Directing Feminism: Creating a Personal Pedagogy

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by

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Abstract

Directing Feminism: Creating a Personal Pedagogy

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This thesis examines the creation and use of a feminist pedagogy within a directing process. The study involved interviewing collaborators, selecting a feminist theatre text, and building a rehearsal process. In this document, I consider feminist and constructivist theory, as well as participants' reflections, in order to better understand the impact of a feminist directing practice. This study serves as my personal pedagogy for directing and can serve as a foundation for other directors to interrogate their own process and practice. My research suggests ways to achieve a feminist process for theatre-making.

Chapter 1: Introduction

"*I think a part of a feminist process, that often doesn't exist in other processes, is being aware of who is in your room. Instead of thinking, I have a room of actors. In this case we established, I have a room of women… It's okay to specify further and find out what those people need from a process*" (River).

INTRODUCTION

As the daughter of an actor, I feel at home in the theatre. The stories I've seen unfold before me on stage have shaped my understanding of the outside world. As I slowly transitioned from an audience member to a theatre practitioner, each play I worked on began to challenge my artistic approach. Now as a college theatre student, it is more than my technique that is being challenged. Each character I play deepens and expands my understanding of what it means to be a woman.

Development of this understanding became especially important to me when I began at James Madison University (JMU). The productions I worked on grappled with themes of identity, femininity, and equality. As a result, I began to question my own identity, my femininity, and at times, my lack of equity. Due to this, theatre that explores, questions, and advocates for feminism became especially intriguing to me.

Feminism, as a concept, has a wide variety of definitions. In the broadest sense, Merriam-Webster defines it holistically as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" ("Feminism"). Some scholars, such as bell hooks, are more specific and cite feminism as

an active “movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (bell hooks).[1] A field of study and practice rooted in feminism is feminist theatre. Feminist theatre specifically employs criticism which examines the ways a theatrical text or production reflects and critiques “the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (Tyson 83). There are many ways in which theatre employs the various facets of feminism, some pieces narrow in on one specific element while others attempt to consider a broader range of feminism. Whether working specifically or broadly, feminist theatre often seeks to communicate to audiences a call for action. This drive is present in both the texts and the artists working with them. Driven by this sense of purpose, some directors intend on making feminist work become narrowly focused and overly concerned with the final message being relayed to an audience. As a result, they fail to consider the larger creative process.

In my personal experience, only a few processes that heavily focus on the final product consider how the very same feminist practice being proposed to an audience, could be used within the rehearsal room. I have seen rehearsal processes where self-identifying feminist directors were so focused on creating a final product, that they unconsciously neglected to use the practices as a foundation for creation. In this sense, the directors strove to create pieces that advocated for women, but in the rehearsal room they disregarded female actors’ ideas and made it clear that they did not consider an actor’s agency to be as important as the agency of the imagined audience member. Theatre is often thought about as an event orchestrated entirely for the benefit of the audience, but the very artists creating the work deserve to have a process that is

[1] bell hooks “is an acclaimed intellectual, feminist theorist, cultural critic, artist, and writer. hooks has authored over three dozen books and has published works that span several genres, including cultural criticism, personal memoirs, poetry collections, and children's books. Her writings cover topics of gender, race, class, spirituality, teaching, and the significance of media in contemporary culture” (bell hooks).

as transformative for them as the final product might be for an audience member. It should be noted that scholars in the field have examined and tested feminism in the rehearsal and/or production room to counteract this tendency, further discussed in my Review of Related Literature.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Feminist practice within a rehearsal process can present itself in a variety of ways. A moment that asked me to consider my own feminist practice while rehearsing a play was when I played Tilly in *She Kills Monsters*. During one rehearsal, we were blocking a moment of intimacy between my character and another female character on stage.[2] The stage directions, as given by the playwright, describe the moment in a way that could be interpreted as either serious or comical. Due to the vague nature of the directions, the director asked us our thoughts on which tone we would prefer as actors.[3] It is important to note that this specific scene is a coming-out moment for two teens. The other actor and I considered the consequences of choosing a comical tone for the scene. If we played our romance as an over-sexualized bit of humor, it would not only undermine the serious nature of coming out, but it would also communicate to an audience that we viewed the only non-heteronormative romance in the play as a joke. Due to this, we chose to make the moment of intimacy serious and genuine.

Honoring the moment of intimacy meant honoring the identities of these two characters, rather than over-sexualizing or oversimplifying them. Choosing to stage the scene in this way

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[2] Blocking is the "careful choreography of actions on the stage" (Carpman).

[3] I chose to refer to the women in this study as actors as opposed to actresses because I am under the belief that referring to all actors, regardless of sex or gender, by the same term helps to promote equality in the field.

made me and my acting partner more comfortable. In addition, it allowed for the final product to be more honest and thus powerful. Choosing a comedic tone or over-sexualizing the intimacy could alienate certain audience members, specifically those that may identify with coming out themselves. Thinking consciously about moments such as these is necessary in feminist practice.

One might believe that thinking intentionally about gender issues would come easily to a woman, especially one that identifies as a feminist, but this has not been my experience. On *She Kills Monsters*, I worked with a male director, and it surprised me that I had this positive experience when I've had the opposite experience working with female director. This made me wonder if, at times, female directors are approaching moments because they have been trained in normative, patriarchal methods and that they did not realize that a different approach or process was even an option. This speaks to the need for feminist practice to be taught, so that directors have better access to these methods. Additionally, some directors may believe that their identity markers automatically result in feminist practice.

After my experience with *She Kills Monsters*, I began to wrestle with how identity markers shape individual thinking and therefore influence each production's process. The intersection of identity markers (intersectionality) in a rehearsal process alters the nature of the process itself because every individual brings their lived experiences into the room. If a director decides to work on a feminist text to communicate a feminist message, it seems that the method to bring the text to life should be intentional. Feminist theatre works to consider the individual artists, who each have their own identities and ideas.

In this thesis, I argue that the rehearsal process of a feminist piece requires intentional feminist practices that are entirely separate from, and not necessarily suggested by, the text.

Elaine Aston mentions in her work, *Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook*, that women "with feminist ideas about theatre-making are few and far between" (2). As noted by Aston, discovering the practices for directing feminist theatre may be difficult. These practices require intentionality, inclusivity, and humility. There is a crucial need for the discovery of more of these practices, because if there is no feminist practice in the actual rehearsal of a feminist piece, actors are left feeling that their work is a facade.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

During the spring of 2019, I developed a personal pedagogy for directing feminist theatre. I considered how a feminist pedagogy, rooted in constructivism, might shape directing practices. In order to do this, I conducted research on feminist theatre practices, interviewed students in the theatre department at JMU to discover what women wanted from a feminist text, director, and process. I then used their ideas, in combination with outside research, to explore how feminist pedagogy would shape my individual directing practice. This practice included selecting a feminist text, building a rehearsal process around it, and facilitating a rehearsal process with the women who I originally interviewed.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND APPROACH

Feminist theatre practice manifests itself in a multitude of ways, depending on the identity markers in a room. Through my project, I attempt to gain a greater understanding of others' perspectives on feminist theatre practice in order to discover how to create my own practice as a director. In general, the goal of my directing practice is to encourage actors to be

active collaborators in the theatre-making process, reflect on their own relationship to gender in society, and challenge traditional gender roles and hierarchies. In order to better support the actors working on a feminist text, I am interested in discovering a foundation for directing that is an intentionally constructed pedagogy rooted in feminist practice.

Pedagogy is often defined as "the art, science, or profession of teaching" ("Pedagogy") and a feminist pedagogy in particular "is an overarching philosophy—a theory of teaching and learning that integrates feminist values" (Bostow et al.). In developing a method for directing that is rooted in feminist theories, values, and practices, I choose to value people and process before product. That means that "individual and collaborative tasks are assigned based on the needs of the student or group" rather than "the needs of the production" (Streeter 73). While the message to the audience remains important, the belief is that a feminist foundation and process will only serve to strengthen the production. Therefore, my research is aiming to answer: *How does feminist pedagogy shape directing practice*?

In order to consider how feminist practice is enacted through a rehearsal, I am interested in exploring how various identities can work collaboratively to make meaning. In order to do so, I must interweave constructivism into my work as a director. Constructivism "describes knowledge not as truths to be transmitted or discovered but as emergent, developmental, nonobjective, viable constructed explanations by humans engaged in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse" (Fosnot). If a director utilizes constructivist methods, it means that they are working with the individuals in the room in order to make meaning, rather than choosing to retain all of the knowledge and power in the room.

The foundation of a feminist process uses constructivism because feminist pedagogy must consider an individual's identity and positionally. Constructivist theory suggests that an individual will consider their own identity and positionality and how it intermingles or connects with others surrounding them. This is especially necessary in theatre because directors are asking actors to think critically and reflect on their vastly different backgrounds and personal experiences in order to tell the story. To enact a feminist pedagogy, directors must acknowledge their own identities and privileges in a room in order to put themselves in conversation with other actors and characters within a play. There have been many feminist and constructivist theatre pedagogies developed over time. My research looks to leaders such as Stacy Wolf, Jill Dolan, Kathryn Dawson, and other feminist practitioners for inspiration. Researching a feminist pedagogy is especially important for me as a young director because I am a white, cisgender female. As a facilitator, I must approach my power and privilege with a pedagogy that acknowledges my own identity in order to allow others in the room to feel free to acknowledge their own. Theatre artists cannot ask of their collaborators and their audiences what they will not do themselves. Furthermore, my actions and choices as a director have consequences. As Jill Dolan notes in *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, "theatre and performance, film and dance—creates from an ideological base meanings that have very specific, material consequences" (Dolan 2). This means that how I choose to cast, rehearse, and produce a piece has real world consequences for my team and the audience.

METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate how a feminist pedagogy shapes my directing practice, I collected several different types of qualitative data. Qualitative data was the most relevant data for my research as it, "seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants" (Creswell 16). Qualitative data encompasses "narrative research, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, and case studies," (Creswell 12) and is the strongest choice for this study because it considers the experiences of the participants.

In January, I began with outside research, developing my literature review and building a foundation for my methodology. As I conducted outside research, I interviewed women who were students in the theatre department at James Madison University. In these interviews, I did not offer a definition of feminism. Instead, I asked participants questions rooted in their own experience. This allowed me to understand their needs and perceptions of feminist theatre, which was necessary because I worked with them through the entirety of my project. The interviews served as a springboard for the workshops I developed later on in the process. For the purposes of this study, the women I interviewed and worked with have been de-identified and re-named.

Using the findings of the interviews, along with outside research, I created two rubrics that analyzed texts to evaluate the potential for a feminist process by considering the text's casting, accessibility, and content. The first rubric allowed me to quantitively evaluate the plays, awarding points based on playwright identity, number of roles for women, etc. The second allowed me to engage in an open-ended reflection on each play.

After analyzing several texts with each rubric in February, I selected the text that seems to have the most potential for directing with a feminist pedagogy. From this text, I chose a long

monologue to build an acting workshop around for the women I interviewed. In March I prepared and developed these workshops, while continuing to research approaches to feminist directing which informed my practice.

Then, I conducted two acting workshops in March and April for the women I interviewed, each exploring feminist approaches to the selected text. These workshops allowed me to develop a feminist pedagogy with a specific text.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In this document, I examine how feminist theories and pedagogies shape directing practice. In the following chapters, I consider how a combination of feminist and constructivist pedagogy can build a process that honors embodiment, reflection, and deep engagement. In Chapter Two, I review related literature to establish the need for my research and the foundation for my pedagogy. In Chapter Three, I reflect on interviews from my feminist collaborators to note what women want from texts, directors, and processes. In Chapter Four, I discuss the development of a rubric for feminist text selection based on my findings from Chapter Two and Three. In Chapter Five, I demonstrate a process for building a feminist rehearsal using the research, interviews, and selected text. Finally, In Chapter Six, I outline my outcomes, conclusions, limitations, and tensions. In this chapter, I also consider how I may use and adapt my findings moving forward.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

"*I would love to have a discussion at the start of a process about what feminism is - a working definition for everyone involved - and how it's not a pushing of ideals, but how we can work to be equally understood in this space*" (Hannah).

Beyond my lived experiences, existing literature can be used to investigate and interrogate my own practice. I researched theories on feminist directing, constructivist directing, and the tensions between feminism and constructivism. Then, I worked to define feminist and constructivist practice and argue that they can support one another to create a directing pedagogy. It should be acknowledged that in this review I have chosen to break down three foundational theorists of the 20th century over theories from female directors. This was done to acknowledge both their feminism and lack thereof and to consider how their work influences the education of young directors at the university level.

FEMINIST DIRECTING

Feminist directing has significantly changed and developed during my lifetime. My research attempts to focus on more contemporary practices and insights, specifically over the last twenty years, though feminist theory and practice extends far before that.

