I DON'T RELATE: PERFORMING SEXUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

I Don't Relate: Performing Sexuality in the Classroom

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This is the research paper accompaniment to the heuristic arts-based research performance titled: *I Don't Relate: Performing Sexuality in the Classroom*. The performance and accompanying research paper are a personal experience of how I perform my own sexuality in the classroom, and responded to the performed sexuality of those around me. This paper consists of a literature review that discusses themes of gender, performance, how we talk about our sexuality in public spaces, and self-disclosure. I discuss in depth my research methodology, the phases of my own heuristic process, how I collected my data, the script for the piece, and what I found to be a surprising and illuminating conclusion I came to in the last steps of creating my final performance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1. Introduction

I started this journey not knowing why I wanted to research how we perform our sexualities in a classroom setting, just that it seemed to be a space where situations implying or involving sexuality of any kind would appear unexpectedly. These instances would often appear in small moments and not be discussed outside of the larger political or social justice context, if discussed at all. The first instance that this question started circling my mind was during a discussion of cognitive behavioral therapy and a classmate immediately stated that its initials, CBT, also stood for "cock and ball torture." Another classmate responded by saying "Yes! I'm glad I'm not the only freak in the room." This example of someone being familiar with non-traditional sexual practices instantly lead someone else to relate in a public way. If one did relate in this instance and in fact knew the practice of cock and ball torture, did they have to speak up in order for them relating to it exist? What could have possibly been happening internally for the rest of the class who said nothing during this tangential interaction? It felt like those of us who did not speak up were pushed into a public position of seeming diametrically opposed and scared of the taboo practice. It has made me question how to perform my own sexuality and how future clients will feel about performing theirs, due to this instance of a possible identity pushing that I experienced in class. It made me wonder: what are we modeling in terms of sexual identity for our clients? Are we pushing our clients into an identity? How did I perform my sexuality as a queer woman who is married to a man; not to mention the only married person in my cohort? The position I found myself in, in terms of social locators and sexuality, were not what I was used to. I found myself feeling like I had to defend myself to myself; searching for an authenticity in performing my "true self."

Chapter 2. Literature Review

In researching the literature tied to performing sexuality in the classroom, I narrowed it down to three sections; gender, how we talk about our sexuality/sex lives, and self-disclosure. Gender has evolved into the fact that if one exists and moves, means that they can define their own gender; it is expanded beyond the harsh distinction between male and female that a doctor defines at birth. Telling sexuality has grown over time to realize that after a major shift in the cultures value for self-disclosure, perhaps it is not beneficial to have explicit stories about people's sexual lives. People self-disclose in the classroom due to very distinct motivations related to what makes us feel closer to people and seen. This might help us to feel like we want to be in the classroom space fully and be more involved. Even with all of this research, there is a gap which is: how do we perform our sexualities in a public setting without explicitly discussing the details or our sex lives? How do we talk about it? How do we present it? How do we perform it?

Performance

Performing sexual identity or identity of any kind begins with definitions of performance. In *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin (1962) wrote about "Speech-act theory:" to say something is to do something. Statements are neither true nor false, but the act of saying anything at all makes it exist and gives it the power to be. The "truth" in the statement does not make a difference, the act of saying something is enough to give it a relevant truth. Austin (1962) asks the question: Does something have to exist to be accepted? Does something have to be accepted for it to exist in terms of language? Austin would argue that something can exist by merely being spoken, but for it to be accepted it must match up with societal norms (Austin, 1962, p. 26). So, in many ways, society defines what "exists" and what is accepted.

Judith Butler (1997) takes this idea steps further in *Excitable Speech: A politics of the performative*. She shares what she considers "failure performances;" people not in positions of traditional authority rewriting conventions and getting their desired results. She wrote, "Language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpolated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body first becomes possible" (Butler, 1997, p.16). One exists by

being visible, not by simply being seen. Visibility can reach a step beyond being seen by an allowance for oneself to be pronounced and noticed by a surrounding population.

Conventional conceptions of visibility depend on what is culturally/societally accepted at the time. Butler (1997) said that language acts as performative agency with consequences. The consequences are related to who has power. She cites how words like "queer" prove that words can be decontextualized and even "taken back" by marginalized persons through speech act theory. This performance makes a difference in changing language. Butler (1997) wrote:

Speech is always in some way out of our control. The listener is understood to occupy a social position or to have become synonymous with that position, and social positions themselves are understood to be situated in a static and hierarchical relation to one another. By virtue of the social position he or she occupies, then, the listener is injured as a consequence of that utterance. Language can be dominant or disavowed depending on societal hierarchies. (pp.26-32)

Examples of this are when Butler (1997) heard the word "abortion" being bleeped out on an airplane due to its impropriety and the "don't ask don't tell" military policy. (p.32). What is not accepted socially, is not accepted linguistically. We do not allow a place in language for concepts we as a society are not willing to accept. Butler completely reverses this concept introduced by Austin.

