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TABLE OF CONTENTS
Mission Statement, Writing Style, And Copyright Statement

Editorial
Dr. Colleen Pinar

ARTICLES
A Culture Of Critique: Personal And Professional Identity In Pre-Service Music Teacher
Alison LaGarry, MM

“A Good Blog Is A Continuing Conversation.” How I Learned To Blog And Use Social Media As A Feminist Activist
Samantha E. Heuwagen, MA

Performance as Education: Creating And Performing A Lesbian-Themed Wayang Kulit In Javanese Style
Summer Pennell, MA
GEMS is a peer-reviewed, online journal that explores the myriad intersections between gender, education, music and society. Emphasis is on the ways in which music teaching and learning can be used to re-dress and eliminate inequalities brought about through ideologies of domination by creating an open-ness to the musical experience that promotes access to all (and thus by extension, also the ways in which music teaching and learning have not been transformative in the past). Gender will be approached, not as male or female, but as a continuum of possibilities sustained by socially and historically constructed notions of masculinity and femininity that interact in complex, often competing and contradictory ways. A wide variety of methodological (historical, ethnographic, philosophical, sociological, etc.) and inter-disciplinary orientations will be featured, with contributors encouraged to make use of the variety of creative options presented by the electronic medium.

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For Text:
Roberta Lamb and Julia Koza brought feminist critiques to music education.

For References:

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Editorial

I would like to welcome readers to the October 2014 issue of GEMS. I have continued to work hard in promoting GEMS and to increase readership. As stated in the September 1, 2014 issue of GEMS, four issues of GEMS (September 2013; October 2013; November 2013; and January 2014) had over one thousand downloads, and that the November 2013 issue of GEMS needed only 48 more downloads before reaching two thousand. This was exciting news.

When I checked the Usage Statistics during the first week of September, the November 2013 issue of GEMS only needed 22 more downloads before reaching two thousand. Later, when I looked at the Usage Statistics I discovered that Queen’s University (houses GEMS online) had upgraded the Scholar’s Portal. With this upgrade, I was able to read the Usage Statistics in Microsoft Excel. I can see many advantages of having this data in Excel. However, when I looked at the numbers, the November 2013 issue had “lost” 1506 downloads. Other monthly issues and individual article downloads were also not reported correctly.

I have been in contact with the Scholarly Communications staff and they responded back quickly. I was told that the Scholarly Communications staff is still looking into the glitches associated with the current upgrade. The Scholarly Communications staff is very mindful of the importance of being able to retrieve statistics on GEMS and the other journals they host. I am very grateful to the people in this department. Without their help and guidance, I am not sure I would have been able to figure out the old OJS system and the new Scholar’s Portal.

In regards to the Usage Statistics, I was somewhat entertained with myself – why was I so emotionally attached to the Usage Statistics? And why was losing these numbers so devastating to me? I realized that the Usage Statistics is probably the only means for me to judge how effective I am as the editor of GEMS. Although I keep on saying that I have worked hard to improve GEMS’ readership, the Usage Statistics was the only effective means to do so. I was also hoping with increased readership, increased article and review submissions would occur. The Usage Statistics also provided me with important indicators on what topic are of interest to GEMS readers. I also devoted the January issue of GEMS to discussing the Usage Statistics along with making indexes of the monthly issues, articles, reviews, and authors. It would be disappointing to me if I would not be able to create a similar issue next year. Thinking positively, my hope is that by the next issue of GEMS the Scholarly Communications staff will have all the upgrades completed so that I can once more be entertained by the Usage Statistics.

I would like to remind readers that PDFs may not download properly with Microsoft Internet Explorer. If you experience this, please use Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome. I also was informed some readers could not access the Scholar’s Portal to submit their article or book/CD review, if this happens to you, please email me your document. I would gladly consider it for publication in GEMS.

In the October, 2014 issue of GEMS, Alison LaGarry’s article titled A Culture of Critique: Personal and Professional Identity in Pre-Service Music Teacher Education discusses preparing music educators to teach in culturally diverse or different settings. Social Justice Education, Conceptualizing Identity, and an analysis of critique in music education are a few of the theories and frameworks presented in this article. LaGarry also provides many examples based on her personal experiences.

Samantha Heuwagen discusses her experiences using social media as a feminist activist in the article “A good blog is a continuing conversation.” How I Learned to Blog and Use Social Media as a Feminist Activist. It is believed that this article will inspire readers to start blogging – if they are not already. Her narrative and transparency makes this article worth reading.

Summer Pennell's article titled Performance as Education: Creating and Performing a Lesbian-Themed Wayang Kulit in Javanese Style will be of interest on many levels. She discusses the art form of Indonesian shadow-puppetry by describing her own performance, which included traditional elements as well as contemporary LGBT themes from Indonesia. She centers the article by discussing the historical and contemporary Indonesian contexts of both shadow-puppet theater and LGBT experiences.

Dr. Colleen Pinar, Editor
A Culture Of Critique: Personal And Professional Identity In Pre-Service Music Teacher Education

Alison E. LaGarry, MM

Abstract: There is little qualitative research regarding the preparation of music educators to teach in culturally diverse or different settings. Existing literature suggests that there are issues surrounding personal vs. professional identity within the field that may have an effect on the music educator’s view regarding issues of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality within the classroom and curriculum. This article is an exploration of the above statements utilizing data from a semester-long study with senior music education majors (participant observation and interviews). Analysis centers on what Spradley (1980) describes as fundamental aspects of ethnographic study: cultural artifacts, cultural behavior, and cultural knowledge. Areas of particular interest include: identity tools that these pre-service teachers bring to the profession, how they conceive of personal/professional identity, and where the limits might exist for their capacity for teaching in culturally diverse or culturally different settings. Findings include a discussion of the role of critique in the field of music education.
Social Justice Education (SJE) is a specific orientation that calls for educators to examine hegemonic power structures and create space for critique of those structures within the classroom. As Lee Anne Bell (1997) stated, “the goal of social justice education is both a process and a goal…The process for attaining the goal of social justice should [be] democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change” (pp. 3–4). A major tenet of a social justice orientation to education is the implication of the educator in the very same hegemonic structure they wish to critique. Thus, the personal identity of the educator is always implicated in professional identity. Any effort to maintain personal identity as outside the realm of teaching, then, is an effort to preserve the myth of schooling and teaching as neutral and non-political. Research in the field of music teacher education has tended to focus on the occupational “socialization” of music teachers into the profession (Campbell, Thompson, & Barrett, 2010; Isbell, 2008).

Mark Campbell et al (2010) refer to socialization as the “ongoing assimilation and integration of life experiences whereby an individual adopts the norms, values, and shared beliefs of a particular group in order to function within the specific environment or culture” (p. 9). Based on the sheer volume of published research on the professional or occupational socialization of music educators, there is evidence that music education may promote a distinct separation of several dimensions of identity including personal and professional (Campbell, Thompson, and Barrett, 2010; Dolloff, 1999; Isbell, 2008; Woodford, 2002). Utilizing qualitative data from a semester-long study of pre-service music educators, this article will explore how this strict delineation between personal and professional identities may have an effect on the music educator’s views regarding issues of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality within the classroom and curriculum. First, I will provide a review of available literature regarding the identity and socialization of pre-service music educators. Then I will provide a discussion of participants’ conceptions of personal and professional identity. Also of interest are the identity tools that pre-service teachers bring to the profession so that they may signal belonging in the field. Data collected for this study suggests that some students may seek to deny personal identity to claim belonging, or conversely, assert their personal identities in ways that seek to explicitly integrate personal with professional identity. Implicit to this analysis is a discussion of where limits might exist for music education in culturally diverse or culturally different settings. Following this analysis, I will detail my thoughts regarding implications of this data for the field of music education.

I live and write as a White heterosexual American woman, who was raised in a working class town on the U.S./Canadian Border. After graduating from high school, I attended a predominately white institution (PWI) where I was not challenged to interrogate my white racial identity and the privilege that I experienced because of it. It was not until my first music teaching placement that a student critiqued the harsh emphasis I placed on classroom order. She also stated that choir at my school had traditionally been perceived as a “white class” based on the type of music programmed, and it didn’t seem like I was doing anything to meet the needs of students of color. An intense focus on appearing competent and professional had outweighed my values and commitments to socially just teaching practices, pushing aside my personal identity. My reaction to this humbling exchange was the first of many periods of critical reflection about my practice and my training. Through my students’ reaction and blunt feedback, I began to see that a focus on multiculturalism was not the same as being a critical, culturally relevant educator.

Moving forward with this study, and my career in academia, I realize that I am working both within and against the system. As a researcher, I occupy a position of power much like that of a teacher in the front of a classroom. Teachers and researchers have traditionally been afforded the power to make judgments about ability and saliency, and to delineate between good and bad. I acknowledge this contradiction, as well as my own tensions, fears, and struggle as I seek to explore conceptions of social justice, power, and privilege in music classrooms. Most importantly, I recognize my complicity in harmful practices that have abused the power of my
position, even as I seek practices that encourage, engage, and lift up.

**Conceptualizing Identity In Music Education**

In education literature and research, there are varying definitions of identity. Speaking specifically from the field of music education, Paul Woodford (2002) defined identity as “an imaginative view or role that individuals project for themselves in particular social positions, occupations, or situations” (p. 675). Most of the current scholarship in music education suggests that identity is socially constructed. Also implicit in this definition is that projected identities must be hailed or recognized by others in the world. As James Gee (2000) stated,

> One cannot have an identity of any sort without some interpretive system underwriting the recognition of that identity. The interpretive system may be people’s historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions, and rules of institutions; it may be the discourse and dialogue of others; or it may be the workings of affinity groups. (p.108)

Here, James Gee details four ways to view identity, based on the assumption that identities are not free from the grip of historical, institutional, and sociocultural powers or forces. These views include: nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse-identity, and affinity-identity. Each of these four views is salient in a discussion concerning personal and professional identity in music education, in that power is highlighted rather than obscured. For example, in explaining institutional-identity James Gee (2000) contended, “institutional realities create positions from which certain people are expected and sometimes forced to act” (p. 108). Though he insisted that an individual might resist this institutional expectation, they could also be recognized and addressed as the identity they resist nonetheless.

Also concerned with the turn from modernism, James Gee (2000) described how discourse-identities might function in a postmodern sense and how emphasis has been moved “from individuals and the identities that seem to be a part of their ‘individuality’ to the discursive, representational, and semiotic processes through which identities are created, sustained, and contested” (pg. 114). Thus, in a ‘modern’ society, identity is situated in individuals who earn or merit their standing through agentic performance and discourse. Referring to the work of Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin, James Gee explained the postmodern critique of identity, “people’s individual minds are formed out of... social interactions in which they engaged as they acquired their “native” language or later academic languages in school” (p. 114). Furthermore, any small pieces of language or discourse that are heard, uttered, or observed are “recirculated” to create the discourse that builds individual identity – situating identity, again, as a social construct.

A critique of modernism is also reflected in a shift in music education philosophy occurring in the mid-1990s and early 2000s. This shift opened the door for the study of music educator identity as a social construct. At that time, a contingent of music education scholars published works that encouraged a re-thinking of the aims of music education (Alperson, 1994; Bowman, 1994; Elliot, 1995; Jorgensen, 2002, 2003; Regelski, 1998). Each noted that advances in technology, as well as shifting demographics of American public school students led them to question the relevancy of current music education practices. These traditional aims were largely based on aesthetic philosophy that dealt with developing responsiveness to music (Reimer, 1989). Wayne Bowman (1994) agreed that responsiveness should be a core aim of music education, but he also warned that this might lead to deterministic value judgments about musical styles and traditions that deny personal preference and other musical cultures. Western classical music has generally been given privileged status in the field, and even today many music educators aim to pass on the associated tenets and practices. This has had the effect of devaluing musical styles and cultures that fall outside the Western tradition and, in turn, denying validity of personal identities that rely on and celebrate these “othered” traditions.

David Elliot (1995) proposed a “praxial” philosophy of music education that focused on the practice of music making, or **musicking**, a conception of music as a verb rather than a noun. Using this language shift, Elliot sought to denote a distinct focus on music as action and practice. He stated that music is
an inherently social action that has the potential to “preserve a sense of community and self-identity within social groups” (pg. 296). Another aim of this approach, as outlined by Philip Alpers (1994) is to give value and meaning to all musical cultures within the practice of music education. Alpers (1994) stated:

The praxial view of art resists the suggestion that art can be best understood on the basis of some universal or absolute feature or set of features such as aesthetic formalism, whether of the strict or enhanced [expressionist] variety. The attempt is made, rather, to understand art in terms of the variety of meaning and values evidenced in actual practice in particular cultures (p. 233-234).

In other words, under the praxial philosophy of music education, students are encouraged to construct their own meaning and value for a given musical experience. In practice, this particular standpoint would provide a space for the inclusion of personal identity in the field of music education.

**Personal And Professional Identities In Music Education Scholarship**

There is significant research in music education regarding the occupational or professional identity development of music teachers (Bernard, 2005; Doloff, 1999, 2007; Isbell, 2008; Woodford, 2002). Much of this research has framed occupational identity development in terms of socialization, which Daniel Isbell (2008) described as “the process by which a person learns to adopt, develop, and display actions and role behaviors typical of, and unique to a profession” (p. 163). Socialization consists of both primary socialization and secondary socialization. During primary socialization, individuals observe their surroundings and significant others within those contexts. Additionally, they observe the actions, attitudes, performances, and discourses related to particular roles and identities. Secondary socialization refers to the acquisition of “behaviors and vocabularies” that are particular to a professional field, and usually occurs as part of apprenticeship/trade training, or college degree programs. Daniel Isbell (2008) stated that the purpose of secondary socialization is “to transform lay conceptions into professional conceptions” (p. 163). In a quantitative study designed to investigate the socialization and occupational identity of music educators, Daniel Isbell’s findings suggested, “experiences from primary socialization account for a marginal amount of variance with respect to [occupational] identity” (2008, p. 176). Furthermore, Daniel Isbell found that “experiences associated with secondary socialization in particular are a consistently significant predictor of occupational identity” (p. 176).

