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Seeking a Feminist Approach to Scholarly Innovations in Music Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

The marketization (Marchand & Orsorno Velázquez, 2016) of higher education impacts faculty through hiring practices, workload structures, and reappointment and promotion policies. Women faculty in fields such as music education need to negotiate masculine discourses and gendered constructions of innovation (Alsos et al., 2013) in a STEM focused economy. Values held by feminist pedagogues could serve as a framework through which to consider a more feminist approach to research and scholarship. Qualities such as equalization of power, collaboration, affective learning, inclusiveness of diversity, and social responsibility may surface through a researcher's approach to inquiry or in the content itself. This paper reflects on the work of Hal Abeles from the perspective of a mother-scholar in an attempt to see possibilities for feminist approaches to scholarly innovation in music education.

Keywords

feminism, innovation, music education, reappointment and promotion, scholarship

The marketization (Marchand & Orsorno Velázquez, 2016) of higher education impacts faculty in higher education in numerous ways. The rising costs of higher education have pushed colleges and universities toward policies and practices to save institutions money while often increasing financial and labor burdens for students and faculty (Kezar & Acuña, 2020). In the past three decades, there has been a trend toward hiring non-tenure track (NTT) faculty (20-70%) who tend to teach more classes, are often paid less, receive fewer benefits, have little opportunity for job advancement, are excluded from governance, and are majority women (Kezar et al., 2019; Kezar & Acuña, 2020). The workload structure of faculty lines influences the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of those holding such positions, with varied prioritization of teaching, service and scholarship and faculty in higher education are typically required

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to demonstrate and provide evidence of these activities through reappointment and promotion evaluation processes (Abeles & Doyle, 2018). Accountability measures such as these to document and measure productivity and labor effort are the result of ongoing commodification of faculty as workers (Gonzalez & Núñez, 2021).

Music teacher education spans the disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and the creative arts which have required increased justification in an economic climate focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) related innovation (Alsos et al., 2013; Pettersson & Lindberg, 2013). Faculty advocating for their own worth and value of their program through negotiations of salary, workload, effort units, and course enrollment may experience a feeling of disempowerment as they are forced to prioritize market-based goals and struggle to find meaning in their work (Tsang & Qin, 2020). Regardless of expectations for scholarly work, faculty may be driven to pursue intellectual curiosities through research publications or creative activities that benefit their teaching, are intellectually satisfying, and contribute toward maintaining relevance for their program. Non-tenure track faculty may feel pressured to maintain an active research agenda despite the expectations for reappointment, given the tenuous nature of their employment contract and the potential need to apply for a more secure position in the future.

Women holding faculty positions may experience the consequences of such policies and practices in additional ways. Globally, women continue to make up three-quarters of lower-level laborers (Bergeron, 2016; Marchand & Osorno Velázquez, 2016), which in higher education manifest as part-time, adjunct, or NTT faculty. Bergeron (2016) points out that women, who are often also the primary caregivers of their families, overrepresent the informal sector of the economy and take on the “double day” (p. 195) of paid and unpaid labor as workers at home and in their jobs. Furthermore, lower wage or part-time positions may not offer benefits such as health care or retirement savings, and likely do not adequately cover expenses such as after school childcare in a “commodified care” economy “where only those with greater resources” can afford it (Bergeron, 2016, p. 195).

My own identity as a *mother-scholar* is one which surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic, and acknowledges the particular experiences of mothers who strove to maintain their careers in academia while fully immersed in the care-economy of pandemic lockdown with their children and families (Myers et al., 2020). Negotiations of placing our children on “the front-lines” of the pandemic (Maas, 2022) were on the table as we tried to do it all. I further acknowledge my privileged position as a white scholar-educator, lacking a racial focus, as I attempt to recognize the numerous differences among women (Rose, 1993).