Lois Tyson, feminist scholar and Professor of English at Grand Valley State University, notes in her book *Critical Theory Today: a User-Friendly Guide. 3rd ed* that Feminist theory provides us with a way of analyzing literature with a feminist lens. From it, the fields and theories of gender studies and multicultural feminism arose (Tyson). These branches of feminist theory are easily linked to feminist practice. Traditional gender roles can be evaluated in how

plays reinforce stereotypes by casting, “men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive” and “women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive” (Tyson 85). One’s own gender identity, and its connection to a character’s gender identity must be considered in casting because of the pivotal role gender has in determining our identity and place in the world. In this sense, if actors are consistently playing roles that do not honor their own gender identity, it can hinder their self-perception. They may also have difficulty relating to or understanding the character that they are playing.

Though, this need for diversity and honesty in casting does not only apply to one’s gender identity. In fact, multicultural feminism provides insight on the need for diversity and intersectionality in feminist theatre pieces.[4] Multicultural feminism demonstrates how “all women are subject to patriarchal oppression, each woman’s specific needs, desires, and problems are greatly shaped by her race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, educational experience, religion, and nationality” (Tyson 105). Again, this suggests that if women are consistently asked to play roles that do not coincide with their race, sexual orientation, or nationality, they may feel unable to be honest in their storytelling or as if they must disconnect from their own identity as they work.

Multicultural feminism and feminism’s relationship with literature is key in evaluating theatrical texts. Certain texts are even written from a feminist perspective and are designed to be analyzed using a feminist lens (Tyson 117). These feminist theatre texts, and therefore productions, are crucial because seeing the way that the patriarchy operates makes it easier to

[4] Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (“Intersectionality”).

resist (Tyson 117). Feminist texts have an impact on audiences in this regard, but they can also help actors to see those operations and resist them.

As a feminist theatre practitioner, you choose to use feminist theory explicitly, through use of the texts, or implicitly, through your pedagogy and practice. One explicit way to use feminist theory is to provide actors with adjacent feminist work that they read and evaluate while developing their performative techniques. J. Ellen Gainor and Ron Wilson, Professors of Theater in the Performing and Media Arts department at Cornell University, suggest in their article "(Con)Fusing Theory and Practice: Bridging Scholarship and Performance in Theatre Pedagogy" that actors might read the article "Sex Roles in the Acting Class," because it "examines the way stereotypical gender behavior is often unconsciously reinforced in actor training, leading to the restriction rather than the flexibility of the actor" (Gainor and Wilson 73). In reading that text, performers may begin to consciously evaluate how stereotypical gender behavior is affecting or restricting their performance in order to counteract the notions of stereotypical gender behavior. Gainer and Wilson also discuss physical ways to begin working in order to combat restrictive gender roles. One option is to begin a directing process by utilizing Anne Bogart's theory and practice of Viewpoints. Dr. Joan Herrington, the Department of Theatre at Western Michigan University describes Viewpoints in her article "Directing with the Viewpoints" citing it as "a technique used to focus actors' awareness on different elements of performance (tempo, duration, gesture, spatial relationship)" (Herrington 155). While there is no evidence that Bogart is a feminist, the nature of Viewpoints though redefines power, including power based on gender, in the space. The power shift is seen in both relationships between collaborators, and in their relationships to the director. In fact:

> working with the Viewpoints involves relinquishing some of the control it has taken directors a century to acquire. When actors become active participants in the overall creation of the show, power is redefined: the traditional director/actor hierarchy disappears. (Herrington 156)

In this sense, even though some of the roles within a rehearsal process may stay the same, the feeling of a significant power imbalance may be shifted by using a technique such as Viewpoints because the actors have more agency in what they are doing. Many directors use Viewpoints earlier in the rehearsal process in order to create a physical vocabulary for the play and promote collaboration between actors (Herrington 157). A director must introduce that an actor's ideas (both physical and verbal) are valued from the beginning of a process in order to create a truly collaborative process throughout.

In working in this physical way, one begins to link theory with actual practice. This practice extends beyond exploratory movement and is applicable to blocking a piece as well. For example, in 2005 Beth Watkins, Professor of Theatre at Allegheny College, blocked a production of *Princess Ida* with her students.[5] In doing so, she wanted to allude to the painting *The Rape of the Sabine Women.* When no context or reasoning for her directing choice was provided to actors, they rejected the idea (Watkins 185). They perceived it as sexist and unnecessary, questioning her overall agenda. Watkins felt threatened by the accusation and started to reflect on her own identity. (Watkins 185). Watkins identifies herself as a teacher, director, and feminist, but claims that "relinquishing control in rehearsal is not always easy or wise, and that striving for a genuine collaboration can involve compromises that even a feminist director intent on de-centering authority may be unwilling to make" (Watkins 186). True collaboration, between actor

[5] *Princess Ida* is "a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta based on Tennyson's *The Princess"* (Watkins 185).

and director, requires relinquishing of total control and that seems to be the potential first step of a feminist rehearsal process.

After this moment, Watkins chose to base her feminist rehearsal process on the work of Bertolt Brecht - specifically on the alienation effect which she says, "[encourages] students to explore questions of gender identity, power relations, and authority from unaccustomed angles and to achieve fuller understanding of the politics of performance" (Watkins 186). This is made possible:

> By focusing on the collaborative process between the students, other artists or scholars, and the director, and by using strategies to defamiliarize the conventional hierarchy of authority, one can alter the giver/receiver model of rehearsal and instead draw attention to the dynamics of true collaboration. (Watkins 187).

She acknowledges that Brecht had less than ideal encounters with female collaborators, as often noted by feminist critics. Still his work became her directing foundation to consider power and privilege within the rehearsal room (Watkins 186). She began to view her authority as a performance and thus leaned into a more collaborative process by adapting a Brechtian approach to the theatrical work.

Using a Brechtian approach for feminist directing is a point of debate for feminist scholars. According to Saadet Bilge Coskun, some scholars use Brechtian techniques to highlight the constructedness of gender (iv). Bilge writes in their M.A. thesis, *A Gender-Oriented Approach towards Brechtian Theatre: Functionality, Performativity, and Affect in Mother Courage and Her Children and The Good Person of Szechwan* that some practitioners resist the work of Brecht due to the subsequent "[desexualization] through this instrumentalism" and the "manipulation of female figures through functionalizing them in order to achieve certain political

goals" (Coşkun iv). The argument between whether to follow or resist Brecht and other practictioners, such as Stanislavski, began in the 1960s (Gainor 163).[6] J. Ellen Gainor, professor at Cornell University, specifically explores the development of the Stanislavski/Brecht performance binary in feminist theatre critiques (Gainor 165). Additionally, she notes that some scholars reject Stanislavski due to the enforcement of his methods being directly associated with gendered conventions and "dynamics anithetical to feminism" (Gainor 165). However, some of the scholars that claim to not follow him use some of his methods, which:

> suggests an important question: is Stanislavskian acting theory fundamentally at odds with feminist theatre practice, or is it evidence from the application of those techniques in key historical, creative contexts that is the real—even if not overtly acknowledged —object of the feminist critique? (Gainor 165)

Through examining these texts, Gainor notes that gendered conventions in theatre can be strongly linked back to Method acting technique (Gainor 165). However, I believe both Brecht's approach and Stanislavski's internal connection to an actor's life can lend themselves to feminist practice when used thoughtfully and intentionally.

Another theatre artist whose methods are important to consider in a feminist process is that of Augusto Boal, creator of the Theatre of the Oppressed. As a political activist, Boal worked to provide a mirror to audiences that displayed society's treatment of marginalized groups. While his work is a different kind of theatre, not reliant on a conventional play text, his process was important to feminist theatre artists. In his process. Boal integrates theory and feminist pedagogy to highlight the experiences and oppressions of women and works to end that oppression (Fisher

[6] Stanislavski is a "Russian actor, director, and theoretician. He co-founded the Moscow Art Theatre (1898) and his theories later formed a basis for the development of 'method' acting" ("Konstantin Stanislavsky"). When I say the Method, I am referring to U.S. interpretations of it.

13). Boal allowed for women to acknowledge their own identities while trying to "bridge the gap" between reality and the feminist future they wanted (Fisher 13). Thus, imagining beyond ones self, from the "as is" to "what if".

From Boal's process, one can conclude feminist theatre practice is not simply what you present, but also how you get there. In her article "Feminists in Action: How to Practice What We Teach," Professor Rae Rosenthal from Essex Community College claims that her feminist composition course was a failure, because she failed to "connect theory with practice" (Rosenthal 139). Teaching feminist theory in a conventional setting is not effective. She argues that in order to communicate feminism, one must use it. She came up with a couple rules to try to incorporate feminist practice into her course on feminist composition. First, she encourages students to speak at the beginning of the course so that they may be more comfortable speaking throughout, and announces that "all comments are welcome; no rudeness is tolerated" (Rosenthal 152). Second, she and other students must respond to all comments. If vague discussion or consensus becomes the goal, then no one will be able to lean into candid and civil discussion of feminist content, feminist pedagogy, or the resistance to either (Rosenthal 152). She claims, "if we profess to be feminists, we must act accordingly, and as opens and dialogue are fundamental values of all feminist movement, they must be fundamental to our classrooms" (Rosenthal 152). Similar rules in regard to collaboration may be used in a theatrical process for the same purpose. All thoughts must be free to be expressed and acknowledged, a "yes, and-" mentality should be used within the space.

Acknowledging women's ideas and values is a central aspect of feminist pedagogy. Arts-therapy activist Nicole D. Hahna notes in her article "Towards an Emancipatory Practice:

Incorporating Feminist Pedagogy in the Creative Arts Therapies" that a feminist pedagogy in the arts might mean "having a student-centered approach to education, encouraging her students' subjective reflection, cultivating a diverse and complex understanding of constructs and identity markers, and encouraging the student to be an agent of self-change," meaning that they are in charge of their own actions and future (Hahna 438). Similarly, a director in a feminist rehearsal process must also consider how the patriarchy functions, the power dynamics within it, and how they can try to resist those dynamics and celebrate the diverse experiences of both the director and the actors in the rehearsal room (Hahna 438). If the power, privilege, and experiences of the actors and director are not made clear in a rehearsal process, balancing the agency in a room is nearly impossible. One great way to decrease power imbalances, honor diversity, and integrate lived experiences is to use a constructivist pedagogy.

CONSTRUCTIVIST DIRECTING

Constructivism is a theory that explores the concepts of knowledge and learning and how meaning is made (Fosnot). Major proponents of the theory include John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Paulo Freire (Hamilton). Catherine Fosnot is Professor Emerita of Education at the City College of New York and she writes in her article "Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives, and Practice" that constructivism views knowledge as "developmental, nonobjective, viable" and "socially constructed" (Fosnot). Due to this, constructivists aim to consider how discourse between peers impacts leads to meaning-making. Constructivist spaces might be seen as small communities that give opportunities for meaningful experiences where participants can examine, interrogate, and reflect on their own ideals and practices (Fosnot). This is important because it

points to the notion that knowledge is not in the hands of one individual, rather it is something "constructed" by a group of people working together.

One way to create a small community in theatre, or an ensemble, that constructs meaning and knowledge with one another is to utilize a theatre-making method known as devising. Alison Oddey, a lecturer in Drama and Theatre Studies at the University of Kent, defines devising as "a process of making theatre that enables a group of performers to be physically and practically creative in the sharing and shaping of an original product" (1). In her book, *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook,* she adds that:

> the process reflects a multisession made up of each group member's individual perception of that world," and that "participants make sense of themselves within their own cultural and social context, investigating, integrating, and transforming their personal experiences, dreams, research, improvisation, and experimentation. (Oddey 1).

From this quote, it is clear that the process of devising acknowledges individual perceptions and places in the world. This understanding is found through the relationship between participants and the meaning they discover in the room together. Due to this, devised theatre is not seen as conventional practice. It does not follow the traditional playwright-director relationship and, in fact, it actively works against it (Oddey 4).

While much of devising begins with only an idea, some devising strategies are applicable to work on an already published script. One person, often the director, may serve as a facilitator, propose strategies that aid collaborators to create their own collective interpretation of a text. I believe that this method of working seeks to empower individuals and give them agency in the creation of a product, which aligns with the values of feminist pedagogy. Though constructivist practices can be used to support a feminist pedagogy, there are notable tensions between the two.

FEMINISM vs. CONSTRUCTIVISM

Feminism and constructivism both seek to represent and advocate for marginalized groups. However, there are points of tension between their approaches to reach this goal. Locher & Prügl, note in their article "Feminism and Constructivism" that, in theory, the major difference between feminism and constructivism is that "feminists approach gender and power as integral elements in processes of construction, whereas most constructivists consider power to be external to such processes" (Locher & Prügl 111). In contrast, as Julia Driver notes in her article "Feminism and Constructivism," constructivism can at times lean into relativism which can harm women because it considers cultural norms to be valid just because they are present (Driver 175). The idea that truth or knowledge is based on perspective can be dangerous because it can lead people to dismiss perspectives instead of acknowledging or working against them. While I believe that individual truths and perspectives are valid in a constructivist space, I feel that it is dangerous to overlook the true oppression that some individuals may experience based on their identity. It seems to be a weakness of constructivism that is does not always account for people walking into a room with different degrees of privilege. Actively combatting the divide is necessary in attempting to create a space where each individual has equal agency. This tension can be addressed through a "dialogue between feminism and constructivism because the two approaches add to each other and in combination can yield better theoretical and empirical understandings of the world" (Locher & Prügl 111). Locher and Prügl seem to suggest that neither theory comes as close to achieving equality as the two in combination. Their acknowledgment of the tension between feminism and constructivism has informed my project

design. I found that in actively working to diminish the tension and combine the two theories, the relationship serves as a stronger way to achieve a feminist process for theatre-making.

