, the facility as a rule-bound institution was framed as an entry point for safety,



support, care, giving, and receiving while the outside held an unknown fate that included dangers that could contaminate the girls or shift their goodness with old habits and deficient resources. Hope became a way of transmuting the fear of the meaning of the institutional boundaries in ways that allowed the mentors to maintain the tenderness and love intact, dynamic, and inclusive.

As a discourse that is highly bound by the construction and dissolution of bonds during the service learning experience, much of the affects here are not tied to intergroup relations literature. Such literature carries a sense of the interaction ending abruptly and unproblematically within an appraisal situation or within a context where solidarity is positioned as a step that arises from continued contact. The potential for the solidarity provided by endings and thoughts of the future is in allying individuals with the institution as the contact zone which guided the affective flow of the relationship. Through the shared hopes for the girls' future the mentors as a group and the facility were positioned as static, as if they would remain waiting inside but hoping not to see the girls within the walls again.

The prior pedagogical suggestion of laying a broad foundation for how students can have a personal, professional, and social impact through their solidarity may infuse their hopes of the future with a sense of direction that may occur as they trouble the causes and effects of such facilities, but also have a way of inflecting their personal positions in the future instead of solely focusing on the uncertainties that may face the girls.

## Conclusion

Across social divides and under the banner of discourses of sameness and difference, the stuff of solidarity building falls out of participants' narratives of key moments in their experience of mentoring. Five discourses emerged as having the potential for forging different sorts of solidarity. These discourses were softly distinguished by their capacity for affective-relational, discursive-representational, and socio-political sorts of union. Distinguishing these solidarities may be instructive to the extent that they provide insight to the temporary incorporation of another and the self, as well as the individual differentiation of biographical and social contexts that sometimes lay between the mentors and mentees. The discourses etch out, dismantle, and reconstruct relationships to power, subjectivities, and capacities to speak. The audiences sequentially and simultaneously fill the shape of the silhouette of the self, others, and the larger societal 'we.' As such, these narratives address a wide audience inside-outside from the standpoint of service learners' whose experiences enabled them to sit within each side of the continuum and negotiate its hyphen. The potential for such shifting solidarities indicates some ways in which people appeal to a new sensibility of self and a new view of humanity within a context where so many people are unseen and untouched. These ways indicate the potential that emerges from telling human stories, being present, embracing trauma, hoping for the future, and implicating the self in its construction – each of which is mottled with a/criticality.

Elements of the discourses presented in this chapter begin to draw out paths to solidarity as an expression of the process of creating equality, while others beckon the imagination of being on the fantasy on the other side. These narratives express a desire to bridge the empathetic divide

with the self, a sense that the critical consideration of unequal social contexts is burgeoning, and a relational ‘vision’ of what it would look like to join with others in a space where – as one mentor suggested – “we have each other and nothing else matters.”

Such data also suggest the role of service learning pedagogy in positioning the social histories that shape biography, the ability to ground in the present moment, and the necessity to build a path that leads these experiences out of the facility and into the world so that mentors can practice solidarity beyond the service learning course. This temporal blending is not well addressed in intergroup relations literature and maybe it shouldn’t be, yet or ever. But, this temporal blending could transition concepts like empathy and self-relevance, discourses of sameness and difference, and the five strategies for forging solidarity into the service learning classroom to make use of the ways they play with the boundaries between self and other, histories and their erasure, and a conceptualization of a future of equality that is difficult to imagine.

### **Interchapter: Presence**

**Presence.** For me life is a continuing dialogue between the past and the future. The past holds our most salient stories of what happened and the future holds the stories of what we think will happen in a better situation, as we are better equipped or at least can better predict and prepare the landscape of our emotions, thoughts, and agency. These moments meet in the present.

**Class.** Once in class I drew a spiral on the board in chalk. The large base extended upward in successively narrowing coils. I imagined, and asked the class to also, that this spiral was a mountain that we were all trying to get up collectively although each of us would walk it at different paces, with different bodies and steps and so necessarily different paths. And along each of our paths we would slip, stumble, and sometimes fall in the dust and grainy gravel that collected as a remembrance of our own old stories of difficulty or trauma. I ran my finger along the chalked spiral mountain cutting marks of absence into the space every so often to represent these moments. Pointing near the top portion of the middle I said some of us are here, further below there were the others, and further still the rest of us. I then began talking about the story we tell about the moments in and between the gaps. The story we tell of our survival, triumph, and struggle or their absence. The story we tell of not being able to see the person who was immediately in front of us, or behind, anymore – feeling singular although together, or together although single. Those stories litter our path and make our step light and heavy at various times – as both proclamation of who we were and prediction of who we would become. We talked as a

class about these storied identities as the slow one, the brave one, the one who doesn't seemingly register trauma, the one who doesn't see her movement in any direction.

I wanted to draw this chalk spiral mountain to insert a bit of depth and context as we began to talk about narrative psychology and therapy – what it had to offer us and what parts we might see of it at the facility. It was equally important for me to acknowledge the class and our movement towards the middle of the semester as the novelty waned and we went deeper into thinking about abuse and trauma, resilience and resistance. Some of us in the class who had run up the mountain in the beginning stopped, seemingly startled, and looked into the distance as if trying to figure something out before moving. Some folks had altogether missed class or deadlines for our weekly reflections.

I also wanted to normalize difficulty or trauma knowing that this course let us face ourselves anew in the presence of a classroom of folks and the facility and the girls. It was never my intention to commune around our woundology, as Caroline Myss would say, but the path of the class was utterly littered by it. The space for trauma was left at the edge of the weft – by design.

**Space.** More space was provided by some of the exercises we did in class. Off of the model of Reverend Dr. Kathleen Cumiskey, I too had the students write about their own adolescence in class. I asked them to write thank you letters to their adolescent though. To thank them for \_\_\_\_\_, whatever it was good and bad that they did so they could get older and show up

here. And they wrote, some sniffing, others looking up and into space, others feverishly. Then they sealed up their cards and I held them until the end of the semester and returned them.

I still have one card from one of the students I immediately connected with. It's in the box with other materials, maps, and assignments from class – a small unassuming envelope with her name in blue-penned neat capital letters. I will hold space with it for as long as I can. As most first day of class rituals, I would go around the room asking people to introduce themselves with their names, majors, why they were in the class, and something interesting about themselves. They could swap out the last point and have me ask a question of them – always tailored by the moment. She answered the question “If we could go back in time and give your child self a bullhorn what would she say?” with a loud “Shut up!” Later, we connected as contemporaries who grew up watching Ricky Lake and Montel Williams in our after-school loneliness. I remember her as the only one who had done many exercises we did in class with her mentee (that was a side-point of doing the exercises). And had she not gotten into a car accident near the end of the semester she would have been in class and would have her letter. For all her life's loss, including the one's sustained in that accident, and all of her great bubbly and purposive energy I remember her often for the person she was and who I saw her be as a person, student, classmate, and mentor.

In other exercises people revealed their wounds as they talked about what they had brought to class as a symbol of their adolescence. Folks brought pictures, pajamas, bracelets, and seemingly random trinkets and many told the story of them.

I brought a copy of my senior portrait with my permed hair, swirling gold earrings and the pearls and black cape I borrowed from the photographer – looking sweet and as one student said sad – that he could see the sadness in my eyes. He was maybe forty and huge in physicality and personality. He was all sweetness and dedication to the girls which he attributed to spending some time inside when he was an adolescent. When it was his turn he said he forgot to bring his symbol but that it was okay and he took off his belt and flopped it on the desk, saying that he got his ass beat on the regular by his old man. I wondered what it was like to take off his belt with us – maybe much like his dad took his belt off. And as always was amazed by the thirstiness to speak and hear that we all have – with our pretty stories of ugly wounds – stories told as ends themselves or as means to demonstrate how far we'd come.

And even as I make space for loss now as I did then, I know it is different – in shape, feel and the contexts that surrounded each of us in and out of class. I understand that the experience

of loss and trauma is different than being inculcated by it. But, there's something else there also for me. Perhaps, it's the question of what we make loss and trauma mean. What does it allow us to do? Who does it allow us to connect to and for what purpose?

## Chapter 5: Navigating the Inside and Outside

Today most middleclass and wealthy youth, who are overwhelmingly White, have at their disposal a public sphere that enables their development, offers protection, and provides supports. With their cultural ideals proliferated in the mainstream culture and media, an invisible public sector of support is supplemented by substantial private scaffolding by family and community (Burns 2004). Elite, White youthful bodies un-self-consciously come to represent merit and a worthy investment. At the same time, and on the other side of the same public policies, many African American, Latino, immigrant, poor, and increasingly Muslim and queer/trans youth are being read as disposable, embodying danger, worthy of dispossession, or in need of containment - in order to protect "us." This story is no news to our nation; we were founded on this narrative. The walls of exclusion slide like glass doors, oiled by public dollars, moving between structure and psyche, between politics outside and the interior of the soul. Cumulative evidence of dispossession bleeds between public and private sectors and onto the next generation, threatening and bolstering young people's sense of competence and possibility for a different tomorrow (Fine & Ruglis, 2009, p. 31).

Across this work the inside and outside of the facility are temptingly close and far apart depending on one's narrated position and how long they pause between each space. In this service learning course the inside and outside were locales marked by a division that made some lives public by the very nature of being inside the facility, while other lives maintained their privacy on account of being 'free.' The service learners' navigation between these spaces marked the course as a site where the circuits of dispossession that led girls into the state facility merged with the circuits of privilege that led the students to the state college. Therein, the service learners who mentored adolescent girls were exposed to the differential values that were representationally, socially, and economically invested in their lives. The capacity to trouble these values emerged on a variety of fronts that spanned from the institutional to the personal. The physical geography of the facility surfaced both the particularity of resources that were made available and the representations of crime, morality, and trouble that surround such spaces. The



relational geography between mentors and mentees was shaped by mutual interests and dislikes, descriptions of neighborhoods, families, friends, and sometimes disclosures of trauma. The service learners' mobility across these provided the grounds for their reflection on the institutional, representational, and biographical convergences and divergences that constructed everyone's life – inside and out.

The entry point for critical reflection, interrelatedness, and advocacy within this service learning experience was widened with the closure of the facility in the spring of 2012. Set within the larger context of the general dissolution of state-driven social services, this closure ripples back through history to a time when individuals and small groups invested in caring for 'wayward' girls in independent reform and maternity homes (Nathanson, 1991; Odem, 1995; Solinger, 2000). Within the current social context, the closure illustrated the inflection of social inequality in the lives of institutions and individuals as the circuits of dispossession and privilege became animated. The limitations of the facility to address the processes and outcomes of girls' disenfranchisement were, thus, laid bare and articulated the need to address the multiple layers that construct 'girls' trouble.' As an event that frames the storied experiences of the service learning site, the closure engages participants and everyone who populated the experience as being affected by the deepening of dispossession.

The following chapter examines the meanings that were available at the boundary between the inside and outside by asking how these meanings can be negotiated towards critical reflection and relationship, rather than projection and distance. To address the touch points of the inside-outside boundary, this inquiry frames participants' narratives as symbols of their inner

environment – how the biographical details of girls’ lives, the institutional dynamics that they participated in, and the representational images that they negotiated live within their reflections.

To begin, this chapter will position the service learning site as the intersection of the circuits of dispossession and privilege that presented service learners with the opportunity for critical reflection. Then, the methods used to guide this exploration will be reviewed and followed by an analysis of the institutional and representational aspects of participants’ narrations. A meditation about the extent to which the facility’s closure can create a space in which participants’ sense of personal loss and dispossession can emerge will draw together the findings of this analysis. Last, the chapter will close by providing suggestions about the pathways that can engender collective mourning and the animation of service learners’ capacities to critically reflect and serve society - inside and outside of service learning classrooms and their institutional sites.

### **Locating Critical Reflection within Inside-Outside Spaces**

The circuits of dispossession and privilege trace the lines that individuals travel from the public sphere and private sphere to the subjectivities where both spheres can be negotiated to the ends of situated knowledge and critical consciousness (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). This framework identifies the ways that inequality is manifested through people’s institutional positions, the production of opportunity, and the constructions of identity (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). Particularly as it has been used to track the movement of Black and brown and poor people out of education and into carceral corners, these circuits help to position the ways that the institutions set and

mediated the experience of this service learning course, produced opportunity for the mentors and mentees, and helped them to construct an identity position for themselves and the girls.

Standing between the institutional spaces of facility and the university provides service learners with the potential to link social inequality to small moments across the service learning experience. The boundary between the inside and outside presents a context that could encourage questioning, critique, and advocacy around the differences in resources available across institutions; particularly as such institutions are racialized and classed. The service learning site, for example, provides indirect and direct exposure to the experience of the institutional context and culture (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). The physical condition of a service learning site exposes service learners to the disrepair, and disinvestment that can characterize institutional space, and provides service learners with concrete experiences regarding the lack of resources that circulate in others' lives. Alongside the physical resources, service learners are also exposed to direct experiences and reports of the ways in which people are treated within such sites (Santos, Ruppap & Jeans, 2012). Service learners, for example might witness acts of disrespect at the service learning site that were directed to young people and commit themselves to interacting with the individuals with a sense of equality and respect (Santos, Ruppap & Jeans, 2012). Similarly, the state of the physical and human resources presents the opportunity for service learners to temporarily experience or witness a sort of dispossession that they otherwise might not.

