Chapter 16
FemTechNet Distributed Open Collaborative Course:
Performing Difference, Exquisite Engendering, and Feminist Mapping

Karen T. Keifer-Boyd
The Pennsylvania State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter is about three pedagogical experiments: Performing Difference, Exquisite Engendering, and Feminist Mapping. Performing Difference is a project in which university students write and perform a conversation developed from their blog dialogue with students at another university about identity informed by readings, activities, and processes; and from dialogue on feminist disability studies informed by readings, videos, and other materials and activities. Exquisite Engendering is a pedagogical experiment in remixing virtual and physical issues of race, body, and difference into videos to teach elementary school children about social justice. Feminist Mapping is a pedagogical project that considers gender intersected with other identities in mapping places, concepts, and objects. These three pedagogical experiments are part of FemTechNet's Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC), an approach to teaching that fosters dialogue to imagine, and then create, an equitable and socially just education.

INTRODUCTION

The *Distributed Open Collaborative Course* (DOCC) is a feminist approach for 21st century learning and teaching with social media connectivity. The DOCC is open access, multimodal publishing, collaborative research and publication, and transdisciplinary education. DOCC has intervened in education discourse on the authority of insular knowledge and one-way modes of communication in massive online courses toward multivocal and multimodal communication, learning, and knowledge production. The DOCC is (un)structured with distributed leadership who share goals of creating pedagogical practices that are inclusive and participatory toward eco-social justice education and activism.

In 2012, I responded to a FemTechNet (FTN) invitation for a *Distributed Open Collaborative Course* (DOCC). With an interest in experimenting with potentials of new media for feminist pedagogy, the emerging DOCC project based in feminist pedagogical principles resonated with me. Two colleagues joined me in co-teaching a DOCC "node" in Fall 2013 that we called G-STEAM. Gender (G-) issues of privileged patriarchy in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) cuts across the humanities, arts, and sciences. The purpose of G-STEAM is to provide support and feedback to emerging researchers working toward transdisciplinarity from a theoretical position of intersectionality (e.g., of gender and race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, socio-economic class, ability, etc.). Each semester since Fall 2013, I have connected courses that I teach to the DOCC and co-created pedagogical experiments: *Performing Difference, Exquisite Engendering*, and *Feminist Mapping*. This chapter is about these DOCC pedagogical experiments.

Background

In the G-STEAM course in Fall 2013, while each week there was a different theme, many of which were shared themes with other DOCCs, there was one theme which was overarching: *creativity*. Not only creativity in what and how we read but also in the pedagogy. From the beginning of the course, students discussed what a feminist approach to creativity might be, and about how feminist digital spaces could themselves be spaces of creativity.

The work by philosopher of physics, Karen Barad helped the G-STEAM course to further theorize creativity as a social process of rereading, remapping, and recoding diffractively.[1]Barad (2007) develops the concept of diffraction as a methodological lens that looks for bends and curves as sites of agency. These agential bends involve joining with others, not as streams feeding and deepening cultural norms but performatively "moving away from the familiar habits and seductions of representation (reflecting on the world from outside) to a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it" (Barad, 2007, p. 88). Diffraction as pedagogical process refers to the act of disrupting the epistemological (knowledge) with the ontological (becoming) through encounters that evoke creative, participatory, and embodied learning.

The course of FemTechNet's DOCC, flows from participants' labor to end violence of dogmatic teaching and instead to practice eco-social justice education. This chapter is a discussion of the theories, processes, and learning in DOCC projects that are convergences of contemporary art, visual culture, and global civic engagement.

Underlying all three of the pedagogical experiments discussed in this chapter are feminist pedagogical principles of *distributed leadership* in which teachers facilitate student agency to be responsible for their learning. The *embodied and participatory processes* generate the course content and influence the course design (Jones, Forlin, & Gillies, 2013). Moreover, participatory processes such as *circle pedagogy* (Chicago, 2014) value participants' experiences and knowledge as learning material from which to generate new knowledge.

Judy Chicago's *circle pedagogy* is part of all of the pedagogical experiments presented in this chapter. Chicago's teaching begins with participants sitting in a circle, all facing each other, without tables that would hide their nonverbal body language. Such exposure encourages active listening. Chicago also expects each member to contribute to the discussion by taking turns in responding to important questions under group consideration. Chicago informs participants that they can pass their turn in the circle and then the facilitator can circle back to ask those who passed to contribute when ready. However, everyone is expected to participate.

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/femtechnet-distributed-open-collaborative-course/172763

Related Content

Catastrophe: An Uncanny Catalyst for Creativity
Laura Rachel Fattal (2017). *Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement (pp. 244-262).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/catastrophe/172760

Creativity Research in the Digital Age: Current Trends
(2022). *Sustaining Creativity and the Arts in the Digital Age (pp. 273-290).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/creativity-research-in-the-digital-age/311357

Social Creativity
(2022). *Sustaining Creativity and the Arts in the Digital Age (pp. 72-97).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-creativity/311348

FemTechNet Distributed Open Collaborative Course: Performing Difference, Exquisite Engendering, and Feminist Mapping
Karen T. Keifer-Boyd (2017). *Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement (pp. 278-296).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/femtechnet-distributed-open-collaborative-course/172763

A Sequel About the Expansion of the Cinematic Universe: An Analysis on Avatar: The Way of Water
Emre Ahmet Seçmen (2023). *Examinations and Analysis of Sequels and Serials in the Film Industry (pp. 107-127).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-sequel-about-the-expansion-of-the-cinematic-universe/322714