Chapter 3: Interviewing Collaborators

"*I remember in the interview, you used the phrase, 'according to your identity markers,' which provided an opportunity for someone to talk about race, or sexuality, or anything without being like, "tell me why you're oppressed and what you want to do about that." Providing the option for that discussion… goes into the idea of having an inclusive process, without forcing anyone to talk about anything*" (River).

After beginning my review of related literature, I started to interview students within James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance (IRB approval, see Appendix A). The call was open to any womxn, but it should be noted that only four cis-gendered individuals volunteered to participate.[7] I chose to begin my project with interviews for a number of reasons. Interviews, compared to other qualitative methods, are a constructivist scientific practice (Rubin 3). Specifically, I approached the interviews from a naturalist and constructionist perspective, meaning I "focus more on themes that are true at some time or in some places, while working to learn which elements of a complex environment affected what was seen or heard" (Rubin 16). Furthermore, I chose qualitative methods because they are "grounded in extensive contextual analyses, currently constitute the most available techniques for investigating agency and context, and these methods provide the best means for eliminating unwarranted assumptions about individual actors" (Morawski 675).

A project rooted in investigating agency must be conducted through a structure that allows for it. By interviewing these women, I am acknowledging that I do not know the experience or needs of all women. When using interviews, "researchers explore in detail the

[7] "The new modification in spelling of the word 'womxn' is finished in an endeavor to stress the concept that womxn are their own separate individuals, capable of operational on their own and without a man to help them. The new orthography is additionally seen as intersectional, because it is supposed to incorporate transgender womxn, womxn of color, womxn from Third World countries, and each different self distinguishing womxn out there" (Vibes).

experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own." (Rubin 3). My study is about learning how to acknowledge those in a rehearsal room, other than myself, and interviews are necessary to achieve that. Furthermore, as part of my thesis, I used the interviews to build an acting workshop around a feminist text that acknowledges my participants' needs. Interviewing that deems itself as "feminist" must be "grounded in a commitment to women's rights and well-being" and "reveals the tensions between attaining such a disinterested ethos and realizing justice" (Morawski 673). Within the interviews, I asked four questions:

1. Have you ever worked on a piece of feminist theatre during your time as a college student either at James Madison University or outside of it?
   A. If yes, can you describe that experience for me?
   B. While rehearsing the piece was there a feminist rehearsal process?
      - Why do you say that?
2. Based on your own identity markers, what do you want from a feminist theatre text?
3. Based on your own identity markers, what do you want from a director?
4. Based on your own identity markers, what do you want from a feminist rehearsal process?

I asked these questions in particular because I wanted to address the participants' past experiences and personal identities and how these factors impact what they now want from a text, director, and process. Across the board, I received answers that were thematically linked.

The participants were especially interested in discussing: community, process over product, and change.

COMMUNITY

The women I interviewed all discussed their desire for a rehearsal room to have a sense of community. Lexico Dictionary defines community as either a "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common," or a " a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals" ("Community"). Raymond Williams goes beyond this in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society,* arguing:

> Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships.What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term. (76)

For the purposes of this thesis, I explored these notions of shared, positive attitudes and goals. Through my interviews, I found that the women I worked with wanted a community with a sense of order, safety, and care when they begin working on a piece.

To have order in a space, there must be certain rules. Rules do not necessarily mean a hierarchy is in place, but rather that each person is responsible for their own behavior in the room. Two separate participants said that they think "understanding who sets the rules for the space" is an important part of a feminist process, especially when those rules relate to open-dialogue and respect. If there is a rule against abusive language and a structure in place for open dialogue, that allows someone to say, "hey you said this thing or someone said this thing and it

wasn't okay" (Amy).[8] This translates to how order and structure can help promote the emotional and physical safety the women stated was necessary for a rehearsal space.

In terms of emotional safety, Amy noted in her interview that if open-dialogue is in place, and the idea that everyone in a room has had different experiences is acknowledged, the next step is noting what aspects of a show might require outside resources. She said, "if it's really heavy stuff, [it] can be triggering," and directors must know how to "appropriately get people resources on how to begin or end a rehearsal, bring in an intimacy choreographer, and be very intentional about the language used there in order to foster a safe environment" (Amy). In these moments of high physical or emotional stakes, it is important as a director to ask for consent.[9] Consent is necessary "for physical and emotional places," and cannot be given once and then taken for granted (River). That means "not just getting it at the beginning and assuming... that that carries through" (River). One must constantly ask for it because it can be changed or revoked at any time. Asking an actor for their consent to something physical or deeply emotional is one way to make them feel both heard and valued in a space.

Outside of rules and safety, community also means a sense of care in a space, or even mentorship. River said that one process felt especially feminist to her "mostly because [she] was just surrounded by all these women who were older than [she] was, who were doing things and saying things, and working the way that [she] wanted to be." River respected the older women mentoring her and they, in turn, respected her as well. Another participant dove into the concept

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[8] The names being used for this study (Amy, Hannah, River, and Sophia) are all de-identified to protect the participants of the study.

[9] Consent is "an active, engaged, uncoerced "yes" at the moment of activity" (Harge). This definition is in regards to sexual activities taking place within the theatre. However, it can also be applied to when actors are asked to engage in anything physical or emotionally traumatic.

of respect stating that it “is the first thing that comes to [her] mind” when asked what is necessary in a feminist rehearsal process. She continued on to say “I think people sometimes can feel as though they’re being respectful by saying ‘how do you feel about this,’ but then they immediately reject how you feel about it” (Sofia). In this sense, respect isn’t just about asking the right questions, but about the way you listen to how others are answering. This intentional listening links to dialogic meaning making, referring to when dialogue causes “ideas or concepts [to] feel more finalized and steady” (Dawson & Lee 24). Dawson and Lee, leaders in the field of Drama-Based Pedagogy, also note that “dialogic meaning making supposes that there is not one right path to the one right answer; the focus is on the process to arrive at the answer” (24). Engaging in dialogic meaning making requires both intentional listening and respect.

The notion of listening and respect is especially true in regards to open-discussion during rehearsals. River noted that gender neutral language is especially important to her. More specifically she discussed how directors will give direction by comparing a set of given circumstances to “that moment with your boyfriend” (River). The analogies made her feel isolated because her partners are not male. She noted that as actors “we’re trying to reconcile experiences in shows with our real lives,” and using gender neutral language when discussing partners is an important part of that (River).

This consideration can ultimately be connected to being aware of “your identity and your privilege in a room” (River). Privilege might present itself in a variety of ways, but in our current community at James Madison University (JMU), much of our theatre department is white. River discussed in her interview how often at JMU “we’re in rooms with majority white people - majority white women,” and begged us to consider, “what does that mean?” She then

suggested that maybe it means making space for those in the room with less privilege than you to feel heard, included, and most importantly safe (River).

Again, safety is not just a physical concept. Sofia noted when discussing safety that she "would like the conversations [in a feminist rehearsal process] to be open and for a safe space." She expands on this concept noting that spaces that allow for open dialogue but leave you feeling that what you share will be taken out of the room are not, in fact, safe (Sophia). Therefore, creating a *safe and brave space* in a rehearsal room is necessary. Safe and Brave Spaces is "a framework of dialogue for diversity and social justice… developed by scholars Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens" that "doesn't incite judgement based on identity or experience - where the expression of both can exist and be affirmed without fear of repercussion and without the pressure to educate" (Vann). Not only that, but Safe and Brave spaces foster conversation, shared experience, and growth (Vann). These quotations argue that Safe and Brave spaces are intended to generate a sense of support and community throughout the process.

PROCESS OVER PRODUCT

The idea of process over product came up frequently in my interviews when participants discussed important factors in a feminist process. Before weighing the importance of process versus product, they must first be defined. Process, as a concept, is more often linked to drama and product, as a concept, is linked to theatre. For instance, Drama-Based Pedagogy, as hinted in its name, uses drama because it is "exploratory and reflective," whereas theatre is usually "focused on the creation and reception of a product for an audience" (Dawson & Lee 13). From this definition, a process appears to more heavily consider individuals - their experiences,

thoughts, and ideas. For this reason, Amy noted, and I agree, that "people say [they want process over product] a lot." However, it is not always easy to practice. According to those I interviewed, process over product means emotional care and the way that a director can take care of and checked-in on their actors. When asked to give an example, Amy said that in one particular production she worked on "everyone, the ensemble, as well as the production team, were very open to everyone and their own feelings and it was sort of like a very fluid process." The processes emphasis on "peoples emotions, and not... we need to get x, y, and z, done today" felt like feminist practice to her (Amy).

The constant deadlines of a project, the x, y, and z that must be done, can often be what really strains actors. As the deadlines approach, it can become easier for a director to emotionally manipulate an actor. Amy claims that, to her, a feminist rehearsal process should include an open-dialogue structure that allows for actors to express either "Hey, this way that you're doing it, this way that you're trying to direct me, it's not really resonating with me," or "Hey, that felt really bad, that put me in a bad place" (Amy). In this sense, Amy is arguing that directors have to be okay with being told that something they did was harmful and adjusting accordingly. They must acknowledge both their intended outcome and their actual impact in order to engage in culturally responsive practice. I agree with this sentiment; if there is such a hierarchy in the room that one person is unable to be questioned, then there is no real sense of equality or community. If such acts continue, participants in theatre might have to continue to endure words or actions that are harmful to their mental health.

In general, mental health is a major topic for universities in 2019. There are more "college students reporting problems with anxiety and depression… than ever before" and it has

been escalating over the last decade (Bauer-Wolf). Due to this, colleges are making mental health a top priority. This need is even more present in the performing arts due to the high physical, mental, and emotional demands of such programs. In the article, "Mental health in the arts: Are we talking about it enough?," Jessie Thompson argues that the stressors of working in an artistic career can often have negative mental health impacts, which are not discussed and interrogated often enough (Thompson). I would argue that this extends to college students studying to be artists. Not only are they under the typical stress of a university student, but "performing arts workers experience symptoms of anxiety ten times higher than the general population and depression symptoms five times higher" (Thompson). Due to this strain on workers in our industry, considering the actors' mental health when making decisions is an important component in valuing a process, and its people, more than a product. In her interview, Amy went on to say that "making sure that people's mental health is okay and that they're not stressing over it, and giving them time to breathe or giving time to check in with people, that's just like so important." She later notes that without those factors, the process can be detrimental to someone's health (Amy). However, while the research supports her claims, it should be noted that she was the only one in the interviews to address these specific concerns.

Additionally, valuing a process over a product within a production can have a larger consequence in a larger product-oriented system, such as a theatre company. In this case, the process would need to be carefully framed for an audience to be able to understand its importance within a particular production.

CHANGE

When asked what they wanted from a feminist theatre text or process, the women I interviewed often talked about change. Change is a difficult concept to define and appears in different forms throughout my thesis. For this section, identify change as a larger, societal, or political shift. As R.H. Leonard describes in his essay "Social Imaginaries and Theatre,":

> Art and artists live, thrive, and give expression in the space between the imagination and the world -- natural and constructed. Whereas all humans fill this space with narrative and image privately, the theatre artist fills it publicly, and as such the theater artist is deeply and essentially political. (Woodson & Underiner 207)

Leonard goes on to note that the theatre "puts a particular way of seeing into the public space, another way of knowing" (Woodson & Underiner 207). In this sense, theatre can evoke political and/or societal change. Activism is an inherent part of feminism and a feminist theatre should create pieces that challenge gender and identity. However, as my thesis serves to interrogate process over product, I am investigating the ways that a feminist directing process can challenge gender identity within the rehearsal room.

In their interviews, several of the women pointed out that positive and varied representation on stage matters to them. They want works that are no longer "falling back on stereotypes of women or other marginalized groupings" (Amy). In contrast, one participant, River, stated that she once read for a character with experiences other than her own and women with those experiences came up to her crying after the performance because they were so moved by seeing themselves represented on stage. River went on to say, "I think maybe [the play] was able to reach out and tell women's stories in a way that I didn't realize because I have no

experience with that. That was cool." Representation can make someone in an audience feel heard and validated.