While the institutional context is latent in many discussions of service learning, the role of relationships in these settings seem to be the primary vehicle through which people come to know themselves and practice new relationships to themselves and others. The capacity for

service learning to “disturb, disrupt, and redefine the boundaries of the self in relation to the world” (Carrington & Iyer, 2011, p. 2) is taken up as one of the benefits of service learning opportunities. Service learning opportunities present the opportunity to counter representations, increase self-knowledge, and improve intergroup and pro-social attitudes. In terms of intergroup relations, service learners may draw on the example of the relationships that they formed with others as a lived experience through which they can challenge their assumptions and beliefs about others (Brown, 2011; Kerksen-Griep & Eifler, 2008; Santos, Ruppap & Jeans, 2012). For some students such understandings can result in their commitment to working in dispossessed settings (Chang, Anagnostopoulos & Omae, 2011).

The service learning classroom emerges as an important site for critical reflection and support as students participate in activities and assignments that help them to integrate their experiences. The pedagogical strategies used in this literature include handwritten journaling, blogging, as well as expository writing. The social nature of the service learning classroom includes discussion, and the creation of a classroom culture that facilitates critical dialogue.

Some work positions the dialogical nature of the ability to explore the structural causes of racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and gendered disparities in health, well-being, educational attainment, wealth, and other domains as arising from coaching and discussion. Watts, Griffith and Abdul-Adi (1999), for example, provide a process for developing critical consciousness in educational contexts that addresses five steps, which range from acritical to liberatory stances. These steps broadly situate critical consciousness as a developing as individuals: address what they saw or experienced, explain what their observation means in the greater social context, base

their analysis on explicit evidence, articulate their feelings, and determine what they could do to create a better situation.

The participants in the preceding study were all African American, but various and diverse groups may also use such processes with attention to the development and maintenance of a classroom culture where discussions of racial and class representations, prejudice, and discrimination can safely emerge. Here, the role of emotions in education surfaces because of the anxiety-provoking nature of grappling with the unknown as a student is compounded by the discussion of topics that are generally silenced or neatly dealt with, like race and class (Buckley & Foldy, 2010). The challenge of critical consciousness is to hold the tension between creating and sustaining the emotional engagement that it necessitates, and maintaining a level of discomfort that is both tolerable and generative. Students, for example, may experience a gamut of positive and negative emotions while being faced with the opportunity to increase cultural knowledge, negotiate with new and old representations, and commit to social justice. Fear, excitement, anxiety, guilt, hope, anger, and relief all have the capacity to surface in students' individual experience and the classroom community (Buckley & Foldy, 2010; Brown & Perry, 2011; Curry-Stevens, 2007).

The affective work necessitated by the development of critical consciousness may be supported in service learning classrooms through the construction and maintenance of a sense of psychological safety. This sense of safety enables students to take risks in expressing and working through their thoughts and feelings. Additionally, a feeling of identity safety can provide students with the sense that they will not be shunned or shamed by the group because of

their perspectives (Buckley & Foldy, 2010). Creating a classroom experience that is a container for critical exploration is of particular importance in service learning courses where there is a risk that students' disengagement with the course may impact their presence within their relationships and actions at the service learning site.

The richness of this service learning course as a space where the circuits of dispossession and privilege were breached presents a number of opportunities for critical reflection, interrelatedness, and action to emerge. On the boundary between the inside and outside, participants were exposed to a new institutional culture, and the convergence of their counter/representations about the girls that they engaged with. The touch points of the inside and outside boundary emerge from the girls' biographies, location in the facility, and representations about who they are. These moments surface insights about the types of meanings that can be drawn from the experience. As the closure of the service learning site symbolically encompassed everyone in the experience with dispossession, it provides a living metaphor for the losses sustained in critical work and how they might be transformed into consciousness, a sense of interrelatedness, and advocacy.

### **Method**

In order to surface the dynamics available and the boundary between inside and outside, the researcher juxtaposed participants' narrations of the biographical, institutional, and representational realities that structured girls' lives. These touch points are respectively linked to three items from the study's instrumentation: (1) Based on your experience at the facility, what are the top three reasons that you think most girls end up in places like this; (2) What should

most people know about the girls that they probably don't; and, (3) The facility is slated to close soon and what happens in the space next is uncertain. While it is uncertain if the space will continue to exist at all, efforts have been made to provide services for the girls who were here or would have ended up here. If you had the chance to write a few words on the facility walls to memorialize what happened in the space, what would you write? What would you write about the kind of place it was?

The researcher first coded participant responses to these items for language that symbolized the distribution of capital and opportunities (Fine & Ruglis, 2009), which were written large to include pathways to incarceration and generativity. Second, the researcher coded narratives for language that represented what circulated in the resources and relationships within the facility for references to the affordances and scarcities that marked the space. Last, the researcher coded narratives for language that represented the participants' narrative presence.

Four themes emerged from this analysis that address critical reflection and projection, interrelatedness and distance. These themes include: (1) locating the need for social equality and services; (2) locating institutions as spaces of respite and reformulation; (3) locating institutions as spaces of contamination; and, (4) locating representations that question the girls' dispossession. As this experience was contextualized by a specific turn in the privatization of public good the erasure, remembrance, and haunts that marked participants' narrations of the experience comprise the final theme - which is woven implicitly and explicitly across the participant texts through a sense of loss, contradiction, and institutional distrust (Ayala & Galletta, 2012).

## Findings

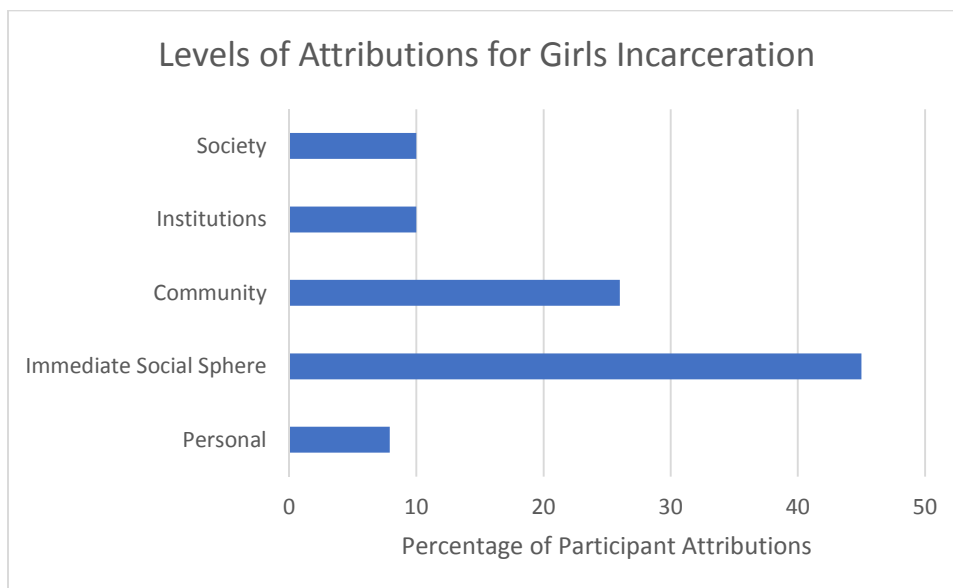
### Locating the need for social equality and services

Critical reflection describes the process by which students begin to understand and articulate the social and personal aspects of inequality. While critical reflection is not widely measured it is said to be related to attribution theory where situational attributions for behavior may be contextualized by structural dispossession and privilege (Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). Across the literature several stages of critical reflection emerge, that generally include the intellectual articulation of inequality, privilege, and dispossession, the emotional impact of understanding inequality, and an intention or commitment to promote social justice through activism (Carlson, Engbreston & Chamberlain, 2006; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). Thus, an understanding of how participants situated the girls in the context of the facility may arise from their attributions for girls' incarceration in ways that help to address the critical meanings that were available within the facility and in the classroom. Along with the critical meanings that are available through the potential to contextualize the girls' lives, the attributions for girls' incarceration may shape the ways that participants think about the role of the facility, and the ability to position the facility as buffering and deepening the dispossession within the girls' lives.

Participants were asked to reflect on their experience and indicate the top three reasons that girls end up in facilities like these. Ecological levels of attribution were provided for the participants' reference and they were invited to provide their perceptions independent of the list of societal, institutional, community, familial, and personal contributions. Figure 6: Levels of



Attribution for Girls' Incarceration shows the number of citations that emerged across the participants' multiple responses to the item.



*Figure 6: Levels of Attribution for Girls' Incarceration*

As the figure illustrates, the number of attributions increased as each level drew closer to the girls' immediate context. Participants, for example, responded with a relatively low number of attributions at the societal level, where classism and sexism emerged as a contributor to incarceration. Racism was referenced once. At the institutional level, participants cited the girls' limited access to education, mental health, and healthcare. The majority of the attributions, however, were clustered at the community level and within the immediate social sphere. In terms of the communities that surrounded the girls, participants cited sexual trafficking, poverty, and a lack of neighborhood resources to advocate for, help, and support girls. Participants' references to the immediate social sphere included the effects of girls' exposure to the wrong crowd, absent parents, and abuse and neglect. The top two attributions across participants' responses were the

lack of resources within the community and abuse and neglect in the girls' immediate social context. Meanwhile, the fewest number of attributions addressed internal attributions for girls' incarceration including the girls' attitudes or behaviors, such as perceptions of their low self-esteem or negative actions.

The issues of class and gendered violence emerge as attributional lines that can be traced from the societal level to the girl. The socio-economic line included poverty, poor institutional resources, a lack of neighborhood resources, and financial need within the family for their successively narrowing impact on adolescent girls. Additionally, the gendered violence line included violence against women at the societal level, sexual trafficking within communities, and abuse and neglect within the family as impacting these adolescent girls. On the whole, few participants indicated that the top reasons that girls were in the facility were related to their dispositional characteristics or their involvement in crime. Instead these attributions positioned the girls as negotiating and navigating a confluence of familial, community, institutional, and societal norms which constructed their environments.

These descriptions of the world outside of the facility draw lines between the personal and societal attributions for girls' incarceration that emerged from participants' response choices. As a point of entry for critical reflection, these attributions set the foundation for understanding the girls' location inside as the compounded effect of societal and personal dispossession, rather than their decontextualized agency. These ecological attributions also set the foundation for understanding the basis on which participants' perceptions of the facility rested as they described

the facility as a site of respite, reformulation and healing amidst a social context of layered dispossession, or as a site of contamination –another location where girls were dispossessed.

### **Locating institutions as spaces of respite and reformulation**

The subtext of girls' lack of a stable home life, safe environments, and guidance emerged in participants' attributions for girls' incarceration and also surfaced in narratives about the kind of place that the facility was as participants indicated that it facility was a space of respite from dispossession where the girls could reformulate and heal. Such themes emerged in fifty-four percent (n=17) of the texts in suggestions that the facility provided for girls' basic need for a home, safety, discipline, support, and guidance. Overall, these narratives address the facility as a throughway that entered the girls 'back into' society by disrupting their dispossession. The closure of the facility seemed to re-solidify girls' disenfranchisement, and its absence was imagined as a loss of safety, mobility, hope, and support for the girls' future. The excerpts that exemplify the themes of respite and reformulation will be discussed in the following section, and presented as they increasingly engage critiques about the facility and a sense of loss surrounding what is left in its absence.

The first text in this section addresses the role of the facility in the girls' lives and populates the space only with the girls and, thus, effectively underscores their increasing isolation. This participant describes her perception that the girls themselves didn't think that they could be helped, but found that they could through their experiences in the facility. This participant positions the facility as the last chance for girls, suggesting that the girls were able to

give themselves a chance to be helped and that the facility was the only social service or network that could have attended to them. The participant begins:

This facility was a place that helped girls who didn't think they could be helped. This place was a last chance for some girls that really needed help. It is really sad that this facility had to shut its doors, especially to these girls that needed somewhere to go and for someone to listen to their problems.

The flow of words across this excerpt indicates the function of the facility with words and phrases like "place," "helped," "could be helped," "chance," "needed help," "facility," "somewhere," and "someone". These words position the facility as providing a physical space and an audience for the girls to articulate their problems. As the primary entity in the text, the facility is depicted as relatively open and accessible since the prospect that it would shut its doors would seemingly leave girls without a last resort, a place to go, or another chance. The participant positions the facility as the final social service available and the one that helped.

Interestingly, no people are depicted as agents. No people are represented at all except for the girls which may speak to a sense of their isolation from others. To the extent that the extremity of the isolation of being locked up conjoins with girls' access to psychological support, this interpretation speaks to the capacity for healing provided by leaving one's immediate environment. The relatively unpeopled solemnness that extends across these lines projects a sense of loss about the closure onto the girls themselves, and perhaps those who made community with and for them inside.

In discussing another role that the facility played, other participants indicated the importance of the facility as a place for the girls to reorient themselves. An example of this theme is presented in the text of one participant who discussed the facility as an open resource,

but populates the facility with people who seem as positive as they do problematic. For this participant it was important to separate the reality of the facility from what it looked like on paper, which is where she began:

I think the idea of the place is good and I hope it stays open because these girls and other girls like them need help. However, I also think the staff should be trained better, should be treated better by their superiors and by the girls themselves. The respect should be a two way street. All in all, I believe girls have a better chance of getting their life on track with the center being open.