From a critical perspective, there are several assumptions to be questioned in Daniel Isbell’s (2008) study of occupational identity in pre-service music educators. First, the study relied on the assumption that most music majors have significant primary socialization experiences in traditional school music settings and come from musical homes (Isbell, 2008; Woodford, 2002). Additionally, Daniel Isbell cited research stating that many individuals who choose to major in music education make that decision in high school. Based on these assumptions, which imply relatively similar primary socialization experiences, it makes sense that there is little variance in occupational identity based on primary socialization. As will be explained in further detail below, two of the interview participants for this study, Aaron and Tasha, described their early experiences with music as outside the conventional primary socialization experiences that Daniel Isbell detailed. For students who come from musical homes and have significant early experience in school music, personal identity—upon entering university music study—may be in high agreement with the desired occupational identity. For students like Aaron and Tasha, however, alternate paths of primary socialization could signal greater dissonance between personal and professional/occupational identity during university experiences.

Julia Koza (2008) drew from personal observations working within a university music education program to theorize about a potential career tracking system that exists in the field of music education that privileges and commodifies certain identities—namely middle class white identities. In other words, those who are granted access to the field of university music education may gain this very

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1 All names are pseudonyms.
access due to gatekeeping technologies that place high value on specific common experiences during primary socialization. She posited that the process of music admissions, which relies heavily on private study as a form of primary socialization, as well as distinct and exclusive audition repertoire requirements, represents a “construction of musical difference” that disadvantages students who cannot afford prior study. Furthermore, students who study musical styles outside of the Western classical tradition may also find themselves excluded from university music programs. Undergraduate audition requirements for music education programs state clearly that students must be proficient in the classical tradition, sometimes bluntly stating that other musical styles such as jazz, country, pop, or musical theater are unacceptable. Julia Koza stated that these requirements, together, represent a social funding of race in the field of music education that materializes whiteness. This is of particular interest in considering how limited entry to the field may serve to exclude students who bring non-dominant primary socialization experiences to music education.

Several music education researchers have attempted to address the glaring absence of personal identity in consideration of music teacher preparation (Bernard, 2005; Campbell, Thompson, & Barrett, 2010; Dolloff, 1999, 2007). For each of these scholars, identity takes on a complex and fluid dimension. Rhoda Bernard (2005) positioned identity as “processual, as positions and contexts that constantly shift, and as constructed on multiple levels. The positions and contexts [referred] to include gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, and status” (p. 5). She also includes professional identities in her list of positions, noting that, for her, these include musician, teacher, and researcher. Lori-Anne Dolloff (2007) agrees, “Identity is a complex phenomenon existing not as a unitary subjectivity, but in multiple layers, in webs, or as multi-faceted” (pg. 3). Each of these definitions makes space for personal identity in a conversation of occupational socialization in that each allows for multiple complex and interactive identities. Because complexity is maintained in these conceptions of identity, Rhoda Bernard (2005) and Lori-Anne Dolloff (2007) resist positioning personal and professional as separable. Lori-Anne Dolloff (2007) specifically stated, “developing a personal pedagogy results from the interaction between an individual’s beliefs and skills” (p. 193).

A consideration of personal identity in music teacher education takes into account not only personal narratives aimed specifically at the profession, but also personal conceptions and beliefs about the ways knowledge is produced (Campbell et al., 2010). The purpose of this assertion is not to claim essentialist or static views about the epistemologies based on individuals’ positional identities, but rather to say that interactions with people in specific contexts lead to certain beliefs, assumptions and values. Making sense of the world, through the lens of identity, includes consideration of those positional identities that are projected by the individual, ascribed by institutions, and the ways in which positional identities are accepted, resisted, or fully rejected. Each of these stances toward, or experiences with identity influences the way that we interact with others. As Mark Campbell, Linda Thompson, and Janet Barrett (2010) stated,

A personal orientation to music teaching and learning looks at all participants in the educational process from a dynamic perspective. That is, as we continue to deepen and extend our knowledge of self and others, it is always in the service of more and better teaching. We are not only present oriented; we are also past and future oriented in our thinking about teaching. Most importantly, a personal orientation framework helps us to understand ourselves; it helps us to understand the music experiences we value, the places and situations that support learning and the ways we can help others. (p. 2)

Thus, personal identity examination should not only be a project within music teacher education, but also a political stance. Though Mark Campbell, Linda Thompson, and Janet Barrett (2010) seek to claim a personal orientation to music teacher education as separate from a critical orientation, it is my belief that these two orientations have much in common. To put things another way, I agree with Estelle Jorgensen (2002, 2003) in her contention that music teacher education must aim for a more dialogic or liberating model that acknowledges the learner’s autonomy in construction of knowledge.
Conceptual Framework And Methodology

George Noblit, Susana Flores, and Enrique Murillo (2004) stated, “research methods and theory are all too often taught separately and implicitly portrayed as having different natures” (p.3). In line with these authors, I believe that “methods are ideas and theories in themselves” (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004, p. 3). This study is approached from the framework of postcritical ethnography, which critiques dominant ideologies and power structures, but also notes that critique is particular to the researcher, as well as socially constructed (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004). I acknowledge that my voice as a former practitioner of music education is present throughout the design, methodology, and interpretation of data. As noted by George Noblit, Susana Flores, and Enrique Murillo (2004), objectivity is usually eschewed in postcritical ethnographies, but is never fully escaped whenever ethnographic interpretations are inscribed. The act of writing inscribes a critical interpretation that exists beyond the intention of the author to de-objectify, dereify, or demystify what is studied. (p. 22)

Context

This study was initially conducted as a requirement for a novice level course on qualitative research, focusing specifically on participant observation and interviewing. Because of my own experience as a university music student and music educator, I felt that my position as researcher might provide a different perspective. For this project, I sought to observe how these pre-service music educators (music education majors) conceived of and enacted the identity and culture of university music education.

Data Collection

Data was collected for this study by way of participant observation and interviews. One class, a senior music education seminar, was the main site and focus for the study. There were thirteen participants in the course (three men and seven women) as well as the course instructor Dr. Hart. The majority of participants were white; only two students – Melina and Tasha – identified as persons of color. I was able to observe this class meeting four times throughout the semester. Additionally, I observed one class meeting of a course for junior music education majors taught by the same professor, and spent several hours in common lobby spaces of the two university music buildings. Jottings were taken in the field, and full field notes written up after each observation, resulting in fifty-two pages of field notes.

Three senior pre-service music educators were interviewed for this study. Aaron, a white man, and Tasha, an African American woman were both suggested to me by the course professor. I approached Hope, a white woman, to request an interview based on her participation in the course meetings that I had observed. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted approximately thirty minutes. Interview prompts were open-ended and inquired about students’ pathway to university music education, their level of comfort in the school of music, as well as their conceptions regarding identity in different spheres of life including family, university, and the school of music. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed in full.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was initially approached using grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). After an initial round of open coding, I was able to derive several themes for focused coding and theory development. For the purposes of this article, I have centered the discussion specifically on issues of personal vs. professional identity – one of many themes that were apparent from the collected data. In both the classroom observations and interviews, I noted specific strategies and tools used to demonstrate belonging in the professional field of music education. Additionally, I noticed specific instances when students signaled a willingness to include personal identity in the classroom discourse, and others when students sought to create boundaries and keep the two spheres separate.

Participants’ Conceptions Of Personal And Professional Identity

One of the most pressing questions to be asked about the relationship of personal and professional identity involves the level of agreement between one’s existing personal identity and the desired professional
identity. In music education then, how much does a pre-service educator’s personal identity agree with the university vision of music educator identity? In the case of Hope, a white woman, both of her parents are musicians and music educators. She noted that she was “in a music class before [she] could walk.” Thus her personal identity includes rich and long-held conceptions regarding how music educators look, teach, interact, and navigate the world. The classroom, as a setting for musical learning — or even as an occupational backdrop, is not foreign to Hope. In this sense, there is a high level of agreement between Hope’s personal identity, and her projected professional identity. Tasha, an African American woman, also described a rich and vibrant history with music in her personal life.

Both of my parents are singers. My mom and dad both were worship leaders at my church. They weren’t classically trained or anything, but they both have really great voices and that’s where my love of music came from. Just living at home and mom singing, and my dad singing. My family is very musical. If you go to a family reunion, about half of it will be spent with someone at a piano and my whole family singing.

Like Hope, Tasha describes a rich and complex personal musical identity. However, there is little agreement between Tasha’s self-described musical identity and that of university music study. In fact, agreement between personal and professional identity in Tasha’s case was so low at the beginning of her time in the music program, that she described her transition into the major using a metaphor of learning an entirely new culture. She elaborated:

When I first got there, I didn’t know anything about the culture of studying music. It was like a language. It’s like you have to learn a new language. It’s like I was put into a new country, and it was like “Here you go! Figure it out. How are you gonna get your food? How are you gonna find your way around?” It was kind of like that. These music people had this system of communication that I didn’t have. I remember the first couple of days of [music] theory…I wanted to Run. Out. Of. The Room. Everyone was contributing and saying words — I didn’t know what they meant. It was really really intimidating and stressful.

Here, Tasha’s lack of dominant primary socialization experiences left her unequipped to begin university music study on equal footing. She describes the dissonance between her prior experiences with music, and the culture of university music education. Later in the interview, Tasha described how this dissonance would often lead her to “shut off” in classes where she was feeling intimidated. She also noted how she eventually had to learn to assert herself and ask for clarification rather than disengage. While Tasha’s initial inclination was to keep her personal identity as separate and disengaged from her professional music identity, she attributed her success and survival in the program to her assertion of personal identity into the professional field.

Both Aaron and Tasha arrived at college with the intention of pursuing other majors, mathematics and pharmacy respectively, directly contradicting Daniel Isbell’s (2008) assertion that most music majors decide on their career path during high school. A particularly interesting point to note in Tasha’s quote above is her use of the term “music people” to describe native residents of the professional world of music education. Aaron also distinguished himself from those students, whose personal identity is in high agreement with professional identity, using the terms “symphony kids” and “opera kids.” In each case, Aaron and Tasha located themselves as “othered” or outside of these categories. Additionally, both participants voiced strong convictions about the location of certain qualities and concepts as either inside or outside the professional sphere of music education. For Aaron, “fun,” “enjoyment,” and “relaxation” were described as located in popular music culture, not professional university music study. When connected to classroom engagement, positioning enjoyment as outside of school music study has serious implications for teacher training. In Tasha’s case, she described the terms “diversity” and “multicultural” as terms that are only used in dominant whitestream professional settings, and denied that either of these educational attempts at cultural relevancy connect significantly to her lived experience.
In the face of the above distinctions, both Aaron and Tasha attributed their success in the professional field to significant mentors who provided a bridge allowing assertion of personal identity into the professional field. Aaron described Dr. Hart as this bridging mentor, stating that he saw in his playful and comedic classroom presentation, an invitation to enact his self-described “goofball” personality. Tasha credited her voice instructor, Dr. Isaac, also an African American woman with allowing her the space to assert her personal identity. She appreciated that Dr. Isaac understood her lived experience, and provided her with professional opportunities that recognized this, including suggestions of contemporary repertoire by African American composers.

Identity Tools And Strategies Brought To The Profession

Throughout the course of the study I noted, in observations and interviews, the presence of both discursive and performative identity tools that the pre-service music teachers used to signal their belonging. Some of these were protective strategies used to deflect or prevent critique, while others served to demonstrate capability or talent in the professional field. Interestingly, these strategies and performances were not always contextually focused in music education. In some cases, students demonstrated knowledge of music history, listed performance experience, or even described what music education was not in order to convince myself and others of their ‘successful’ socialization. In some instances, discursive strategies used by participants functioned as a tool to distance them from personal identities that they did not believe to be associated with professional music study. Below, I will discuss the identity strategies and tools located in the data, as well as the conditions from which they arise, as described by participants.

Knowledge Claims

As described above, some students demonstrated their belonging in the professional world of music through discursive performances that highlighted field-specific knowledge or skill. For example, Matt (a white man) would often sing excerpts from art songs or opera arias as comical responses to classmates’ comments. By connecting the subject matter of the songs to things that Dr. Hart or his peers had said, Matt created a casual musical banter that served to demonstrate his in-depth knowledge of the vocal repertoire. Perhaps for the same reason, Aaron spent a great deal of time during his interview reciting terminology, naming composers and musicians, and generally highlighting his knowledge of the professional field of music. As someone who had to learn the “language” of music very quickly, Aaron used this performative language to demonstrate his belonging in the culture of university music.

If I were an instrumentalist, I would be doing anything I could do on my instrument. I have a friend that is a cello player – a cellist, who is kind of like that in that he plays cello for a rock band, but he also plays Brahms on a regular basis. Or like really large works, like Dvorak. A good music major should do everything of their craft, and have something that they can focus on that’s an official university concentration, but also something that you’ve made your own. Cause, like, to just come here and sing English art songs, French art songs, German art songs, Italian art songs, with a sprinkling of opera – that’s the stereotype. But to really immerse yourself in what you’re doing…. I mean for me, it’s Spanish art song. I focused on Spanish art song and Zarzuela because that’s something that’s very interesting to me.