Gender

In discussing performing sexuality, I must explore the performance of language with the evolution of how gender is and has been understood. McIntosh (1993) discusses the word "queer" by writing, "Queer means to fuck with gender" (p. 3). It is a challenge to the dominant systems of categorizing sexuality and gender i.e. girl, boy, man, woman, rejecting binary labels. Judith Butler (1990) wrote *Gender Trouble* which discussed gender as a social construction that's able to change daily, as one would change an outfit, make up, or breakfast cereal. Butler defines gender as a wide range of behaviors that we act out, and it is not a "truth" but stylish repetition of actions. Gender is considered by Butler (1988) as an intentional and performative act, with the performance piece being dramatic and non-referential (p. 522).

Kate Bornstein (1995) discusses how queerness is a "third space" for anyone who does not adhere to the dominant paradigm of heterosexuality. For clarification, "queer" in terms of gender refers to a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary individuals. "Queer" in terms of sexuality refers to people who do not identify as straight. The term "Queer" becomes about inclusion, as opposed to a derogatory anti-gay slur. "Queerness" disavows traditional gender roles and attributions.

Telling sexuality

Let's look at the telling/performance of sexual identity throughout history. The emphasis here is not on what people's sexual lives actually are, it is on how they are being told. Michele Foucault (1978) discussed an intense need to know about people's sexual stories within this context. This points to a kind of obsession with knowing the inner workings of people's specific and detailed sexual secrets. At the time, he critiqued the church's belief that *they* had the power to help people confess their sins and therefore absolve them; taking the power away from the individuals themselves. Foucault also recognized that the way sexuality was discussed evolved over time, and got farther away from the union of a "married couple" and started to veer towards sex lives of people who did not fit into this mold, or the "World of Perversion" (pp. 36-51). This "World of Perversion" included the mentally ill, homosexuals, and criminals. He noted that the people in power and the "perverts" felt a sense of "pleasure and power" in labeling it and being labeled. Foucault (1978) maintained that the ongoing curiosity in humans' sexual narratives aims to reach an ultimate truth about intimacy. He mentioned that this "truth" was being explored vigorously by both scientific and religious means (pp. 76-78). Foucault acknowledges wanting to reach the "truth" of human sexuality, however how can one reach that "truth" without being in people's bedrooms with them? What do we want to know, really?

Ken Plummer (1995) attempted to gather stories by people who were 'sexually different' by using narrative inquiry. He concluded that we are living in a culture where we are encouraged to tell all about our sex: tell about your sexual abuse, tell your coming out story (Plummer, 1995, p. 4). He said the media is saturated with sex and stories of sex, and not only are we encouraged to tell our cathartic or painful sexual stories, we are

encouraged to talk about stories of puberty, a blind date, or a rally against sexual violence. Sex is unavoidable in Western culture and has become a sexually storytelling society (Plummer, 1995, p.5). In conducting his research, Plummer (1995) found himself asking what the purpose was of hearing these individuals' stories of sex and sexuality. He wanted to observe trends in sexuality, but in the process Plummer found himself asking if these narratives he collected were rehearsed, performed, or ultimately had anything to do with these people's sexual truths behind closed doors. What was the story these people were not telling? Perhaps a story they thought no one would want to hear. Perhaps a story that could not be societally deemed "edgy" or "exciting."

Jeffrey Weeks (1999) asked, "how are we supposed to understand myths of sexuality throughout history?" (Weeks, p. 12). How do we navigate desires, identity, histories, power, chance, and fear? Myths and fictions are an enormous part of how we structure our own narratives. Frank Kermode (1967) wrote about the distinction between them by saying that myths are the agents of stability while fictions are the agents of change (Kermode, 1967). In forming narratives, people are bound by the myths that precede them but they have a strong desire to make a unique change in their own story. How we tell our own sexuality is influenced by how others are telling theirs. It becomes an echo chamber.