In this text, the participant populates the space with the girls she came to know and moves beyond that small group to unnamed and nondescript “other girls like them.” These unknown girls of the future are presented as deserving a chance to be in this space where there was a potential for respite and self-reformulation. In expanding the theme of help from the girls to include the staff and the administrators, the participant suggested there was a chain of disrespect which seemingly connected everyone and that it could be broken. This is coupled with the insistence on something “better” throughout the rest of passage that provides a direction for change and imparts a sense of change expanding outwards. The participant indicates that better training for the staff would enable better relationships within the facility, for example. Better treatment of the staff would facilitate a greater capacity for the environment to be meaningful and effective. Last, with more training and better interpersonal relationships the girls would have an even greater chance of creating a positive future.

This text holds the contradiction between knowing that the facility served a purpose and knowing that it could have been more generative for all involved in tension. This tension does not problematize the administrators and staff as wholly responsible for lack or deficit, however,

since the participant argues that professional and personal resources limit the potential of the facility. In arguing as such, the participant engenders the critique with a sense of compassion through her hopes for a better situation. Couched within this critique is a suggestion that the space was a necessary context for relationships that provided support and healing. The duality of the institutional and the relational indicates, as many other passages, the importance of social service as a physical place and a performative entity.

Some participants framed the facility as forming a caring community around the girls. The text from one participant, for example, populated the facility with the insertion of themselves, the girls, and the staff. This participant presented the facility as an exclusively positive and generative place, mostly because of the people who worked on the inside and those who came in from the outside. It is noteworthy that this is the only text where the participant writes themselves into the space, and responds directly to the survey item that asked them what they would write on the walls of the facility after it was closed about the kind of place that it was. The participant writes:

I would write that there were a lot of girls who came in and out of the facility, many whose lives were turned around being there. I believe that the facility allowing positive programs such as our mentoring program and the Girl Scout program to be implemented there has helped facilitate growth in the girls, which gave the space a positive reputation. The dedication of the staff was valued by the girls and impacted them greatly and were great role models for the girls.

The participant indicates that the facility was valuable because it was the setting for support that the girls might not have access to otherwise - like the mentoring and the Girl Scout program (which was started by a former mentor). Here, the narrative may exclusively lean towards the positive given the participant's discursive insertion into the space and her

participation with both programs, which may have offset any negativity with an infusion of participation and purpose. As the text moves to discuss relationships on the inside, the participant suggests that the staff cared deeply for the girls and that the girls, reciprocally, cared for them. This turn suggests that she did not experience moments of disrespect, disregard, and discontent or that she did and perceived an enduring dedication underneath them. The participant ends with a suggestion of the value and greatness of the staff and their impact on the girls to bring the passage full-circle - as it begins inside, spills outside, and ends inside again – by manner of illustrating her opening assertion that “lives turned around being there.”

The last full text discussed in this section also addresses the facility as a physical space with a relational capacity that the participant draws herself into. This participant opens with an indication that the girls came together and formed a family between them. She positions this family as a temporary condition that the facility provided. The participant wrote:

Girls came together and some found the support and family they needed even if just for just a little while. Even if they have forgotten me I will never forget them or this place. It make look cold but there was warmth here. It will always be in my heart.

While the girls appear within this excerpt there is no reference to administrators, staff, or mentors. The participant’s memories and love appear at the facility, but she is not fully present in the text. The disembodied sense of these lines is compounded by the cross-temporal nature of “never” and “always,” which positions the facility and the girls as unforgettable and in her heart. This passage is unique in that it focuses on the girls so narrowly that it eclipses the adults. It reads as if there was simply a cold isolated space and the relational warmth that the girls kindled. By describing the space and the relationships as a form of respite, the participant works with the

loss of the facility and the families that it facilitated, “even if just for a little while.” Her position on the thin boundary between the past of what the facility was, the present loss, and the future space it will occupy only in her memory and heart provides a new depth of loss. Specifically, it suggests that the closing creates a loss of the potential for other girls to create a new family as well as the loss of a bridge between insiders and outsiders – each of whom have the capacity for temporary and enduring care.

These texts multiply populate the facility in addition to framing its existence as a space for girls to go, to find support and programming, and to be cared for by adults and each other. In locating the facility as a space of respite and reformulation these narratives draw the shape of the loss of the facility. Additionally, six texts explicitly deal with the loss of the facility. Some of these texts indicate a sense of personal sadness regarding the closing. Other texts, however, inferred a mixture of sadness and fear about what the closing would mean in others’ lives. One participant, for example, pleaded: “Don’t close, these girls need a place to grow and learn if they have no other options.” The loss of the facility was an important context for participants’ reflections and may have shaped these data so that they conveyed the good things that happened in the facility, the contradictions between the good and critiques, and a general sense of the loss surrounding the role that the facility played in the girls’ and mentors’ lives (Ayala & Galletta, 2012).

Summaries of the content of two additional passages indicate the ways that some participants articulated this loss in terms of the structural and personal dispossession around the facility and the girls. These passages surface a sense of omnipresence and cross-temporality. In



one passage, the participant recognizes that the girls had limited resources inside and outside, and that what they had access to within the facility should have had better. In bridging this lack of resources within the facility to the dearth of resources outside of it, the participant states “I would hate to see the facility closed and replaced by even fewer services.” Here, the participant draws its current closing into a wider span of social services in which the facility provided a semblance of safety, hope, and care to individuals who are precariously positioned by dispossession. The second half of the sentence also points to absence as a thing with heft through the use of the word “replaced.” The phrasing grapples with the logic of one thing being replaced by a lesser thing that cannot fill the footprint of the original space.

The second example also provides a ghostly sense of loss by projecting the specter of future girls onto the space. This participant also discusses a deficit of resources within the facility but magnifies the necessity of the space by contrasting it with a real jail where the girls’ problems will not be addressed because they will be “overlooked due to crowding and budget.” Juxtaposing the girls of the future, who will be trapped between the absence of where one service used to be and the routine absence of care for adult prisoners, this participant balances loss and critique. This participant also links the social context and trauma that contribute to some adolescents’ incarceration to that of adults, as she begins to imagine jail as a likely alternative to the facility for these girls. These specters of the past and future and the representations of the facility as good, good enough, and flawed circulate with their own gravity that is held in tension by the mentor’s perceptions of the girls and what she believes others do or do not know about them.

Across this section, these excerpts represent the facility as having filled gaps within the girls' access to the fullness of family, social services, and community. Participants suggested that the girls alone, and with the staff, formed relationships that were the basis of a sense of family and supportive socialization. In positioning the facility as providing both a place of physical safety and the space for positive relationships, these passages draw a line between the impact of abuse and neglect and a poverty of material and affective resources that were presented as somewhat buffered within the facility.

These narratives also illustrate a contradictory relationship to spaces that are closing as they emphasize the positive role of the facility at the same time that they include critiques about the physical and human resources that were devoted to the girls. The facility was positioned as a last hope for the girls and its loss was imagined as further obscuring positive outcomes for girls. The dissolution of the facility demonstrated the accuracy of concerns about the lack of investment that already circulated in the girls' disenfranchisement from society, other institutions like schools and health care - as well as communities and families which featured the care and effective resources that nurtured, guided, protected and supported the girls. In effect, this closure affirmed the girls' need, and surfaced the inability of the facility to address their dispossession alone.

### **Locating the facility as a space of contamination**

While the facility was mostly represented as serving an important function in the girls' lives, sixteen percent (n=5) of the narratives discussed the facility as a place of lack – and rarely referenced its usefulness or competencies. In discussing the few examples of such texts, the

following section includes arguments that the facility was a place that facilitated resources and relationships that shared the same poverty of hope and wealth of problems that encumbered the girls outside. The content of these passages frame the facility as a place of contamination - a jail, or a dull and isolating space. The construction of the passages affirms this sense as the participant resisted their discursive presence at the facility and did not narrate themselves into the space.

The first text in this section explicitly refers to the facility as a jail that missed the opportunity to be a structured and artful space where the girls could heal. To begin, the participant argues that a truly residential setting would best offset the effects of “their neighborhoods and poor family structures.” The participant wrote:

I think that jail is not the place for these girls. They need the support of a family home-like setting. They need the space to build bonds with other girls, the authority figures in the facility and the mentors that go there to help them. They need to be given skills such as knitting, drawing, music, art. They need a place where they can be exposed to greater hopes that they would never even imagine stuck in their neighborhoods and poor family structures. I think more training and education needs to be involved as well as personal and family therapy. These girls are hurt and they need a warm welcoming place that can lovingly discipline and show them where they have gone wrong but to also embrace them and show them that they can and are worth better.

In the construction of this text the participant uses the first person to transition the passage - first to link the girls to the facility and then to link the girls to the world outside. Outside of these two turns, the text indicates a, perhaps unconscious, sense of authority and fact rather than indicating the participant’s self-awareness that she is providing her situated knowledge through the use of a series of sentences that begin with “they need.” These statements suggest that the girls need a home-like setting, strong relationships with another, artistic

expression, and hope. The participant implicitly suggests that the architecture and administration of the facility demonstrate messages of unworthiness to the girls. The relationship between the girls' self-worth and the environment inside is framed as parallel to a lack of wraparound care and social service, authority figures, art, education, training as well as personal and familial counseling on the outside. These resources would enable girls to see their worth and heal from their trauma. But, instead the absence of these resources draws the facility in as only one point in the girls' accumulation dispossession.

Importantly, the participant provides these critiques as elements that would distinguish a good facility from the girls' other communities, or a jail. Implicit here is a view of jail as a place of punishment rather than rehabilitation that joins a conversation of modern critiques about the purpose that prisons should serve. As in other texts, this argument leaves the operation of jails and prisons for punishment unproblematized and, at the same time, it suggests that this situation calls for a different strategy because the girls are adolescents who have sustained trauma. To this last point, the text suggests the resistance to or inaccessibility of the recognition of the role of structural dispossession and trauma in the lives of adult prisoners who are implicitly dissociated from their child and adolescent biographies.

Another participant raises her concerns that the facility did more bad than good. In referencing the relationships between the girls themselves as well as with the staff, this participant positions the facility as a detached setting, rather than an institution that facilitated or inhibited such relationships:

The facility was a place where girls with problems met other girls with problems, socialized with one another and unfortunately probably hurt one another more than helped one another. A lot of isolation took place, though the staff did try.

This excerpt features a critique. It also features a compliment in another rare turn of positivity towards the staff. The participant indicates that the staff tried to engage with and care for the girls, but nonetheless a sort of isolation that took place. This works to compound the sense that the girls were left to their own devices with one another. The image of the girls alone in the context of the facility, recirculating hurt amongst one another, suggests that the physical isolation of being institutionalized is an extension of their isolation as people pushed to the outskirts of circles of social services, resourced neighborhoods, and families. Although inexplicit, the pain and isolation that the participant references link to a larger social comment about who becomes isolated and what society does not have to see, know, or address by keeping segments of dispossessed individuals silent, invisible, and locked away. As such this text speaks most directly to the facility as a contaminated space.

In linking the critiques about the facility and the detached nature of relationships within it, the last text in this section builds a vision of the kind of place that could provide respite and reformulation for the girls. This participant indicated that the facility could provide opportunities for the girls to learn to channel their creativity and direct it towards their pain and “nemeses,” as an effective use of the time and the space afforded by incarceration. She writes:

It's what didn't happen in the space. Don't just hold them, inspire them. Don't let them sit idly, but draw on their experiences and invite them to meet their nemeses head on through workshops, interactive role play, performance, art, music, and dance. Creativity is the key to a child, and a great means of channeling passion and pain. Ideally... more funding for a skilled and creative staff and for necessary equipment. Exposure to new worlds, new ideas, broader views, that which changes old patterns of thinking. Competent

counselors. Lots of physical activity/exercise. The facility lacked imagination and resources, and was too stale an environment to effect any lasting change.

Citing that “the facility lacked imagination and resources, and was too stale an environment to effect any lasting change,” this participant argued that the facility needed more funding, more resourceful staff, and equipment. The personal investment from individuals seems to fall unevenly on staff. However, the insertion of the personal level also makes the space for the entry of outsiders as conduits for art, healing, physical activity, and exposure to different points of view. This argument for more resources provides a space that can be taken up with the involvement of more people.

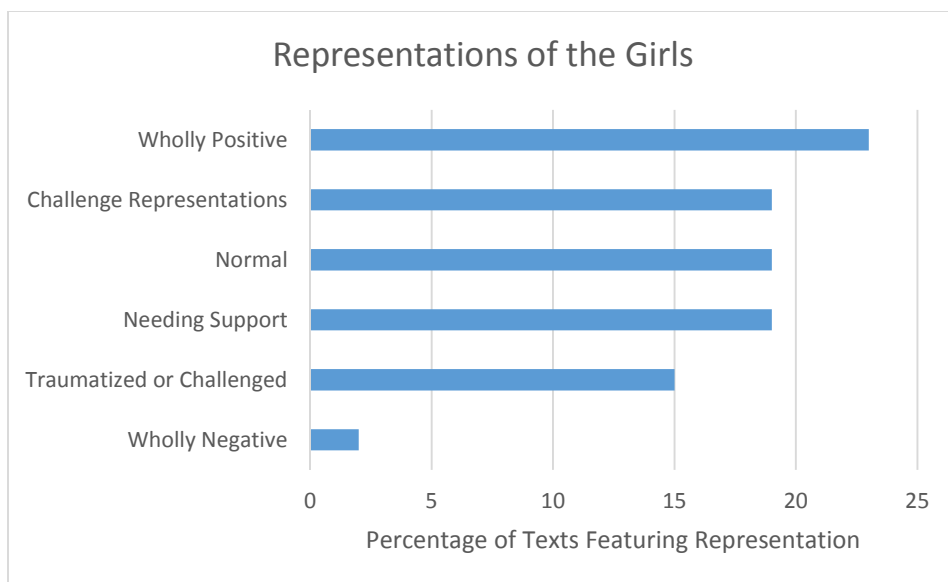
The excerpts in this section frame the facility as being largely unwilling or unable to create a physical and relational space that could buffer girls from structural and personal dispossession. These texts problematize the lack of institutional and interpersonal resources that circulated within the space. In extending this critique, these narratives highlight the challenges inherent in having a generative space sprout up and flourish within a social, institutional, and interpersonal landscape marked by deficit, loss, artlessness, and soullessness. Unlike the preceding section, these narratives suggest that respite and reformulation did not exist under the perception of the inhumane agendas inside and outside of the facility. The only loss referenced here was the lost opportunity for the facility as it existed to be more generative.