In the case of this interview excerpt, Aaron sought to highlight his belonging in the world of classical music, as well as his personal identification with the world of rock ’n roll, while at the same time loading the statement with vocabulary signaling his knowledge of professional music vocabulary and norms. For example, he corrects himself – changing “cello player” to “cellist” – switching from lay vocabulary to a more formal title. He also lists several composers, and is sure to list each of the languages that are generally highlighted in voice study. Even though the statement seeks to show that he is proficient in various musical spheres, he relies mainly on the technical languages of the Western Classical tradition of music.
Co-opting And Pre-empting Critique

In order to deflect or prevent critique, I noted that students took one of two approaches. In one approach, students would pre-empt the instructor’s critique with their own so that he did not have room to offer his appraisal of a recorded music lesson (post-performance). In the other approach, students made demands about minute details of assignments – namely a large portfolio project – so that they were able to ensure proper adherence in order to prevent failure, as well as negative critique (pre-performance). In an example of post-performance deflection of critique, I observed a one-on-one conference with Hannah, a very vocal young white woman who often dominated class discussion:

Dr. Hart says to Hannah, “Tell me about your videos.” (The students are required to film music lessons they’ve taught and comment on them as part of a portfolio project). Hannah replies, “They’re bad. They’re really rough.” Together, we watch several minutes of the videos that Hannah has recorded of her class. The students are semi-active in their participation, most are singing, but Hannah points out that their posture is not what she would want it to be. In our conference, Hannah cringes at several points when the students’ pitch is flat (below the desired pitch). Dr. Hart begins to offer some advice, but Hannah interrupts and says, “Ron, the first time I watched these videos, I cried. I hated them.”

In this case, Hannah pre-empted a critique from Dr. Hart, acknowledging and highlighting her failures in the video. One possible explanation is that the above passage is a performance of her “critiquing skill” that serves to show her capability in one mode of musical knowledge to make up for a lack of ability in teaching. Throughout the conference, Hannah focused so closely on her failures and inabilities that Dr. Hart never had the opportunity to give feedback or suggestions for improvement. In this example, Hannah strategically used deflection as a tool to avoid criticism from Dr. Hart. By dominating the conversation, she was able to avoid negative feedback.

Limits For Capacity For Teaching Culturally Diverse/Different Settings

“Well, that’s what you get in a problem-based discipline.”

(Interview Participant, personal communication, March 21, 2013)

Dr. Hart, the music education professor observed for this study seemed to be particularly fond of this phrase. He spoke a similar phrase several times in personal conversation, as well as in two separate class meetings. In this statement, he refers to the idea that school or university music is a discipline largely based on skill development, where improvements are made through practice, performance, and critique. The field of music education is unique in that it represents a confluence of two professional pathways that are both characterized by the three areas mentioned above. A vital implication of this intersection of two fields is the idea that students are evaluated based on embodied performances in which their professional identity is inseparable from their personal identity. This poses a potential limitation when, for music educators, critique is a highly valued skill to be used for refining musical performance. Throughout this study, I observed the participants engaging in critique on many levels: critique of self, critique of the instructor, critique of peers, and critique of students. In several instances throughout the study, the participants sought to demonstrate their ability to critique in both discursive and performative ways, perhaps as a strategy to demonstrate their professional belonging in the field.

Negative Critique

In one class meeting, Dr. Hart began by saying to the class, “Tell me everything that’s bad about musical theater.” At this moment, Nathan, a white young man, perked up. The scene is described in the following excerpt from field notes:

Nathan, who has previously not engaged much during the class, says “YES! I am going to tear up this cons list!” Seemingly in excitement, he then begins to sing a jazzy version of Jingle Bells. Dr. Hart dictates directions to another student about how he would like him to set up a chart of pros/cons
on about musical theater on the whiteboard. As this communication is taking place, my attention is drawn back to Nathan, who is saying to Kathleen, “Cons…based on what I hate…I HATE musical theater!” As he says this, Nathan begins singing again and sits with his hands in the shape of a steeple, tapping his fingers together one by one. Perhaps because of the Christmas music, the way he speaks the sentence makes me think of a plotting Dr. Seuss Grinch, taking joy in negativity. Before Aaron can fully draw Dr. Hart’s chart, the students in the room suddenly seem to see what he’s asking for and begin to shout out negative things about musical theater. In this moment, they are more focused and participatory than they’ve been in the previous class sessions I’ve observed.

This class meeting was, by far, the most engaged that I’d seen the students. The invitation to discussion, framed in negative critique, triggered a joyful and participatory reaction from the students. In translation to the music education classroom, there is the potential for this type of discourse to open the door to negative critique of students, perhaps leading to deficit perspectives of particular groups and communities.

**Deficit Perspective**

Several times in the observations and interviews, I noted that the participants demonstrated a critique that reflected a deficit view of students. Deficit thinking includes language and beliefs that assume students or their families’ lack capability or authority because they differ in some way from the speaker’s identity or lived experience (Marx, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999; Yosso, 2005). This type of thinking can be based on race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, or socioeconomic status. In her interview Hope, a white young woman from a middle class background, demonstrated this kind of language:

> Surprisingly for it being a Title I school, it’s run very effectively. Like, all the kids are extremely well behaved; they want to be there. And all of the staff that’s there, they want to make sure that every kid gets the care, the love, and the nurturing they need when they’re at school, because a lot of them don’t have that at home. Like, I have a least one kid every day that doesn’t speak any English. It’s actually really interesting, there’s two self-contained autistic classrooms, and these kids are so far on the spectrum they can’t do anything for themselves. You see them come everyday, and the number of kids that you see that have those issues that you know aren’t cared for at home the way that they should be. Like, to see the TA’s that are with them give them so much love every day is really encouraging. And it makes it feel like a very loving environment.

From the first sentence, Hope demonstrated a deficit view of Title I schools. Though she praised the school where she is placed, she is still assumed that students at Title I schools do not care or want to be at school. Especially interesting, is how Hope followed up a statement about students not receiving love or care at home, with a sentence about students’ inability to speak English. Does she believe that students whose parents have not taught their students English do not care about their children? She also spoke about students with disabilities as if their parents do not love them, and places teachers in position of saving or “other mothering” (Delpit, 1995).

**Focus on Concrete**

Another tool used by students that could serve as a limitation for teaching in culturally diverse or different settings is the claim that they could only understand succinct, concrete discussion. Several times the students observed demanded concrete and structured methods of instruction and information delivery, citing their inability to grasp abstract or complex topics.

In one case, Dr. Hart dictated a chart to a student who drew it on the white board. Based on Dr. Hart’s direction, the student filled in the columns before assigning headings. Several students voiced their frustration and misunderstanding.

> Leah asks if Dr. Hart can add headings to the columns, because she doesn’t understand the organization if there are no headings. Aaron says: “Oh I get it, we are going to have to look
at these columns and come up with what they mean as a part of the exercise.” Dr. Hart smiles and says, “Shh! You’re going to give away my secret too early!” Leah sighs loudly, and Melina says, “I still don’t get it.” Matt: “Me Neither.” Melina (sarcastically): “I mean, I’m a genius and I really don’t get it.”

Even though Aaron deduced Dr. Hart’s plan, the frustrated students continue their protest. They seem to maintain their confusion and obstinacy, even though they have not yet been asked to summarize.

(Fifteen minutes later) Apparently, the students are still bothered by the fact that headings have not been added. Hannah says, “Ron, I think you think we are smarter than we are.” He responds saying, “No you’re all very smart. Just stay on board.” I notice that Hope is still slouching and utters an audible “ugh” as she shrugs her shoulders. Leah says “Can’t you just give us a hint about what you are looking for?”

In these excerpts, the students appealed to clarity, denouncing their own intelligence, and claiming that Dr. Hart was asking too much of them. One possible explanation is that the students are truly more comfortable with concrete concepts and easy answers – perhaps a characteristic of students who have survived the pressures of high-stakes testing. On the other hand, this may simply be an offensive move that seeks to pre-empt critique from the professor, as described above. This concrete stance, which serves as a disabling performance, ties pre-service music educators to a very practical model of teaching, in which there can be simple answers for dilemmas encountered in the classroom. Additionally, it highlights a disturbing limitation regarding the participants’ ability to examine complex ideological constructs such as race, power, and oppression within the field of music education. Demanding straightforward, concrete instruction in their own classes may, in effect, provide an excuse for students to recuse themselves from engaging in critical conversations that would prepare them to teach in culturally diverse or different settings.

**Technology And “Shutting Off”**

Technology, in the form of laptops and smartphones, was omnipresent throughout the study. Although this observation may be more indicative of university youth culture, rather than unique to music, I wonder what influence these pieces of technology might have on expression of personal identity in the music education classroom. In many of the observations, I noted that students who became frustrated with the discussion immediately turned to their phones. There were several times when Tasha immediately turned to her cell phone after choosing to disengage from the classroom discussion. Notably, in the following example, her peers are attempting to talk about race and Tasha was one of only two students of color in the room.

The class is listening to Aaron speak with Nathan about what to do when musicals call for casting according to race and says “I cannot colorblind cast a show, and you sure as hell can’t do black face.” Tasha raises her hand to ask a question, then seems to bargain with herself about whether or not to ask it. She shakes her head, and says “No” out loud, and then puts her hand back down. Tasha immediately picks up her cell phone and begins typing something.

It was obvious that Tasha had a comment in mind, but chose not to express her feelings in the class at that moment. However, the fact that she turned immediately to her cell phone implies that she did find an arena to express a personal concern. After assessing the potential risk of asserting her personal identity, specifically addressing race, Tasha audibly stated, “No.” The risk, in this case, outweighed the benefit of weighing in on the conversation. It is of particular interest here that personal technology provides a real-time connection to the hidden transcript. As opposed to the public transcript, James Scott (1990) stated,

The hidden transcript is the discourse that takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation by power holders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript. (1990, pp. 4-5)
Assuming that the content of Tasha’s text contained a critique or complaint about her classmates, it is of particular interest that personal identity, for Tasha, is better situated in the hidden transcript rather than the public transcript of music education.

Implications And Applications To The Field Of Music Education

In the face of not just changing, but changed demographics of American public school students, the teaching force is still largely made up of white individuals. The field of music education has only recently begun to call for a shift in the way the field conceives of multiculturalism and culturally relevant or culturally sensitive pedagogy (Abril, 2013; Allsup & Shieh, 2012; Elliot, 1995; Jorgensen, 2002, 2003). Throughout my experience in the field, I have always found that music education has been touted as a subject that easily incorporates multiculturalism, thereby achieving cultural relevancy. It is my belief that this fallacy has led to a lack of critical reflection within the field. Through selection of repertoire or songs, music educators have attempted to highlight particular cultures or musical traditions. These educators, including myself, have validated this tokenistic practice, stating that by programming music from various traditions, we are acknowledging the personal identities and learning needs of culturally diverse students (Jorgensen, 2002). Though I am in agreement with the idea that all musical traditions are deserving of a place of stature within school music programs, I feel that this practice stops short of recognizing the social and political contexts of classrooms. Having said this, I believe that music educators must consider the fact that content, classroom instruction, and institutional structure can serve as oppressive forces that obscure the personal identity of both student and teacher.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) has stated that culturally relevant teachers “assume that an asymmetrical (even antagonistic) relationship exists between poor students of color and society. Thus, [the teacher’s] vision of their work is one of preparing students to combat inequity by being highly competent and critically conscious” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 30). For example, as Tasha stated, merely programming an African American spiritual does not automatically create space for dialogue about the institution of slavery, and is all the more problematic when taught to students of color by a white music teacher. Following this, the field of music education must create space not only for consideration of students’ personal identity, but also for critical examination of personal identity of the music educator. Many music educators are trained in programs that prepare them to teach white, middle-class students (Ballantyne & Mills, 2008; Koza, 2008). Though curricular requirements often include a university course in social foundations of education, these courses often exist outside of a musical context, leaving pre-service music teacher without concrete examples of culturally relevant practices in a music classroom setting. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) suggested, “most pre-service teachers enter a program that ghettoizes issues of diversity” and that curricular organization “suggest[s] that issues of diversity and social justice are tangential to the enterprise” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 38).

With the above in mind, it will be vital for music teacher preparation programs to politicize and problematize education within the context of the music classroom. Without concrete connections, pre-service music educators may continue to see the field as exempt from including students’ personal identity and voice in an authentic manner. Equally troubling, pre-service music teachers may seek to claim innocence or neutrality for the field, seeing diverse repertoire choice as having sufficiently connected personal identity to classroom curriculum. Also implicit in this assertion is the need to make visible the power that a teacher has in the classroom. In bringing this power to light, one could better understand how that power, combined with other positional identities, can serve to either encourage or deny personal experience. This is especially pertinent in situations where a white music educator is working in classrooms teaching students that are culturally different from them. For these educators it will be important to examine and make visible their racial identity, as well as their complicity in the hegemonic racial ideology that confers an additional position of dominance aside from their powerful role as teacher in the classroom (Applebaum, 2010; Sleeter, 2013).

Even as music educators seek to make space for what Randall Allsup and Eric Shieh (2012) refer to as a public pedagogy, we must also understand that
asserting personal identity in spaces where it has traditionally been denied will continue to involve a high level of risk. Thus, music educators at all levels must be prepared to respond to these assertions in ways that are affirming, but must also be willing to risk their own vulnerability so that students may offer critique. Barbara Applebaum (2010) suggested that humility, uncertainty, and critique emphasizing listening are dispositions that allow educators to maintain vigilant responsibility in acknowledging oppressive social ideologies. In preparing music educators to allow space for personal identity in the classroom, university curricula must include these as acceptable and worthwhile dispositions, stepping away from more traditional tropes such as control, management, and authority.

Another specific consideration for the field of music is the fact that both time and space will need to be made for critical dialogue in the everyday classroom. Kate Fitzpatrick (2012) described her experience in “losing an entire rehearsal” to discuss the racial context of a band arrangement. In a field that emphasizes public performance as product, music teachers are often unwilling to give up rehearsal time, which is already lessened by other school priorities such as remediation for high-stakes testing. Thus, taking time from a rehearsal for critical discussion entails risking the potential quality of public performance. There is also the possibility that the tenuous position of music education in the public school curriculum may prevent those within the field from offering critique for fear that music programs may be cut altogether. Additionally, in the current high-stakes testing climate, music educators often celebrate the fact that their subject area is not tested, and therefore maintains autonomy in curricular decision-making. It is possible that a stance that regards other subject areas as bearing the burden of oppressive schooling practices allows music teachers to disengage from critique, effectively excusing themselves as not being part of the problem.

