

Assignment 3: Identify and discuss diversity considerations in the development of specialist delivery techniques and advanced learning activities.

The specialist delivery techniques I used at Golden Girls WI encouraged exclusively female learners to engage with music technology and electronic music through using:

- 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 define advanced learning activities as female only kinaesthetic activities, which encourage female learners to take leadership positions which develop assertive and experimental and risk taking approaches to working with electronic music. Michael Gurian defines risk taking as an area that is deficient in female educational participation, but tends to be dominant with male learners. My activities are defined as advanced as they are pitched at adult learners in the 20-50 age group. I am assuming many women in the group have obtained university level qualifications and re-inforce the activities through a higher education lecture style format (which draws from cultural theory).

I encouraged hands on electronic music making through workshop activities that referenced the work of pioneering female electronic musicians.

I presented to an all female audience through the support of Golden Triangle Girls Women's Institute in Norwich. The Golden Triangle Girls WI dubs itself an urban and young WI (as apposed to a rural mature WI), with ages ranging from early teens to mid 50's.

Feminist musicology and diversity

To fit in with the empowered ethos of the WI I gave my talk a feminist slant. Feminist musicologists often explore issues of diversity through drawing attention to the inequality of the sexes. In my presentation I used feminist ideas to discuss the historical narratives of women and music and how historical sexism was woven into the vary fabric of western music making (since the dawn of the renaissance era). This had led to a culture of exclusion which has undermined womens participation in making music.

Diversity and musical composition

Musical composition (and especially composition that involves music technology) is an area that has traditionally been underrepresented by women due to historical sexism (which has done little to increase gendered diversity). In less enlightened and liberated eras, the structural language of orchestral composition was aligned with masculine notions of "logical" harmony and counterpoint. A male canon (or pecking order of male minds) was established, with many composers in the Romantic era producing heroic and bombastic

music which glorified the myth of the male composer (names such as Beethoven, Wagner were common currency, although visionary figures such as Hildegard von Bingen were historically ignored and maligned by the normative gaze of the male elite). Lack of opportunities in terms of education, public performance, patronage and Institutional support has led to a culture of male musical dominance.

To appeal to the feminist demographic of the WI I avoided favoring the male canon which is notable for its historical admission of gender diversity. I implemented positive discrimination towards solely female composers (many of which have been historically overlooked or written out of history entirely). I have presented a chronology of female electronic composers from different eras. I started with early BBC Radiophonic composers such as Daphne Oram and Delia Derbyshire. I concluded with current composers such as Kaffe Matthews and Marina Rosenfeld. See enclosed PowerPoint presentation in Assignment 4 folder.

The talk concludes by championing the diversity of female electronic music making which is characterized by:

- An sensitivity to the environment (Pauline Oliveros, Christina Kubish).
- An artistic approach based on affective communication and listening (Pauline Oliveros, Marina Rosenfeld, Kaffe Matthews).
- A sensitivity to the role of the audience (Kaffe Matthews).
- A communal anti-competitive empathetic approach (Marina Rosenfeld, Pauline Oliveros, Chicks on Speed).
- Taking up discourse with the body, and the potential for subversion through technology (Laurie Anderson, Kaffe Matthews).
- A feminized reframing of dominant masculine musical symbolism (Marina Rosenfeld, Chicks on speed).
- A resistance to male violence (incorporating anti war sentiments), domination and control (Laurie Anderson).

A survey by LeFanu conducted in 1987 estimated that merely 15% of composers in Britain were female¹. Performance of female composition was estimated to be less than 5% of total gendered performance nationally². In May 1995, Radio 3 listed 11 women composers and 840 men composers on there playlists³. In 1990 The UK National Proms featured the works of 90 men, and merely 1 women composer⁴. In 1995 a Prom brochure listed 5 women composers to 106 men⁵.

To counteract this gender imbalance in musical composition I have implemented positive discrimination in my presentation solely towards the work of female composers.

The secondary school teacher Denise Young speaks of the importance of female role models:

"I always try to add role models to the mix of learning experiences. To be a role model for girls is so essential. I take a Tae-Bo kickboxing class, and I

often talk about it with my children. I pick girls often for activities or jobs that boys usually do, such as carrying boxes.”⁶

The paradox that undermines my presentational agenda is that I imagine most female electronic musicians would want to be accepted as artists in their own right rather than a marginalized women artist⁷.