### **Locating the girls’ dispossession in a lack truthful representations**

In framing the reasons why girls were incarcerated and the role that the facility played as a site of respite or contamination, the narratives have begun to fit together the larger social,

institutional, and community context in which the participant formed relationships. The representations of the girls may illustrate the extent to which the participants' grappled with the discourses that surround girls' incarceration, and negotiated a relational space with girls who might have been written off as juvenile delinquents outside of the service learning context.

Discourses in the societal air that formed around the facility sometimes threatened to surface stereotypes about people of color, class, and crime within a few participant texts which indicated that the girls were nothing like images in the media. As one participant indicated, the girls 'weren't all sociopaths determined to destroy everything.' In countering such social representations, the participants primarily represented the girls in six ways: (1) as having only positive characteristics, (2) as challenging representations, (3) as being normal, (4) as needing support, (5) as having been traumatized in their biography, and (6) as having negative characteristics. Figure 7: Representations of the Girls, provides a snapshot of the frequency of these counter/representations.



*Figure 7: Representations of the Girls*

The following section presents some of the ways that the participants represented the girls along with some outliers as contrast points. These excerpts can be positioned as reports from the inside told on the outside to anonymous and unknown audiences because these responses were framed as things that most people should know about the girls, but don't.

As participants countered representations, they mostly represented the girls in a wholly positive light. Some of the participants wrote about what mentees looked like on the surface, the redeeming qualities that emerged in them at the same rate as they were given the chance to, and their ability to survive extra/ordinary pain and trauma. The first example in this section is presented as an introduction to the girls that includes the participant's initial perceptions:

They may seem, angry, mean, and rude when you first meet them, but once you get to know them, you will really see they are good kids. They just need more attention, and another chance to prove to themselves and others around them that they can do better.

Here, the participant seems to draw the reader in as a witness to her first moments within the facility as she found the girls to be unapproachable and brusque. The participant presents the girls' anger as an initial reaction that fell away with time as they co-created a relationship with their mentors and other members of the class. This progression suggests that the girls' perceived anger was disarmed as they learned that they had adult attention, and would have the opportunity to be regarded as good.

This text traces the shape of the participant's ability to really see the girls as she starts with their outside defense, and the inside goodness that was seemingly coaxed out by the act of paying attention. Resting on the word "prove," this text implicitly illustrates the mentor's and



mentee's ability to prove their initial thoughts wrong, the ability to prove to oneself that one is good, and the ability to prove one's goodness to others. In delivering a message that ultimately challenges the listeners to prove that the girls are bad and hopeless, this participant also provides a sense of objectivity through the construction of the text that places them and the audience on the outside - as free from this context as the girls they describe. As such, the participant demonstrates a refusal to put the girls or themselves into the facility. This sort of refusal thereby gains an element of protest that critiques the fact that these girls were placed in the facility to begin with when something so simple as listening to them illuminates how good they are. Beyond a sense objectivity, however, the unboundedness of the participant from the text is also a critique of the isolation that the facility provided from society as well as the isolation within the facility that surges throughout the texts in this chapter. The facility, again, becomes a space that the participant refuses to enter and enter the girls into, leaving everyone together on the outside.

The refrain of the girls being 'given a chance in society' also appeared in reference to the girls' biography, social context, and residence at the facility. Statements about giving the girls multiple chances emerged as discourses that suggest that individuals can be redeemed – even after having broken social contracts. Such phrases can be read as statements that hide the question of why these girls aren't given more chances instead of being locked up – a question with the potential to surface the twin isolation and lack of access that characterizes inside and outside contexts. One participant, wrote about the isolation of the girls in the facility, from society, and within their social contexts:

They [most people] should know that the girls all have a story to tell, and that they should not be dismissed from society or our minds just because they are in the facility. It should

be brought to light the impact that poverty, parental neglect, education, and abuse have on their lives.

The facility is invisible in the text and thus is positioned as being very far away, dark, or obscured (darkening or obscuring). The participant surfaces the invisible forces that incarcerated the girls and levels a critique at the function that such facilities can play in dismissing the girls – to isolate them and thereby hide the contributors that have paved their paths to incarceration. The participant argues that the facility and the societal, institutional, and interpersonal aspects that created the necessity for the facility should be “brought to light.” Here, the participant suggests that most people don’t know the structural and biographical influences that are directly tied to poverty, educational system deficits, and familial neglect and abuse in the girls’ lives. The pause provided by the use of “light” may be interpreted as a discursive strategy for introducing truths. It may also be read, however, as a hesitation about or discomfort in a personal intimacy with social contexts that prune the potential outcomes for girls and their use of a sense of hope, positivity, and truth. The participant’s text implies that if people knew the truth about the girls, rather than their representations, that society would address the injustices that structured their realities.

One participant extended the discussion of social context in the other direction, and tempered socio-political reasoning by adding the girls’ agency. In combining structure and agency into her statement, this participant opens with age in order to indicate a sense of unfairness that seemingly marked the girls’ lives. The participant opens:

They are kids, and some of them have been through things that no kid or even adult should be. I think that while they should definitely work on themselves and take

responsibility for their actions, they are products of their environments. Somewhere down the line someone who should have loved them, failed them.

The participant first works with a recognition of the girls' experience and trauma as something that no child or even adult should experience and thereby indicates the destabilizing effect of elements of some girls' biographies. The participant also suggests that the girls should be held accountable for what they have done and work towards improvement, but ends with "someone who should have loved them, failed them." The singularity of "someone" obscures the multiplicity of experiences and the accumulation of both love and failing to love in the girls' lives. Through the insertion of both "someone" and "I," however, the participant makes the space of the text habitable. The use of the first person affords the presence of the mentor who likely is a person with the capacity to love, although she is not directly responsible for the girls' founding traumas. It also affords the space for the reader to join and share the capacity for personal care, and societal accountability to construct a space of safety that may free the girls to work on and be accountable to themselves.

The next excerpt positions the girls as survivors who are strong beyond the measure of their age, their bodies, and their trauma. The first participant ties her former representation of the girls with trauma in a refrain of the capacity to dismantle the illusion of representations about the girls that this section opened with. The participant stated:

Like myself, I went into the class scared thinking these girls were bad and dangerous when in actuality they are victims of something out of their control. People need to know that although they may have made mistakes that landed them in a lock up facility they are not bad people and are probably the strongest group of people I have ever met.

A sort of reflexivity opens this passage as the participant reflects on her own fear of the girls, and then shifts to a recognition of the fear that the girls once held/hold having been “victims of something out of their control.” The participant adds that the girls made mistakes and were tossed into the facility – but that their mistakes don’t altogether detract from the perception that they are good. The participant also indicates that the girls’ mistakes should not be judged without being tempered by the acknowledgement of their trauma. The participant ends with a general statement about the girls, reiterating that they are not bad – a narrative turn that indicates that the girls are strong and brave as proof of their goodness and foregrounds their unglamorous survival.

The last excerpt troubles the narrative of the girls as mostly positive and sympathetic characters set within the facility. This participant cites the types of unglamorous survival that some girls participated in while inside: “Many of them hurt one another much more than we were let on to believe in the beginning. They had unique ways of creating weapons and fighting with one another.”

This participant contrasts what she now knows as the types physical violence that she presented as rife within the facility, against the sorts of relational and rare physical outbursts that mentors were “let on to believe.” As a unique report from the inside, this text suggests a situation within the facility where the potential for violence goes unnoticed. More importantly, however, this narrative contrasts the simple and essentialist notions of the girls that had the potential to romanticize them as people and problematize structure. The essentialist representation of the

girls as exclusively dangerous, however, also indicates the challenge of viewing the girls as complicated and mottled people.

Across these representations, participants characterized the girls that they came to know as smart and brave survivors of their trauma and under resourced social contexts. These characterizations challenge pre-existing representations, thoughts, and attitudes that the participants may have held. The discordance between the values assigned to the girls by the nature of their social and institutional locations may surface the need to reckon with the potential that inequality structured the girls' lives. The positivity with which the girls were characterized and its discordance between the representations of the girls and the space, for example, may surface the unfairness of the accumulation of dispossession inside and outside. Thus, this discord has the capacity to extend beyond the moment, and into the broad landscape of social reality. This dynamic, in particular, raises a sort of splitting that happens as participants negotiated between multiple meanings. The participant texts flowed across representations and counter-representations, good girls - bad girls, light-dark, someone-I, and good facility - bad facility as a way of creating the space to negotiate the complexity of meanings that surfaced in the service learning experience.

### **Discussion**

The inside and outside are close together across this work and reflect the participants' position at the intersection of circuits of dispossession and privilege. With their contact with the girls bounded by these dynamics, participants gained knowledge and articulated perceptions about the structural and biographical elements that contributed to girls' incarceration. These

contexts prefigured their experiences of the facility as an institution that buffered or expanded the distribution of violence against women, insufficient community resources, poverty, and personal abuse. The facility was positioned as a space for reformulation and contamination that housed girls who were represented as normal, traumatized, needing safety, support, and human and physical resources and they were characterized as smart, strong, and caring survivors rather than troubled sociopaths or bad people. The juxtaposition between the outside contexts of dispossession, its relationship to the facility as an institution, and the representations of the girls created a sort of dissonance in the participants in which implicit questions began to form. They ask: How can these girls have suffered so much? Why have they been placed in an institution with seemingly few resources? What would happen if other people knew these girls the way that we do?

The following section discusses the ways that the findings answer these questions with narratives that are interjected with socio-political critique - albeit disembodied from the participants who were largely absent as people within the space. In drawing on work about the narration of the closings of public spaces, this analysis will first discuss the loss and contradiction in such situations. These themes underscore the social and psychological processes in shifting the blame for dispossession towards people and institutions, rather than structural inequality. The loss and contradiction that is upbraided in the closing of the facility will then be extended to provide insight to the possibility that the participants must also grapple with two other losses. First, the findings are positioned as reflecting participants' loss of faith in the purpose and efficacy of institutions like the facility. Second, the findings are positioned as

reflecting the loss of dispositional attributions for girls' incarceration, which gives way to the possibility of seeing the workings of prejudice and discrimination in the girls' dispossession. To close, this discussion will highlight pedagogical components that may support service learners in navigating the institutional and representational elements of such experiences with greater criticality and a sense of interrelatedness, rather than projection and distance.

### **On the closing of the facility**

Notwithstanding the depth of explicitly critical reflection, the acknowledgment of the elements of social contexts that lead to incarceration, the characterization of the inside and outside world, and the girls who navigated these micro-circuits stood frozen under the reality of the closure of the facility. In some narratives, the loss of the facility registered in the key of an institutional erasure that represented an increasing divestment from girls who were already strategically abandoned by society and sometimes family. Participants expressed this loss through their concerns for the girls of the future who were agentially and ecologically positioned to need the shelter and relationships that were available in the space. The participants argued that these girls of the future would have nothing – not another chance, not the capacity to build new family, not respite, nor the experience of being within an institution that replicated the lack of investment seen on the outside in some ways.

Across these texts, the psychological impact of the loss of institutional spaces emerges as remembrance, contradiction, and institutional distrust and is tempered by the particularity of this service learning experience (Ayala & Galletta, 2012). The sense of loss that is articulated in these narratives finds greater socio-political shape when contextualized by work on the increasing

losses of other institutional spaces. The closings of public spaces that are embattled in themselves, and in their relations to state power, surface remembrances and contradictions (Ayala & Galletta, 2012). People who have been affiliated with such sites grapple with their loss through narratives of remembrance, which characterize the space as exclusively positive or mostly generative (Ayala & Galletta, 2012). Remembrance, as it appeared in Ayala and Galletta's (2012) work and in the present analysis, also represents a resistance or a plea for an institution to stay open. Such pleas have the potential serve as a grief-bound sort of bargaining where people may fear mentioning the challenges of the space alongside the redeeming qualities of it as a place of safety, close relationships, and possibility. This omission may respond to the anxiety of producing evidence that quietly affirms that its closing was the right choice. In other words, these remembrances demonstrate a societal context that forces individuals to metabolize the loss of institutions and the responsibility for the loss – as if the reasons for the closure were closer to the ground than the other institutions, policies, and economies which produced the erasure.

While remembrance appears as a form of resistance to the closure of a space, it can be complicated by the narration of negative incidences and critiques. These contradictions surface as expressions of wanting the space to remain open, locating the positive aspects of the institution, and critiquing how it needed to be better (Ayala & Galletta, 2012). The contradiction between wanting to place ultimate trust in institutions and needing to raise critiques emerges in the present analysis where participants positioned the facility as the last, imperfect hope. Here, the insistence on some sort of institutional space comes through as participants seemed unable to



imagine a situation where no facility exists, regardless of whether they positioned it as a site of respite or contamination. Despite this content, however, the contradictions in this argument are underscored in the construction of the passages which largely disappeared the mentors and thereby positioned the facility as inhabitable for them.