Conclusion

In order to meet aims of social justice education, the field of music education must be willing to change in order to incorporate, not just accommodate, diverse personal identities, expressions, and lived experiences. This will entail a questioning of the traditional aims of music education and a willingness to re-envision our field and re-organize the associated priorities. While we encourage students to read music notation, we can also encourage them to engage in musical communities, jam sessions, improvisation, and even musical détournement (Débord, 1959). We must question why the world of university music appears as a “foreign land” to those who enter the field without dominant primary socialization experiences, when we proclaim music as “the universal language.” Music education researchers must ask how pre-service teachers make sense of critique from professors and peers, as well as how this critique translates into teaching attitudes, dispositions, and practice. Additionally, there is a need to juxtapose the desirable critical posture in music education with that of Social Justice Education (Bell, 1997; Bettez, 2008; Hackman, 2005; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). I am in agreement with Rhoda Bernard (2005) who stated that we must reframe music teacher education such that “our programs become contexts where we can nurture our students as whole people who bring their whole selves to the craft of teaching music” (p. 29). Furthermore, we must allow for students to see their personal identity not just nurtured, but also reflected in the practices, repertoire, and cultural sphere of school music.

References


"A Good Blog Is A Continuing Conversation." How I Learned To Blog And Use Social Media As a Feminist Activist

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This article is based on Ms. Heuwagen’s thesis at the University of South Florida

**Abstract:** Blogging has become a hot ticket to fast and lasting notoriety. Or has it? With what seems like everyone starting a blog, it is easy to get pulled into the idea that once you start writing you can become successful in a matter of just a few posts. As a feminist activist, I set out to discover what it takes to become a successful blogger with a social media presence. I spent several months writing and working with Matter of Cause, an organization looking to create change online. My narrative reflects the triumphs and difficulties of online feminist activism. As I worked on writing blog posts that reflected my views on pop culture, feminism, and sex positivity, I faced the hard work and determination it takes to establish a successful online feminist brand through social media.
How It All Began

Hi Samantha,” the email began, “[a friend of mine] passed me your name and email. I run the blog for I Am Choice Community Changemakers.² We would love to invite you to write for our blog, ‘I am Choice.’ I know you have an active blog yourself, so we’re also interested in sharing reposts.

I was stunned. How on Earth did this editor find me, and why was she interested in my writing? I had been running my own blog, A Feminist Life, for almost four years and though the blog had grown with me, I never received any substantial interest in it before. I realized quickly that this opportunity would be a way to showcase my own work and allow me to grow as a writer. I responded to the editor, telling her that I would be more than happy to write for her website turned blog. I was so excited that I immediately began drafting a piece about heteronormativity and how the stereotypes of marriage and family feel as though they are constantly shoved down the throats of young people everywhere.³ The editor of “I am Choice” accepted the piece and, thus, began a working relationship between me and the “I am Choice” team.

I submitted several pieces to the “I am Choice” organization before inquiring about an internship. I was approaching graduation, and I needed to complete an internship in order to graduate with my master’s degree in Women’s and Gender Studies. I contacted the president and founder of “I am Choice” about the newly established internship program. I was invited to meet with her in person. The interview process covered my views on politics, women’s issues, and LGBTQ rights. I positioned myself as a pro-sex radical feminist activist who often commented on sex, politics, and pop culture. I got the job because of my teaching and volunteering on comprehensive sex education. The president hired me following a second interview and explained that I would be writing about women’s issues and sex positivity. Twice a month I would write pieces of my own choosing.

I hoped writing for the blog would teach me to use social media as an activist and to operate a website successfully. I was interested in learning how to publicize my work more effectively and at the same time how I could enhance my activism through online technologies. This opportunity with the newly named, Matter of Cause (MOC) would be a way to merge my passion for writing and my interest in technology-based activism. This narrative of my time with MOC reflects the triumphs and difficulties of online feminist activism. I write as a white heterosexual 20-something middle class U.S. bilingual woman with an invisible disability. As I worked on writing blog posts that reflected my views on pop culture, feminism, and sex positivity, I discovered the work and determination it takes to establish a successful blog and social media presence that works towards creating a place for feminist activism online.

“It’s A Matter Of Cause”

Matter of Cause (MOC) was originally named “I Am Choice: Community Changemakers.” The mission of “I Am Choice” was to “spark, re-imagine, and cultivate community driven solutions for the issues people face” (MATTEROFCAUSE, 2013). The primary focus of the group was to organize opposition against the 2012 Florida Constitutional Amendment Six, dubbed “The Florida Abortion Amendment.” This amendment would have prohibited the use of public funds for abortions. Fortunately, because of the efforts of “I Am Choice” and other organizations, the amendment was defeated (Ballotpedia 2012).

After the 2012 election the organization’s future looked promising. During the 2013 Florida legislative session, the organization’s leadership led a three-day awareness campaign, “Stop Hate, Stop 58,” in response to Florida Senate Bill 58, nicknamed the “anti-religious hate” bill by advocacy groups.⁴ The organization became so successful that within hours the “I am Choice” Facebook page had reached over 10,000 people and received national news coverage. In the end, the bill did not pass in the Florida Senate.

After its success, the organization’s name became a problem. The word “choice” is controversial because it has become synonymous with abortion rights. Numbers of supporters and organizations became confused and believed “I Am Choice” only

² I am Choice” organization slogan is now “Matter of Cause” and the website has also been changed to, www.matterofcause.com
³ “Young People and the Pressure to Lead Lives of the Past”
⁴ For more information about the Senate Bill 58, visit: http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2013/0058
focused on issues of access to safe abortions and reproductive rights, which was not the case. Though the organization was gaining traction in the political world, it was not reaching the audience it cared to target. “I am Choice” wanted to connect with other progressive organizations within the Tampa Bay area by focusing on the impacts of national and local stories. Ultimately, “I am Choice” leadership decided a new direction and name change were needed. After some debate and careful consideration of word usage, a new name was found: Matter of Cause (MOC). The slogan became, “It’s a Matter of Cause.” Currently, the main focus is to grow the readership and reach of MOC’s articles. MOC leadership wants to build a platform to unite diverse but likeminded individuals in the Tampa Bay area for the ultimate purpose of galvanizing a political force.

MOC is more than a blog; it’s an organization that “brings knowledge to action” through progressive voices. Key for MOC is to bring many voices to its progressive political agenda. MOC wants to be the No. 1 place to go for a fresh perspective as well as a device to document the progressive movement from a grassroots point of view. The goal is to bring real-life accounts to topics important to the people of Tampa Bay. MOC also works to bring issues of equality to the ballot by moving these issues hard enough for other organizations around the Tampa Bay area to join MOC in support. Ultimately, then, through MOC leadership, these issues reach the Florida State Government.

MOC is growing and changing. MOC publishes articles based on what is happening in the news. Content relies on the writers and how their individual experiences shape their understanding of current events, though some weeks there have been themes to the pieces. For example, MOC emphasized women’s history month. During the weeks leading up to March, MOC posted several articles that looked at women’s issues. Some examples of the categories that writers can choose from include race, gender, and sexuality issues and rights. MOC’s goal is to establish a dialogue between its bloggers and readers by covering topics important to MOC’s readers. The idea is to let the voices and expertise of MOC’s writers make connections with people.

**Overview Of Internship Responsibilities**

As this was my first experience as an intern, I wasn’t sure what to expect. In graduate school, I improved my skill as a writer. In addition, I had written for MOC before starting my internship. So I felt confident about my style of writing and its ability to fit the blog’s intended audience. I was, however, apprehensive about helping MOC maintain an editorial calendar and lobby for specific legislation. Throughout my time with MOC, once a week I was responsible for one article that covered a variety of topics, such as feminism, women’s issues, life, and sex. Despite some nervousness about non-writing assignments beyond my experience, I remained excited for the new opportunities this position would bring me.

Below is a brief overview of some of the responsibilities for which I was accountable during my time with MOC. The following is excerpted from my internship contract:

**Intern Responsibilities**

**a. General Responsibilities**

i. Maintain confidentiality: Intern will come in contact with various information, processes, methods, and supporter information. None of this or any other proprietary information should be disclosed without written permission from company.

ii. Work on days and times scheduled, as well as notify supervisor about any schedule changes.

iii. Act in accordance with all guidelines and dress requirements as specified.

iv. Complete all assignments, tasks, and projects within the deadlines and guidelines provided.

v. Communicate and collaborate with other team members in developing and executing daily tasks, projects, and/or campaigns.

vi. Provide feedback on internship during and upon completion.

**b. Position Responsibilities**

i. Researching and drafting statements as needed.

ii. Drafting, repacking, and editing content for blog.

iii. Collaborate with team members on new ideas, strategies, and messaging for campaigns and overall direction of blog.

iv. Oversee blog recruitment.
v. Maintain editorial calendar.
vi. Assist in expansion of online community and distribution of content.

vii. Attend weekly meetings and post weekly updates in Facebook work group.
viii. Maintain some general knowledge about current affairs as it pertains to women’s issues (especially sexual assault on college/university campuses and reproductive rights in Florida).

I also was responsible for brainstorming ways to increase MOC’s following. I read, watched, and listened to a lot of news sources because anything could be a story. Then I was to share and “like” the various posts on MOC’s Facebook page through my own Facebook page, as well as ask my friends to do the same. Furthermore, I shared the articles on my own blog and even went so far as to join Twitter to promote MOC’s work because MOC targeted likeminded progressives across the social media universe.

In the second week of March, I ended my internship earlier than the April 25 end date on my contract. I respectfully declined to continue to write for the organization because of editorial differences and my desire to take my writing in a different direction. During my brief writing career with MOC, I published nine articles and wrote an additional seven, plus an eighth that I eventually published on my blog, A Feminist Life. (See appendices for the texts of these articles.) I am proud of this body of work. In my mind, I left the internship amicably. I believe in MOC’s mission, and I wish it continued success.

Blogging, Cyberfeminism, And Social Media

During my internship, in addition to reading and writing about feminist issues in the news and on the political agendas of progressives, I also read what the scholars have to say about blogging, social media, and cyberfeminism. I was trying to get a handle on the relationship between my stance as a feminist and online communities such as the blogosphere and social media. I discovered that I can claim the label cyberfeminist. As a form of online activism, cyberfeminism influences my choices of topics to write about. Since my interests and expertise lie with comprehensive sex education, I also searched for some consensus on how to define “sex positivity” in an effort to write about it in an engaging way for MOC.

To begin at the beginning, the word blog comes from the saying “log your being” (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz 43). Blogs are one of the fastest growing forms of social media and a useful tool to reach others (Cooke 646). James Baker and Susan Moore write, “Blogs, or online diaries, are websites containing an archived series of reverse chronological items of content posted by the author” (Baker & Moore 379). Blogging is sometimes viewed as a new grassroots form of journalism (Nardi et al. 41), which is why MOC chose to use this type of medium to gain readers as well as establish a platform to create political change. Blogs combine the immediacy of up-to-the-minute posts and latest features with a sense of the author’s personality, passions, and, of course, point of view (Cooke 646; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz 42). Blogging also offers quick feedback and provides the ability to test an idea with very little risk (Doctorow 1; Briggs 46). Running a blog does not take much in terms of funding and can easily be published quickly and with very little effort (Doctorow 1; Briggs 46). Bloggers do not need to go through a publisher or spend funds on publicity. Posts can be published within a matter of minutes and most websites are free to run (Doctorow 1; Briggs 46). Cooke explains, “At the heart of blogging is the notion that the person is not a ‘respondent’ reacting to our stimulus, but rather a willing participant on a journey of discovery” (Cooke 646).

Because I do the majority of my activism online as a blogger to promote such feminist ideals, I consider myself a cyberfeminist. This form of feminism shaped my approach to my MOC work and the way I represented myself online through social media. Betsy Eudey writes:

Many suggest that "cyberactivism" is an appropriate term for feminist civic engagement online, but that "cyberfeminism" should be reserved for those forms of activism that not only utilize the Internet, but also include critical reflection of the ways in which sexism and other oppressions are components of the online experience. (Eudey 241)

Technology has had a large impact on what we do as feminist activists by providing the mechanism wherein many individuals can gather to connect in real and
asynchronous time across geographic and socio-cultural distances in order to express their beliefs for a wider audience than anyone could have imagined less than a generation ago. Cyberfeminism picks up on the use of such communication technology, especially social media, and uses it to bring awareness to more people than ever before (Volkart; Eudey 241; Nuñez Puente 334; Gillis 4; Paasonen 336). Although not without its limits, electronic communication puts more people in touch with one another for sharing ideas and concerns.

I used cyberfeminism as a tool to enhance my activism by utilizing my social media outlets to connect with other likeminded individuals. So I began to focus on the topics I would blog about and how those topics would touch my readers. In the beginning of my time writing for MOC, I was assigned the task to define sex positivity. MOC was interested in creating a piece that could become a reference when MOC wanted to discuss topics relating to sex. Put simply, sex positivity is being positive about sex. The problem, however, arises because sex is a politically charged issue and different people define “being positive about sex” differently. Lack of consensus on what constitutes sex positivity causes difficulties, let alone debate, for and among scholars and activists alike (Williams, Prior, & Wegner 273; Ferguson, Philipson, Diamond, Quinby, Vance, & Snitow 106; McElroy 3). If scholars and activists cannot agree, then implementing social change becomes even more difficult (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz 273; Ferguson, Philipson, Diamond, Quinby, Vance, & Snitow 106; McElroy 3).

McElroy illustrates the problem: “The bottom line is that every woman has the right to define what is degrading and liberating for herself” (McElroy 3). I argue that a sex positive approach encourages a wide range of sexual expression that accounts for various sexual and gender identities, orientations, behaviors, and presentations. Of course, this enlightened view of sex positivity requires access to health care services and depends on comprehensive sexual education (Williams, Prior, & Wegner 273).

A message like sex positivity can be difficult to bring to readers because of its varying and sometimes competing definitions. However, using social media to promote these types of messages is an excellent way to begin dialogue among scholars, activists, and individuals interested in the subject. Yet social media users have to create their own audience (Leach 1).