While there are implications of gender and femaleness inherent in the traditional roles, responsibilities, and assumptions at hand, this essay seeks to position *feminism as critique* (Gould, 2011; Lamb, 1994) toward innovation and scholarship in such a way that it acknowledges many women hoods, gender as a non-binary experience, and “the intersections of multiple sources of oppression as they are experienced by groups and

individuals in terms of their situatedness” (Gould, 2011). Pecis & Berglund (2021) further suggest that a feminist approach,

can revolutionise the innovation contexts by recentring the margins, escaping identity politics that mask structural inequalities, and co-opting non-inclusive forms of innovating. The aim has been to push the margins towards the centre and invite others to discover the terrain of the margin(alised) (p. 1013).

What happens when the experiences of traditionally marginalized persons are placed as the central context in which expectations of scholarly work would be based? How might those who exist both within and without those spaces resist the “stickiness of masculinity with innovation” (Alsos et al., 2013, p. 247) to shift gendered discourses of innovation and scholarship away from the gendered power hierarchy that defines expectations?

As a woman holding a NTT faculty position in music teacher education, I often wonder how others create time and space for pursuing intellectual curiosities and engaging in critical discourse of their discipline. I wonder what creative, artistic, and scholarly innovation looks like while attending to the pulls of work and life. How might male and female faculty resist oppressive, market driven forces which have the potential to demoralize and deprofessionalize teachers, and find new openings for scholarly innovation in their work? Specifically, how might *feminist innovations* manifest within the field of music teacher preparation?

SCHOLARSHIP AS A FEMINIST PRACTICE

It is understood that we often teach as we have been taught and learning comes in many forms. Throughout my professional life, I have been fortunate to have learned from advisors and mentors who guided, questioned, challenged my ideas, and served as important role models. As a teacher educator, I am also cognizant of the “ripples” of influence (Lewis & Maas, 2022) that are oftentimes set in motion impacting generations of future students. While colleagues and I celebrated the lifework of our advisor, Hal Abeles, it is logical that I became curious about the ways he approached research and scholarship in regard to my emerging questions. I recognized that I would be looking toward someone I knew as a cis-gender, white male, in a relative position of power to consider scholarly work in regard to values of feminist pedagogues and decided that this was precisely the exercise through which to engage with these ideals.

Feminist pedagogues aim to liberate and empower students, urging them toward action through critique and the cultivation of new knowledge grounded in experience (Grissom-Broughton, 2020; hooks, 2003). Wolfe-Hill (2017) examined choral practices in music education against values described by feminist pedagogues such as: a) equalization of power, b) collaboration, c) affective learning, d) inclusiveness of diversity, and e) social responsibility.

When applied to research and scholarship in music education, these qualities may manifest through content, methodology, collegiality, and mentorship and serve as a lens for understanding a body of work from a feminist perspective. In this paper, I will use

these qualities to discuss how the work of Hal Abeles—my doctoral advisor, provides me—his forever student, with the opportunity to think critically about feminist approaches for scholarly work in music education.

EQUALIZATION OF POWER

Early in Hal Abeles's research, he turned his focus toward student perceptions and experiences as music learners (Abeles, 1973; Abeles, 1975; Abeles & Porter, 1978; Porter & Abeles, 1979). In some cases, it was graduate students who had the unique perspective of returning to a classroom and repositioning themselves as learners after acquiring teaching experience. An early study (Abeles, 1973) aimed to develop a rating scale for evaluating clarinet performance. The items on the scale were derived using the essays of instrumental teachers enrolled as graduate students as they describe the work of a junior high-school clarinetist. This study acknowledged the complex behaviors inherent in teaching and learning musical instruments that went beyond product-oriented evaluation criteria. A subsequent study (Abeles, 1975) used a similar methodology to develop a rating scale for student evaluation of studio faculty. Abeles observed a disconnect between typical emerging evaluation scales for university faculty and the more nuanced work and relationships taking place in the setting of an applied music studio. Participants included undergraduate and graduate students who contributed toward the development of evaluation rating items, placing the authoritative power of evaluation in the hands of learners. The research aims and methodology of these studies reflected a shift toward an equalization of power in favor of learner experiences in evaluation. They also acknowledged the unique ways that teaching and learning in the creative arts take place. Their findings challenged traditional methods of evaluation and performance ratings which would impact the ways future teachers have thought about assessment in the arts.