The inhabitability of the facility for most participants reads as a statement of privilege and access to generative and contaminated spaces. However, the emphasis on structure may have narrowed the opening for a singular individual to enter into the text through the first person. While this issue is partially methodological, it may also be rooted in the affordances and limitations faced by individuals as they construct structural narratives. The affordances and limitations may vary from the resistance to framing the self as an individual alone, the necessity for the self to be an agent in autobiographical narratives, as well as the anxiety surrounding discursively entering a contaminated and empty space.

In terms of how this experience might impact participants' experience of institutions, Ayala and Galletta's (2012) theorize closures as sites that produce a sense abandonment that can ultimately grow and fortify institutional distrust within people as they realize the social contract between society and people has been broken. Given this context, participants may be doubly impacted by a growing personal distrust of institutions and the disappointment that they imagine from the girls' perspective. Such distrust might manifest for participants who may find that the experience has dismantled a fantasy that institutions themselves are answers to structural and personal trauma. Through the instance of closure, the participants have become witnesses and victims to dispossession in ways that may limit or facilitate the pro-social behaviors associated

with critical reflection. For example, the closure may be an entry point that engenders solidarity across privilege and dispossession and provides a line that gathers people to transform the dissolution of social services, and the inhumanity of poverty, racism, and sexism. However, it can also incapacitate people by trapping the personages of their hope, generativity, and action of their experiences within the emptiness of the facility - as haunts without people to catalyze. From the perspective of such haunts, there is no other life-giving hope than that particular environment. Additionally, the incapacitation may stall the recognition of an institutional memory can travel across institutions (e.g. the mental health and health care clinics, schools, advocacy organizations, family services, and economic supports and transformations referenced across their attributions) with people as they work towards constructing generative futures with girls, families, communities, and societies before a last chance is dreamt of or necessitated. Thus, the experience may be as catalyzing as it is foreclosing in its ability to fixate change as emerging from any one site, any one person, any one ecological level – rather than each holding a piece of liberation. These narratives raise the sense of loss surrounding the space of respite and contamination, a site of memory, and a symbolic dispossession as important steps in the process of transformation that should be collectively addressed and mourned. To make institutional closures and the last days of such courses transition points rather than ends, the service learning experience should connect beyond the moment – to other sites, people, institutions, levels of impact, and opportunities. Thus, the synergy of working with others towards visions of liberation can be leveraged as spaces of creation after loss.

**On the dissolution of a representation.**

The mentors' position is a twist on the outsider-within in which the relatively privileged are exposed to the contradictions between the popular representations of an at-risk, juvenile delinquents and more accurate representations. These representations invent someone who is dispositionally bad and deserves to be locked up rather than a more accurate representation of the girls: as struggling, relatively unsupported, being angry, making mistakes, trying to stay safe, taking the heat for their boyfriends, assaulting people, and hurting themselves - while being brave, strong, happy, traumatized, goofy, scared, and conflicted.

However, the insistence on providing counter-representations about the girls is complicated in that it suggests that if people knew about the girls' goodness and trauma that they would care. As such, the emphasis on people's representations may actually displace any critique of the racism and classism that structural inequality operates through. These representational formulations, however, remain problematic only insofar as these narratives are read as the beginnings *and* endings of the capacity for critical reflection. The findings of this study, for example, begin to illustrate the difficulty in balancing the dissonance of (1) false representations of the girls, (2) understanding the realities of dispossession, and (3) acknowledgements about the illegitimacy of positions of relative privilege.

Before addressing what would need to be in place to facilitate the resolution of such personal and social dissonance, a final interpretation on the erasure of the self within the facility will be offered that addresses the anxieties that may arise from the experience to foreclose critical reflection, at least temporarily. The erasure of narrative presence may reflect a general

response to structural and biographical trauma, whereby locating the origins and impacts of both seems to be a painful endeavor. Certainly, contamination is at work here. It is also possible that this contamination reflects a deeper and psychoanalytic dissociation – a splitting and troubling of the space between present-absent - which indicates a personal response to trauma. At the same time, this absence demonstrates the psychic effect of having become dispossessed first by being physically in the institution and bound by its rules, and then by having been erased through the institution's closure, regardless of whether suggested the facility was a space of respite or contamination.

### **Locating the service learning course as a space of reformulation**

The personal and structural dispossession of the girls was compounded by their residence at an imperfect facility which carried the painfulness and isolation of being locked up - despite the efforts of the girls, staff, and outsiders. On the boundary between the inside and outside, participants' access to this trauma, loss, institutional experience, and relational connection combine and surface questions that help form the grounds for pedagogical suggestions. These questions span from the role and meaning of the advocacy of speaking on behalf and with others to working with intrapersonal tensions. They ask: What do people do now that they know the depths of dispossession that created the service learning opportunity? How can individuals access positions of generativity within structurally bound narratives? What is the psychic stuff of reconciling the self with the structural and personal pain of others?

As an exercise in the provocation and education of one's fears (English & Stengel, 2010), disrupting the boundaries between the self and the other in this educational experience unites the

preceding questions under the meta-inquiry of “who am I if you are not who I thought you were” and “who are we as a society when we construct then flee from contaminated spaces, and stay within them to work?” Formulating answers to these questions may frame the work undertaken in service learning courses. However, the service learning classroom must provide the space for the cognitive and affective ways that service learners navigate the fears and anxieties of difference as well as negotiate the reckoning of structural and personal trauma. Representational violence may also be added as a part of this mediation to work with the implicit and explicit ways that race, class, gender, and freedom are constructed in order to provide and eclipse the social distance that structural and interpersonal violence operate through.

Literature on critical consciousness already indicates pedagogical guides for use in such contexts that arise out of critical reflection. While this work has primarily been used with people of color it may also be effective with groups that are mixed on a variety of demographic indices. Work that addresses the development of critical consciousness among White people also argues the need to address fear, guilt, and anxiety when working across the critical trajectory. Thus, a mixed pedagogical model would include additional affective support, such that those who face the dissolution of representations of themselves and others as ‘beginners’ are supported, and those who are ‘experts’ in speaking and experiencing dissolution and dispossession personally also have the chance to recognize their fears and anxieties, which should by no means be taken for granted.

Work on the development of critical consciousness and multicultural competence provides a wealth of information on pedagogical strategies that can be used in classrooms. For

example, the literature suggests that several stages of critical reflection emerge that include the intellectual articulation of inequality, privilege, and dispossession, the emotional impact of understanding inequality, and an intention or commitment to promote social justice through activism (Carlson, Engbreston & Chamberlain, 2006; Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). The development of critical consciousness through reflection, however may be limited by the culture of the service learning classroom.

### **The culture of the service learning classroom**

Buckley and Foldy (2010) theorize psychological safety and identity safety as foundations for their pedagogical suggestions. Psychological safety is the sense that it is safe to take interpersonal risks in learning to discuss race and racism, and learning to tolerate the discomfort that expression and suppression brings (e.g. self-protective emotions including guilt, anger, shame and defense mechanisms that lead to withdrawal, passivity, and anger – that impede communication). Without this sense, students face difficulty in going against status quo, which broadly indicates the silence around race in the classroom and society as well and around anti-oppressive perspective that students may want to question or work through to figure out their position. Identity safety is the sense that one's social identity will be accepted and that they will not be shunned for their perspectives.

Settings engage social identity threat from a variety of sources in the education context which include the number of dis/similar individuals, rootedness of the setting in a philosophy of difference, and the extent to which social identities and representations are salient. Depending on these contexts people might be afraid to act in accordance with stereotypes or will act

stereotypical. White students may experience a greater degree of identity threat because whiteness represents a privileged social group and thus encourage students' fears of being perceived as racist as they work through their meanings, for example. This work is crucial in ways that suggest its necessity and, therefore, the necessity of creating effective classroom spaces. For example, the relationship between identity safety and a critical stance is supported with findings that indicate that as a person's identity is affirmed they make less biased statements about others and their empathy increases (Kerssen-Griep & Eifler, 2008). Both of these findings indicate the intergroup value of working with the self through critical reflection. In addressing the growth of self-acceptance and empowerment of teachers, they narrated moments within class where a solid sense of self also allowed students to engage with issues of race directly – at least in their ability to admit that they see race (Shockley, Bond & Rollins, 2008).

### **Exercises to develop**

Watts, Griffith and Abdul-Adi (1999) also elaborated five steps that comprise a process of coaching critical consciousness in which people engage in describing what they saw or experienced, what it meant, what evidence they based their analysis on, how they felt about it, to what they could do to create a better situation. This process grounds each stage on the continuum of socio-political development from acritical to liberatory : (1) the inability to identify inequalities in resources and the belief in stereotypic representations, (2) acknowledgment of unequal resources but a sense of complacency, (3) the awareness of inequality and concern, (4) the desire to learn more about inequality and ability to frame it's injustice as meriting efforts for

social transformation, and (5) the recognition of the salience and urgency of oppression as well as commitments and behaviors that seeks to address it.

Another cluster of recommendations seeks to engage students in experiential activities that help to relate personal attitudes and beliefs to power dynamics within the immediate group and society (Buckley & Foldy, 2010, Stephan & Finlay, 1999). A span of literature promotes group discussions, role-playing, and paraphrasing exercises to build critical reflection and also encourage a sense of empathy between people (Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Watts, Diemer, Voight, 2011). One example, of a group activity is to stage an intergroup conversation between two classmates who represent different social groups so that they can discuss the ways that their personal experiences have been tempered by dispossession and privilege. Following up this activity with a discussion or assignment that engages all students in identifying ‘where’ the social emerged in the individual accounts, and then reflecting on the extent to which these aspects of the position and experience resonated with them, could help to scaffold the experience. In situations where the level of psychological safety in the class is uncertain, individuals from outside of the class may represent their experiences. This adaptation may be particularly useful in situations where one of the discussants has the potential to be othered, whether by problematization or reification, by their minority status within the class (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005).

Given the particularistic nature of this service learning opportunity, the personal and vicarious trauma may also be attended to in expository and creative assignments, journaling or blogging, and classroom discussions that focus on projective ‘visual aids’ through which the



class can safely attend to their experiences. The institutional experience of the circuits of dispossession and privilege surface as entry points for acknowledging what it is like to be in the institutional space and more, what it is like to show up as moments thicken with trauma, injustice, and difficult reflections of the self. Critical reflection, including the construction of ethnographies of the entry, departure, and difficult turns along the experience may support students in recognizing their location in particular moments in ways that also ask students to see where elements of structure are. The work may be made more accessible with the instructor's construction of a word or concept bank from which students must draw to complete such assignments. Additionally, this work may be framed as a process of surfacing the narrative polyphonies that construct power, difference, deservingness, and advocacy. Such inquiries can make visible the differential construction of the self across sites where there are various relationships to one's access to privilege and dispossession.

Last, as the dissolution of such spaces may continue at a rampant pace, the presence and absence of service learning sites can be imagined. Such thought exercises may take the form of asking the students to address what does/could happen within society, community, family, and the individual (including the service learner and those within the site). Next, students might address the extent to which these levels shift in the presence and absence of the service learning site. This exercise may be accompanied with the construction of an alternate future where these spaces cannot exist because of a lack of state resources and/or necessity. Working with the dissolution of space may engage service learners in understanding their own meanings and help them imagine or practice service, writ large, beyond the course as well as beyond the space.

In working to build critical reflection at the intersection of dispossession and privilege, reflection may be balanced with or preceded by just being. The capacity for the service learning classroom to make and hold an explicit space for discomfort, fear, grief, relief, contradiction, and gratitude may ultimately be as important as any structured exercise. As such, a sense of psychological safety that makes uncomfortable feelings and thoughts more tolerable is a necessary to the experience.

### **Conclusion**

The exchange of the situated knowledges of insiders and outsiders is a currency that afforded the opportunity to imagine the circuits of dispossession and privilege as intersecting. Some service learners became role models, perhaps sharing their middle-class and college aspirations. Some service learners became subjects to some and teachers to others through their experience of their social contexts, sentences, and dreams. The space, however, also enabled the service learners to experience the reparative nature of relationships, the privilege of another's reflection, and the investment in border crossing at various levels. This inquiry surfaced four considerations that were phrased as tasks and emerged as points that can direct the experience towards reflection: (1) Locating the need for social equality and services; (2) Locating the service learning site as a space of respite and reformulation; (3) Locating the service learning site as a space of contamination, and (4) Locating the girls' dispossession in inaccurate representations. The challenges of narrating a sense of interrelatedness and action that emerged as participants engaged these considerations were read through the lens of the loss, remembrance, and contradiction that bounded everyone at the site by dispossession. As a salve

for the losses sustained in critical work, the wisdom of theories and practices that build critical and multicultural consciousness were drawn in as strategies to hold the dissolution of the faith in equitable social contexts, institutions, and representations. Rooting service learning courses in a culture of psychological and identity safety is integral. Such rooting provides the context where critical discussions and the emotional landscapes they create can be navigated towards a greater capacity to tolerate the dissolution-construction inherent in increasingly critical practices as the primary ways that educational spaces can reckon with the social and personal.

### **Interchapter: Switchbacks**

**Transformation.** The best way for me to talk about transformation is to use my own story in relation to this class. With every stage of personal growth the confidence I used to have in how smart, loving, in touch, and knowledgeable I was seems to fall away - perhaps as sacrifice to who I one day will be.