Using social media to broadcast information is hard work that requires a savvy understanding of how to use such tools. Also understanding how to use publicity effectively can aid in building a brand (Tagholm 1). Although social media offers authors the opportunity to connect with readers, said readers will connect with the author on their own terms to return, join, or abandon the site (Leach 1; Breakenridge 141). The viral aspect of social media makes it the contemporary analog to old-fashioned word of mouth—the elusive goal of authors and activists. An online “brand” grows from finding people who connect with and support the message and to share with their own networks of people (Breakenridge 141). Unlike traditional mass media, social media are today the cheapest and easiest way to get publicity, even as you have to work at it consistently (Leach 1). Noorin Ladhani explains, “Social media will remain a critical component during major global events; when used to exercise free speech, share information online, and organize, they become a powerful tool for activists” (Ladhani 57).

Cyberfeminism via social and blogging methods could extend my activism to an online audience, increase my reach among readers, and help MOC reach its goals. The simplicity of the concepts is deceptive. It is hard work to grow a following—from finding the topical sweet spot to networking in 140 characters or less.

Sex Plus Benedict Cumberbatch Equals Readers

Originally, I was asked to write about content both relevant to my life and reflective of MOC’s progressive viewpoints. I tried to produce material compatible with the organization yet also true to my own worldview. After all, I was writing about feminism and sex positivity, two topics that are important to me. In hindsight, I can share three major lessons I learned from my internship: the difficulty of defining sex positivity, the shock of working with an editor for the first time, and the challenges of developing a readership. I take these hard-learned lessons with me as I continue to develop my voice as a feminist writer.

My first experience with writing about sex came in the form of a piece critiquing the product Summer’s
Eve Cleansing Wash\(^5\) and a TV commercial associated with the product. Promoted as a vagina wash, this product moved me to inform my audience; vaginas are self regulating and don’t require chemicals. My piece focused on proper washing techniques for the vulva and vagina (something lacking in the :30 second commercial). After my initial piece was published, I began to feel more comfortable writing openly about sexual issues. Soon MOC leadership contacted me about producing an article to describe what it meant to be sex positive so that the organization would have a piece that would reflect how MOC viewed sex positivity. It also would be a way to introduce myself to MOC readers and introduce them to my writing on topics about sex. I headed to the library for a literature review.

Using the research I gathered on the subject, I put together an article that I thought reflected both my understanding and MOC’s. It turns out that my definition was just that, uniquely mine. The organization decided to step away from defining sex positivity and move on to other pressing topics. Later published on A Feminist Life, I shared my ideas about sex positivity as:

…[A] moving target that many scholars and activists alike cannot agree on. But I like to think of it as being positive about sex. It’s a mentality that embraces all positive aspects of sexuality and the various acts of sex. There is no slut shamming or bashing of any kind about what people do to pleasure themselves. Sex is openly discussed. It also addresses the various myths associated with some sexual acts as well as myths about the body. I believe that a good sexual education is a must and that it teaches people from a young age about all the aspects of sex. Fulfillment and pleasure are on the top of my list as issues that need to be discussed in sex ed classes. Health is also an important matter when being sex positive. Knowing not only how to name the correct body parts but also knowing how the reproductive systems work, as well as how to pleasure oneself, is the first step towards being sex positively.

being sexually healthy. Lastly, I also believe that safety and consent is a big part of being able to control what happens to you before, during and after sex. Consent is extremely important and sets the tone for the rest of your sex life. Seeing sex as beautiful is a wonderful thing. (Heuwagen, “A Feminist Life.”)

Even though I struck out with MOC on the subject of being sex positive, I did walk away with a solid understanding of the movement. I developed a definition that I will use in my future work as a feminist activist on behalf of sexual health and comprehensive sexual education.

Next, subordinating my editorial independence to an editor also became a learning experience. It was a challenge because I was not used to working under others’ guidelines, and now I had to be aware of how my writing reflected on MOC and its leadership. Even though it was a challenge to learn to write in a style that was unfamiliar to me, working so closely with an editor proved to be an excellent way for me to establish my voice as a writer. Although sex was off the table, the opportunity to write about pop culture helped me to develop as a blogger. As a result, I produced a piece about male celebrities claiming the title of feminist. I started to write in a snarky, sassy, and comedic voice. One of my favorite pieces to write was about the top three male celebrities who have mentioned feminism:

As the stardom of Benedict Cumberbatch has grown throughout the last year with his hit TV show, Sherlock and starring in movies like Star Trek: Into Darkness and 12 Years a Slave, how can I not include him in the list? He’s literally everywhere! Shrines of him are everywhere on tumblr and Instagram. Hordes of young fans call themselves “Cumberbitches” or “Cumberbabes.” I have to be honest about something. Do you promise not to laugh? OK… I am a Cumberperson. There I said it- it’s out in the open, finally. For most of you, you’ve now decided I am completely fan girl-ing out and can no longer take me seriously as a writer, but wait! Hear me out. When Mr. Cumberbatch got wind of his fans calling themselves “Cumberbitches,”

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\(^5\) http://matterofcause.com/2014/01/27/matterofcause-samanthaheuwagen-sexpositive-summerseve/
he saw to it that he set the record straight:
there are no “Cumberbitches” just
“Cumberpeople.” Why didn’t he like the
clever name? He encouraged fans not to call
themselves “Cumberbitches” in order to avoid
using a word that is derogatory to women.
When I heard that, I knew I had been
converted. (Heuwagon, “True Confession.”)

This article gave me the confidence I needed to
recognize how to translate my personality into a
written form. I allowed myself the freedom to express
myself without reservation. Ultimately, I found voice
for “telling it like it is.” Writing has since become a
tool for me to express myself honestly without being
so reserved in my tone and diction.

The Benedict Cumberbatch piece segues to my
third lesson learned—about publicity. Promoting the
articles and generating new readers remains a top
priority for the continued success of the organization. I
helped gain new readers by funneling individuals to
the MOC blog. I contacted several fan pages for the
major stars mentioned in the article to promote the
piece. My Cumberbatch piece was the only internship
article I wrote that was successful at generating new
readers for MOC through the social media tool, in this
case Instagram. I still promoted all work via my
personal blog, A Feminist Life, but the number of
readers I funneled to MOC was very small. Yet, just
by using the tag “Benedict Cumberbatch” on several
social media outlets to promote the piece, I was able to
reach MOC’s goal to gain more readers. The piece
earned the title of post of the week, with 1500 views
(and still climbing), 58 likes, 21 comments, and 28
shares on Facebook.

MOC’s strategy to get Facebook friends to share
content was simple: share on your personal Facebook
page every day and every time something was updated
to MOC and then find five friends to share and “like”
one article a week. The bloggers would then promote
the articles on other social media websites, such as
Twitter, Tumblr or Instagram. The various Facebook
friends helped promote MOC’s work and it became a
successful tool in gaining new readers.

Through this simple strategy, I have discovered
that by using multiple social media sites one can
generate new readers, but being good at working a
social media forum can help keep and maintain the
exiting readership longterm. MOC focused on
Facebook and was able to steadily gain new “likes”
and readers by promoting the articles via its Facebook
page. The organization does have a Twitter account
and tweets the links, but the primary focus is
Facebook. This strategy has worked for MOC. I, on
the other hand, am not as comfortable or adept at
increasing reach via social media as I would have
liked.

Reflection
I enjoyed my time writing for MOC. The
experience helped shape me as a writer. With guidance
from the leadership, I found my voice and
experimented with writing about topics I normally
would have shied away from. Still, I could have
pushed myself more when writing about controversial
topics, such as LGTBQ rights, equal pay, and
immigration. I conducted one interview with a distant
cousin of mine about her menstruation artwork. But in
retrospect, I wish I had made the effort to interview
more individuals to bring their stories to MOC’s
constituencies. MOC’s mission is to bring awareness
to different voices around the Tampa Bay area, and I
feel that I could have done more by reaching out to a
variety of people.

Learning to use social media more effectively
was a main goal of mine. Upon reflection, I used a lot
of self-taught techniques. Some of the techniques such
as using images I created for promotional purposes
were successful. Others were not. My attempt to reach
fan clubs on Tumblr or through Twitter was not
fruitful. For the first time I created a Twitter account,
even though I found it difficult to use the account to
create any success. I researched strategies online to
help me in my attempt to garner new readers, but my
lack of understanding how the hashtags reached other
Twitter users paralyzed my attempts. Given this
failure, if I had it to do over, I would work more with
MOC leadership to understand their views on how to
use Twitter. I also would collaborate more other
members of the organization on their strategies and

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6 A way to use key words to allow readers to easily find the
article. I used “Benedict Cumberbatch,” “Ryan Gosling” and
“Joseph Gordon-Levitt” to name a few.

7 Metrics given by MOC leadership.
tactics to promote their pieces. I will take these lessons with me to the next stage of my career, wherever that may be.

**Takeaways And The Future**

Social media is a powerful tool to connect with diverse and differently opinionated individuals from all over the world. I think about working with MOC to write sex positive cyberfeminist articles as implementing activism in my own small corner of the world. I also learned valuable skills for promoting my work. Shareable content incites emotion, offers some value to the reader, facilitates a connection, or is in some way remarkable (Fosco).

While the definitions of being sex positive are still being debated, I have defined sex positivity for myself: being positive about sex included an honest and inclusive approach to sex education, access to health care services for everyone, a code of conduct that requires consent, and an emphasis on sexual pleasure. As a result of working with an editor during my internship, I’ve improved at articulating these kinds of ideas in writing. Last, I argue that cyberfeminism is a viable approach to social media for changing people’s ideas about issues regarding progressive social justice agendas.

That is easier said than done, however. It’s not easy to write a connection between my ideas and my readers’. I have found that in the moments when I remained respectful to myself and what I wanted to say, I connected more with readers. Writing under an editor and publisher for an organizational mission was stressful, and learning to understand how to market myself via social media was intimidating. But now I do understand why using social media connects with people and that positioning yourself with a brand, if done well, increases followers and can lead to a new type activism. As a new cyberfeminist activist, I enjoyed sharing my pro-sex message with readers.

When I started this journey, I was a scholar who happened to blog. Blogging was something I did for fun. Now blogging is an outlet for my activism, for the change I wish to help make real. Through my growth as a writer, I came to realize I am a pro-sex feminist, who uses cyberfeminist methods. Perhaps even more important, since this internship, I am not afraid to tell people, whoever will listen, that I am a writer. I am not afraid to produce work that is important to me or reflects my values as a feminist scholar.

For examples of a successful blogger with a social media presence, see: Afeministlife.tumblr.com, https://twitter.com/AFeministLife and http://matterofcause.com/category/bloggers/samantha-heuwagen/

**References**


Performance As Education: Creating And Performing A Lesbian Themed Wayang Kulit In Javanese Style

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Abstract: In this article, the author describes her experience creating and performing an Indonesian shadow-puppet play (wayang kulit) with a lesbian storyline. Wayang kulit is a highly codified art form, and the codes can be manipulated to create new perspectives. This experience was educational for the performer, as learning to perform wayang kulit creates a deeper learning experience than merely reading about the art form. This article includes the historical background and contemporary iterations of wayang kulit and queer lives in Indonesia, framed with performance and anthropology literature combined with queer and feminist theory.
The performing arts are one way to learn about different cultures, as they can give us a window into a different reality. Studying culture through the arts is my preferred method of learning about the world, and it was in this spirit that I took a Southeast Asian art history class as an undergraduate with Jan Mrázek. Here I was introduced to wayang kulit\(^8\) and gamelan\(^9\) and fell in love with these art forms. Since taking this course, I have played with two Javanese\(^10\) gamelans (Gamelan Sari Pandhawa in Eugene, Oregon and Gamelan Nyai Saraswati at University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill); traveled twice to Indonesia where I saw several performances and took a three-week gamelan course with Çudamani, a gamelan in Pengosekan, Bali; and performed my own wayang kulit play with Gamelan Sari Pandhawa for my Master’s project. Performing a wayang kulit myself allowed me to incorporate my research with lesbians and transgender people I met in Bali, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the art form that cannot be gained from text research alone.

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The aims of my performance—Pinang and Ayu: A Love Story—were to engage, both theoretically and practically, with an Indonesian art form that I find fascinating, and to use it as a format for social commentary and education. As education theorist Maxine Greene (1994) stated, the more people become used to experiencing art from different cultures, the less likely they are “to rely on predefined categories in making multicultural curricula and the less likely they may be to generalize” (28). While not a traditional classroom presentation, my performance was a form of public pedagogy with the aim of showing the audience the diverse experiences of Indonesian people. Through this work, I wanted to both honor the art form by situating my performance within its contemporary framework of practice, and create a new story relevant to contemporary Indonesian and American culture, much like current dhalangs (puppeteers) are doing in Indonesia.

Through my efforts to manipulate the puppets, write a script for a performance, and vocalize the entire cast of characters, I gained a broader and richer understanding of the art form. As Victor Turner and Richard Schechner discovered in their experiments engaging both anthropology and drama students in one classroom, “there may be ways of getting people bodily as well as mentally involved in another … culture” (Turner 1979, 84). This creates a different type of knowledge, “a dialectic between performing

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8 Wayang means shadow, kulit means skin, referring to the leather the puppets are made from. Indonesian words will be italicized throughout the paper.
9 Indonesian orchestra- consisting mainly of percussive, bronze instruments, but also drums, flutes, and stringed instruments.
10 Indonesia is an archipelago, and Java and Bali are two of the more well-known islands. They both have gamelan and wayang kulit in different styles. Javanese gamelan is generally slower than Balinese style.
and learning. One learns through performing, then performs the understandings so gained” (Turner 85). Thus, I agree with Kathleen and Billie Dewalt’s (1998) statement that participant observation is “as critical to social scientific analysis as more formal research techniques like interviewing [and] structured observation” (259). Participant observation taught me both the flexibility and limitations of the form, especially as I was a beginning dhalang. For example, when I was first writing my script a few scenes described the characters as pacing nervously, but when I began rehearsing I realized this wasn’t possible. This type of learning could only happen from physically manipulating the puppets.