However, while representation may surround a single identity marker of a character, it does not mean the actor is only concerned with that aspect of themselves. For example, River stated in her interview that she is looking to work on plays that "have queer characters but it's not about them being queer… While I think there is some really awesome theatre about being queer, it's almost more important when it's not being mentioned because then we are acknowledging that these identities exist." In her eloquent words, feminist work should be "acknowledging those multitude of identities" and that those characters "are all real women and that [being queer] is not the pillar of who you are" (River). Hannah also discussed this in her interview stating that "as a person who is bisexual, I'd love to see something that's not like 'Ooo, gay people.' There's the token gay character supposed to represent everything and people either accept it or don't" (Hannah). Representation is not one-dimensional and it cannot be vague. Identities are complex and intersectional and, at times, changing. It is important that feminist processes provide the "opportunity to talk about the struggles of going through figuring out your sexuality and identity" and "the constructs that we've been put into" (Hannah). Representation should involve breaking these constructs, or at least, "acknowledging that they're in the room" (Hannah). I agree that representation on stage matters, but at times in the University setting, representation means putting more women on stage, even if that means dressing them up as men. I feel there are intentional moments in which women playing male characters can add a layer of commentary to texts. However, the directors that are casting women in mens' roles simply to involve more of them in the production are putting a band-aid on the issue. If a director

wants to provide more opportunities for women, one possible solution is to tell stories that have more women in the casting breakdown.

The students I interviewed also wanted to break the constructs of the patriarchy present in the theatre. In terms of texts, Sofia found that they felt "it can be hard to identify with some characters because of how female characters can be written," and that some plays "put females and women into a box." River agreed with this notion, claiming that sometimes the boxes that women are put in are due to the fact that men are often writing them. She argued that "a lot of the time men write women like they've never spoken to a woman in their life before and that's bizarre because we speak the same that men do and so I think a big discrepancy between the way that the female characters and the male characters talk is a sign that of it maybe not being a piece of feminist work" (River). Hannah took the concept even further and said that she'd like a script that's "less male-dominated and there's female characters that talk to each other about more than just a love interest or their sex life. More who they are as people." I agree with this sentiment. Representation isn't just about telling women's stories, but what kind of stories women are allowed to tell. We are more than romantic figures, and our stories should reflect that.

Finally, the women I interviewed discussed the fact that feminist theatre should be aimed at bringing about political change, whether "it's about abortion, or rights, racism, or gay rights, or that sort of thing - it's important to continue to fuel that agenda in order to get that on people's minds and get them talking about it. Cause if we continue to do shows that don't talk about that, or all about that in one dimensional ways, then it's not gonna bring change" (Amy). A director in a feminist rehearsal process must "[acknowledge] ways in which patriarchal assumptions perpetuate systems of oppression and power differentials" and "[work] to decrease

power imbalances" (Hahna 438). This means that a work in its content must not only acknowledge power imbalances, but also work to right them. One of the women I interviewed, Hannah, disagrees, noting that the term "feminism" needs to be defined in the space, but doesn't necessarily need to have an agenda outside the space. She expressed a desire to have a "discussion at the start of a process about what feminism is - a working definition for everyone involved - and how it's not a pushing of ideals, but how we can work to be equally understood in this space" (Hannah). River added that within the space it is important to try to "dismantle that hierarchy that normally exists in theatre" and use "a more of a collectivist approach because all the values that the capitalist, hierarchical theatre model is under upholds the patriarchy." This sentiment rings true to my personal values and reemphasizes the need for agency in a feminist rehearsal room.

CONCLUSION

The women I interviewed desire for texts and processes to represent three-dimensional women with intersectional identities. They want a structure that breaks down hierarchy and redistributes power in order to promote change to audiences, but they also want to practice it themselves. Women want the focus to be on the process of a piece, rather than its product. In using a constructivist approach, feminist processes should focus on respecting the people involved in the piece, which includes consideration of their mental health, their consent, and their ideas. Without a structured room full of emotional support, actors can not feel safe enough to even participate.

Chapter 4: Selecting a Feminist Text

"*I - just in general - I feel like sometimes when feminist works or feminist identifying works are written they can be exclusive to certain communities so I like feminist works to be all inclusive to whatever anyone identifies as. Especially from a performer perspective I feel like there have been times where it just kind of puts females and women into a box. It can be hard to identify with some characters because of how female characters can be written*" (Sofia).

FEMINIST TEXTS

I begin each chapter of my thesis with quotes from participant interviews because of the sentiments they present. The interviews serve as the foundation for the rest of my research because I was interested in considering a process specifically catered to the individuals I would be working with. For this reason, I utilized a constructivist approach, which relies on "social and cultural understanding" of my participants and "[co-constructing] meaning through dialectical interactions" between them and their environment (Lee). To further honor this constructivist approach, I began the process of selecting a text for the acting workshops by re-examining what the women said in their interviews.

One question I asked during the interviews was, "Based on your identity, what do you want from a feminist text?" Due to the nature of this question, it allowed participants to root their answers in their own experiences as college students situated amongst their own identity markers. The women that volunteered for this study did not all disclose their gender or racial identities, but several shared their sexual orientations as a basis for their answers. In reviewing the collected responses, I noticed that the women all touched on two central themes: representation and identity.

Usually, representation is thought of as the way media or theatre "[portrays] certain types of people or communities" (Tawil). However, representation can also be seen as the flip-side: "who's absent from the room or whose story is not being told" (Mzumara). However, representation is not as simple as placing bodies on stage. It is also about making sure that "marginalized people are… represented in the work in a thoughtful and authentic manner" (Mzumara). This means that they are not being stereotyped, attacked, or exploited. Instead, they are being shown as three-dimensional and capable characters.

I believe this is pivotal in a college setting because students are still developing their own sense of identity. Students that have the opportunity to play characters that are three-dimensional and match their identity markers helps students form a positive self-image. In creating and staging contemporary theatre, higher institutions are asking themselves "how could we start… [to] reflect our community context truthfully" (Wyatt). It is crucial that universities begin to select texts that can truthfully represent those in their community, especially marginalized groups. During my time at college, I served on the School of Theatre and Dance's Season Selection Committee. One of the frequent conversations was about how to begin producing plays that represent the diverse community of JMU. If we continue to tell only white, male stories, then we are communicating to the community that those are the only members we value. This leads to the reinforcement of oppressive systems.

Representation of marginalized groups brings up another important point when selecting a text - identity. The terms identity and identity markers are used to "describe different facets (e.g., cultural, religious, gender identity)" of a person (Watzlawik). To put this in context, our theatre department at James Madison University consists of mostly white women. Yet, we often

produce works that call for more white, male actors than proportionate to our student body. Sometimes these productions, such as *Vinegar Tom*, try to counteract this balance by casting in such a way that the entire production is female.[10] This offers audience members the opportunity to critique gender, but fails to recognize the power of casting women in roles that align with their own identity markers.

Casting with identity markers in mind (their gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.) achieves strong, positive results. The article "Esperanza Rising - A Culturally Specific Piece for TYA," written by Theatre for Young Audiences scholar Joshua Rashon Streeter, highlights how a process changes when you cast actors within their own identity markers in a play that is culturally specific. In casting the production with actors of the same culture as they play, table work becomes more effective. Streeter notes that "the actors collectively possessed more knowledge about the experience of the individuals they would be portraying onstage than [he] could research during a four-week rehearsal process" (Streeter). Due to this, rich conversations of representation and the events within the play took place, and personal experiences worked to fill the gaps. These conversations were crucial because "critical inquiry and dialogic meaning-making leads to action in the rehearsal room through the creation of intentional and specific choices made throughout the process" (Streeter). This means that the actors sharing their own experiences and collectively reflecting on them allowed for the process to be directly and intentionally related to personal experiences and truths, which honors cultural and social identity. This case-study presents the need for texts to coincide with the identities of the performers.

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[10] Vinegar Tom is a play with music written by Carol Churchill. The James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance Mainstage production (October 29th-November 2nd, 2019) was directed by Professor Ben Lambert.

A specific initiative designed to combat the underrepresentation of women in college theatre departments is the Big Ten Theatre Consortium that supports "new plays by and about women" ("Department of Theatre Arts" University of Iowa). This initiative promotes the work of minority female playwrights and calls for parts that are age-appropriate for college students. Furthermore the initiative also focuses inquests that are majority female, which mirrors the demographics of theatre departments in the United States. It is followed by mostly R1 schools in the hopes that it will promote change from the top down. This example demonstrates how playwright and actor representation can be equally considered when producing work on college campuses.

Representation on college campuses also needs to consider intersectionality. Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage ("Intersectionality"). This means that representation is not just about gender or race, but truly honoring the intersections between identity markers. Considering markers that are present in the student body is essential for university theatre departments. While some directors cast or conceptualize productions that adapt classical texts to tell more diverse and contemporary stories, we also need to be creating new stories. This includes entirely new work that is not adapted from an existing text. There are plays being made now to represent our current community and their experiences that are more accessible to a wider range of audiences. This is especially important in an educational institution because "to introduce teens to plays on the page with Shakespeare is akin to teaching calculus to students before they've learned algebra, or even multiplication" (McCullough). We want to invite

diverse audiences, not alienate them. One way to invite audiences, and have them recognize themselves on stage, is to select and produce new work compared to recycling and reusing published plays that reinforce traditional hierarchies.

NEW WORK

New work, often meaning plays that are unpublished, recently published, or still in development, has the ability to represent the identities of any given community. However, it is an especially "powerful [vehicle] for voices from underrepresented communities" (Mzumara). Over the past few decades, new work has developed a strong foothold in colleges and universities over the years through the creation of specific programs aimed at connecting professional playwrights to theatre-makers in training. For instance, New Plays on Campus (NPOC), "is an institutional membership program of the Playwrights' Center" that connects professional playwrights to universities ("New Plays on Campus"). Karen Peterson Wilson, Theater Department Chair at St. Olaf College, noted NPOC as being "one of the first times that [she] can honestly say that such a bridge between the professional world and college theater makes us connect in a way that is creative, important, and useful for all parties involved" ("New Plays on Campus"). Other organizations also work to make new plays more accessible, such as the New Play Exchange. The New Play Exchange is "the world's largest digital library of scripts by living writers" and is frequently utilized by college students ("New Play Exchange"). In an attempt to utilize the wide representation presented in new work, and its professional ties to universities, I decided to select a new play as the text for my workshop.

I selected new plays to evaluate mostly from two separate sources: the Kilroys and the Hollins University Playwright's Lab. Kilroys is a list generated by playwrights and theatre-makers who are trying to combat gender parity. "The List," as their website calls it, is a collection of "excellent un- and underproduced new plays by woman, trans, and non-binary playwrights. It is a tool for producers committed to ending the systemic underrepresentation of woman, trans, and non-binary playwrights in the American theater" ("Kilroys"). This aligned to the characteristics of new work that excite me as an artist and educator. In order to be selected for the list, you have to be recommended by pre-determined respondents who has seen at least 40 new plays in the last year. For these reaons, Kilroy's List is a strong source for finding feminist work.

Another source that I pulled from, Hollins University's Playwright's Lab, is an M.F.A. program in Roanoke, Virginia ("Playwriting M.F.A."). Their New Work Initiative follows the structure of a "intensive workshop/retreat or conference, it promotes inclusivity and collaboration" and allows for students to work with big names in new play development. The proximity and collaborative nature of the program is what drew me to it while working on my thesis.

Finally, to supplement the list of plays from the Kilroys and Hollins, I did outside research, finding smaller collections such as Kickass Plays for Women by Jane Shepard, and took recommendations from my peers and faculty advisor on pieces such as *Milk like Sugar* by Kirsten Greenidge and *Venus in Fur* by David Ives.

EVALUATING A FEMINIST TEXT

After pulling 17 texts from these major sources, I sought to evaluate them for their feminist content and potential with a constructivist rehearsal process. This is a small simulation of what a director might do in selecting a piece to propose to a specific theatre company.[11] Directors, in selecting a text to produce, will evaluate different criteria to fulfill their objectives. Michael Daehn, an assistant professor of theatre education and directing at Ball State University, wrote an article for student directors to consider when selecting a text (Daehn). He encourages directors to "pick your play with your cast and audience in mind, choose stories that will engage the folks who fill your seats," and to "cast the right students in the right roles" (Daehn). In stating that casting is the most important and difficult part of a directing process, this quote serves to further emphasize how crucial representation and identity are in selecting a text. Other scholars agree, claiming that casting outside of education settings "often reinforces stereotypes and does not allow students to play against their 'type'. So educational environments provide rare opportunities for students of all races, genders, and identities to play roles they might (not yet) be able to play outside" (Macadams). In this sense, casting is not only one of the most crucial parts of a directing process, but it is doubly important on college campuses.

To align the concepts of identity and representation with my feminist pedagogy, I researched criteria to evaluate the 17 selected texts with. The criteria was based on (1) representing playwrights, (2) opportunities for actors, and (3) the way that the piece deals with gender on stage. Playwright representation considers if the playwright is a woman or is non-binary and if the play is unpublished and/or underproduced. Opportunities for actors considers

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[11] There are many ways for a play to be produced and selected and many times directors are not in a position to select the text. However, this process relates to when directors or theatre practitioners do have the ability to do so.

both quantity and quality: the number of roles, the identity of those roles, and how those roles are represented in the play. The way that the piece deals with gender can be broken down into whether or not it explicitly discusses it as a central issue or implicitly comments on it.

