

*Assignment 1: Identify learning needs that can be met through the use of specialist delivery techniques.*

The specialist delivery techniques I shall use will encourage female learners to engage with music technology and electronic music through utilising:

- Feminist theory to explore musicological concerns and gender biases in the field.
- Positive discrimination to present female pioneers of electronic musicians as motivational female role models.

I shall encourage hands on electronic music making in reference to the work of pioneering female electronic musicians. Specialist delivery techniques shall be presented exclusively to women via the Golden Triangle Girls Womens Institute in Norwich. The Golden Triangle Girls WI dubs itself an urban and young WI (as opposed to rural and mature WI), with ages ranging from early teens to mid 50's.

For my PEL Theory assignment, I investigated the gender imbalance of my two music technology placements. All of my pupils were exclusively male (due to the masculine nature of the subject). When I investigated exam entries for music technology courses on a national scale (through analysing gender break downs of Edexcel exam entries), I found that males outnumbered female students in 2008 by roughly 4 to 1 (Exam board Edexcel 2008 AS Music Technology male entries were 4209 male to 1077 Female. A2 was 2792 Male to 589 Female)<sup>1</sup>.

Victoria Armstrong in 'The gendering of music technology' explains gender role expectations to be the reason for this disparity. She claims technology is commonly perceived to be a male pursuit because "our cultural imagination aligns masculinity and rationality with technology and science"<sup>2</sup>. Other factors affecting gender imbalance in the field include:

- Peer pressure from media, parents and social group reproduces gendered social norms.
- Male bias makes it an uncomfortable and intimidating environment for women.
- Lack of industry role models.

For my lecture/workshop I wish to de-mystify the subject and open it up to a female audience through presenting the topic in a jargon free and inclusive way which encourages participation rather than male competition. I wish to use a punky DIY approach which can be democratically utilised by women of all abilities. I wish to encourage women to form their own feminist DIY musical revolutions through linking the lecture to the work of electro Riot Grrl feminist punks Chicks on speed. The Golden Triangle Girls WI is one the youngest WI's in the country (ages 20-50), the WI is currently going through a period of re-invention and attracting younger women to the network (especially in metropolitan areas). The talk's contemporary feminist ideas will hopefully radicalise members and address the political needs of the

organisation (the WI has strong early links with the suffragettes and the womens liberation movement). I wish this presentation to re-invent the teaching of Music Technology through re-evaluating the gender bias of electronic music and celebrating the achievements of often overlooked female composers. This will hopefully get more women to enter the field.

Through celebrating the work of pioneering female electronic musicians I hope to provide my class with positive role models. I wish to encourage them to take up a new hobby and investigate the talents of pioneering women who have been historically overlooked.

Victoria Armstrong's research of 84 mixed gender students at A-level/GCSE level at four varied host colleges showed that only 48% female students claimed to be confident computer users compared to 90% of males<sup>3</sup>. The reason for this lack of confidence may be due to cultural factors and male dominance in mixed sex groupings. Through teaching at the WI in a single sex context, I hope to increase female musical confidence through demystifying the electronic music making process.

The workshop activities will use cheap and affordable equipment and will be explained in a jargon free and inclusive way which encourages participation rather than male competition. I shall use feminist ideology to radicalise my client base into action!

Through using the WI as the host for my project I am able to present the subject to women in an environment they feel comfortable (without the intrusion of other males competing for resources and attention). The specialist techniques I shall utilise aim:

- To counter the male bias of electronic music by celebrating the accomplishments of female electronic musicians who have often been historically overlooked.
- To encourage more women to take up electronic music as a fun hobby through hands on workshop activities, and presenting the topic in an welcoming gender inclusive context.
- To demystify electronic music making and deconstruct dominant determinist assumptions about technology, gender and power.
- To explore risk taking experimental ways of making music that reach beyond gendered norms.

Presenting Music Technology in a single sex context, means that many women will be able to relax and have fun with their peers in a non-pressured informal environment. The advantages of single sex classes for females are that:

- Single sex classrooms are free of the male gaze.
- Single sex classrooms are a safe space for young women. Girls have more of a chance to express themselves in a non rowdy atmosphere and to engage in learning processes without having to fear being ridiculed by boys or competing with them for time and attention.

Researcher Abramo (2009) reflects on the loud rehearsal volume used by some of the boys in mixed sex music technology/popular music classes below:

“electronic instruments (...) have the luxury of increasing the volume simply by a turning a knob and the drums are easily played at a full volume. This allowed the boys to overpower any extraneous sounds that were not part of the rehearsals...Perhaps, their need to create volume was a way to show power, to call attention to themselves, and to carve out their own physical space through sound”<sup>4</sup>

An Anon teacher from Lucy Green’s study of mixed sex music making in secondary schools and colleges was also aware of male musical dominance:

“Boys (unless checked) dominate music technology resources: synthesizers/computer controlled notation; girls therefore veer towards orchestral instruments if allowed!”<sup>5</sup>

Through presenting at the WI, I shall be given a platform to deconstruct the dominant male discourses of music technology and present the subject in a more girl friendly way. Through presenting my ideas outside of formal educational institutions I have freedom to encourage punky DIY grassroots feminist music making without the restrictions of vocational emphasis, male government control or corporate award body interference.

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- <sup>1</sup> Armstrong, Victoria (2011) **Technology and the gendering of music education**. Ashgate. pp. 2/3
- <sup>2</sup> Armstrong, Victoria (2011) **Technology and the gendering of music education**. Ashgate. pp. 34
- <sup>3</sup> Armstrong, Victoria (2011) **Technology and the gendering of music education**. Ashgate. pp. 55
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- <sup>5</sup> Green, Lucy (1997) **Music, gender, education**. Oxford University Press  
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