With the space of years since the course I have been able to look at the glaring omissions of myself and my experience from the course. Now, the word 'omissions' seems a little legal or clinical and may suggest some sort of willfulness but I don't want to use it that way. I want to use omissions as placeholders for what I will say one day to a class, to a group of girls in any context, to women on the inside. Class for me was this personal and social sort of reckoning that in retrospect I see as a beginning, a part, a singular step with intentions to make more. This is one of the most important gifts of the class for me – being able to see how the layers of recognition, support, anxiety, facing, reckoning, fear, stepping away, and resuming one's path fit together – not over the course of a semester but over years, decades, lifetimes even.

**Steps.** What I didn't know or could not articulate as the process of personal and social transformation or equality is just that – it's a process, a step, something more enduring. I think what kept me from articulating the process was some magical thinking whereby students would step into class, be blown away by some fascinating combination of the person I am with and against the person who I probably 'look like,' my interactive teaching style, a slew of experiential exercises, and the approachable journal articles that I built into the textual standbys

in the class. Within this egotism is probably the truth of how I appeared or what my presence meant to some students.

Only recently, as I've read through some of the data from this study, can I recognize my grandiosity in wanting students in my class to be transformed into sensitive-critical beings in the course of the semester. I assumed that they would be forever changed and that such change would be palpable or audible immediately or years later. But, when I started looking at some of the data I thought – who are these people? What's with the self-righteous tone? Why would they think meeting with mentees for two hours a week could change mentees' mindsets and lives so drastically? How could they think their mentees' inability to stay out of trouble at the facility was a reflection of them? I was offended and a bit snarky about it, then wide-eyed about how these assumptions about the great and dire impact the mentors had on mentees were side-by-side with fear, helplessness, criticality, and acriticality. It didn't take too long for me to realize that I shared the same views – that one person, or even a room full of “like-minded people” could reform centuries-worth of a narrow sort of relationship with ourselves and others. I too had the neoliberal-inspired dream that the individual or group of individuals were self-determined. This is true but we also go back into the world with people who are grappling with inequality from their own positions and in their own ways.

For four months in 2010 I was sick. It started with itchiness and fatigue, which is normal given my relationship with Lupus. It evolved into something quite different though. My skin was a brittle yet bubbling collection of cells too tender and painful to let my neck turn. My face and neck went into weeping thick yellow and rancid mucous. I was pretty utterly convinced that my body was rotting off the bone. Every night as I lie awake itching or trying not to itch, trying to meditate or trying to think, layering cool wet cloths on my skin or slathering it in honey. I felt as if I were simply existing in this prison of a body I had built. Maggot Brain, one of the best known Funkadelic albums, opens with

Clinton giving a monologue ending with “I knew I had to rise above it all or drown in my ooooooowwwwwn shit.” That’s where I was, drowning in my own shit, or at least that’s how it felt.

During this time I did three things. I taught Mentoring and Adolescent Development and I continued my art apprenticeship with an artist, healer, and now friend. The last thing I did was go to acupuncture. These three things I credit with saving my life – which is why I had to do them, tired and achy, itchy and weeping. One of the first times I was in acupuncture I was talking to Dr. Nu who is a man of few words – all seemingly profound. I asked him what his favorite part about his job was and he said that he got a chance to do something good. He looked at me saying “who knows maybe in the past I did something bad to you, now I can make it right.” I think I kind of nodded before I laid on the table and he put needles in my body in rapid staccato.

**Cocoon.** It’s an intimate moment where we find ourselves broken/healing. Having people look at our skin and eyes, to touch and find a pulse without a stethoscope, and look at a tongue and see one’s history. Dr. Nu placed this moment at the edge of past and the future, which does seem like the most appropriate time and place for healing and transformation. Later at home with my body weeping and tears in my eyes and pain and itching and fatigue, I would sit on the couch with oil pastels and huge pieces of newspaper print art sheets. I drew, houses, homes, pickaninnies - whimsical and serious, dozens of teeth chattering, and the landmines that I’m convinced most little girls walk through, especially little Black girls growing insularly in little White suburbs.

My world suddenly insular, even for me given my hermit upbringing and tendencies, was good medicine. I had become monastic. But, the relationship I had with the folks in the course and in the facility let me feel a community that I hadn’t before. This was also my gauzy cocoon in some ways. Before the second semester, I was busily planning the course and wrote down the prompt “if you could tell only one story about your life what would it be.” I can’t say which, but

I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be about my sexuality, class, gender, or race – or any combinations thereof. Certainly these things are the stuff of connection between folks and were the pivot points for what I wanted to do with the course – but, I'm interested in something more enduring that I don't yet know the shape of.

**Appearances.** Through this course as it was and the projections the residents and students and staff allowed me to shine on their bodies, I began to be redeemed. Allowing a part of myself – teacher, leader, performer, student, witness, and survivor - a bit more space to step back into my body. Directly after each class and certainly each semester, I felt a little more like my true self having been trusted, laughed with, shocked with, institutionalized, and personified by people who could have very well remained perfect strangers but by no ordinary ends or means became part of my self.

Through this course as it was and the projections that I let students, residents, and staff shine on my body, I have been able to see myself between the prescriptions about me as a young(ish) Black, woman, formally-educated, middle-classed, and queer(ish) and the parts of it I think are provocative or generative; useless fiction, and deeper truth. Too, I appreciate the flexible self that is/was afforded by being cast as a hippie, anarchist, black separatist, shaman, feminist, motivational speaker - however people chose to cast me. Certainly, most of these are part of my narrative identity inside and outside of class at some point.

**Moving. Still.** William James suggested that we have as many selves as we have people to reflect or mirror us, a unified energy or being that lies between us and other people that I imagine kind of hanging around in a cloud around our bodies. I believe this. I also believe that

structural inequality is a collection of activity undertaken by selves that hangs out in the corners of classroom walls, residential facilities, dark corners of narrative memory and reality, and doctor's offices – a collective debt to be repaid in grappling with what was lost, what we need, and how to move forward through progress and often with resistance. I'm working on seeing this course, and all of the stories that populated it, as trying to acknowledge and address debt as painfully and as playfully as it needs to be for the most profound work, eventually.

**Switchbacks.** I'm not convinced that we were defined by any story. Nor am I convinced that our experiences lie tied and confined by these pages. But, I want to write about these experiences because I've only spoken about them hitherto. And I want to lay out one of the possibilities for this experience so that people can walk it with me and wonder why I took this turn, wrote any one of these vignettes and left others in almost silence. I am strategically laying down this road now so that I can walk it the next time, and the next time after that I can walk it with others. I write this space in to make community, first out of words and sentences, and then out of the remnants of all the mentors and girls that have been very much alive in my heart and mind as I think about, weep over, analyze, and let myself be amazed that I had this really intense few years of experience. And in holding this space I honor those of us showing up as we can though we aren't done, aren't ready, aren't yet vocal. We are working – nevertheless- through lives wrought tenuous with the ignorance, silence, shame, loud-talking-over, and fast movements that cover up how much work it is to get to the other side of any inequality and violence at any point along the personal to social continuum.

**Gratitude.**



## Chapter 6: Discussion - Drawing Us In

Civic engagement can become a massive volunteer effort to pick up the pieces of a neo-liberal society; a strategy that accommodates, rather than one that contests, inequality gaps and social injustice. If we mean something deeper, if we mean a commitment, a value, an institutional shift in the membrane between the university and the community, what would that look like? To address the question of what bold civic engagement might look like, I want to talk a bit about public science or critical civic research; research that examines “what is” but also expands the landscape for “what could be,” engaging audiences in widening the social imagination for “what must be.” --Michelle Fine

The other-in-the-self, that is, the self as extended to the environment, as an alternative to the idea of self-contained individualism, so typical in mainstream psychological theories of the self and, more generally, of the Western image of the person; relative dominance between positions in the self, which mirror and answer power differences between individuals, groups, and cultures in a world where people are different, yet intensely interconnected; and emotions as emanating from contact between people at the interfaces of their communities (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

Service learning courses provide the opportunity for a sort of civic engagement in which the boundary between the university and community begins to shift. As Fine (2012) worries, however, such boundary shifting may turn into a way of acritically engaging with institutions and others where the privilege and dispossession that constructs social life is obscured. Service learners may take what they have experienced across a course and translate it into a flat representation of the neediness of the other, for example. Such a perspective might limit the view of the agency of the other and also how individuals are contextualized by under/resourced immediate social spheres, communities, institutions, and representations that hold inequalities in place. In other words, while busily cleaning up the collateral damage of those who fall within and between the university and the community, service learners may miss the unequal distribution of access, affect, trauma, and resources that are often divvied by race, class, and gender. This is only one of the potential outcomes of service learning, however, and this flow

may be circumvented, lived through, and leveraged within such courses. Some commitments of critical service learning, for example, stress the need to grapple with representations of others, power differences and equality within relationships, as well as the social and historical underpinnings that construct the service learning site (Kinefuchi, 2010).

### **What Was and What Could Be**

The narratives from service learners in this study address the capacity for critical consciousness and relationality along this experience. These narratives also show the entry points where critical education can encourage the contestation of ‘what is’ the reality of privilege and dispossession, and for creating small moments of equality as a practice of imagining ‘what could be.’ These narratives illustrate the deepening of a contextual awareness of the factors that contribute to girls’ incarceration: violence against women, under-resourced institutions and communities, and familial neglect. These narratives address the temporary safety of the facility, swells of personal care, and love that people in and across institutions and families provide as a reality that stands aside what contributes to girls’ incarceration. The safety and swells of care, in particular, shape a vision of what could be through the narratives about: the role of the facility in girls’ lives, some of the girls’ families, some of the relationships between mentors and mentees, and what could happen if more of people cared about the girls.

This glimpse of what is and what could be was made possible by service learners’ position on the boundary between the university and the community; the outside and the inside. The shifting of this boundary necessitates many other shifts: the institutional role, relationships between self and other, and construction of representations of the girls and the facility, and the

biographical and social group histories that converged in mentoring relationships. While these began to shift in these narratives, the silence around the explicit naming of differences in race and class remained static, as did the similarities in gender across the sample of participants and the girls. These silences indicate the threat that naming social group differences and similarities posed for service learners, although many could articulate color-blind and class-blind critiques. Despite these silences, such differences and similarities were communicated through the narrative content and presence within participant discussions. How these power differences are done may provide a point of reflection that deepens the critical recognition within the construction of the personal, interpersonal, and institutional. These silences against these actions underscore the difficulty in seeing inequality as a decontextualized object, and the relative ease of seeing *how* it works within a context. At the same time, the silences may suggest the ways in which the use of the word “mentor” frames a hierarchy that does the work of holding raced and classed meanings. The complications brought by the use of this word prefigures a difference that is difficult to be undone, at least without the explicit deconstruction of the weight the terms carries across the institutional boundary that separates the university and the community. Addressing the themes that emerged in these data is one way of making visible the work of dispossession and privilege – racism and classism in particular. Naming and identifying social inequality as it works through individual bodies might afford more deeply critical outcomes and a potentially greater risk or sense of threat.

However, such work may be foregrounded with the reality of what is and the goal of constructing what could be as a societal and intrapersonal, existential exercise. Here, the focus

on what could be is supported by a variety of viewpoints that suggest the necessity of a visionary imagination to create social change. James (1890), for example, addressed this potential in his discussion about the process of self-growth being filled with discomfort, sorrow, loss, responsibility, and guilt to the extent that self-transformation is stalled or resisted. James (1890) suggested that people could continue to transform through resistance by using the imagination of a supportive other or others, or even a vision of society. Especially if criticality counters the positions and values of society or an individual's immediate social sphere, this imagination of others and a society that aligns with their new values may help the self to continue to inhabit new realities and possibilities.

Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis' (2010) also emphasize imagination. Imagination is crucial to the ability to shift into the affective, cognitive, and ecological space of another – after, or by way of helping one to articulate the indices of one's own dispossession and privilege. The authors refer to the personal imagination as a situated imagination that is integral to producing and supporting situated knowledges. In addition to helping people know the fullness of the material ways in which structural inequality produces social life, imagination is also key in constructing a vision of equality that is readily habitable and provides a hope that may sustain against the apathy that sometimes accompanies reality.

Most directly, however, Hermans (2012) and Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) detailed a method of imagining or realizing the interconnection between self and other; self and society. These authors seek to understand how globalization and the associated anxieties and uncertainties of contact, difference, and power are inscribed onto the bodies and the dialogical

processes of individuals and relationships (Hermans, 2012; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). This work makes it possible to imagine the multiplicities of positions with different relations to privilege and dispossession as part of the self. In the theory of the self as a society of mind, for example, each position available to the self reflects an external position within society. These positions have different voices, independent perspectives, and separate functions (Hermans, 2012) that hold a space for the integration of all aspects - from dispossession to privilege, or from thought to affect. Hermans (2012), for example, suggests that the self already has the other within it as a position, a voice, and a reflection. Here the self is a stage across which the voices and power dynamics between individuals, groups, and cultures that engage with one another. Where the self can negotiate different internal relationships between the voices of the privileged and dispossessed, Hermans (2012) suggests that the potential for a parallel and external relationship becomes increasingly possible.