These two distinctions are important because there is tension between whether or not a play needs to actually discuss feminist issues in order to be feminist. Gender is addressed implicitly in every play, whether or not it is outwardly discussed. It is commented on through representation, casting, and a character's journey. In her book, *Changed for Good*, feminist performance scholar Stacy Wolf notes that in *Wicked*, a popular Broadway musical with two female leading roles, "gender inflicts and shapes every aspect of the musical" (6). She extends this notion and claims that this is actually true of all musicals because when an audience sees an actor they assume their gender and interpret the character and their journey based on the way they are presented (Wolf 6). In a similar way, every play can be evaluated for the potential it has to comment on gender, whether or not the play's central conflict is explicitly about gender.

It makes sense for a director to consider these criteria and tensions in a play before selecting it, but the real question is: how? When asked how to analyze a play, Suzan Zeder, renowned Theatre for Young Audiences playwright, answered, " First, I think it is important to read without assumptions and agendas and to read carefully" (Klein 136). This means that directors should approach a play having predetermined opinions about it. They should instead be ready to read the play for what it actually is, and to do so intentionally. To contrast this, Jill Dolan, noted feminist theatre scholar, recommends reading a text with certain criteria in mind, stating that when analyzing a text one must read "against the grain of stereotypes and resisting the manipulation of both the performance text and the cultural text that it helps shape" (Dolan 2).

This means that rather than going in open-minded, Dolan recommends you go in as a “resistant reader” who is ready to evaluate the work and question its implications. From these two quotes, I wonder: *how can you possibly read without agenda while noting whether or not a play meets certain criteria?* In an attempt to stay open-minded while objectively evaluating feminist aspects of a play, I created two rubrics.

CREATING RUBRICS

I designed two rubrics in an attempt to be as objective as possible. A rubric is a “scoring guide used to evaluate performance, a product, or a project. It has three parts: (1) performance criteria; (2) rating scale; and (3) indicators” (“Build Rubric”). A rubrics “is a coherent set of criteria for students' work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria” (Brookhart 4). I created my own rubric because, after researching, I could not find a rubric to evaluate feminist texts. For this reason, I developed rubrics rooted in the feminist values present in my own pedagogy. In designing these rubrics, I wanted to emphasize the ideas of representation and identity discussed in the interviews and the criteria that Daehn had set forth. Additionally, in order to honor programs such as the Kilroys, I wanted to acknowledge the identity of the playwright and whether or not the piece was a new work. New work, in this case, meant that the play was either unpublished and/or underproduced.

Of the two rubrics I designed to evaluate texts, the first rubric (Appendix B) was quantitative, meaning the data “can either be counted or compared on a numeric scale” (“All Guides”). Frequently, “quantitative data are used when a researcher is trying to quantify a problem, or address the "what" or "how many" aspects of a research question” (“All Guides”). In

this case, I used a quantitative rubric in order to address how many aspects of the above criteria a specific play had met. I scored all of the texts using the rubric and the four plays that scored the highest were read in further depth and evaluated in a subsequent rubric.

The second rubric I designed allowed for comments and more complex considerations. This rubric (Appendix C) was qualitative, meaning the data "describes qualities or characteristics," and "may be in the form of descriptive words that can be examined for patterns or meaning" ("All Guides"). I chose for the second rubric to follow this structure because I found it important to reflect on the message the play might communicate to the audience or the opportunities for representation that are often points of tension which are difficult, and dare I say impossible, to answer objectively. Working with the qualitative rubric at this point in my process was necessary because my thesis centers on development of a personal pedagogy.

CONCLUSION: MY PERSONAL PEDAGOGY

As noted in the Introduction, pedagogy is "the art, science, or profession of teaching" ("Pedagogy") and a feminist pedagogy in particular is " an overarching philosophy—a theory of teaching and learning that integrates feminist values" (Bostow et al.). The personal pedagogy I developed through this study adapted my beliefs, practice, and approach to directing. My beliefs informed my practice and my practice is my pedagogy. It should be noted that not all artists would agree that practice is pedagogy. Some do not see a connection between what they are doing and the concepts of teaching and learning. As both an artist and a fine arts educator, I see an inherent link between the two. For this reason, I find it important to think intentionally

about my philosophy and my practice, because my pedagogy will have a significant effect on those that I work with.

Throughout the entire process of selecting a text, I discovered a lot about my personal directing pedagogy. I learned that even though my personal opinion matters in selecting a piece for production, it is not just about choosing something that I like. The choice has to be based on the work's values and how the work might be developed and presented. This will vary based on external factors such as location, demographic, etc. However, I noticed that without these factors I personally value feminist pieces with and without explicitly feminist content in the play. This means that I search for stories that are either outwardly political or represent a marginalized group. Finally, I realized that it is likely that few plays will fit every aspect of feminist criteria. Some criteria may be heavily addressed while others are forgotten, but that does not mean the story is not worth telling. It is my job as a director to consider how my process comments and reflects on the texts or works to fill in the gaps.

Chapter 5: Building and Reflecting on a Feminist Process

"I *think discussion and understanding is something that is important in a feminist process. It is feminist to say, "let's do this one thing," and everyone to say, "yeah," but it's even more feminist to say: Why? What is the reasoning behind that? Tell me more so I can learn more*" (Amy).

After examining the second rubric, *Facing*, a new play by Caitlin McCommis surrounding a woman being diagnosed with Crohn's disease, was the text that matched the majority of my criteria. This play became the basis of my performance workshops. In order to engage in intentional practice, I pre-planned and scripted the entirety of my two workshops, which allowed me to scaffold the activities and questions.[12] During the scripting process, I considered what elements contributed to a feminist process and used those elements as a foundation for the lesson plan. In researching and planning the two acting workshops, I discovered three factors that serve to strengthen a feminist rehearsal process: embodiment, collaboration, and reflection. These concepts are intertwined and often happen simultaneously. In this chapter, I will discuss each of these three concepts and how they influenced the structure of the two workshops.

EMBODIMENT

Embodiment, as a practice, helps to ground a feminist rehearsal process. Embodiment, in a performative context, "describes teaching and learning in acknowledgement of our bodies as whole experiential beings in motion, both inscribed and inscribing subjectivities" (Perry 63). In

[12] Scaffolding, in education, refers to "successive levels of temporary support that help students reach higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition that they would not be able to achieve without assistance" ("Scaffolding Definition").

other words, embodiment recognizes actor's bodies as both a part of themselves and as a representation of a character or part of a text (Perry 63). Perry, who is an Assistant Professor of Drama and Theatre Education at the University of Regina, goes on to add that embodiment is a "mode of creation in progress (a 'tool')" (63). For actors, the body and the voice are their tools for storytelling. Therefore, when actors use their bodies to tell a story, a greater understanding or sense of knowing is achieved for them. In fact, "embodiment can be a transitory, temporary, and partial experience... that generates a level of cognitive understanding and bodily knowing" (Turner 59). This means that through the process of embodiment, actors are gaining a new understanding of the world and of themselves. This is crucial in designing a feminist process because every moment of embodiment, and every body chosen as the "tool," must be determined with intention. Embodiment is central to the theatrical process and as it is linked to someone's understanding of the world, it must be heavily considered when building a feminist process.

Feminist studies of embodiment vary in perspectives depending on how the body is defined. Some scholars investigating embodiment claim that a body is "constituted and circumscribed by culture(s) through particular discursive systems that privilege certain sets of norms and values" (Ellingson 2). In other words, these scholars are more interested in how different bodies relate to cultural norms and physical identity markers when performing. However, Ellingson notes in *Embodiment in Qualitative Research* that other scholars look at bodies as not just physical entities, but something that contains "our essential qualities (e.g., emotions, gut instincts, physical characteristics) and material being" (2). I believe that bodies, theoretically speaking, fall into both of these categories. In investigating embodiment through a feminist lens, both an actor's physical and emotional markers and past experiences need to be

considered. Other scholars agree with this notion, stating that "the body . . . is simultaneously physical and affective, social and individual, produced and producing, reproductive and innovative" (Jones & Woglom 116). The external and internal aspects of embodiment should not be separated or ranked to give weight to one over the other.

In an attempt to acknowledge the physical and emotional aspects of embodiment, I chose to build a workshop (further described in this chapter) that was entirely rooted in the actors embodiment of a text, without the pressure of an audience. Throughout the workshops, self and group reflection occurred after each and every activity, which allowed for the actors to engage not only their physical bodies in the work, but their internal, essential being, as well. To utilize embodiment as a mode of creation, I created two acting workshops that guided the actor's in exploring the text vocally and physically using Drama-Based Pedagogy strategies (discussed in the "Collaboration" section of this chapter).

In addition to Drama-Based Pedagogy, I also used a lesson planning approach called backwards design. Backwards design is planning that considers essential questions and understanding as the "point of education" (Wiggins & McTighe 1-2). This approach to planning focuses on inquiry driven instruction to promote higher engagement and collaboration. My hope was that participants would honor a workshop which values embodiment, reflective practice, and process over product.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration, as a concept, can take multiple forms in theatre. In a more traditional theatre setting, collaboration might mean working together between disciplines (acting, directing,

designing) in order to create a final product. More than that, collaboration is a “process [that] fosters a community who engender a shared vision, which in turn fuels individual creation” (Thomson). It does not sacrifice individuality, but “rather releases and expands what is unique to any artist” (Thomson). This means that collaboration should not be seen as a sacrifice that individual artists make when forced to work together. Collaboration opens doors to new possibilities. For the purposes of this study, I looked at collaboration largely through the lens of devising. Devised theatre must include “process (finding the ways and means to share an artistic journey together)” and “collaboration (working with others) (Oddey 3). As noted previously, a process-oriented approach is necessary for embodiment. The inherent and equal agency that comes from collaboration is used by feminist scholars to make-meaning.

In order to make-meaning outside of traditional hierarchies and patriarchies, a feminist director has to honor collaboration and “resist directing methods that disempower student authority and diminish student agency” (Young 139). In her study “Feminist Pedagogy in a University Rehearsal Room,” Christine Young determined that feminist collaboration should invite students to use their experiences or sources of inspiration and engage their full bodies. While doing so, students should be asked to think critically, reflecting on what they are learning (Young). This is important for students to be able to have clear objectives and recognize their own success (Fisher, et al. 58). In my experience, this has only been done in classrooms where the facilitator feels comfortable leading moments of reflection. In several of my courses, this component was never a part of the process. When reflection was not a foundational element, I found myself struggling to make meaning and wondered how to be successful and apply my knowledge outside of the classroom.

Other scholars, such as Anne Bogart, an American director known for in Viewpoints (an ensemble based acting technique), disagrees with Young's take on expanding actor authority. Bogart argues that "the director's job is to direct the play; the actor's job is to direct the role," and Holly L. Derr stretches this in her article, "Feminist Theatre: What Does it Do and How Does it Do it?" to say that a feminist director directs the play, but must have a more "malleable and permeable" vision (Derr). In this sense, Bogart's views can be evaluated using a feminist lens and translated to mean that an actor and director are still working together and have degrees of agency, but there is a greater difference between them as one person is still in charge of the overall vision. This is the prevailing way of working, and many devised theatre groups, such as the Wooster Group, Trusty Sidekick, and PigPen Theatre Co., have one figure who serves as the "editor" of the piece. This is to ensure that an overall through-line is present, the piece flows, and the concept remains intact. For the purposes of my study, I leaned into both of these approaches. Before the workshops, I selected a text to fit my own vision for the study, but as a director I merely facilitated participants collaborative efforts to stage the text, instead of dictating blocking.

As my thesis relies heavily on drama work, I chose to utilize mostly Drama-Based Pedagogy (DBP) strategies for my workshops. DBP considers embodiment, collaboration, and reflection and "focuses on an embodied process-oriented approach" (Dawson & Lee 15). DBP acknowledges how embodiment develops the way that students understand their own identities and interact with the world. Furthermore, "within the lens of critical pedagogy, we see these results as indicating not just a dialog between participants, not just a conversation, but also a 'constant state of becoming' (Cawthon et al. 15). This means that a dialogue has an impact and leads to an internal change.

Due to its association with interpersonal development, critical pedagogy is a key aspect of drama education. In discussing Freire's work, drama and theatre education scholar Jo Beth Gonzalez notes that critical pedagogy "helps students learn to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions" while transforming "practices of standard education, which originate from an ideology that favors white, middle-class, European-descended, able-bodied, heterosexual Americans" (Gonzalez 8). Essentially, critical pedagogy seeks equality for those who are underrepresented and underprivileged in society. Thus, a feminist pedagogy is rooted in critical pedagogy. In order to engage in a feminist directing pedagogy, the process must be collaborative and ask actors to acknowledge that each individual starts with a different degree of privilege. In addition, the collaborative process has to adjust in an effort to give agency to those who have not been equally favored due to long standing systems of power and oppression.