Sonic Artist Kaffe Matthews questions the value and necessity of all-woman positive discrimination. Such contexts, she insists, only “flag up the fact that there are so few women out there making sound work”⁸ and she doubts positive action will “inspire other women to get on with it”⁹. “A few women showing within a group of men” Matthews concludes “could be more powerful in that matter”¹⁰.

Grass roots diversity activism as a challenge to the male dominated music industry

Through presenting female pioneers of electronic music to impressionable young women, I aimed to inspire women to take up a new hobby. More women participating in an informal basis could lead to increased female entry into the professional industry (thus increasing gender diversity within the traditionally male dominated music industry).

The research of Leonard published in 2007 concludes that women comprise only 5-15% of working DJs in the UK, whilst the ratio of female sound engineers was merely 2-5% of their profession (mostly concentrated in live sound engineering)¹¹.

Simon Reynolds in 1999, explored the gendered reasons for this:

“The presence of women on the dance floor is not reflected by the proportion of women in the ranks of professional DJs... This has a lot to do with the homo-social nature of techno: tricks of the trade are passed down from mentors to male acolytes. DJ-ing and sampled based music also go hand in hand with an obsessive ‘trainspotter’ mentality: the amassing of huge collections of records, the accumulation of exhaustive and arcane information about labels, producers and auteurs.”¹²

Diversity of gendered participation in academic disciplines

My talk drew heavily on educational theory which I used as a basis for my specialist delivery techniques and advanced learning activities. I researched mixed sex schools and looked at the disciplines that had low gender diversity ratios. This gave an overall impression of what disciplines appealed to women’s academic strengths.

In 1985, over 90% of UK entries in all technical subjects were from boys¹³. Gurian discusses this phenomenon below from an American perspective:

“According to a study by the AAUW, only 17% of high school students who take the advance placement tests in computer science are girls. Women earn only 28% of the bachelor’s degrees in computer science (the percentage peaked in 1984 at 37% but has been steadily dropping since) and constitute just 20% of information technology professionals. Some of this disparity may connect with many girls just not wanting to stare, in an isolated room, into a screen as much as boys. Even so, the disparity is frightening, especially in an era such as ours when fluency in the language and use of computers is crucial.”¹⁴

By encouraging women to use music technology I am aiming to increase gendered participation in a male dominated subject area.

As Researcher Judith Whyte notes:

“Female exclusion from Science and Technology, even if it is apparently by girl’s own choice, also means that as citizens their ability to understand and control their environment is limited. Nevertheless, most schools consider they are already providing equal opportunities by neutral treatment of the two sexes. In effect, ignoring the effects of gender in this way merely reinforces stereotyping because it does nothing to challenge the definition of certain aspects of the curriculum as masculine or feminine”¹⁵

Diversity of gender participation in music technology

I examined diversity issues in the teaching of music technology to gauge how to make my subject more girl friendly. My PEL Theory primary research at Popular Music College (alias), Norfolk revealed that many female learners felt uncomfortable learning in male dominated environments. In one instance female learners were a minority of 2 to 22 males, both female learners subsequently dropped out due to the isolation of the alien environment.

The researcher Culley in 1998 claimed that when computers are situated in a very male dominated environment, girls may feel less comfortable inhabiting such spaces as there is a perception that computer rooms are ‘male territory’. An alien space in which boys attitudes and behaviors tend to dominate¹⁶.

Being only one of four women in a composition class of thirty, a respondent in McCartney’s (1995) study noted that the women who did remain on the course did not identify themselves ‘as women’ and were often very isolated, not even taking to other women very much because as one participant observed, they had to ‘prove themselves all the time they were there. So they didn’t identify themselves as women, so I didn’t have the feeling that they were there, (even though) they were’¹⁷

Composition student Wendy Bartley talks to the researcher McCartney in 1995 about the male bias of music technology:

“I didn’t know anything about computers when I started...I was in a class with eleven men, and they all seemed to be really hip to what was going on. There

was a strong air of aggression in the class—probably all blustering, since I doubt that many of them knew much about computers either... Somehow I survived that environment and learn by spending hours in the studio.”¹⁸

Wendy elaborates to researcher McCartney in 1995 about her gendered survival strategy:

“Being one of the boys was my way of dealing with it- I dressed like one too... I wore heavy workbooks and huge T-shirts... Female students who can't easily fit in would do something else, just back out”¹⁹

Victoria Armstrong believes that “male engagement with technology affirms masculinity whereas women's engagement with it marks an interruption to their femininity because technological expertise is not part of feminine identity”²⁰.