The project also enabled me to creatively express my own political beliefs and reflect on the lives of lesbian women in Indonesia and the U.S., as well as their relation to their fellow citizens and government. My wayang kulit goes beyond the normal boundaries of the genre by focusing on sexuality. While I have seen and read about wayang kulit performances that include commentary on religion, the government, and the environment, to my knowledge queer sexuality remains mostly unexplored. One exception is the independent film Children of Srikandi, which uses wayang kulit interwoven with the stories of queer women in Indonesia (Tan 2012). This is most likely due to the general taboo nature of the subject in Indonesia, which will be discussed in a later section. I realize that I risk the criticism of trying to “Westernize” this art form by including my own political ideas. Daphne Patai (1991) has discussed the ethical difficulties ethnographers face when working with “third world” cultures and peoples, and I did question whether I was overstepping the boundaries of propriety by addressing this subject. However, there are many Indonesians, including gay activist Dédé Oetomo, who have been accused of bringing Western ideas to Indonesia when they are simply fighting for the rights of people who are already a part of the culture: women, queer people, and transgender people. By using an Indonesian art form instead of a Western one, I could ground the issue in a culturally specific way. As Ward Keeler (2002) and other scholars have noted, wayang kulit reflects Javanese social norms and values and cannot be looked at as separate from the culture. Ruth McVey (1986) also articulates its importance to the nation, calling it “the symbol of a great cultural heritage […] that has maintained its relevance because it does not exist on one level of meaning or time” (22). I was not trying to change the art form through my performance. Rather, I hoped to add an additional viewpoint into the current dialogue; a part of Indonesian culture that is often overlooked in this highly valued genre.

This article is structured similarly to the process I went through in creating my project. I will begin with discussions of wayang kulit, including its conventions, relation to gender, and current scholarship. I will then discuss the status of Indonesian lesbis and other queer people in the political and social context at the time of the performance. The remaining three sections are titled preparation, performance, and reflection. These sections serve to situate my methodology and the performance itself within a theoretical framework.

Figure 2: Promotional Shot For Pinang And Ayu: A Love Story For The Performance "Pinang And Ayu" With The Support Of Gamelan Sari Pandhawa/Ken Jennings.

**Literature Review**

**Wayang Kulit**

*Wayang kulit* is an Indonesian art form performed mainly on the island of Java, but also in Bali, Lombok, and on other islands. The stories portrayed are usually based on Hindu religious texts, and are adapted to include commentary on local issues. The *dhalang* sits behind a shadow screen manipulating...
the puppets and performing their voices. S/he cues the *gamelan* with a foot tap or a rap of a *gamel* to play at the appropriate times. These performances have traditionally lasted overnight, but now shorter performances are also popular. Though *wayang kulit* was historically performed for the royal Javanese court, it is now performed for tourists, and as a part of local ceremonies, weddings, arts festivals, or other community events such as the opening of a new store.

Research on *wayang kulit* before the 1970s was based on the Dutch colonial research methods of cataloguing and categorizing rather than understanding *wayang kulit* in a larger cultural context (Keeler 2002). Since the 1970s, scholars have taken a more anthropological approach, looking at cultural norms, political ideals, gender roles, and class issues portrayed through the art form. Jan Mrázek, Sarah Weiss, and Helen Pausacker are among the current scholars studying contemporary changes and approaches to *wayang* and *gamelan*. Ward Keeler (2002), Laurie Sears (1996), and others have stressed that Western scholars have a different idea of performance itself, which can affect their own research. Ward Keeler (2002) especially feels that Westerners expect artists to be lone forces working against the mainstream ideas of society and the government (in Indonesia currently, these ideas are generally conservative Muslim and heteronormative), when *dhalangs* are in fact a part of the mainstream and highly valued in society, and so are not striving to further their own political agendas.

However, after seeing contemporary *wayang kulit* in Bali in 2008, I disagree with Ward Keeler. I saw two popular *dhalangs* at the Bali Arts Festival in Denpasar whose performances were highly political in nature, and outside of the mainstream Indonesian mentality. In one case, the *dhalang* questioned the national government’s value of Islam over all other religions. Another Balinese *dhalang* included pointed commentary on environmental devastation and poverty, and criticized the government for not helping the situation. Though Ward Keeler (2002) argues that ethnographers tend to fall in the trap of seeing what they want to see and may interpret *wayang kulit* and certain *dhalangs* as political when they are not, these performances were too obviously political to have been misinterpreted. Since I discussed these thoughts with local gamelan performers in Bali who concurred with my observation, I feel safe saying that the portrayal of a political message was intentional.

Historically, it was not unusual for political groups to use *wayang kulit* as a form of propaganda, and today the government often sponsors performances (McVey 1986; Mrázek 2005). Yet even when the government is a sponsor, the *dhalang* is “allowed to criticize or ridicule the sponsor [and] often that is part of the entertainment” (Mrázek 2005, 517). Several contemporary scholars have documented *dhalangs* using *wayang kulit* as a forum for political commentary (Cohen 2002; Curtis 2002; Weintraub 2002). In the 1950s, even the Indonesian communist party considered using it to spread their message, as “the emphasis on a clash of epistemological worlds could easily be adapted to the portrayal of class conflict and competing social philosophies” (McVey 1986, 23). However, this idea was ultimately abandoned because of the genre’s history as a royal art form, its feudal classification of characters, and because it is historically more Javanese than generally Indonesian. In contemporary Indonesia, *wayang kulit* continues to be a space for social commentary, as “[i]n a country where adverse comment on those in power has rarely been permitted, *wayang* performances have often been the only source of critical observations on public affairs, and interpreting the *dalang*’s allusions is a favorite game of the *wayang* audience” (McVey 1986, 23).

Despite it being a space for subversive messages, *wayang kulit* remains steeped in social traditions, including gender norms. It is historically a male-dominated art form; the *dhalang*, *gamelan* and the primary characters are all male. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabarata*, Hindu tales commonly seen in *wayang kulit*, feature male main characters with females playing secondary roles. Even Sita, the most morally upstanding of the female characters in the *Ramayana*, has her purity questioned and is asked to walk through fire to prove her faithfulness to her husband Rama. No male character must prove their worth based upon their relationship to a female character. Women’s issues are rarely discussed in *wayang kulit*, though in the 1970’s female characters were used in government-sponsored performances to educate about birth control (Pausacker 2002).

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12 Mallet
Throughout the history of wayang kulit, female characters have served mainly to perpetuate heteronormative gender roles. Even today, women dhalang and gamelan performers (with the exception of the genderan, who is traditionally the wife of the dhalang [Weiss 2002]) are the exception to the norm. There are Indonesian folk tales in which women have a stronger role, but these are not typically made into wayang kulit plays. Even the innovative performances I saw in 2008 continued in the tradition of marginalizing the female characters’ voices; in fact, except for Sita, there were no female characters at all.

Queer Indonesians In Historical And Contemporary Contexts

Since the Era Reformasi (Reform Era) began in 1998, changes in Indonesian government and the passing of new laws have given women and queer people less freedom. Though the current government claims that homosexuality is a Western concept, homosexuality and transgenderism existed in Indonesia (and were documented in local texts) before colonialism (Blackwood 2007; Boellstorff 2005; Offord 2003). Despite their consistent presence, homosexuality and transgenderism were scarcely documented by the Dutch during the colonial period (Boellstorff 2007, 85). While I have found no scholarship on the effect colonialism had on Indonesian’s queer citizens, Tom Boellstorff (2007) noted that throughout SE Asia “gender and sexuality became key sites for distinguishing colonist from colonized, thus acting to legitimate colonial rule through rhetorics of propriety and virtue” (191).

In Indonesia, gay rights are virtually nonexistent. Due to increasing international pressure from LGBTQ non-government organizations (NGOs) since the 1990s for same-sex marriage rights, the government made “explicit statements against the practice of homosexuality for the first time” (Blackwood 2007, 298). In 1994, the Minister of Women’s Affairs said “lesbianism is not a part of Indonesian culture or state ideology” (Murray 1999, 142). In the same year, the Indonesian Minister of Population stated that “Indonesia would not support a declaration acknowledging same-sex marriage” (Blackwood 2007, 298) and the media took this as “the state’s official position against homosexuality” (Oetomo 2001, as referenced by Blackwood 2007). Sadly, it seems that Baden Offord’s (2003) speculation that “the very project of homosexual rights in Indonesia may act as a catalyst for its denial” (132) has become a reality. However, there are several active LGBT rights groups across Indonesia despite the groups’ difficulties in gaining respect from the larger population (UNDP, USAID 2014).

Since 1945 there has been no national legislation explicitly against homosexuality, however many Indonesians assume it is illegal because of government statements such as those discussed above (Blackwood 2007, 294). New regional laws, enacted since 2000, equate prostitution with homosexual behavior. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission’s 2007 report on Human Rights Abuses against Sexual Minorities in Indonesia cites examples of gay men and transwomen being falsely accused of and arrested for prostitution for merely walking alone at night. A Balinese lesbian couple, who I informally interviewed in 2008, told me horrific stories of physical violence, discrimination, kidnapping, and forced marriage attempts they faced when their families first became aware of their relationship 20 years prior. Sisca, a transwoman, told me that all transwomen she knows have done sex work at some point because they could not find other employment. Though Sisca’s statements may feed the perception that all queer people are prostitutes, it also illustrates the limitations transgender people face due to discrimination. It may also suggest that the legislation may feed this discrimination or even take advantage of it, and could potentially be used to arrest a disproportionate number of transgender people. A 2014 study (UNDP, USAID) found similar accounts of both personal and legal discrimination.

Thus, the fear of arrest and violence is very real in Indonesian queer communities. In 2008, I also met with three women who were starting a lesbian group in Bali (Srikandi Bali) and were holding a women’s dance as a fundraiser. Their advertising was all underground, via email and word-of-mouth. They sent

13 Gendèr player

14 Some transwomen in Indonesia identify as waria, which combines the words waria (woman) with pria (man). Sisca did not use this word in conversation with me, though I do not know if she does when talking with other Indonesians.

15 I referenced this group in the prologue of my play.
me an email which billed the party as a fundraiser for global warming, but this was simply a ruse in case it got into the wrong hands. The tickets had to be purchased in advance, only women were allowed in (with the exception of male friends of the organizers), and there were no posters advertising the event in the city. The women told me that even this limited advertising would not have been possible in other areas of Indonesia. Bali is known to be the safest island for queer people (largely because it is the only island that is not predominantly Muslim), and many move there from other islands for this reason (personal interview, July 2008).

Some scholars, such as Evelyn Blackwood (2007) and Helen Pausacker (2002), illustrated how contemporary homophobic policies and attitudes have directly affected Indonesian performing arts. With the government’s limitation of sexuality to heterosexual marriage,\(^{16}\) theater and dance forms that have traditionally included transsexual or transgender characters have lost their popularity (Kellar 2004). As described by Blackwood (2007), there are several performance forms in which individuals play roles of the opposite sex, including a Balinese dance form called Arja where women express gender fluidity (295), meaning fluctuating between movements that signify male and female. While government officials continuously justified the new regulations on sexuality by claiming that homosexuality comes from Western influence, they were clearly ignoring these long-standing Indonesian art forms for their own convenience and to satisfy conservative Islamic supporters. This research, and my personal experiences travelling in Indonesia and talking with queer people there, served as motivation to create a wayang kulit that drew attention to the queer lives that are often ignored by mainstream Indonesian society.

Creating Pinang And Ayu: A Love Story

Writing The Script

It was with this background knowledge of wayang kulit and queer lives in Indonesia that I began working on my script. While the stories I heard in Bali are not included in my play, they served as inspiration and further drove me to form new narratives of Indonesian queer identities. As Robert Cover (1982) stated, “[n]o set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning” (Cover, 4). These narratives are part of a “nomos- normative universe” (Cover, 4). The body and the way society views the body are a part of the nomos, as the body is “constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere” (Butler 2004, 21). In Indonesia, this nomos and the public body is generally Muslim and heteronormative. Thus the country’s laws mostly ignore the existence of queer identities. Though I’m not under the illusion that my graduate school project had any effect on the Indonesian nomos, this was my small way of introducing a new narrative through a performative context. Performance can have the power to spur political action, and since I believe in the feminist mantra that “the personal is political” (Forte 1990, 253), I hope that some who viewed my performance were inspired to join the fight for queer rights on an international level.

To create this new narrative, I used the Javanese folktale “Princess Pinang Masak,” which was introduced to me in the spring of 2008 by Kenneth “Qehn” Jennings (he uses the name Qehn as a musician), the music director of Gamelan Sari Pandhawa in Eugene, Oregon. I joined the gamelan in 2007, and they were interested in collaborating on a new wayang kulit play. In the original folktale, the beautiful princess Pinang Masak is kidnapped by the Sultan of Sumatra’s soldiers, as he wanted her in his harem. But she heard of the plan and made herself look ugly, so he rejected her. The Sultan eventually finds out he has been tricked, and goes after her, but she subsequently escapes on a boat with a group of women and men. The group founds a new village called Senura and makes it their home. Yet when the princess is on her death bed as an old woman, she wishes that no woman from the village will be beautiful, for her beauty was her curse. It is said that if you visit Senura Village today you will not find beautiful women, so if a woman marries she knows it is for love and not her looks (Bunanta 2003).

I saw how easily this folktale could be adapted to include a lesbian storyline, and discussed this concept with Qehn, and then with the gamelan group very early in the process. In my play, Pinang lived with her

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\(^{16}\) In 2005: Article 484 of the state penal code prohibits an unmarried couple from having sexual relations (Blackwood 2007, 303).
wife Ayu\textsuperscript{17}. She still disguised herself to escape the Sultan, but he was disgusted not just by her disguise, but also by her sexuality. When Pinang and Ayu escaped to start a village for other queer people, they also assembled a Tomboi\textsuperscript{18} army to fight back, and ultimately the Sultan was defeated. Rather than wish that none of the village women be beautiful, on her deathbed Pinang wished that the villagers’ sexuality would be invisible to homophobic people, so that they could live in peace. The ending reflected the current difficult situation many queer Indonesians face.