REFLECTION

In order to practice critical pedagogy, reflection was a key part of both of my workshops. Reflecting, during a theatre workshop, can be defined as "learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process, and learning to judge one's own work and working process and the work of others" ("Artist Habits of Mind"). To engage in critical pedagogy, reflective practices should consider how actions and ideas interact with privilege and power. During the workshops, the participants in the study utilized a reflection questioning technique called D.A.R. (describe, analyze, and relate) (Dawson & Lee 25). D.A.R. is structured as a series of carefully scaffolded, open-ended questions that ask participants to describe and analyze what they have just done and relate it to a larger concept (Dawson & Lee 25). D.A.R.

relates back to the concept of dialogic meaning-making because it supports both “critical thinking and reflection” and “individual and collective meaning-making and understanding” (Dawson & Lee 25). This structured reflective practice is powerful because it facilitates individual and collaborative meaning-making rather than assuming participants are reflecting on their own.

In a study that looked at how reflection and group check-ins affected university actors, they found that reflecting and checking in had a significant impact on the actors’ personalization and characterization and “enhanced awareness of the cast as an ensemble” (Preeshl). In my workshops, there were check-ins at the start of each session and reflections after each activity. The check-in process allowed the room to begin with intentionality. Based on how an individual was experiencing their day and the reflection process allowed the room to make meaning before ending the session. While these are all positive reasons to check in this process can also have negative effects.

It can be argued that “playing a character is a complex process that cannot be separated from the life of the actor” and “sometimes actors are unable to let go of the emotions associated with their characters” (Taylor). As an actor, it is difficult to place yourself in someone else’s shoes without considering your own life and how you would be impacted by the set of imagined circumstances from the play. When stepping into a role, you feel emotions that only a character in that situation would feel and could believe that those emotions are your own. Even after you step out of character, it can be hard to distance the emotions you felt from yourself. At times, holding onto these emotions can have a severe impact on the mental health of an actor. So, despite the fact that reflection and checking-in can increase personalization and characterization

in a way that makes an actor more satisfied with their work, it can also make the actor less satisfied outside of their work. That leaves me to wonder: *how does a feminist director encourage embodiment and reflection without encouraging actors to damage their own mental health?*

As I wrestle with this question, I consider the consequences of reflection. It allows for deeper characterization, but it can also allow for actors to separate themselves from their work. Aesthetic distance, "the factor which allows us to enter into an imaginative world--even though we are aware that it is separate from everyday reality…" (Trumbull), can be explicitly discussed to allow actors to come back to their reality more quickly. I was once in a deeply emotional process where we meditated at the end of each rehearsal while our director guided us saying, "this is your body, not your character's," and "you are not them, you are you." These exercises in self-reflection promoted distance and allowed me to leave my work in the room. For this reason, reflection may be a way in, but it can also be a way out when necessary.

Furthermore, reflection is not only a way into or out of character, reflection is a way to interrogate a process. During and after each acting workshop in this study, we reflected on what we did, what was successful, and what we would improve upon. Without reflective practice, individual pedagogies and processes are unable to change and adapt when needed. Similarly, without reflection I would be unable to immediately evaluate the pedagogy I have developed and how it can be improved in the moment and for future practices.

Reflective practice, embodiment, and collaboration are the driving forces of my pedagogy for building a feminist process. I rooted Workshop #1 and Workshop #2 in these

concepts. In the rest of the chapter I describe how these concepts played out in the room by utilizing quotes from the participants' reflections

WORKSHOP #1

The first workshop (Appendix D) explored text and visuals. It began with an overall check-in and ended with participants working in pairs to make a movement sequence. To describe the benefit of checking in, Hannah claimed, "Once you've done a walk around or a check-in you're like, 'This is our space. This is where we're a group. These are the people that I know and that I will work with and form connections with,' which is opening a door to a deeper understanding of your work and the people you will work with" (Hannah). From this quote, I gather that checking-in not only allows the actors to feel better connected to a text, as theory suggests, but also allows actors to be more connected to each other and the space that they are in.

After the check-in, we created a community contract for how we would interact throughout these workshops. A community contract is a strategy for community building that is further discussed in "Workshop 2". After creating the contract, we engaged in the Drama-Based Pedagogy (DBP) strategy Punctuation to Punctuation with layered movement. Sofia noted that the strategy "deepened or furthered my understanding of the confusion and inner turmoil of the text that before I couldn't really acknowledge and I feel like that would inform other conversations," (Sofia). She went on to say that "when we had to keep changing at the end of every punctuation I feel like I was starting to understand the twists of the narrator's life. Every upset they hit, I was also hitting it with them in real time" (Sofia). In this sense, the strategy allowed participants to embody the text and personally relate to it. It made the imagined

circumstances feel real to them. Amy agreed saying, "I felt empowered. It was more like a statement. It was more coming from me versus coming from the person who's speaking this text. As if I was in the story" (Amy). River also felt a sense of community and collaboration during this activity. She said that, "There was something cool about this almost danger of "I'm gonna stop talking and someone else has to start," but I knew that they were ready. You were after me and I never had my eyes on you, but you were always ready to talk right when I finished" (River). This sentiment leads me to believe that a strategy can allow for embodiment and collaboration at the same time. The participants had to rely on one another and trust that each individual would do their part within this body-based activity.

In working on the last piece of the workshop, improvisational movement, Amy said the ability to just follow impulses was helpful (Amy). She and other participants claimed that they can sometimes feel stuck in the text, so exploring embodiment in such a free way was exciting. In moving beyond the way one tends to work, there is so much more that can be discovered.

After engaging in the second strategy, Visual Dramaturgy, Amy stated "I felt like I was ruining people's things at points. But, then I was like, 'No. It's intentional.' That makes it okay. It's not my drawing, or your drawing" (Amy). This quote also touches on the idea of collaboration. In creating a piece of visual dramaturgy, the participants make meaning as a group. Sofia said that she also felt stressed by the start/stop nature of the work, but she also felt that it was "freeing" because she wasn't attached to anything she created (Sofia). I think the stress the participants felt was from a pressure to create a product, but in emphasizing that the visual dramaturgy, similar to the workshops, was about process they began to feel more at ease. River really allowed herself to explore her imagination. She said, "you were like, 'try images,' and I

was like, ‘I’m gonna try the tree, but that’s too easy, everyone’s gonna try the tree. Then I read it again and I was like, there isn’t a tree in this.’ But I was thinking about old people and they make me think about wise women. I think about trees because mother earth” (River). After getting past the pressure of creating a product for others, the opportunity to make meaning and self-reflect is invaluable.

WORKSHOP #2

Workshop #2 (Appendix E) followed the same structure as Workshop #1. The work began with a check-in and a revision of the Community Contract we made. This workshop focused on textures, sounds, and movement.

In this workshop we engaged in a strategy called Artifact where the participants explored the qualities of soil and the role of the soil in the piece. I used soil as an artifact to explore because it plays a key role in *Facing*. The lead character, Wilda, grew up on a flower farm and her monologue discusses the power and history of soil. Sofia said that exploring soil in this strategy:

> could help actor development, because things like this give lots of depth to the backgrounds of stories. You know when you love something you love it for all of its little things? So if an actor has, “oh yeah, I love this,” in a monologue or something, or “this is the red dirt road I’m gonna go on”... if they know all of those small little pieces of why they love that red dirt road it can be even more. (Sofia)

This quote was exciting because it links to the concept of embodiment and how reflecting on an object and its relationship to oneself enhances an actor’s work. River also connected to the soil saying, “There’s something so rooting about standing on the ground, the outside ground. You often can’t do that in a theatre space, but like what if this - what if the floor is covered in soil and

that's your grounding?" (River). In reflecting on the object they had just explored, the participants were able to fully imagine the possibilities that the soil held and how they could interact with it.

To continue exploration of the given circumstances we created the soundscape of a farm, River noted that "the sounds we pick initially are the first sounds that we think of when we think of a garden. It being real to us, because it's what we heard" (River). In other words, she demonstrated how the soundscape was rooted in her own personal experience that deepened her connection to the environment. This ties back to several key concepts. Through embodiment participants reflected on past experiences and perceptions. Each individual contributed one sound from their life to the soundscape, allowing for collaboration and meaning to be made collectively within the room. The power of a constructivist practice is that the individual is in dialogue with the group and visa versa.

The final part of this workshop was creating a piece of Chamber Theatre, a narrative method that adapts works for the stage. It was perhaps the most impactful part of both of the workshops. Several of the participants reflected on how it was impulsive and organic and everyone approached the task with a "let's make it work" mentality (Sofia). This emphasizes the role of collaboration in this embodiment exercise. After the strategy was finished, River described how empowered she felt. There was a moment of weight sharing in the piece they devised and she said, "weight sharing always makes me feel empowered because I feel like I am doing my job and people are doing their job to hold me up. At the end I was like, I was here" (River). This quote really touches on the essence of these workshops. In using Chamber Theatre to embody the text, the actors collaborated to create a piece that allowed for them to feel

truly engaged and empowered. While Chamber Theatre serves as a performance, it was not done for an audience, but rather to imagine, enact, and reflect on the text for the process of embodiment. This allows for the focus of the piece to be the benefits of the process, not the final product.

CONCLUSION

In creating a feminist process, reflective practice, embodiment, and collaboration are foundational elements of my pedagogy.. The workshops were most successful when participants were fully engaged and reflecting on the ways that they were able to work together. The sense of community that was able to grow over two workshops was truly impressive. The ease of collaboration and reflective practice became apparent as time went on. Once the participants became used to the structure, the creative energy in the room was unlike any I’ve seen.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

"*Equality. I never felt like, even though you were leading the session, I never felt that one of us was in a higher position than the other or had more say than the other. I guess equality covers that. Equality and respect*" (Sofia).

In my research, I studied a combination of constructivist and feminist theories in order to create a personal pedagogy for directing. My research suggests that this combination would yield a stronger pedagogy than either used individually. There are several outcomes, limitations, and tensions that should be noted before these final takeaways.

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

In stepping back and reflecting on my research, I discovered that engagement is an important part of feminist practice. Engagement is behavioral, cognitive, and emotional investment (Fisher et. al 133). This study focused on cognitive engagement - the "effort students put into learning and mastering content," - and emotional engagement - relationships with environment and peers and a sense of belonging (Fisher, et al. 135). Engagement is supported through the use of embodied, collaborative, and reflective techniques. For example, the participants in the study were asked to embody the text and collaborate to create a piece of chamber theatre at the end of the workshop. In the reflection after a strategy, River said:

> I remember doing an improv exercise like this in high school where a teacher was like, "every single suggestion that's given has to be used," and we were like, "that sucks," but I kind of feel like that's what we did in creating this. It was awesome and wonderful and it worked. Every time someone was like, "but, hey, what if we…" and we were like, "hey let's do that," it made it come together faster. That's character development on my part.... I feel so good. I feel so energized and happy that we just

> made this thing in thirty minutes. That was cool and that I would love to elaborate on in the future. (River)

This quote suggests that the environment created in the workshops, combined with the scaffolding of the strategies, lead to greater collaboration. Furthermore, I gather from this that finding ways for actors to feel that they are able to engage fully in a work is a necessary part of a feminist process.

Additionally, in reflecting on my research, I found that the structure and atmosphere of a rehearsal room is a key part of a feminist process. In fact, in the final reflection almost no one commented on the text or its content. What they really discussed was the overall community. The women I worked with wanted a communal space where they felt safe, understood, and accepted. When asked how this was a feminist process during the final workshop reflection, Hannah said one aspect that was feminist to her was:

> The way that we were... asked to check-in and understand, and asked to be understanding throughout the entire thing. That showed up in different ways: through the check-in and the conversations we were having with each other during each part of the process. I was secure in my acceptance and location in the group. I didn't feel like I was forced into a box or a label because who I appear to be or who I am. (Hannah)

Her statement also connects back to the idea of community in her reference to her "place in the group" (Hannah). Utilizing the community contract (that allowed us to consider our own identities and needs in the space) and reflecting on our work (that allowed us to connect what we were doing back to ourselves) played a key role in allowing each individual to feel acknowledged and valued in the space.

Similarly, in looking at my work, I found that an important part of a feminist process is what an experience leaves actors with moving forward. For example, in asking what we explored

in the workshops the participants replied, “movement, language, teamwork, acceptance, experimental forms, different ways of approaching a text, dirt,” and “ensemble building.” Aside from the dirt, the women did not list components of the text, but rather ways that they could approach work in the future, in other words, a variety of tools for them to use as artists and theatre-makers. In addition, they used words such as teamwork and acceptance, both vital elements of collaboration and critical pedagogy. In this way, the women left the workshop with more than the concepts present in the play. They left with a better understanding of themselves, their work, and their interactions with peers and the world around them.

LIMITATIONS

This study did have several major limitations. First, I should have pulled texts from the Big 10 for my evaluations. They were discussed in my overall research, but not included in the list of plays to be evaluated. This would have shifted the research to be more rooted in the feminist work taking places in universities already. In this study, I connected new work to universities rather than examining new work created specifically for universities.