Gender and Sex Stereotyping

Research that subverted traditional notions of gender roles and stereotypes in music education laid the foundation for future scholarship in similar ways. In 1978, Abeles & Porter published what would become the seminal study in the sex- stereotyping of musical instruments (Abeles & Porter, 1978) resulting from four studies that examined associations of gender and musical instruments. The authors posited that stereotyping of any kind, and in this case, specifically that of gender and musical instruments, could lead to limited musical experiences and inequities in career opportunities. Their findings revealed that musicians and non-musicians alike, did make stereotypical gender associations with musical instruments and these associations might have been influenced by the ways in which children were introduced and exposed to instruments. They found that children began to sex stereotype musical instruments typically after the 3rd grade and that the child's gender seemed to influence instrument selection. This study compelled scholars in music education to problematize the ways gender biases influenced pedagogy and curricular materials, expectations and roles in ensemble

playing, and even who might become the next generation of music educators or instrumental performers.

Gender bias in music education also had (and continues to have) a specific impact on girls and female identifying musical learners. Porter & Abeles (1979) built on their earlier studies of instrumental sex-stereotyping to illuminate gender biases against women as instrumentalists and members of professional ensembles. The authors positioned schools as “socializing agents” (p. 48) and noted the lack of representation and other forms of gender bias presented to young children through educational materials. They warned that professional journals—a significant continuing development resource for teachers—can be dangerously reflective of society's expectations based on gender. They questioned the ways images and language were used to implicitly and explicitly oppress and discriminate against women from pursuing their full-range of options and potential as musicians.

Porter and Abeles acknowledged the work of female contemporaries such as Anne Mayer and Carolyn Karkosza who were similarly challenging sexism and the womens’ status in music and educational settings (Karkosza, 1974; Mayer, 1976). Holding up, celebrating, and giving voice to persons from underrepresented, marginalized, or disempowered groups is an important component of feminist practice and one way that teachers and scholars work to share the experiences of those community members (Maas, 2020). Porter and Abeles further amplified the voice of a nine-year old child cited from Karkosza’s piece “Two Lives” (Porter & Abeles, 1979, p. 49):

When I go to school I don’t like to be left out from others, so I act like them even though I hate it. It’s like I’m living two different lives[:] a liberated one at home, and a nonliberated [*sic*] at school. I am at the age of nine, and I’m trying to make my way through life, trying to live one life but I can’t. It’s hard for me. I want to be free, but I guess if I stay like this living two lives I don’t know what will happen to me or what I’ll be. (Karkosza, 1974, p. 137)

The authors leave readers with a resounding call to feminist action that goes beyond representation and definition, claiming, “Music ought to provide the kind of freedom that not only this little girl, but all adults and children are seeking, regardless of their sex” (Porter & Abeles, 1979, p. 49).

Abeles conducted a follow-up study (Abeles, 2009) to revisit previous scholarship to understand if changes had occurred in the sex-stereotyping of music instruments over three decades. He examined the experiences of two participant groups with different aims: a) Have gender stereotypes of instruments changed among college students? b) Do instrument choices of middle school students reflect a change in their gender associations with instruments? The inquiry was grounded by sociocultural models of gender association suggesting that such associations are the result of socialization. Though the results of this study demonstrated little change in instrument selection by gender since reported in the 1990s, there was some evidence that in band settings, girls were more likely to play nonconforming gender instruments than were boys. The author pointed out that despite social movements aiming to equalize opportunities by gender,

numerous trend studies found that gender associations had stabilized or intensified (p.128).