I was very lucky that everyone in the \textit{gamelan} was open to the idea of a queer storyline. For guidance on writing the script, I looked at one Qehn had written, and a book of \textit{wayang kulit} plays called \textit{On Thrones of Gold} (Brandon 1970). I also drew on my observations of a \textit{wayang kulit} I played in with Gamelan Sari Pandhawa in 2008, and a performance by Qehn’s teacher and mentor, Ki Midiyanto. My script very much followed in their style, such as the way the characters speak, the inclusion of mentioning the \textit{dhalang} in the clown scene. This inclusion is common in \textit{wayang kulit}, but the jokes I made about my appearance were typical of Qehn’s style. The way I chose to vocalize Cakil’s\textsuperscript{19} lines (an ogre character who is in every \textit{wayang kulit} play and represents a hero’s struggle with inner turmoil) in a high-pitched register were also taken directly from Qehn’s portrayal of the same character.

I finished the first version of the script by January 2008, though Qehn and I did not have a chance to go through it together until April. He helped me structure the script so that it would follow the conventions of the genre, such as waiting until as late in the story as possible to have a scene with the heroes—heroines in this case—and the inclusion of the battle with Cakil for the secondary protagonist. He also told me I should add a prayer scene for Pinang, and a scene for a secondary antagonist. Thus I wrote the character of Made\textsuperscript{20}, a servant of the Sultan, who was also hiding his homosexuality. Because traditional \textit{wayang kulit} performances are overnight there was much left out, such as lengthy scenes with the armies and their commanders, but the basic conventions were maintained as much as possible. There were five drafts of the script all together as we continued to work out the kinks; the later versions having only minor changes. Some elements of the script were altered when we began rehearsing the show in April with the entire \textit{gamelan}, as music had to be changed to better fit the mood. Traditionally, the \textit{dhalang} directs the \textit{gamelan}, but since I was a beginner Qehn took on this task for me. There were times in the script where my actions or narration signaled the musicians when to stop or start the music, but I was not using a \textit{gamel} to indicate this directly or to set the tempo. This increased the level of collaboration, and also my comfort level in performing.

My main challenge in writing the script was with content; how to make an entertaining script that still included social and political commentary about gay rights, particularly Indonesian gay rights. I had to assume that my audience would have little to no knowledge of Indonesia at all, let alone the country’s political situation. I carefully chose moments in the script to include this commentary, and did so in simple language, as was appropriate for a performance context. Lengthy lectures from the puppets about gay rights would not only have been cumbersome for me, but also for a mixed audience who came for entertainment, not a lesson. Also, since I had targeted the local queer community in my advertising I knew that there would be people in the audience who understood the basics of queer activism and identities, and so I could draw on this common cultural background in the script. For this reason, I used references to American stereotypes of lesbians, such as Home Depot visits and softball playing, while specifically talking about Indonesian political issues, such as the government’s refusal to accept lesbians as a part of their culture. My goals were to include social commentary on the contemporary gay rights movement in the U.S., to allow the audience to see the

\textsuperscript{17} The puppet used for Ayu was Balinese, and Ayu is a common women’s name in Bali meaning beautiful
\textsuperscript{18} A term used in Indonesia by some queer women to describe themselves
\textsuperscript{19} Pronounced Cha-keel. C sounds in Indonesian are always pronounced “ch”
\textsuperscript{20} Pronounced Ma-day with a short “a” sound, this is a common name in Bali and indicates the second child. I included a Balinese name to honor my teachers and interviewees there.

GEMS, Volume 7, Number 7, October 2014
parallels between the gay communities, and also to note that for Indonesians, the situation is considerably tougher. This excerpt from the script shows this combination of US norms and Indonesian realities:

**Pinang**: Ayu, did you go to Home Depot yet? We need a wrench to fix the sink.

**Ayu**: Me! Why do I have to be the handyman?

**Pinang**: Because Princesses never have to do anything of course! Besides, one of us has to act butch so that everyone understands we’re lesbians.

**Ayu**: Isn’t this show supposed to refute lesbian stereotypes, or show the diversity of the community, or something? Besides, as a Princess can’t you hire someone to do that stuff for you? And furthermore, since I’m your wife, doesn’t that make me a Princess too?

**Pinang**: Yeah, you’re right, as always. Besides, I can’t have my wife doing all the dirty work! We should be ladies of leisure, take yoga classes or go to charity functions or something.

**Ayu**: You go right ahead honey. I’m going to work on my petition to the government for gay rights.

**Pinang**: The same government that said lesbianism is not a part of Indonesian culture? That’ll be a long time coming! ... Hey, aren’t we supposed to be at softball practice soon?

**Ayu**: What did I tell you about stereotyping? But you’re right, come on, we’ll be late

As previously discussed, wayang kulit has long been a space for social commentary in Indonesia and skilled dhalangs are masters at illustrating a political message, whether overtly or in a more hidden, implicit manner. Since it is highly codified, an audience familiar with the codes can easily understand its conventions (Schecher 2002, 183). In this case, the codified elements are the standard forms of puppet movement, stock characters, formal structure of the script, and familiar storylines from Hindu epics. However, since I knew there would be few, if any, Indonesians in the audience, I could not rely on manipulating the structure of wayang kulit to indicate a break from the norm. But, since the folktale included elements similar to those found in Western fairy tales, such as a Princess and a Sultan who desires her, I decided to rely on the manipulation of the audiences’ understandings of these meanings to “destabilize the codified forms” (Schechner 2002, 189). Any Western audience member would understand that it is a break from the heteronormativity prevalent in folk and fairy tales to make the main characters lesbians. This served as a form of appropriation coding, a strategy which “adapt[s] to feminist purposes forms or materials normally associated with male culture” (Radner and Lanser 1993, 10). In my story, the Princess had a wife, and led her army to fight for their freedom. While Pinang was helped by a male monkey god, Hanoman (my favorite wayang kulit character from the Ramayana story), the women primarily helped themselves; they were each other’s Prince(ss) Charming.

Wayang kulit as a genre is unique in that it allows for contemporary criticism and situations to be explored through ancient stories, as “[t]here is no time past in the wayang’s terms, for in its vision all time coexists” (McVey 1986, 22). This allowed me to simultaneously use recognizable Western conventions of fairy tales, such as beginning the prologue with “Once upon a time, long ago on the island of Java” and also easily include contemporary references, such as Hugh Heffner as a parallel for the Sultan, and commentary on President Obama’s contradictory stance on gay rights, of which many Americans, queer and otherwise, were not fully aware in 2009. This excerpt from the clown scene references Obama, and the 2009 Miss California, who in her pageant interview (which occurred shortly before my performance) infamously advocated for “opposite marriage.”

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21 Every wayang kulit includes a clown scene in the middle, which both sums up the play for people who have missed the beginning and also serves as a comic break.
Petruk: So there’s this super cool chick, Princess Pinang Masak, and her awesome wife Ayu.

Bagong: Hold up Petruk- did you say her wife? Can they do that?

Petruk: Well, not legally. Not even in America! I mean, gay marriage is legal in a few states, and some have civil unions, but those don’t give equal rights to marriage. So until same-sex marriage is legal on a federal level, Obama might as well be advocating for separate but equal.

Bagong: Wait a minute, I thought Americans only believe in opposite marriage?

Petruk: I think only Miss California believes in that- or knows what that is. The point is, Pinang and Ayu are lesbians, and they’re married.

Subsequently, the fluidity of the art form allowed for more blatant social commentary than may have been possible with other performance genres such as dance, and to mix it with humor so that the audience was both entertained and (ideally) enlightened about current gay rights issues. Adapting the folk tale to fit my goals was as much fun for me as performing; I enjoyed the creative challenge of finding ways to include queer content, and Qehn and the other members of the gamelan enjoyed this transformation process as well. The Sultan can be seen as a metaphor for the larger homophobic Indonesian society; or for a global homophobic vein that many queer people can, unfortunately, identify with. He represents the heteronormative, patriarchal view, as expressed by Luce Irigaray (1975):

That a woman might desire a woman ‘like’ herself, someone of the ‘same’ sex, that she might also have auto- and homosexual appetites, is simply incomprehensible’ in the phallic regime of an asserted sexual difference between man and woman which is predicated on the contrary, on a complete indifference for the ‘other’ sex, woman’s. (de Lauretis 1990, 18)

This is why I included a few lines, both for the Sultan and a male soldier, in which they claimed it was impossible for a woman to love another woman. Pinang and Ayu also discuss the common problem for lesbians of being invisible in mainstream society. Though Jeanie Forte (1990) said that “[f]or women, sexuality cannot remain private: since one is constructed as ‘woman’ through sexuality in relation to male desire” (259) lesbian sexuality frequently remains private by default in heteronormative societies, as its existence is often ignored. This is very true in Indonesia, where as I personally experienced in my travels, most outside of the queer culture have little to no knowledge of queer identities. I was relying on a queer audience, particularly queer females, to relate to this idea and knew that this type of dialogue would hold more meaning for them than the heterosexual audience members. Though I was using explicit codified meanings that would be obvious to the majority of the audience, the queer members would get additional messages, and were more likely “to recognize a double message” (Radner and Lasner 1993, 3), such as the Sultan as a metaphor for more than just a stereotypical alpha-male.

The clown scene is traditionally the place for the most obvious social commentary in wayang kulit, and mine was no exception. Petruk is used as the voice of the dhalang (Mrázek 2005, 480), so I was able to speak most directly through this character and didn’t have to alter the register of my voice. This scene has no place in the original folktale; as with Ayu’s battle with Cakil, Pinang’s prayer scene, and the Goro-Goro22, it was added to fit the conventional structure of the genre. While I used it to include a line about gay people not being allowed to marry in Indonesia, and about the government denying lesbians’ very existence, I did this juxtaposed with American cultural references (such as lesbian musician Melissa Etheridge). The audience was able to understand and enjoy the commentary this way, for if I had only included Indonesian content they would have been lost. Again, these references were obvious to the

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22 A traditional wayang kulit scene in which the world is out of balance due to the conflict in the plot, similar to a pathetic fallacy
majority of the audience, and particularly funny to my queer audience. It was important to me to create something for a queer audience, instead of focusing solely on a heterosexual audience. There is very little in the entertainment industry created for queer people in general, and even less for lesbians (Fouts and Inch 2005). So even though I hoped that if there were people in the audience who weren’t aware of queer culture they would be educated by viewing my performance, I was mainly writing for my peers. For if we don’t write for ourselves, who will?

Other parts of the play were crafted to add queer content and commentary to the plot, referencing particular experiences of Indonesian queer women. The final fight scene of the play ends with a victory for Pinang and her Tomboi army. I purposely spelled it “tomboi” because this is how it is spelled in Indonesia, and also because in the myriad of current American queer identities, some people identify as “boi.” This generally means they are biological females attracted to other females who project masculinity, and for whom a genderqueer or boi identification better reflects their sexuality and gender identity than the broader term of lesbian. The final narration states that “all the happy homos lived under a protective spell, where they will remain until homosexuality is no longer hated and feared, and the narrow-minded ones can see past the curse of hatred within themselves.” I could have chosen instead to make the whole society enlightened and accepting, but this utopian view would not have reflected the contemporary situation in Indonesia or the U.S., and I wanted the ending to give a lasting impression of the need for social change. In Indonesia especially, queer people live their lives primarily underground; this ending, though bittersweet, reflects this. Though this story was largely a celebration of lesbian identities and of lesbians’ perseverance through adversity, ending it without acknowledging the continued struggle for rights and acceptance would have seemed false, and even disrespectful of my Indonesian acquaintances who face daily resistance.

Learning Puppetry

I began learning the technique of puppet manipulation as we rehearsed the show, which began in April of 2009. Qehn showed me how to make the puppets enter the stage, stage a fight scene, and make

the characters walk and talk to indicate different moods and personalities. Cakil, in particular, has a specific arm-movement that no other character uses (Mrázek 2005, 53) in which the puppet is flipped around with the arm held straight. The position of the puppets is also indicative of their status or characterization. Any royal character is always on the puppeteer’s right in their own palace—so Pinang and Ayu were always in the same positions, and Made was always to the left of the Sultan. Good characters (alus) are always on the puppeteer’s right, while evil characters (kasar) are on the left, unless the scene takes place in the palace of an evil character. So, if I had shown Pinang and the Sultan in his palace, he would have been on my right, even though Pinang is the good character.

Making the voices distinct from one another was one of the most difficult elements for me. While “[i]t is the puppeteer who is speaking, not the puppet; … the puppet has to be understood—heard— as producing the voice” (Mrázek 2005, 270). To my surprise it was the voices of Pinang and Ayu who were the most difficult, not the male characters. This was partially because I did not want them to sound like parodies, with high-pitched, hyper-feminized registers. I have a low voice myself, and making their voices too high would have been impossible to carry out for the whole performance. After much rehearsing, I decided to make Pinang’s voice a little higher and more sing-song, to characterize her as more carefree than Ayu. This decision was also made because it is Pinang who seems most unconcerned about the Sultan. Thus I vocalized Ayu’s lines in a lower register and without a sing-song inflection to portray her as the serious one of the pair. This serious voice also helped in her characterization as the activist, and the one whose lines included social commentary. Typically, “[t]he voice is always related to the visual appearance of the puppet” (Mrázek 2005, 271), but in this case the American audience would not read the puppets as that distinct from each other. And, since having two female protagonists is unusual for this art form, the voices had to be very distinct to avoid confusion. Furthermore, having voices that complemented, rather than mirrored, one another, further emphasized one of the points of the play: that lesbians are not identical.

I also made a puppet for the Tomboi army. In Indonesian this type of puppet is called a prampongan. I
have always been amazed at the intricate details carved to make the elaborate shadows of wayang kulit; this amazement has multiplied infinitely now that I have tried it myself. I modeled it after a prampogan Qehn created for a performance of Beowulf, which was also used in Pinang and Ayu as the Sultan’s army. I gave the Tombois’ faux hawks, a popular “lesbian” haircut at the time, as the queer and queer-familiar audience members would instantly recognize this coding. Their shields were emblazoned with the woman’s symbol (seen in Figures 3 and 4), to make it obvious that this is an army of women. I painted it with acrylics purchased at a drug store, and attached a stick with red thread, as is the tradition.