Feeling they have to adapt and conform to male forms and expectations is problematic for female pupils in music technology²¹. Caputo (1994) argues that cultural assumptions about technology can result in females valuing more rational, linear processes (forms of thought that produce a mechanistic way of thinking)²². This means that girls either have to conform to male ways of thinking or remain silenced²³. The isolated nature of digital musical production (sitting on a computer on your own cut off from the world with headphones) does not encourage relational ways of learning that some female learners prefer²⁴.

I decided from my research that I could use single sex classrooms to liberate my learners from the male gaze and allow girls to learn without fear of being ridiculed by boys or competing with them for time and attention. Through encouraging a communal form of music making which involves relational interaction I hope to make electronic music making more appealing to women. Through using Pauline Oliveros's 'Deep Listening' exercises I was able to encourage communal music making that stresses co-operation and a group dynamic over an excessive and competitive male ego approach.

Diversity and the case for single sex classes

The WI's all female membership seemed a perfect way to re-address the gender balance of music technology and encourage grassroots electronic music making in an female single sex environment.

There is evidence to suggest that single sex classes in mainstream education could be advantageous too. Research suggests that even within prescriptively co-educational environments genders often naturally segregate (in co-operative activities and seating arrangements). As Brain researcher Gurian notes:

“We see this from the very young, noticing the preschool boys proclivity to do work and activity with other preschool boys and, at times, not with girls. Similarly, we see preschool girls desire to find one another and avoid boys in their games and work. This continues throughout education and indeed

throughout adulthood. Men and women enjoy each others company, but they often find it much easier to do things only with their own sex.”²⁵

He explains:

“For educators, this common-sense observation is, ideally, a liberating one, allowing all of us to look at single sex education as one of a number of possibilities for educational improvement. In employing this innovation, we are not in any way harming children, as they are already naturally inclined toward this way of being, and we are potentially helping millions of children who aren’t learning as well as we’d like in the naturally gender-competitive environment of co-education.”²⁶

Gurian argues that mixed sex classes are failing both genders:

“Girls who are not naturally as interested in or proficient at math, science, or technology do not need to fail in the face of proficient males. Boys whose brain systems are not as verbal do not need to fail in the face of girls whose brains are more verbal.”²⁷

Through focussing my attention on female learners, I was able to use specialist delivery techniques/advanced learning activities to directly address my learners needs.

Diversity and the WI plus inter-generational contexts

Golden Triangle Girls WI is one of the youngest in the country (with an age group varying from 20-50). I used Specialist Delivery Techniques to make cultural assumptions about my learners (based on research into the changing nature of the WI and it’s historical foundations).

I hoped for participants to be sensitive to my feminist agenda due to their cultural allegiance with the WI (who have historically shown sympathy to feminist concerns, it is a little known fact that the original logo of the WI echoed the color scheme of the suffragettes!²⁸).

Researcher Tara Rodgers explains the diversity of feminist identification:

“Typical wave models of feminism, which describe feminist movements as succeeding each other temporally in a linear historical progression, and tend to posit strictly defined generations of women as irrevocably at odds with each others interests, are inadequate representations of women’s complex identifications”²⁹

As my talk would be engaging with different generations of women with distinctly different definitions of feminism, I was careful not to subscribe to a unified movement or sub-section of feminism. I decided to focus on universalisms that unite all women (rather than divide them).

The WI since its inception was conceived to give women a practical, domestic education before the days of widespread female education. The WI was conceived as a support network for women to socialize, broaden their horizons and alleviate rural isolation.