Abeles concluded that “gender associations with musical instruments have far-reaching consequences beyond the music classroom and may restrict the vocational aspirations of both female and male musicians” (2009, p. 138). Harmful gender associations and stereotyping of musical instruments has potentially had negative impacts on student success and their later hirability as instrumental conductors. It is reasonable to think that negative associations by gender may have also impacted employer and colleague perceptions of leadership and other professional qualities of musicians.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS OF DIVERSITY

Scholars engaging in feminist practices might direct their inquiry toward social responsibilities such as inclusivity, equitable access, experiences of belonging, and diversity to dismantle barriers in music education. One might examine the ways biases influence student experience and potential career choices or examine evolving music education pedagogy, curriculum, and technological tools for hidden barriers. When critiquing change in music education, scholars might look for potential roadblocks to participation or illuminate possible openings for a deeper, more equitable engagement with diverse students and colleagues.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic set the stage for transformative change in music education, particularly through the use of technology such as digital tools and collaborative online spaces for learning and making music (Lewis & Maas, 2022). However, digital music making was not a new idea. The emergence of digital instruments in the latter part of the 20th century presented new tools to be considered for use by music teachers and students. In 1990 Abeles and Van Scoyoc presented an informative review of then new, digital wind controllers modeled after traditional wind instruments. The authors compared and contrasted various models in regard to technical functionality and expressive potential. They considered the possibilities for use in professional performance settings, school settings, and by composers. The authors discussed additional qualities such as a) ease of use, b) cost, and c) potential for success by young musicians (Abeles and Van Scoyoc, 1990). They believed that controllers such as these could open doors for creating and composing music by students who lacked keyboard or traditional notation skills, urging, “music educators will need to become more familiar with them—they represent yet another means by which children can experience the joys of learning music” (p. 18). Interestingly, the authors chose to focus on how this tool presented opportunities for student creativity and musical enjoyment rather than the ways wind controllers might improve performance outcomes by school ensembles.

Teachers continue to evaluate digital tools for use in music classrooms based on similar qualities including cost, ease of use, access, and pedagogical application (Crawford, 2017; Frankel, 2021; Maas, 2022). As teachers were forced to teach online during the COVID-19 pandemic many re-examined music tools for technology integration against frameworks such as TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge)

and SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition) (Brunner et al., 2022; Frankel, 2021; O’Leary, 2022). Sommerfeldt (2022) used electronic music and digital audio workstations (DAWs) to create a more inclusive way to deepen students’ understanding of foundational musical concepts, particularly for students inexperienced in reading western notation. Today, the incorporation of technology can serve as a means of engagement for students who may not have felt a sense of belonging or found space for self-expression in the music classrooms.

Long before the pandemic, I experienced learning online as a graduate student of Hal Abeles who had the foresight to recognize web conferencing as an opportunity to provide access to education for students around the globe. During our coursework he consistently facilitated meaningful online collaborations between students using the university learning management system (LMS) which prepared me for my own, unexpected turn to online teaching in 2020. Online discussions, student-led presentations, and peer-reviewed work were central components to learning with peers whose diverse perspectives and life experiences were invaluable to my own development as a teacher-educator.

COLLABORATION AND AFFECTIVE LEARNING

In all of his teaching—online and in person—Hal Abeles recognized collaboration as a key component of student engagement and meaningful learning experiences. Feminist pedagogues move toward collaboration to call on multiple perspectives and distribute power in group work. Hal Abeles’s own scholarly collaborations have opened doors in similar ways. When inquiring upon new or controversial topics, collaboration by researchers and practitioners provides opportunities for diverse ideas, analysis, and interpretation. When scholars engage with collaboration as a practice or issue to be examined, they potentially resist notions of individualism that may lead to isolation and competition that typify masculine notions of innovation.

Abeles’s collaborative inquiry and inquiry *about* collaboration have illuminated the ways digital platforms mediate communications regarding gender stereotypes of musical instruments (Abeles, Hafeli, & Sears, 2014), examined the influence of orchestra and school partnerships on students’ interest in instrumental music (Abeles, 2004), and provided a deeper understanding of how music teachers engage in professional discourse in online communities (Bernard, Weiss, & Abeles, 2018). Abeles and his colleagues reported collaboration with arts specialists and teaching artists as a key characteristic that could lead to transfer of learning in and through the arts (Burton et al., 2000).