During a battle, you sometimes hold one puppet in each hand, and bring them together while the gamelan makes crashing sounds. The fighting moves are aggressive and bold, and take a lot of practice to perfect. Thus, the fight scenes are the most difficult to perform, and were made even more so in my case because female characters do not normally fight, so the female puppets are not built for this. The male characters (with the exception of some of the clowns, who also do not fight as they are lower-class servants) have more flexibility in their arms, the joints are strongly reinforced, and the tudings are stronger. It is interesting that Indonesian gender and class stereotypes are evident even in the puppets’ construction. As a result, several times in rehearsal I broke the tudings on both of my female leads when I was too vigorously having them fight their opponents. This led us to rethinking the fight scenes, and Qehn showed me less aggressive ways of conducting them and more careful ways of holding the puppets to prevent breakage.

Performance

At our last rehearsal prior to the performance, none of the tudings broke, we were all feeling fairly confident, and had our trouble spots worked out. The gamelan was taking this opportunity to wear gender-deviant clothing. However, since our clothing was

Figure 3: Creating The Tomboi Army Puppet For The Performance ”Pinang And Ayu”.

Figure 4: The Finished Tomboi Army Puppet

23 The rods, traditionally made of water buffalo horn, that are held by the dhalang to manipulate the puppet
traditional Indonesian wear, the audience wasn’t aware of the conventions we were breaking and it was our own private joke. In Figure 5, you can see I was wearing a batik shirt, which is normally worn by male performers. In the right bottom corner a hat on another female performer is visible: this is also normally worn by males. Females usually wear a lace shirt called a kebaya, with a sash tied over it. For this performance, only Qehn wore a kebaya.

The performance went well. It was the first time I had the lamp behind me, and at times I nearly got distracted as I enjoyed watching the shadows. The tudings did not break, and the audience was very responsive. Though I was behind the shadow screen and so could not make eye contact, I could feel their energy. As “[n]o theater performance functions detached from its audience,” (Schechner 1985, 10), their reactions gave me more confidence and also increased my desire to perform well in order to please them. I found myself exaggerating certain elements, like the Sultan’s deep laugh, as I felt the audience responding well to them. Though it was the puppets who were “speaking,” my views were expressed through them, illustrating the liminal state of “performance consciousness,” an incomplete transformation in which the audience sees the puppets’ shadows on the screen, but is still aware of the fact that it was I giving them their voice (Schechner 1985, 6). Their active attention was crucial to my success, and I was very grateful for it.

Performances always include an element of risk, and so naturally there were some things that did not go perfectly. When I gave my introductory speech, I explained to the audience that in Indonesia, the audience comes and goes, chats to each other, and moves around during the performance. The Indonesian idea of audience, in this setting, is much less static than American audience norms. Some people did move around and talk, though most seemed hesitant. Later I learned some were distracted by the door opening and closing and the children who kept standing in front of the screen. Some of the gamelan musicians on the outside of the arrangement were also bothered at times by children getting too close to them, but they are used to this for it happened at all of our performances when there was no physical barrier separating us from the audience.

Conflicts between audience and performer occur, and are to be expected, in cross-cultural performances. Overall, though, I was pleased with the audience’s level of interaction at this performance. I think it helped that we set up the screen and the instruments on the floor, instead of on the stage. This brought an element of casualness that would have been absent otherwise, helped to break down the boundaries between the audience and performers, and encouraged some viewers to be more relaxed. Also, this broken-barrier was reinforced through the script, where the puppets directly address the audience. While this is part of the genre, this is not typically seen in Western theater forms, and it seems that the audience was pleasantly surprised by the breaking of the fourth wall.

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Reflecting on the performance, I realized that the audience was very responsive to the way the puppets were interacting with them. They were not just passive observers, but actively engaged in the performance, which was reflected in their reactions. This was further enhanced by the fact that I was behind the shadow screen, which made it difficult for them to make eye contact with me. However, this also added to the sense of mystery and intrigue, as they were unable to see my face and could only see the puppets in shadow. This created a kind of ‘liminal’ state, where the audience was simultaneously aware of the performer and the puppet, yet unable to distinguish between the two.

Figure 6: The Clowns As Seen By The Audience Of The Performance "Pinang And Ayu".

Reflection

In the 1980s, emerging lesbian performing groups in New York City used forms that were so codified a heterosexual audience would have found it incomprehensible (Dolan 1990, 40). Though I was creating a performance with a lesbian audience in mind, I did not want it readable only to this group. I operated in the mode of “revisionist feminist critics … who suggest that dabbling in traditional forms might be an effective method of insinuating social change” (Dolan 1990, 41). It is a strategy of lesbian artists, particularly in theater and film, “to alter the standard of vision, the frame of reference of visibility” (de
Lauretis 1990, 33). Though characters in *wayang kulit* are largely allegorical and thus their personalities are not very developed, I wanted Pinang and Ayu to be seen as lesbians who lived outside of the conventional stereotypes and beyond the butch/femme dichotomy. As Jill Dolan (1990) stated, “[r]econstructing a variable lesbian subject position … requires emptying lesbian referents of imposed truths, whether those of the dominant culture or those of … radical feminist communities” (53). Through humor, I addressed these common categorizations of lesbians, but I also did not attempt to define how a lesbian does, or should, look or act as this is an impossible and counterproductive task.

Jeanie Forte, in describing feminist performance art, stated that:

All women’s performances are derived from the relationship of women to the dominant system of representation, situating them within a feminist critique. Their disruption of the dominant system constitutes a subversive and radical strategy of intervention *vis à vis* patriarchal culture. (251)

My performance also functioned as a form of resistance against patriarchal culture, but I hate to categorize it as radical merely because of its inclusion of feminist and lesbian content; I hope that we are in a time where this commentary that challenges the status quo is more familiar to a mainstream audience. For why is it that something that is read as queer is automatically deemed radical? This labeling always makes me cringe; I do not think of myself as subversive or radical simply because I am a lesbian. However, the presentation of this queer content in *wayang kulit* is radical, in that it is a break from the heteronormativity of the genre. Gamelan Sari Pandhawa had already broken this mold, as at the time of the performance we only had one male member; this performance reinforced the group’s position as outside the gender norms of conventional *gamelans*.

I once heard a professor say that if you scratch the surface of academic research, you will find the researcher themselves just below it. I am definitely guilty of this. However, it was also about my queer “family” in America and in Indonesia. *Pinang and Ayu: A Love Story* was not just a love story about two women, but also an expression of my love for Indonesia, *wayang kulit*, and the global queer community at large. Using Charles Briggs’ (1996) method of examining positionality, there are many aspects of my own identity to explore through this work, which all affected how the performance was perceived, and how I approached it. Next I will discuss my different positionalities that lie close to the surface: graduate student, ethnographer, Gamelan Sari Pandhawa member, performer, and queer community member.

As a graduate student, I had to take care that this *wayang kulit* would work as a terminal project. From this position, I worried about putting enough critical content in the script so that it would be evident to my thesis committee. I also added some lines to Made and Gareng’s scene for a small commentary on class issues, since one of my committee members had expressed a desire to see this addressed in the script. But my position as a student also allowed for some fun, as in the clown scene I mentioned my thesis committee:

*Petruk*: We’re in another wayang kulit, brother!

*Bagong*: Another one! What is it with Javanese people and their wayang kulit?

*Petruk*: Actually, we’re in America this time. Eugene, Oregon.

*Bagong*: You- what where?

*Petruk*: Eugene. At a University. This is for Summer’s terminal project.

*Bagong*: Who’s Summer?

*Petruk*: She’s the one behind the screen.

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24 Made’s boyfriend
Bagong: Ah! I forgot about that part! So we’re in a puppet show! I guess Bush wasn’t the only puppet in America!

Petruk: We’re not those kinds of puppets! We’re here to provide comic relief, social commentary, and to sum up the story. And to suck up to Summer’s thesis committee—hi thesis committee! Don’t you love the show?

Bagong: What’s a thesis committee?

Petruk: Um, I don’t know exactly, they’re these people who decide if she gets her degree or not.

Bagong: Oh, sounds important! We should be on our best behavior then.

As an ethnographer of performance, a wayang kulit enthusiast, and a member of Gamelan Sari Pandhawa, I wanted to show my American audience as “true” of a portrayal as possible in form and structure, even though I was simultaneously pushing the boundaries with the content. Since I was the main performer in this show, I positioned myself as the one with “discursive authority” (Briggs 1996), a role I was not entirely comfortable with as an inexperienced dhalang. One of the goals of Gamelan Sari Pandhawa is to introduce gamelan and wayang kulit to new audiences, and I believe this is one reason Qehn was so careful to teach me conventional structural methods. I also felt this was important; since this would be many people’s first time seeing a wayang kulit performance I wanted them to leave with some sense of the genre. And of course, I wanted them to be entertained, so that they would appreciate the magic of wayang kulit as much as I and the other members of Gamelan Sari Pandhawa do.

My position as a performer was the most obvious to the audience. Though I introduced myself as a graduate student and explained the purpose of the performance was for my thesis, I hope that they saw me as a performer more than a student. I started consciously performing from the moment I began my opening speech; I wanted to appear confident and relaxed, and to make the audience comfortable as well. I also wanted to prep them sufficiently by giving a brief explanation of the genre. Since I was sitting behind a screen during the performance, I was not aware of the audience visually, but as previously discussed I felt their presence and positive energy. I wanted to please them and enjoyed interacting with them. During the final battle scene, I heard my friends answer Pinang’s battle cry. This seemed a natural progression in the performer/audience relationship, and was evidence of my close relationships with certain members. I estimate that I knew approximately one third of those present, and this helped me feel more at ease, as I knew they would be supportive even if the screen had fallen over. My ‘performance of a performer’ continued after the show, as strangers from the audience came to talk to me and I wanted to continue to project confidence, and also my genuine gratitude for their attendance and support.

Lastly, my position as a lesbian and a member of the local queer community gave weight, and perhaps even a layer of authenticity, to the performance. I embodied this identity visually, by wearing a rainbow sash and styling my hair in a faux hawk to match my Tomboi army; signs that would immediately read as lesbian to the audience, and which would clearly identify me as “family” to the queer audience members. I myself am always suspicious of queer representations in entertainment and scholarship that are not created by queer people, and I wanted to let the community know that this was not the case here. As stated previously there is not much created specifically for us, and it was important to me to make this contribution to the Eugene queer community. I did not tell the audience verbally that I was a lesbian, but through explicit coding, it was evident.

In Indonesia, this performance would have been very different. In the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S. I was very comfortable being “out:” I was not afraid to tell people about my sexuality, and nearly everyone I knew was aware that I am a lesbian. However, when I travelled in Indonesia I did not tell most people, only other queer people I met and a few men at a bar who were very persistent suitors. I did not feel safe to come out there, and would probably not feel safe performing Pinang and Ayu as it is written. In Indonesia, I would have to use a different kind of coding, “in which one group of receivers is ‘monocultural’ and thus assumes that its own interpretation of messages is the only one possible”
(Radner and Lanser 1993, 3). I would probably employ codes of indirection, which use metaphors to create ambiguity that can only be interpreted by certain groups (Radner and Lanser 1993, 16). This type of coding is frequently used by dhalangs performing government-sponsored shows, as “[t]o evade censorship, [subversive] political messages are interwoven with humor and satire” (Weintraub 2002, 133). But even using veiled messages, I do not know if I would have the courage to perform it to a mainstream audience. Since queer people are often arrested under false pretenses in Indonesia, this threat would probably mean I would perform it underground, if at all.

**Conclusion**

Wayang kulit is full of contradictions, which perhaps is why it has remained popular for so long. Dhalangs are hired by the government, yet they also may criticize the government, sometimes within the same play. It reinforces Indonesian ideals of class relations, religion, and gender, but since it is so codified, it can easily be manipulated to show subversive messages. It was traditionally performed as entertainment for the royal court, yet is enjoyed by Indonesians of all classes. For these reasons, Carol Warren, as referenced in Cohen (2002) “characterizes wayang as a countermodern cultural border zone in which dichotomies, including past-present, tradition-modernity, and East-West, are played off one against the other in the service of identity construction and revision” (111).

Through this project I played with these dichotomies, including my own dichotomy of ethnographer and performer. I fluctuated between these positions, which gave me varied lenses through which to view the results. At times this perhaps made me hyper-sensitive as I worried about how my project would be perceived by all parties involved. Were my multiple goals accomplished? I cannot say for certain, but overall I feel that they were. I wanted to engage with the current world of wayang kulit by including my own political agenda of queer activism and a global commentary in a local context, and I believe in this I was successful. I followed the conventions of the genre enough so that it would be readable as a wayang kulit, rather than as postmodern or avant-garde.

As Richard Schechner (1985) stated, “performers- and sometimes spectators too- are changed by the activity of performing” (4). The experience of creating and performing a wayang kulit enhanced my understanding of the genre, Indonesian culture, and the way performance can be used as a vehicle for social commentary, education, and political activism. I can only hope that some in the audience, especially those who expressed their thanks and appreciation after the show, felt this too. I wanted to honor this tradition for which that I have so much respect and awe. From talking with some of the audience members after the performance, some were happy to see wayang kulit for the first time, some were happy to see lesbian identities represented, and some of these experiences overlapped. I don’t expect everyone to start writing the Indonesian government or donating to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), but as a believer in grassroots activism, I feel that education and awareness are the first steps to create change. Since this project wasn’t performed for an Indonesian audience, it did not affect Indonesian queer people directly, but I hope that for the American audience it created awareness of a larger global context from which to view queer rights. Wayang kulit is a treasured art form, and this performance cemented its place in my heart.

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Figure 7: Summer Pennell Prepares For The Performance
References