Another notable limitation is that within my sample all of the women identified themselves as cisgender. Having all cisgendered participants does limit my research to the experiences of only cis-gendered women, even though all womxn were welcome to participate. I wanted my feminist research to be intersectional and a wider range of identities would have supported that. Additionally, this already limited sample size was also exceedingly small. Though a call was put out allowing for more volunteers, only four of the women who were interested were able to work with the schedule for my workshop. Therefore, I was only able to support my

research with four women's experiences. A larger sample size would have better reflected the opinions and experiences of the womxn in the School of Theatre and Dance at James Madison University.

Finally, my research can only draw conclusions about people in James Madison University's School of Theatre and Dance. I believe the pedagogy can be applied and adapted for other groups, but this is only a prediction. I have no evidence to support that womxn outside of the department have had similar experiences to those within.

TENSIONS

In the whole process, the largest moments of tension were between feminist and constructivist theories. While I argue that constructivist pedagogy can help to support feminist practice, there are moments where the two concepts contradict. As stated in my Review of Related Literature, the major difference between feminism and constructivism, is that "feminists approach gender and power as integral elements in processes of construction, whereas most constructivists consider power to be external to such processes" (Locher & Prügl 111). In this sense, the two concepts have tension between whether there is a difference in the real and perceived agency within a room. In trying to utilize both of these concepts in my pedagogy, I had to find ways to both acknowledge the points of privilege in the room, and actively work to achieve a sense of equal agency in the group. This came up when we, as a group, avoided defining feminism. We didn't stop to consider both the widespread definitions and the definition we wanted to construct and revise for our room. Therefore, the tensions between the two left us with a vague definition that, as a researcher, I should have worked harder to clarify.

This leads me to the other significant point of tension in my work: struggling to really define feminism and feminist practice. Even one of my participants at the end of my study noted that she wanted to define what feminism meant to our group. She said:

> I don't really have issue with it, but based on this conversation, [I wanted] a working definition throughout of feminism and what that means in this process versus what other people take it to mean. I might have a different working definition than you have and creating a group understanding of our working definition of feminism, but it didn't hinder or inhibit anything. (Hannah)

I gather from this quote that it wasn't that she disagreed with our feminist practices, but that she would have valued an explicit definition from the start. Feminist practice had differing definitions in my research. There were differences between the ways that feminists evaluate texts and whether or not feminist processes can exist when using a pre-written text. I understand that the approaches to these concepts may vary from scholar to scholar and creative team to creative team due to their different experiences. My pedagogy is personal and capable of being adapted, but in order to first build a pedagogy, I must define its foundation.

MOVING FORWARD

Moving forward, I am leaving the field of directing a process that honors both feminist and constructivist ideologies and practices. Due to their tensions, there are limited studies on the overlap of these theories. Most of the studies that do exist do not examine the theories working together within theatre. Using constructivist practice requires directors to lean into process-oriented work which is a shift for the field as a whole. Furthermore, I believe that combining constructivism with feminist practice to build a process that acknowledges the specific identity markers of the actual humans in the room leads actors to feel more engaged, accepted, and

supported. My hope is that the field will continue in this direction and critically examine their processes for theatre-making. This means directors must pay greater attention to the individuals in the room and consider how the art serves the artists in addition to the audience.

Appendix A

IRB Approval with Current Version of Protocol

Morgan, Cindy - morgancs <morgancs@jmu.edu>
Mon 2/4/2019 2:58 PM
To: Strope, Gwyneth Miranda - stropegm <stropegm@dukes.jmu.edu>
Cc: Streeter, Joshua - streetjr <streetjr@jmu.edu>

1 attachments (42 KB)
Current Version (to PI) 02-04-19.docx;

Dear Gwyneth,

I wanted to let you know that your IRB Protocol entitled, ***"Directing Feminism: Creating a Personal Pedagogy"*** has been approved effective from 2/4/2019 through 12/31/2019. The signed action of the board form, approval memo, and close-out form will be sent to your advisor via campus mail. Your protocol has been assigned No. 19-0321. Thank you again for working with us to get your protocol approved.

We have attached the most current version of your protocol. You will note areas highlighted indicating minor changes made to your IRB protocol. Please make sure this is the version you are using when conducting your research.

All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission, meaning that you will follow the research plan you have outlined in your protocol, use approved materials, and follow university policies.

Please take special note of the following important aspects of your approval:

- Any changes made to your study require approval ***before*** they can be implemented as part of your study. Contact the Office of Research Integrity at researchintegrity@jmu.edu with your questions and/or proposed modifications. An addendum request form can be located at the following URL: http://www.jmu.edu/researchintegrity/irb/forms/irbaddendum.doc.
- As a condition of the IRB approval, your protocol is subject to annual review. Therefore, you are required to complete a Close-Out form before your project end date. You *must* complete the close-out form unless you intend to continue the project for another year. An electronic copy of the close-out form can be found at the following URL: http://www.jmu.edu/researchintegrity/irb/forms/irbcloseout.doc.
- If you wish to continue your study past the approved project end date, you must submit an Extension Request Form indicating a renewal, along with supporting information. An electronic copy of the close-out form can be found at the following URL: http://www.jmu.edu/researchintegrity/irb/forms/irbextensionrequest.doc.
- If there is an adverse event and/or any unanticipated problems during your study, you must notify the Office of Research Integrity within 24 hours of the event or problem. You must also complete adverse event form, which can be located at the following URL: http://www.jmu.edu/researchintegrity/irb/forms/irbadverseevent.doc.

Although the IRB office sends reminders, it is ultimately ***your responsibility*** to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure there is no lapse in IRB approval.

Thank you again for working with us to get your protocol approved. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Wishes,
Cindy

Appendix B

Play - Playwright	Points
Is the playwright a woman? (3 points)	
Is the play unpublished/underproduced? On the Kilroys? (3 points)	
How many opportunities for actors who are womxn? (1 point per role)	
Is gender the root of the main conflict? (2 points)	
Total Points	

Appendix C

Content	Notes	Does this align with the values of my pedagogy? Explain.	If not, is there a way this aspect could be addressed as a director in order to better align with those values? Explain.
What is the identity of the playwright (what story/voice is being shared)?			
Are the men and women portrayed in the piece as 3-dimensional?			
Is gender discussed in the piece? Is it merely through visually exploitation, or are needs for change/ potential solutions suggested?			
If gender is not a main factor in the piece… Does the piece harbor any problematic representations of gender or does it include powerful representations of women?			

Process	Notes	Does this align with the values of my pedagogy? Explain.	If not, is there a way this aspect could be addressed as a director in order to better align with those values? Explain.
Are there enough actors of the correct identity markers to work with the material in a way that does not tokenize or appropriate?			
Is the material age-appropriate and accessible for the director, actors, designers, team?			
Is the material within the range of the director, actors, designers, team?			
Are there opportunities for collaboration/devising in the piece?			
Can critical scholarship be applied to the piece in a way that benefits the team and the story? If so, in what way?			

Product	Notes	Does this align with the values of my pedagogy? Explain.	If not, is there a way this aspect could be addressed as a director in order to better align with those values? Explain.
Who is your intended audience?			
Why this play, at this time?			
What message do you hope to communicate?			
How does this piece offer a different perspective?			

Appendix D

Lesson Plan #1
PREP

Sequence: 1 of 2
Day #: 1 - 90 minutes

Essential Question(s): How does a feminist directing pedagogy shape the way that we physically explore a text?

Lesson Objectives:
The actors will articulate their expectations by building a *Community Contract*.
The actors will design a piece of Visual Dramaturgy utilizing themes in a selected text.
The actors will analyze the text by participating in *Punctuation to Punctuation*.
The actors will connect themes by creating a piece of movement inspired by the selected text.
The actors will devise blocking for the scene based on the movement piece they developed.

Materials Needed: Sides of the text we are working with for all participants. Craft paper and markers. Materials to record and photograph.

Space Needs: An open space for performers to move in.

FACILITATION PLAN

Do Now: *Check-In* [10 Minutes]

Hello, I am so thrilled that each and every one of you are here today. I know that many of us know one another already, but I would love to begin our work together by re-introducing ourselves and sharing our pronouns. [Allow for this]. *Thank you all for sharing. Now, I would love to go around and check in on how we are feeling today. We will also be doing a little bit of movement work today so if you would like to take this opportunity to share that you prefer not to be touched, please feel free to share that as well. We will still be asking again before any partner activities in case something changes. Are there any questions on that? Great! When it gets to you I would love for you to say, "Today I'm feeling __ because __." For example: Today I'm feeling excited because we are starting our work together! I'll give you all few seconds to think about what you'd like to say. You can also opt not to say anything, if you'd rather not share with us. However, I would like all of us to take this opportunity to listen intently our colleagues' words so that we can consider where they are today while we engage in our work. Would anyone like to begin?*

Side Coaching:
Thank you for sharing.
That's good to know.
I'll keep that in mind today.

Reflection:
D: *How is our group, generally, feeling today?*
A: *What larger things around us are shaping how we feel as we enter our work?*
R: *How might this inform how we work together today?*

Transition: *Keeping that in mind, let's make a community contract for our expectations in working with one another.*

Community Contract: [5 Minutes]

I have poster paper here and some markers. Would any of you like to write down our thoughts on the poster as we go? [Allow for volunteers]. *Thank you! Today we are beginning a workshop that explores a feminist process for developing a piece of theatre. I'd like you all to raise your hands and say what this means to you. List some expectations that we might have for each other and for this process during our time together. I'll begin: I expect us to listen intently to one another's thoughts. Does anyone else have one?* [Continue until all ideas have been listened to and recorded].

Transition
Thank you for taking the time to consider and establish a foundation for community and trust in our work together. We will display this contract today and next week in order to remind ourselves what is expected of us as a member of this collaborative community. Now that we have an idea of our needs and expectations for one another, let's get up on our feet and begin exploring the space we've been granted today!

Focus : *Cover the Space* [5 Minutes]

To help us focus in, we are going to begin by Covering the Space. The entire floor is open to you. I would like you to begin walking around the space neutrally, without talking or making eye contact with anyone else. Stretch your arms up and reach for the ceiling. Great, you can let that go. Shake out your hands, your feet, or anything you need to as you walk around the space. We started today by acknowledging what was on our minds and now it's time allow ourselves to get into our bodies. Notice your pace as you are walking. Slow it down. Now speed it back up. Faster. Let's bring it back down to neutral. Consider the pathway you are taking. Don't walk in a circle, instead pick a destination and a pathway to that destination. How can you travel intentionally? What does intentional travel look like? Let that go. Begin to notice your peers in the room. Make eye contact with them as you pass one another. If you feel so inclined you can say hello to one another or wave, or squeeze their hand if that's okay with them. Can we gather in a standing circle?

Possible Side-Coaching:
What do you notice in your body as you walk around the space?
Remember to keep yourself within the outside parameters of our walking space.

Reflection: [5 Minutes]
***D:** What did you notice about yourself in this exercise? What did you notice about the group?*
***A:** How did it feel to go from neutral to interacting again with one another?*
***R:** Why might it be important to take time to settle yourself into a space and into the rhythm of the group at the beginning of our work together?*

Transition: *Right now*, *I am handing you a piece of selected text from the play, Facing, written by Caitlin McCommis. She is a unpublished playwright that lives in Seattle with an MFA in playwriting from Hollins University. She wrote Facing about her own life after she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, exploring what it is like to live with unseen illnesses. I specifically selected this play for our work together because it is a feminist piece that is not about displaying stereotypes or expressing a need to empower women, but rather it is a story about already powerful woman going through human experiences. I feel that that is something that needs to more normalized in storytelling. Furthermore, I chose this piece because I feel that*

feminist theatre should not only be about a final product, but about the process as well, and artists deserve the opportunity to tell stories about strong, three-dimensional, and powerful women. I'd like you to take a moment to read this section of text to yourself.

Engage: Visual Dramaturgy [15 Minutes]

Right now I am setting a large piece of blank paper on the floor, so that we all have a comfortable workspace on the border of the paper. There's a large collection of markers spread out so that every participant has a selection of colors to use. I'd like you all to read the beat silently to yourself again, and then I would like for you to silently draw images of the characters, objects, places, events, and feelings that are most prevalent to you, without using any words. Get as many different images on the paper as they can. [Allow for them to work]. *Let's take a silent "gallery walk" around the paper to see all the images we created. I want you to pick a colleague's image and add to it, again, without using any words. If you finish that, move on to another colleague's image.* [Allow for them to work for 3 minutes]. *Let's take another silent "gallery walk" around the paper.* [Allow for this]. *Now, I would like for you to fill in the remaining empty space on the page. The goal is to connect the drawings without adding anything directly to images that have already been created. You can use words in this final round if you desire. Let's take a final silent "gallery walk" around the paper.* [Allow for this]. *Let's sit in a circle around our work.*

Reflection: [5 Minutes]
D: *How did it feel to work collectively on this drawing? What images do we see from the text?*
A: *What story do these images tell together? What parts of the story appear the most? Why?*
R: *What image/idea resonates with you the most? Does this help you to determine any themes in this text?*

Possible Side-Coaching:
Make big images, we are trying to fill the paper!
What are important details you want to express?
What can you add to someone else's image to give more detail and context.
Think about how color, shape, and line communicates a feeling. What feeling sits between these images?