Jackie Wiggins (2015) describes teaching and learning as a socially constructed endeavor that requires learner agency and risk taking on the part of the student, facilitated through *artful teacher scaffolding* (156). In doctoral programs, this manifests in the process of becoming a researcher and writer. Scholars in higher education extend scaffolding efforts when they collaborate with their students on research projects, presentations, and publications. In this process teachers engage with students as colleagues

shifting the teacher/learner power dynamic. This act demonstrates trust and provides opportunities for experiential learning. Emerging scholars embody new roles, working side-by-side with an experienced researcher and writer who expertly guides the process. Hal Abeles's collaborations with advisees and former students have resulted in countless studies and publications. This work has often reflected and extended his previous areas of research, while allowing for fresh perspectives to permeate and drive new knowledge on critical issues. In 1992 Abeles collaborated with then doctoral candidates, Jeanne Goffi and Susan Levasseur, expanding on his previous work regarding evaluation tools and applied studios (Abeles, Goffi, & Levasseur, 2021). The authors applied Abeles's facet-factorial approach to scale development (Abeles, 1975) to develop a means of measuring the effectiveness of applied studio faculty as feedback for faculty improvement and evidence for reappointment and promotion committees. The two studies collected data from different participant groups—music majors and non-majors, recognizing that these students might have unique priorities and aims when working with applied studio faculty. In their discussion, Abeles, Goffi, and Levasseur note that, "Applied music faculty, while often being skilled and experienced performers, do not necessarily arrive at their first academic position with much experience or competence as teachers" (p. 8). The evaluation tools they developed in their studies could provide an effective means of faculty feedback for improvement and could offer graduate students useful information as they prepare for their first experiences teaching at the college level.

A more recent study with former student and advisee, Lindsay Weiss-Tornatore examined the effects of a professional development initiative with more than 600 New York City urban music teachers to implement popular music through Amp Up NYC into their curricula (Abeles, Weiss-Tornatore, & Powell, 2021). The results revealed increases in teachers' musicianship, pedagogy, and leadership skills throughout one school year. After participating in Amp Up, teachers reported the greatest improvement in their musicianship but also noted shifts in affective dispositions such as increases in positive outlook and excitement about their music programs.

This paper expands on findings previously reported by the same authors (Weiss et al., 2017) from their study examining the impact of participation in Amp Up NYC on students' musical, social and emotional, and college and career readiness skills. Weiss et al. found that students who participated in Modern Band experienced increased levels of confidence—socially and musically, developed personal and social identities, and discovered outlets for emotional and self-expression.

Affective learning as a feminist practice, acknowledges the complexity, nuance, and significance of one's social and emotional experiences and their impact on learning. Studies such as these bring new perspectives to program evaluation and call upon researchers to look more intentionally toward social emotional learning (SEL) as a critical component of program effectiveness in music education.

PARADOXICAL SPACES FOR SCHOLARSHIP IN MUSIC EDUCATION

In an attempt to consider a more feminist approach to scholarship in music education, it seemed useful to consider how scholars have engaged with qualities of feminist practices (Wolfe-Hill, 2017). These qualities: equalization of power, collaboration, affective learning, inclusiveness of diversity, and social responsibility may appear through a researcher's approach to inquiry or in the content itself. Feminist innovation in scholarship would require one to reach what Katarina Pettersson & Malin Lindberg referred to as "paradoxical spaces" of feminist resistance (Pettersson & Lindberg, 2013). Their analysis of Gillian Rose's four aspects of feminist resistance toward masculine discourses of innovation (Rose, 1993) highlighted the need to a) move between discourses and experiences that are located at the "centre and margin", b) reach beyond "representation and definition" in such discourse, c) create opportunities for "separatism and free spaces for women", and d) recognize "differences among women" (Pettersson & Lindberg, 2013, p. 326).