As author Jane Robinson explains:

"The official record of the first WI meeting in the world described a simple, explicit structure with space for business, education, creativity and debate. It had a sturdy, capacious agenda, which encouraged members to express themselves without inhibition, within that structure without worrying about what their husbands might think of them (men weren't allowed)."³⁰

A WI member talks to The Times in 1911 about the benefits of WI membership:

"We women can talk, nobody denies that", said the lady with a smile, "but too often, even if we've got something worth talking about, we haven't got enough knowledge to make what we say worth saying. And we are apt to take rather narrow views of things. The institute is really broadening our minds"³¹

Through involving women in making electronic music and engaging with music technology I wanted to encourage creative, practical skills which the WI has always endorsed. Taking into consideration the age group (and aspirations of my learners) I have pitched my talk at a Higher Education level.

Madge Watt was an initial agitator of the WI movement. She believed:

"A WI should cater to all tastes, be grave and gay. Explore the world together, and learn as much about growing roses in your garden, or trimming hats, as about 'Darkest Africa' or 'Bolshevism'. If you become dull the young will not join, and your numbers will decrease. Make sure you always include a 'social half-hour' in the programme: the chance for a chat reduces the amount of whispering during lectures. Have fun, but be fruitful not frivolous."³²

The media cliché of the WI is still the image that pervades public consciousness, as Jane Robinson explains:

"The image of a violet scented matron of decided maturity, a bit like a dim Miss Marple, sensibly rather than smartly dressed, favoring harmless (useless?) pursuits like beetles drives and decoupage lives on. She's right wing, and naturally Anglican. The kitchen is her natural domain, in a neat little home in the country. Apart from venturing on mystery coach trips or to national meetings (where she tends towards hot flushes), her compass is comfortably small, and her life serene. Nothing more is expected of her than to busy herself inoffensively in the background of rural life."³³

I wanted to move beyond such conventional representations of the WI and pitch my project at the more modern younger radical image (being re-invented in metropolitan areas).

The WI has historically been conflicted between the instinct towards small minded broad appeal, and weightier political activism. As Jane Robinson explains:

"In the 1940's to 50's letters to home and Country (WI magazine) began to smack of resentment and disaffection. Why were members given such stupendously inane competitions to enter- like the best-boiled potato, eating jelly with knitting needles, or- cop-out of cop outs- the cleverest idea for next month's competition? New members like Peggy Downs of South Ruislip, complained bitterly that there was nothing meaningful for them to contribute to society through the WI. She felt compelled to resign, 'sadly disappointed in the range of appeal'. She found that the official ban of controversial discussions involving party politics or matters of religious belief denied intelligent young women like her a voice."³⁴

She continues:

"There was a disconnection between the Movement's visionaries and those ordinary members whose intentions were good but whose scope was traditionally small...What lay at the root of the Movement's difficulties during the last three or four decades of the twentieth century was its image. Every massed-membership organization suffers from stereotyping; when it's an organization go-massed woman, as we have seen, stereotype tends towards caricature. This encourages solidarity when outsiders are the culprits, but the trouble with the WI was that its own members caricatured each other."³⁵

Jane Robinson explains the generational divide within the WI:

"Ordinary, conventional members felt neglected and redundant. And none of the high-powered activity at national level seems to have affected places like Wraybury or my mother's Institute in Yorkshire. If members were aware of it, they don't appear to have realized its relevance. The WI has always inspired loyalty. Its members feel proprietorial about the organization. In the early decades this feeling was essential to its survival. Now, it was becoming increasingly obvious to many members that 'my' WI was not necessarily the same as 'hers'. People were pulling in different directions, and it mattered. Traditionalists were perceived to be compromising the activists."³⁶

In 2005 a new WI formed at Leeming in North Yorkshire. Its founders (average age 33) called it the Wythit WI, and it hit the headlines when it organized an institute outing to a lap-dancing club, to inspire a course of 'pole dancing Pilates' session³⁷.

The forming of the Whey Aye W1 in Newcastle and the Jam Free Institute in Surrey both attracted attention in 2006, principally because their members looked unusually young and glamorous³⁸. Bramley Lite WI in 2008 stands alongside a Hampshire village WI which has been toddling along since 1919; it had twenty members, a seventy year old president and a very traditional programme³⁹. Bramley Lite has 60 members its president Emma Cunningham

was only 35. Its first institute trip was to the play *The Puppetry of the Penis*. Its members enjoyed a bracing variety of demonstration sessions, from burlesque dancing to life drawing with a nude male model.⁴⁰

The concept of the WI to young women has become hauntological. Derrida defines hauntology in reference to the artistic concept of sign and signifier⁴¹. Hauntological interpretation draws attention to how meaning is informed, overshadowed, and haunted by the ghosts of other meanings⁴².