Transition: *I am going to hang this up on the board for us to look at for the rest of our session. Having theses themes and images as a foundation, let us dive deeper into the specifics of the text.*

Explore: Punctuation to Punctuation [10 Minutes]

As a group let us begin reading and responding to the text in two different ways. [Round 1] *To begin, one of you will read the text aloud and you will stop when you arrive at a punctuation mark (-- : ; , . ! ?). Then, the next person in the circle will read until they reach a punctuation mark. This may mean that a person reads only one word, or an entire sentence. Keep reading*

around the circle, punctuation to punctuation, until everyone gets an opportunity to read and the text has ended. If we encounter a word or phrase that we don't understand or recognize, anyone can say "stop" and we'll work it out together. Who would like to start?

[Round 2] *Great, thank you everyone. Let's all stand up on our feet and begin to walk as we read the text out loud together from the beginning. At each punctuation mark, I want us to change the direction that we're walking until the text is finished. Who would like to begin this time?*

Possible Side-Coaching:
Please walk slowly and be aware of others as you shift directions; we need to be respectful of other bodies in space.

Reflection: [5 Minutes]
D: *What did you notice about the text or yourself during this activity?*
A: *When we were up on our feet, how did the points in the text where you were turning and the points where you were walking straight inform your understanding of this text?*
R: *How does the text feel in your body? How can you use your body to punctuate thoughts?*

Explore: Paired Group Improvisation [10 Minutes]

Please break yourselves into pairs. We are going to explore the text a little more deeply in our bodies. We will improvise this work, meaning that we will make it up as we go, and we will do it simultaneously so that your pair can explore your thinking on your own without an audience. Think about the section of text we have been working with. I would like you to develop a short sequence of movement, no more than 30 seconds, either realistic or abstract. I would like for it embody the arc of the text, the themes we are exploring, and the way that the text is feeling in your body. There is no pressure to create a final product, I would just like you to begin exploring the piece physically. Your sequence does not need to include touch, but it can if both partners consent to that. Whenever you're ready, you can begin. I will be walking around in case you have any questions at all. [Allow for them to work]. *Would either like to share what they've been working on so far? We all know that these are merely explorations and works in progress.* [Allow for this]. *Let's gather in a seated circle to reflect on our work.*

Possible Side-Coaching:
Incorporate images into the movement.
How can you capture the arc of the text?
"Yes, and" an offer from your scene partner to continue the dialogue.
How will your sequence end? What decision or choice has been made?

Reflection: [5 Minutes]
D: *How were levels used in our sequences today? How was the space used? What about pacing? What else did you notice physically in what we shared today?*

A: *What was the relationship between the two people in each pair? What was the relationship between the sequences of our two groups?*
R: *How might exploring this movement sequence influence the blocking of this text in a rehearsal process? Are there elements that could be kept or elements that the actors or a director could use as a foundation?*

Transition: *Let us continue to reflect on our work today as a whole.*

Whole Workshop Reflection: [5 Minutes]
D: *In what ways did we approach the text today?*
A: *What approach was most useful or effective for you as either an performer or a collaborator?*
R: *In my directing pedagogy, I am looking at using a mixed process for blocking where I would first encourage performers to explore how they would block the scene, and then together we would weave those ideas in with the ideas that I had also considered. Do you feel that the work we did today would help prepare you as a collaborator to begin a blocking or devising process for this selection of text?*

Ending Statement:
I want to thank you all for you work today. I am excited for our next workshop, where we will continue building on this moment. For today, I would love to leave you with a quote: "Feminism isn't about making women strong. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength." —G.D. Anderson. Thank you for sharing your strengths with me today. I am so very honored that you did. I'll see you next week.

Selected Text for Workshop: [*Facing*, by Caitlin McCommis]

The red soil of Kenya is a product of heavy rain and intense heat enriching the earth with iron and aluminum. The rich color comes from a lifetime of pressure.
Memories are static. I am not a historian, but I have a history that is made up of truth and fantasy, as we all do.

Every time we recount a memory, we change it a little bit, but that makes it no less true. Maybe it becomes truer and truer as we get to the heart of the memory.

If I take this dirt on my hands and spread it on my skin I am creating a new life for the dirt.

What's your biggest fear? For many of us, it's death. For many of us, it's a loss of ourselves. Of control. There are small deaths and there are large deaths.
I didn't have a typical god. My goddess was named Dolores. Ever since I was in first grade, there was only one thing that I wanted to do. I wanted to be my grandma. She was my ideal image of a woman. When she was twenty-three, she planted a life in Kenya. When she was twenty-seven,

she returned home and started a flower farm. She was a warrior. When I was twenty-four I encountered my worst fear. I was one month away from taking the red dirt road that my grandmother went down when she was the same age, but first, I was here.

Appendix E

Lesson Plan #2
PREP

Sequence: 2 of 2
Day #: 2 - 90 minutes

Essential Question(s): How does feminist pedagogy shape the way we devise a beat?

Lesson Objectives:
The actors will refining their expectations by engaging in *Community Contract*.
The actors will interpret the meaning behind soil by participating in *Artifact*.
The actors will compose environmental sounds utilizing the strategy *Soundscapes*.
The actors will construct the world of the text by working in *Chamber Theatre* .

Materials Needed: Sides of the beat we are working with for all participants. The Community Contract and Visual Dramaturgy exercises from the first workshop. Poster Paper and markers to scribe for soundscape. Soil.

Space Needs: An open space for performers to move in.

FACILITATION PLAN

Do Now: *Check-In* [5 minutes]

Hello, again. I am so excited to continue diving into our work today. We are going to begin by doing another check-in and sharing how we are feeling today. I can begin today's as a reminder: Today I'm feeling ________ because __________! I'll give you a few seconds to think about what you'd like to say. Again, you can opt not to say anything, if you'd rather not share with us today, but I would like us to take this opportunity to listen intently our colleagues' words so that we can consider where they are today while we engage in our work.

Side Coaching:
Thank you for sharing.
That's good to know.
I'll keep that in mind today.

Reflection:
D: *How is our group, generally, feeling today?*
A: *What larger things around us are shaping how we feel as we enter our work?*
R: *How might this inform how we work together today?*

Transition: *Keeping that in mind, let's quickly review our Community Contract with one another.*

Community Contract: [5 minutes]

Does anyone want to read out loud the points we have listed? [Allow for volunteers]. *Thank you! Would anyone like to add any new points before we begin our work today?* [Allow for this].

Transition: [5 minutes]
Thank you for continuing to establish a foundation for community and trust. Now, I would like to re-familiarize ourselves with the text we are working with. Take a moment to read back over the side. As you read, underline or circle the words that call out to you. Acknowledge the moments you feel a connection. When you're finished I would like you to look up at the visual dramaturgy we created last time. Acknowledge the lines, images, and colors that strike you and take notes on your side to help you remember. Time this time to breathe the text back into your mind. [Allow for everyone to finish]. Now that we've had a taste of the text again, [pick up jar of soil] *I'd like to bring our attention to what I have in my hands.*

Artifact: [10 minutes]

Let us take the time to really evaluate this material that I have in my hands. We'll begin by only using descriptor words.

D: What do you notice about this object? Describe what you see. Textures, color, temperature. Feel free to popcorn out.

Okay, so we noticed as a group that this artifact in my hands is soil, that it is __________ and that ___________.

A: What might be the history of this soil? Where did it come from? What purpose does it serve? What else could our descriptions suggest?
You made some excellent inferences about this soil, and began to search for meaning in it.

R: How might you use this soil as a performer? What are ways that you could use the soil in the selected text we've been working on?

Transition: *Great. Now that we have considered how tangible objects can help to create an environment, let's explore how we can create a flower farm using sound.*

Soundscapes: [15 minutes]

What sounds might we hear at a flower farm? Go ahead and name them off and I'll write them down. [Once ideas are written down, referencing a word]: *What might this sound like? What about this sound?* [Continue this pattern until everyone has a sound]. *I'm going to ask you to continue to make your sounds, slowly getting louder. Thank you. I'd like you to make it softer now, almost as if you are whispering. And let's rest. I'd like you to close your eyes. Whenever you are ready, I would like one of you to begin with your sound, and then I would like you to slowly add in the other sounds, layering the sound scape. Consider the pitch you are using. The rhythm. The tone. [Allow for this]. Thank you. Let's rest there. Can we sit in a seated circle to reflect on this activity?*

Reflection: [5 minutes]
D: *What types of sounds did we use to establish a location?*
A: *Why were these the sounds that we picked? How did they help to evoke a sense of place?*
R: *How does this work influence your view of the text? How could you use this soundscape when staging this text?*

Possible Side-Coaching:
Draw on your past experiences and memories or imagine what this place might sound like. Listen to the group; add new sounds or shift your sound to explore all possible aspects of place.

Consider the musical quality of your voice. Think about your tone, pitch, and rhythm. Are there times where you go silent? When might you begin again?

Transition:
Having explored this soundscape, and using the visual dramaturgy and movement sequence from our last session as a foundation, you are going work together to create a piece of chamber theatre.

Chamber Theatre: [35 minutes]

Chamber Theatre is centralized around the text. In it, the text is sacred, honored, and uplifted in every aspect. In Chamber Theatre, you are sharing the text while making choices with your body and your voice. There are a few parameters for Chamber Theatre: everyone is involved, no one is a director, and you are working as a collaborative ensemble. Together you will consider how you might tell this story. It does not need to be presentational, you can stand in a circle and speak as a chorus or work in the round. How you use your bodies and the space is up to you. I have broken down the text into beats. I would like you to work together to give a title to each beat, and then for each of those beats you will create a different stage picture. I encourage you to work beat by beat and layer on instead of jumping around the text. There are a few vocal and physical factors I want you to consider in each stage picture that are written on these pieces of paper. Physically, I'd like you to consider elements such as use of space, levels, pace, weight and environment. Vocally, I'd like you to consider what points will you speak as individuals, in unison, or in groups. When might you echo, or add-on? How can you play with tempo and volume? Finally, how can you establish environment? You do not need to focus on all of these things in every stage picture, but focus in on a couple with each one. The final requirement for Chamber Theatre is that you have a clear opening picture and a clear closing picture to demonstrate the beginning, middle, and end. You may use only the text, your bodies, your voices, and the soil. I will be here to coach you and answer any questions. I'm going to give you 30 minutes to work. Don't worry about creating a perfect final product, but rather working together using the tools we have developed in our two sessions. I have our visual dramaturgy if you would like to draw from those images and the recordings of your movements pieces and your soundscape if you would like access to those as well. Do you have any questions before we start? [Allow for this]. *You can begin whenever you are ready.*

[After 30 minutes]. *I would love to see what you have so far.* [Allow them to share].

Can we gather in a circle to talk about what we just experienced?

Reflection: [5 minutes]
D: *What were some of the movement patterns you were drawn to? What were the sounds and tones that you chose?*
A: *Why did you make some of the choices you did? How did you evoke the world of the text? How did you demonstrate the themes?*

R: *How might this strategy for exploring the text be used in a rehearsal process?*

Thank you for your responses. As you know, this is the end of our second session, so I would love to reflect on our work together as a who le.

Final Reflection: [5 minutes]
D: *What were some of the things we explored together in these workshops?*
A: *Which activities and conversations felt exciting or supportive to you as an actor? Which activities or moments felt less effective?*
R: *How did this process for working with a text feel feminist or collaborative to you? How could it be improved upon?*

Ending Statement:
I want to thank you all for your work these past two sessions. I encourage you to reach out to me if you have any additional thoughts you would like to share privately with me.

I would like to leave you all with a quote today:

"I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back." ―Malala Yousafzai

As story-tellers, and in this case, storytellers who may have the privilege of being able-bodied, this is the power of what we do. At times, we empower women. But we also tell the stories of powerful women. Of women whose stories deserve to be heard. And stories that would better us to understand. We do so as a collective group of warrior women seeking empathy, equality, and honestly. And to me, that is truly feminist work. Thank you all.

Selected Text for Workshop: [*Facing*, by Caitlin McCommis]

The red soil of Kenya is a product of heavy rain and intense heat enriching the earth with iron and aluminum. The rich color comes from a lifetime of pressure.
Memories are static. I am not a historian, but I have a history that is made up of truth and fantasy, as we all do.
Every time we recount a memory, we change it a little bit, but that makes it no less true. Maybe it becomes truer and truer as we get to the heart of the memory.
(beat)
If I take this dirt on my hands and spread it on my skin I am creating a new life for the dirt.
(beat)
What's your biggest fear? For many of us, it's death. For many of us, it's a loss of

ourselves. Of control. There are small deaths and there are large deaths.
I didn't have a typical god. My goddess was named Dolores. Ever since I was in first grade, there was only one thing that I wanted to do. I wanted to be my grandma. She was my ideal image of a woman. When she was twenty-three, she planted a life in Kenya. When she was twenty-seven, she returned home and started a flower farm. She was a warrior. When I was twenty-four I encountered my worst fear. I was one month away from taking the red dirt road that my grandmother went down when she was the same age, but first, I was here.

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