The inspiration of such work begins to surface the possibility that social inequality is the cause and consequence of an existential dilemma of intrapersonal fracture and disintegration. This potentiality casts the positions, discourses, and meanings that emerged across this study as points of reflection that may promote a generative acknowledgement of fracture, experiments in personal integration, and grounded examples of how privilege and dispossession work. Additionally, an understanding of the challenges of the totality of such service learning experiences encourages ways to frame the potential use of these themes as pivot points between the starkness of social reality and the visionary imagination that guides the practice of social change. The image and felt sense of pivoting is important to establishing a sense of movement

across binaries that can be made in successive steps that symbolize the university and facility; sameness and difference; reality and possibility. The movement holds vitality and stagnating on either side just holds still.

In the spirit of dynamism, the research questions that were asked at the sites of the personal, interpersonal, and institutional are now offered throughout this discussion with revisions. They have been revised based on the suggestions of findings that describe what was available at each site and what could be. These questions include: (1) What might mutual transformation look and feel like?; (2) How do inside and outside solidarities shift in order to communicate the need for advocacy?; and, (3) What do people have to be prepared to lose and grieve to address the relationships to privilege and dispossession that they and others live with and enact? While the answers to these questions will not be resolved in the following pages (and should not be resolved as a wholly individual process), the negotiation of the answers within the small collectivities of service learning courses offers the possibility of conceiving a reflexive and responsive university, self, and vision of social change.

In addressing each question in turn, the following section returns to themes that emerged at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional sites. The reflections about these themes includes a focus on two exemplars that represent the binary anchors for each site, and the beginning of an answer for the revised question. Then, the most critical exemplar will be used to illustrate some of the potential that may surface if courses explicitly deploy these themes as starting points or tools. This section will then turn towards the particulars that need to be resolved as these findings

are generalized, and will close with an afterword about the commitments that this work should be applied with.

### **The personal site: What might mutual transformation look and feel like?**

At the personal site, the framing of the service learner as an agent of transformation was examined. This inquiry highlighted the institutional affiliation with the university and the facility as shaping the role of the mentors and therefore the actions and meanings that they drew from their experience. In examining how the mentors positioned themselves and others within the service learning site, four positions for the mentor emerged. First, mentors positioned themselves as role models for the girls by using their status as college students as markers of their capacity to lead the girls. Mentors also positioned themselves as outsiders who witnessed the lack of resources or violence at the facility from a distance. As mentors positioned themselves as future professionals they addressed themselves as students who were learning clinical and counseling skills or gaining experience working with ‘a population,’ with varying degrees of distance and presence. Last, mentors positioned themselves as recipients of transformation as they questioned the degree to which they and the girls benefited from the experience.

Examples of the first and the last positions excavate the underpinning of the affiliation with the spaces of the university and the facility as a fundamental binary across which the critical potential of the experience was negotiated. The first text represents the mentor as role model position that is most rooted in the affiliation with the university. In this position, mentors derived a sense of their role at the service learning site from their affiliation with the university - their mobility, their cultural capital, and their desire to share each. The participant indicates:

I tried my best to guide them towards the right path, one where they could be successful and help them see why punching their teachers and selling drugs were not good ways in which to behave. I gave them alternative ideas about how to go about becoming successful other than those they knew about such as college, scholarships and jobs.

This participant, for example, used directional words and phrases like “guide them towards the right path,” and “gave them alternate ideas.” These phrases provide the sense of the mentor’s mobility that she imparts to the girls so that they know the right ways to behave and succeed.

At the opposite end of the binary, mentors derived a sense of their role from their affiliation with the facility: their relationships and extracurricular work. For example, the participant in the second text introduced a similar position of the mentor as role model, and referred to the participant as a university student and the girl as an inmate. However, as this excerpt describes the intimacy growing between the pair, the mentor’s role dissolves into a series of collectivities that transition her from being a role model to being transformed. The participant begins:

As a psychology student I had the wonderful experience of taking a class on mentoring adolescents. The class involved visiting a juvenile women’s jail as a class group once a week and then mentoring an inmate during one on one session once a week. My mentee was a girl named Lisa. When I met Lisa she was 16, pregnant, and spending the next year in jail. I was a fresh “face to her. I was there to listen and cared about what she had to say. After realizing I was genuinely interested, she began to really open up. Having that kind of impact on a person made me want to be there for others - more of the girls. That desire led a classmate and I to start a cheerleading program at the facility... Although at first it was a struggle to get them to work together, little by little egos disappeared and team work emerged. We were able to get the girls to trust each other enough to learn stunts and gymnastics. They were able to learn an entire routine and performed it during family day. The difference between the first practice and the family day performance was night and day. Incredible. I cried tears of joy as they performed watching. I can honestly say that as much as I hope I had a big impact in Lisa’s and the rest of the girls’ lives, I think they had a bigger impact on mine.



At the turn where the participant realizes that she'd like to "be there for others – more of the girls," she most clearly dissolves her institutional role into a collectivity with a classmate. This collectivity was then extended to all of the girls in the facility and further extended to include all of the families at Family Day. This participant ends with a claim that she hopes she had as much impact as she received. In effect, she demonstrates that contesting the privilege of her affiliation with the university by extending herself into the facility troubled the focus on transforming the mentee in ways that engaged the possibility for the mentor's transformation.

These two quotes exemplify the anchors of the binary of university and facility affiliation. In comparing these positions along with those that lie in between them, one finding is that the service learners who wrote themselves into the space of the facility referenced the possibility of their own transformation to a greater degree than narratives that centralized the role of transforming the other. In other words, the service learners' institutional affiliation had the potential to become another layer of privilege that could foreclose mentors' relationships, the parts of themselves they share with others, and their acknowledgement of how they were impacted.

This finding suggests the affordances of helping service learners to shift their perceived roles in ways that encourage them to contest who owns transformation and thereby reposition the scope of the impact of the service learning experience. To animate this finding within service learning, classes may engage in discussions about the potentials of service learning. Service learning classrooms, for example, may address questions about what mutual transformation would look and feel like. Largely, these data suggest that mutual transformation looks like

presence and participation at the service learning site and may feel like a sense of productive uncertainty about the reciprocity of service learning exchanges. However, contesting transformation might also include articulating how and why service learners imagine the impact of the experience on themselves and others. Such reflections can facilitate service learners in grappling with the hierarchies that can lie dormant and guide the ways that service learners can engage in negotiating with the discursive framing of service learning, the enactments of racialized and classed privilege and dispossession within relationships and at the site, and the historical and institutional flows that positions of impermeability perpetuate.

**The interpersonal site: How do inside and outside solidarities shift in order to communicate the need for advocacy?**

In turning to the interpersonal site, narratives were examined for the ways that discourses of sameness and difference emerged to forge a sense of solidarity in mentors. Five narrative strategies emerged in this examination that engaged different emphases on sameness and difference. In finding and telling a human story about the young women in the institution, for example, participants narrated a human collectivity based on the sameness between all people. Second, participants also entered the space of the facility and the classroom in ways that made collectivities of everyone in those spaces – a ‘we’ constituted by shared presence and shared affect. In the third discourse, participants narrated a collectivity between the mentor-mentee pair. Here mentors discussed sharing a specific trauma with their mentee or hearing about a trauma or dispossession that their mentee had – an abusive family, a lack of larger social support - in ways that drew in differences between them. In the fourth discourse, loving and hoping for the future,

participants also drew in sameness and difference as they built a sense of solidarity from the shared space of the facility. In this discourse, participants contemplated what would happen when they and the girls left the facility which raised concern about the unsafe environments of some of the girls and the possibility of their recidivism. In the last discourse, participants wished things were different and recognized themselves as partially responsible for creating change. Difference emerged most clearly as participants narrated a sense of responsibility for recognizing and advocating for a gamut of changes along the societal to personal continuum of social problems: the representations of the girls, lack of community resources, and abuse and neglect in girls' immediate social spheres. The sense of solidarity alternated between a solidarity with the girls and a solidarity with outsiders who could advocate for larger societal changes.

The examples that represent the first and the last themes illustrate how the discourses of sameness and difference were negotiated to construct a sense of solidarity. The first text suggests that the participant found a way to tell a human story about her mentee on the inside. This participant suggests that love changed her perspective as she begins:

Hearing about her love for her family, especially her mom, grandma and baby cousin made my heart feel warm... This totally changed my view on not only my mentee, but all the girls because it made me think about the people they have home and maybe they got caught up in terrible situations and that they aren't "bad people" like what I thought originally going into this class.

As the participant explains, hearing that the girl was lovable and that she was loving humanized the mentee in the eyes of the mentor. In telling the story of this moment, the mentee is characterized as knowable and human rather than being a caricature of a bad person. The sense of humanity that this participant found spread to include all of the girls.

Meanwhile at the other end of the discursive continuum, the participant in the second text leads with difference by indicating the environmental and community resources that were perceived as unavailable to the girls.

...given a better environment, associations and resources, these girls could take their immense pain and struggle and turn it into great self-empowerment. How their youthful spirits transcended their adversity, and that given the appropriate and consistent guidance and attention that perhaps, just perhaps, they could find a way out...I felt their potential, their gifts, their frustrations, their stifled dreams and hopes. I felt them. They had become a part of me. That they were my children, everyone's children, and we had a responsibility to see that they were safe and flourishing.

This text illustrates how the participant used an embodied sense of connection as a preface to conjugating the responsibility for helping the girls achieve well-being. This narrative constructs a convergence of expansive solidarities that increasingly implicate the self, as well as others beyond the facility. For example, I-them and they-me emerged as preludes to constructing a solidarity comprised of “everyone,” or “we” who could participate in the moment with our personal relationships on the inside, and could advocate for better environments, associations, and resources on the outside.

One of the findings that emerged across these binary anchors, and the discourses in between, was that the scope of personal to social challenges addressed in the narratives was related to the scope of the collectivity that was engaged - from humanity at large to members of society that created and could help address these social problems. This finding suggests participants’ perceived the necessity to broach the subject of solidarity in ways that engaged the assumption of the girls’ lack of humanity and difference so that participants could be in solidarity with the mentees and the outside audiences. At the same time, this finding can be

interpreted as the fragility of solidarities under the threat of naming explicit differences. While this finding begins to inform a larger question of how inside-outside solidarities are communicated to endear advocacy, it also points to the complications of forging solidarities through their seeming need to be true to the set of experiences from the service learning site as well as the sensitivity of outside audiences.

In engaging the relationship between the discourses of sameness and difference in service learning courses, the explicit use of race and class may enter the discussion to help participants understand the critical value of erasing and claiming social difference – in interpersonal interactions, and inequality at the societal level. Using the second text as an example, students may be engaged in addressing the barriers that keep girls from better environments, associations and resources. In the context of this service learning experience, this discussion might also include how the girls' isolation from society. Further it could address how the raced and classed representations about the girls and the facility may keep outsiders from seeing and acknowledging these factors. This example also surfaces the conjugation of responsibility for the girls' well-being such that the other can become part of the self in ways that encourage an interpersonal, and then social sense of responsibility. Representations might also surface in such conversations to the extent that the classroom community can discuss why other people do not feel a sense of responsibility for the girls - why a felt sense of union, sympathy, and compassion is difficult. Such work may provide the opportunity to build critical forms of solidarity because it erases the sense of an absolute oppressor or victim by complicating the representations of every individual with elements of both (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005).

Based on these findings, attending to what could be made of the service learning experience, and how it can extend beyond the walls of the service learning site and classroom may emerge from understanding how inside and outside solidarities shift in order to communicate the need for advocacy. In some cases the inside and outside solidarities are the same solidarity of humanity. In others, the service learner suggests a parallel solidarity with the girls on the inside and advocates on the outside. However, the presumed link across these solidarities is the body which increasingly shows up as unified – in one instance it's a human silhouette and in the other it's a silhouette with care, worry, intention, and a sense of the use of personal mobility for mobilizing others. In both instances, the inability to name a racialized and classed body as a participant in solidarity seems to represent an erasure that may ultimately decrease the meaningfulness and efficiency of any potential advocacy.

**The institutional site: What do people have to be prepared to lose and grieve to address the relationships to privilege and dispossession that they and others live with and enact?**

The extension of the scope of problems around girls and the strategies for forging a sense of solidarity leads directly to the last question at the institutional site. Here, the critical meanings that were available across the consideration of the dispossession inside and outside of the facility were examined. The themes that emerged located the facility as a space of respite and reformulation where girls were relieved, temporarily, from the disenfranchisement that some of the girls experienced in institutions of education and health care, and in personal situations where they were being hurt. The facility, however, was also narrated as an extension of this dispossession, and was positioned as a space of contamination in the second location. Third,

participants located a need for greater institutional and community services as well as a resolution of societal level phenomena like violence against women, sexual trafficking, and poverty. Last, participants located the problem of girls' disenfranchisement in the sorts of representations that circulated around the girls that seemingly justified their dispossession, inside and outside,

In this section, the closure of the facility surfaced within participant responses in ways that indicated that its erasure had the potential to draw participants into their own loss surrounding the site – the loss of their memories, efforts, and mobilization towards addressing their concerns. At the same time, the closure surfaced a frightening thought for some college students: the potential loss of faith in public institutions to 'fix' the injustice of the outside world. This may have been a threatening thought whether participants characterized the facility as good, good but problematic, or wholly problematized.

In examples of the first and last meanings, different senses of loss emerged along the binary between the inside and outside. These two texts illustrate the anchors of this binary and engage representations about the facility and the girls. In the first text, the participant provides an inside view of the lack of physical and human recourses that circulated within the facility. Although this participant indicates that the facility was not good enough, she expresses that it still holds value in the girls' lives.

...it was by no means a perfect place, there were issues in the way some of the staff viewed the girls and in the limited resources the girls had access to, they deserved better, but at least the facility was something. I would hate to see the facility closed and replaced by even fewer services.