In her article 'Packing History, Countering Generations', Elizabeth Freeman argues that not every contemporary adoption of past style can be subsumed into the postmodern market place, that there may be 'crossing of time' that are not 'postmodern pastiche' but rather 'stubborn identifications with a set of social coordinates' that exceed the historical moment of the identifier⁴³. She calls these stubborn identifications 'temporal drag' 'with all the associations that the word 'drag' has with retrogression, delay and the pull of the past upon the present'⁴⁴. Temporal drag is always anchored in past ideas, styles, and politics, which may come to be seen as embarrassing, essentialist, backwards looking, but which highlight 'the interesting threat the genuine pastness of the past sometimes makes to the political present'⁴⁵.

The appeal of post modern WI's like Leeming is that they ironically subvert the agenda of the WI. Through 'temporal drag' they playfully exploit the institutes retrogressive nature and proudly prepose a re-invention. Drawing attention to how femininity has changed through the years, and the potential for it's re-definition.

Like Leeming WI, Golden Triangle Girls WI can be said to be a modern re-invention of the WI it's programmes are inventive and challenging ranging from film editing, radio production to baking. I decided to match there adventurous program by presenting a talk/workshop on challenging electronic music. I aimed to match the WI's new focus on activism by incorporating feminist themes into my talk.

I decided that a talk addressing the notably un-diverse gender imbalance in music technology might be of interest to the WI (who have historically shown sympathy to feminist concerns). My talk used specialist female centred delivery techniques to counteract the un-diverse gender bias of the subject.

I aimed to make the subject inclusive and welcoming to female learners through exploring music technology through the prism of feminist theory. I hoped the use of feminist theory would galvanize and radicalize participants who had traditionally excluded from the subject by male competition/over-subscription.

Diversity and Confidence

The researchers Colley and Comber (in 2003) noted that boys are more likely to be confident music technology users, and girls are more likely to

underestimate⁴⁶. They observed that girls are more likely to report greater feelings of incompetence⁴⁷.

My research revealed that single sex learning environments like the WI can increase learner confidence.

Recent gender research by David/Myra Sadker and Carol Gilligan shows that girls self-esteem is lowered by teachers giving more attention to pushy boys in a mixed sex classroom⁴⁸. Teachers who favor bonds with boys, according to this research, call girls on less than boys⁴⁹. Because of the bonds favoring boys, girl's self-esteem drops⁵⁰. Girls feel outside the loop and less connected to the teacher, classroom and learning process⁵¹.

Secondary school teacher Ruth makes sure she calls on "every girl every day"⁵². Gurian explains:

"Teachers like Ruth notice that girls often need more verbal feedback than we give. Perhaps all of us have seen the girl in the class who just did not believe in herself until we kept encouraging and encouraging her. It is crucial for teachers to realize how personally girls can take perceived failure- whether in a relationship or in academic performance."⁵³

Disadvantages of Single Sex learning

Although the single sex approach appears to offer many advantages to female learners, its benefits need to be evaluated in light of some of the disadvantages it offers to both genders.

- Single sex groups denies natural social development of both sexes.
- Single sex groups can be an unnatural environment that doesn't enforce the realities of modern working life.
- Single sex groups do little to promote inclusion of excluded gender.
- Single sex groups promote the old fashioned victim mentality of feminism where women are perceived to be lacking in ability, confidence etc. Promotes old fashioned and unrealistic views of men as being obsessed with power and domination.

Conclusion

I have looked at how male dominance in fields such as Technology and Science (and most importantly Music Technology) can exclude female learners from participating in the field. I then examined how music composition and the music industry have been traditionally male dominated and how this creates expectations that can exclude women from participation. Through presenting at Golden Girls WI I have explored teaching which sympathises and responds to these injustices in a girl friendly single sex environment. I discussed how gendered diversity can be increased through specialist delivery techniques/ advanced learning activities and have noted that the positives (such as increased confidence) outweigh the negatives of the approach.

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