One must also acknowledge the gendered constructions of innovation and hierarchies of power that shape the research agendas of faculty in higher education. Women and other feminist actors must engage with issues of promotion and tenure on a policy level, to get a seat at the table with those who have power, and become those "whose ideas are brought forward and heard" (Agnete et al., 2013, p. 247).

DISCORD AND RESOLUTION

It is likely that while in pursuit of feminist innovations, one might encounter tensions between ideology and practice that cause pause or discomfort. Marchand & Osorno Velazquez describe marketization as "the encroachment of market principles upon noneconomic spheres of human activity" and posit that it "is itself a gendering practice that transforms relations between women and men of particular races, ethnicities, classes, and geopolitical locations" (p. 429). It stands to reason that faculty seeking feminist approaches to scholarship within institutions driven by market-based policies and practices will need to consider how to negotiate contradictory aims.

Roberta Lamb described the *discords* (1996) she experienced as a music teacher feminist where inherent ideologies came in conflict. These often manifested as expectations she could not, or did not, necessarily want to fulfill. She described her own expectations of the musical process, questioning, "What is musical?" and "How might musicality be achieved, in both its oppressiveness and liberative-ness?" She also described her most satisfying experiences as the rare occasions in which both social and musical trust were present. Analogies might be made regarding one's experiences toward scholarship as a faculty in music teacher education.

Expectations to "publish or perish" are often worn as badges and grant funding may be awarded only for studies that reflect a particular agenda of an institution or funding source. One might wonder, "What is scholarship?" and "How might it be achieved within such oppressive frameworks but also in its ability to be intellectually freeing?" Finally, what is the role of trust as it pertains to scholarly innovation as a

measure of accountability or in terms of what qualifies as *valid*, *rigorous*, and *empirical*?

Feminist innovation in scholarly work goes beyond doing research about women and for women. It impels scholars to embrace doing research *as* women and all that women *are*, acknowledging and valuing the ways women move and exist in the world of scholarly research in music education. It reminds me of a quote by Roberta Lamb (1994), “...we who are women would know music as if women mattered while men would know music as if they were women” (p.70).” One might replace the word *music* with *scholarship* to read it another way:

We who are women would know scholarship as if women mattered while men would know scholarship as if they were women.

Scholars such as Hal Abeles have demonstrated that it is possible to pull back layers of tradition, assumptions, and contradictions to shed light on nuanced and varied experiences. Future feminist innovations in music education scholarship might further celebrate the valuable intersections women embody which permeate their work and often provide unique perspectives through which to make connections—and bring into focus—the big picture with fine detail. Finally feminist innovations in music education scholarship will come to fruition only when feminist principles inform policy to make the structural changes necessary to support this work *at work*.

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About the Author

Andrea Maas is Program Coordinator and Senior Lecturer in Music Education at the University of Vermont. Maas facilitates foundational and capstone courses in music education, as well as applied teaching experiences in general, instrumental, and choral music. She also directs the University Concert Choir and serves as the Vocal Area Coordinator. Her work is informed by the valuable experiences gained while teaching PK-12 music throughout Vermont, working with graduate and undergraduate pre-service music educators across New York State, and designing music education technology curriculum for MusicFirst. Her scholarly interests reflect her eclectic professional and academic background, including musical expression, intersections of policy and curriculum, inclusive pedagogies and program practices, and teacher innovation during times of change. Throughout her work, Maas aims to better understand implications for equity ethics in music teacher education.

Maas' work has been presented at the International Symposium for Music Education, International Conference on Music and Emotion, National Symposium for Research in Music Education, Symposium on Music Teacher Education, and the National ACDA Research Symposium in Choral Singing. Recent publications include the *Journal for Music Teacher Education* and the *International Journal for Research in Choral Singing*. Her book—*Music education on the verge: Stories of pandemic teaching and transformative change*—published by Rowman & Littlefield is available through most major booksellers.