In this text, the participant's use of the words "replaced by even fewer services" draws an equation of the closure where the loss isn't pure absence but is a thing that has a heft, a weight that can't logically be counterbalanced by anything less. Additionally, in positioning the facility as a service, this participant suggests that the facility served a function that was much broader than a prison or a jail.

On the other end of the critical continuum, the text from the participant in the second quote indicates that the girls have biographies that shaped their location in the facility, and that their incarceration should not allow people to dismiss them. The participant begins:

They [most people] should know that the girls all have a story to tell, and that they should not be dismissed from society or our minds just because they are in the facility. It should be brought to light the impact that poverty, parental neglect, education, and abuse have on their lives.

Across this text, the participant suggests that the true representations of the girls need to be brought to light. The participant signals the necessity for the loss of false representations. Here, she argues that in the light of truth about the girls' circumstances that people will care, and that care will mobilize the dissolution of trauma from societal-level poverty to personal abuse.

In comparing these anchors and the meanings that lie in between, one of the findings is that a sense of loss may characterize part of the process of building a critical lens. This loss indicates the integral affective stuff that service learners face as they find that institutions are not entirely equipped to address social problems, that the people within them are more than one-dimensional caricatures, and that the false representations about institutions and the people within them may hold inequality in place.



However, these narratives also created an alternative for the girls -from a resourced facility to the sorts of societal care and advocacy that would make such physical and human resources available, or the sort of generative social world that would undermine the production and administration of such help. This construction of possibility included generative institutions, accurate representations of the girls, and access to social and personal care as images of what could be instead of what is. In the broadest terms, the narratives about what is and what could be comprehensively addressed the equalization or eradication of the trauma-inducing factors like violence against women, poverty, neglect and abuse. The meanings underscored the need to alternately attend to reality and possibility as a strategy for incorporating the starkness of dispossession and the vision and affect necessary to transform it.

In extending the inquiry at this site based, the question about what people have to be prepared to lose and grieve in order to face the privilege and dispossession that shapes social life surfaces. These data begin to show that people must question the faith that they put in institutions to buffer the harsh realities of inequality, and that people should be prepared to lose the representations of people as troubled and contaminated. Instead, people must work to examine what is happening to them through bodies, communities, and institutions and what they, in turn, do. For the service learning classroom to be a container where loss can be facilitated, courses may attend to helping people construct a sense of possibility. Some work indicates the value of assessing what's right and what's not about a situation and envisioning the possibilities of a situation, for example. Here, fitting everyday life to "higher principles" can be extended to address the values that institutions, societies, and communities need to live by (Watts, Griffith &

Abdul-Adil, 1999). A sense of possibility may be key in constructing a vision of equality that is readily habitable. Approaching the construction of this vision as a task of one's personal-social purpose and destiny may also provide urgency to imagining and creating possibility from one's situated perspective (Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

In short, possibility provides the conceptual space within the experience to lose-create; be disappointed and motivated; dispossessed and engaged. In other words, service learners may need to be supported in feeling a sense of loss while interacting with other people's lives in ways that lead them to question what may be their fundamental beliefs about society. Simultaneously, they should be supported in constructing a vision of equality that they can begin to demonstrate in their interactions at the service learning site, their reflections on the societal distance between representations and reality, and their advocacy for social and personal contexts that lead to equality.

In extending the necessity and use of the imagination to the classroom, several strategies emerge that encourage the use of alternating sides of a dialectic of reality and possibility. For instance, the conditions that society needs to address may be laid bare as in the preceding quote that suggests that society has forgotten about the girls who were in the facility, or had forgotten that they had biographies. Against this reality, the quote also provides an entry point for possibility as the participant argues that if people knew they would care and perhaps intervene. From this point, however, possibility must be expanded into specific ways that caring can work towards changing social, institutional, and representational realities. Service learners might explore the relationship between representations and outside advocacy, for example, so that their

reports about the realities of girls' lives inside and outside can also be animated towards people's understanding of policy, social support, and community engagement.

**Tracing the specificity of the experience and methods: A question of the limits of the study, service learning, and the State**

The interpretation and the direct applicability of the findings and suggestions of this study are contextualized by the stubborn influences of the specificity of this service learning course and some of the methods. The course, Mentoring and Adolescent Development, was cross listed as a Psychology and Women Studies course. Its orientation was primarily psychological in nature as the content of the course was grounded in readings about the effects of trauma and abuse on adolescents and basic counseling techniques. Additionally, many courses read *Girls in Trouble with the Law*, a critical ethnography of the racialized and classed nature of girls' corrections. The reading and discussion of these texts presented an opportunity for students to variously approach their experience of themselves and others through the lenses of professional psychological, humanistic, and critical consciousness.

The specificity of the course was also bounded by its inside-outside nature, which is a divergence from many service learning courses in which the people at the service learning site are neither bounded in residence within the site - adjudicated and court-involved - or openly problematized to the degree that adolescent girls in a minimum-secure residential facility might be. Thus, the curricular foundations and the site of the course contributed to its unique nature – both as a service learning course and as an intergroup contact zone where the deeply racialized auspices of criminalization and morality were made explicit by the context.

Between the specificity of the course and the methodology, the participants in this study provided retrospective narratives – some participants having taken the course as early as in 2008 and some as recently as 2012. The retrospective nature of the study means that the experiences were not fresh and may have been transformed over time, shaped in part by participants' current lives. The effects of time may have changed or transformed the initial meanings that the participants assigned to their experience in how they inflected the content, construction, and positioning of their narratives. Additionally, the narrative form itself may have sculpted the content, construction, and positioning within participant texts. Participants may have worked towards narratives that had a clear plot and, thereby, discounted parts of the story that had a greater meaning for the phenomena of interest in this study because these parts did not fit neatly into the narrative, or may have necessitated too much writing. Narrative form may have also limited the expression of the meanings that were drawn from the experience, which may have surfaced in methods like interviews and focus groups where participants can communicate their meanings non-verbally.

Time also played an important part in the methodology and analysis of the experience because the facility was approaching closure during the developmental stages of the study. Some participants within the study were from the last class and had access to the facility before it closed. These participants clearly knew that the facility was closing, but participants from other semesters might have learned about it for the first time upon reading the last item on the survey in the present study. The historical effects of time that emerged with the closing were read into the data and analyzed as they presented a space where participants could have engaged a sense of

personal loss and dispossession given their ‘erasure.’ Other service learning experiences likely have not featured events like closings, and thus, the particularity of this experience may be deepened.

Last, because this study only reflects data from the participants in the course who were mentors, their representations of the girls, the girls’ biographies, and the ecological contexts in which the girls negotiated were filtered through the experiences and perceptions of the participants. It is impossible to know what the girls communicated, and how the girls’ situated knowledge was heard or interpreted by the service learners. What appears in the service learners’ texts may symbolize the discourses and representations that the participants had access to. Thus, at best these data can be read as how individuals construct narratives out of experiences that surface dynamics related to institutional positions, interconnection and relationship, trauma, and access to dispossession and privilege across the social and personal continuum.

A final consideration about the generalizability of these data comes from the research methodology in which the researcher individually coded the data. While attempts were made to increase the trustworthiness of the data, none of these interpretations were subjected to a test of inter-rater reliability.

With the understanding of these limitations to generalizability, the findings and the ways that they might be extended into service learning literature and teaching practices can be adapted for further exploration.

## Conclusions

While service learning courses often operate as contexts of intergroup contact, it is clear that contact is not enough as the critical and participatory amendments of power differences, social histories, and the production of common goals indicate (Pettigrew et al., 2011; Torre, 2010). The particularities of the experience highlighted in this study address some of the entry points at which such amendments might be applied. The themes across this work surface the challenges that service learners and educators may face in travelling the difficult territory of institutional, relational, and personal spaces. In examining this course three binaries represented these spaces – the inside-outside, self-other, and university-facility affiliation. These binaries surfaced points of ease and (dis)ease in the process of founding critical consciousness and relationality in ways that point to the necessity for their explicit contestation within the classroom. At the same time, these binaries and corresponding themes can be extended beyond this particular site and service learning course in general, to address any epistemic community whose work engages intergroup difference(s).

The capacity to leverage these binaries and themes during critical reflection in the course constructs the classroom as a space to create critical cognitive, affective, and relational cultures that spread across service learning sites, and perhaps simultaneously inflect the structure and lives beyond. The necessary work moving through personal-social problems towards solutions may need to be more intentional, critical, hopeful, and creative. As an increasingly popular form of civic engagement within universities, service learning courses need to reflect a commitment to criticality – in its intentions, scaffolding, and activity within the community. Further, the ways in

which service learners articulate and revise the positions, discourses, and meanings that they deploy should also be scaffolded with criticality to avoid reproducing hierarchy, distance, and acritical meanings.

### **Afterword**

While being rooted in service learning, the inquiries and corresponding themes of this work may be applicable in other educational and intergroup settings and be deployed towards a greater definition of positionality, relationality, and criticality. The expansive nature of moving between and beyond the sites of the personal, interpersonal, and institutional surfaces questions about the responsibility of educators and educational spaces for encouraging the permeability of the membranes that separate each site, and thus the tensions that hold the boundaries in place. Such responsibility may be addressed with the practices of reflexivity and accountability that are manifested in the commitments that keep participatory research critical. These three commitments are summarized below as an afterword that transitions from the inside space of this dissertation to the outside space that now supports the author and the readers.

**Engaging and expanding emergent themes as practices.** In theorizing the civic debt that universities have to pay to their students and surrounding communities, Fine (2013) calls for the distinction between research *on* civic engagement and research *as* civic engagement. This call may be transposed by substituting “education” for “research.” As education on civic engagement, the service learning classroom can generate and illustrate how the development of critical consciousness, relationality, reflexivity, and history can enter into the individual and collective space. As practices, these strategies may be widely understood and privileged without

a deep understanding about the micro-processes they intuit. The binaries that couch the positions, discourses, and critical meanings provide visual aids for the kinds of micro-processes that can be explicitly worked with, challenged, broken open, and worn by students and educators alike. Revisiting and revising the positions, discourses, and consciousness iteratively within the classroom and across courses may also serve to document the practice and outcomes of courses that provide education *on* civic engagement.

**Making reflexivity a prerequisite.** Education *as* civic engagement naturally invites the service learning context as long as it seeks to contest inequality by creating and participating in practices that counter the silence, insensitivity, and the naturalization of power that obscures both difference and interconnection - intrapersonally, interpersonally, and inter/intra-institutionally. It is the responsibility of students, educators, and universities alike to reflexively map the shadowlands and fields of light along the path that links consciousness and history. It is an individual and collective responsibility to ask that people go only to the places that any of “us” have already visited in our reflection, trauma, shame, power, hope, and imagination. Or, it is our responsibility to transparently ask people to go with us to places that we haven’t been but imagine and know; to transparently respond when asked to continue going with others – places that we must carve roads and travel to together, such that our journey is participatory, generative, and mutual.

As part of this reflexivity, loss must also be addressed as classrooms move into communities that may increasingly face deep budget cuts and closures. Reflexivity, here, works in two ways. First, while promoting transformation educators should take care to understand



what is left behind and be prepared to support students' growing criticality in terms of loss and grief. Service learners who cross into difficult physical and affective spaces, for example, quickly face the dissolution of the fantasy that institutions are invested with the resources to buffer individuals from the harsh realities of social life. Beyond, even if institutions were privileged by the state, the loss of the fantasy that people end up engaged with institutions by their own decontextualized accord may be stunning for some. In short, educators should be prepared to be able to relate to being stunned, resistant, sad and angry for the first time, or lost in the totality of trauma that is unequally distributed on across people's bodies. Second, educators must take the responsibility to help ensure that the loss of public spaces is not solely projected on others, but also is a reflection of the loss that everyone suffers as citizens and that particular people, groups, and classrooms suffer through the dispossession in parts of their path towards advocacy.

**Affirming the accountability of students.** It is the responsibility of educators and universities to help students craft something that is their own based on their own thoughts, values, questions, troubling, and resolutions. As a collection of these thoughts, questions, and resolutions, the role of the classroom is to provide generative tension, the extension of possibility where it is forestalled by closures, and the infusion of possibility that acknowledges the difficult and dynamic path that leads to it. In setting the context for the critical convergences between the personal, interpersonal, and institutional sites educators are responsible to the students and the communities in which they work. This responsibility means participating in constructing architecture that includes the commitment to unravel the truths and myths about the social

contexts that surround people across institutions and to attend to the production of affective, cognitive, and lived understandings about what discourses of difference and sameness mean, facilitate, and offer to teach. Beyond the course and beyond the university, practicing a personal commitment to crafting a true critique and stance, unravelling the construction of the self and other, and deploying curiosity needs to be explicitly passed to students. At the end of the course, educators should prepare students to acknowledge the difficulty and joy of their work, transfer and generalize their concern and advocacy, and seek to construct and/or participate with collectives of others. Part of this work is acknowledging the arbitrary end of relationships at the end of the course, which calls attention to the messy nature of endings as the university and the community physically part again. The shift in the boundary between the university and the community, and the individuals on both sides of the relationship, may seem abruptly stopped. These endings embody the power of saying goodbye, the reality of the context that brought people together, the complication of inorganic endings that are meant to live beyond the moment, the difficulty of maintaining a sense of solidarities and critical meanings in a social world that largely lives without them, as well as the psychic impact of having opened up, chanced transformation, and having been left alone – perhaps altered, but alone.

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