Weeks (1999) said that sexuality is culturally sensitive and there are definite risks to be assessed: pleasure vs. pain, risks alongside opportunity, and more binaries like these (Weeks, p. 14). Weeks stated, "the sexual is a battleground between different claims to truth" (Weeks, p. 16). Everyone seems to be trying to get to the truth of sexuality and there is this concept of "detraditionalization," or putting every decision back on the individual to figure out for themselves, leaving people with the loneliness of their own moral choice (Weeks, p. 12). Where is the "truth" in sexuality when it is primarily performance?

Bruce Bayley (1999) wrote about queerness in drama therapy through the lens of Alice's journey through Wonderland. Bayley shared that in trying to answer our clients' large question of "who am I?" queerness is going to inevitably come up. Instead of trying to alleviate the possible discomfort, the therapist might just let it be, and wait for the

client to speak it out loud. Thus, there should not be a "pushing" from the therapist in the way of discomfort or too much comfort towards discovering a client's queerness (p. 6).

While I appreciate this, I would like to insert my opinion with this thought: Though I believe as therapists we must challenge our clients to see parts of themselves they might not want to, I don't think I agree with this notion of "pushing." The reason I chose this topic was because I felt pushed into an identity that didn't feel true from the people around me; and even that push was unintentional. When is a push for disclosure ever truly a safe, consensual interaction that leads to an authentic voice? This can relate to us as therapists and how we believe or disbelieve what our clients tell us. The meaning lies in the notion that the client brought something to the session, whether it is fact or fiction, it has a power and exists fully.

Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure relates heavily to performing an identity in the classroom: we choose what we disclose from a slew of facts and opinions that we have. Reis & Sheiver (1988) researched intimacy in terms of relationships and how much intimacy has to do with self-disclosure. There has not been much research done on intimacy/personal relationships because attraction and intimacy can be seen as "timeless states and rootless events" (Duck & Sants, 1983). They wrote that if we look at the word "intimacy" and how it is developed, it is through the process of emotional communication as opposed to a solid state of being. We become more intimate with different people over time in different ways; this depends on the relationship. There is a distinct difference between intimate interactions and intimate relationships. I am most interested in the intimate interaction piece. Do we disclose when we know we will be validated? How does someone disclose without developed intimacy?

There has not been much research done about creative arts therapies and self-disclosure inside the classroom within a specific cohort. Himelstein & Kimbrough (1963) indicated that self-disclosure in the classroom remains inconsistent and unexplained, though it seemed to make a difference that a contained environment (such as a classroom) with some kind of acknowledgment of self-disclosure can help lead to its increase (Himelstein & Kimbrough, Jr., 1963). They looked at a class of graduate students.

Martin & Goodboy (2009) researched how teacher self-disclosure relates to student desire to communicate. They wrote that any message about the self that a person communicates to another is defined as self-disclosure (p. 338). When studying interpersonal relationships, Wheeless and Grotz (1977) argued that several dimensions of self-disclosure exist: intent, amount, valence, honesty, and intimacy. In the other direction, all types of teacher self-disclosure lead to students' willingness to attend class and the clarity of their learning. Martin, Myers, and Mottet (1999) identified five motives students reported for communicating with their teachers: excuse-making, functional, participatory, relational, and sycophancy. Students' personalities and beliefs affect their motives (Cayanus, Martin, & Goodboy, 2009). If students feel like they will make a connection with the teacher and they will be understood because of self-disclosure, they will want that to continue. Self-disclosure becomes an incentive to show up.

Fetner & Rosenbloom (2001) researched a case of sex workers disclosing their profession in a classroom setting and how it was perceived by other students and the stress involved. They concluded that as social norms change, the content of self-disclosure is likely to shift. Taboos will shift. However, being a student with a secret will still endure (p.451). Being a person with a private life will always endure.

Social norms have changed, taboos have changed. How we talk about and perform our sexuality/sex lives must be changing with them. Most of the literature I found on performing sexuality in the classroom revolved around what used to be seen as fringe sexual practices and how they should be accepted into society. I am arguing that these "fringe practices" i.e. queerness, sex work, polyamory, genderqueer, *are now* accepted into classroom culture and are no longer ostracized in progressive school settings. We now must start talking about what happens when we all have the freedom to discuss any sexual journey we have been on. What does this do? How do students come to terms with how to perform their sexual identity?

Chapter 3. Methodology

At the beginning of this deeply heuristic process, the only information that would appear for many weeks were more and more questions. Why did I even want to research this? What steps would I need to take to find that out? The Heuristic methodology coupled with philosophies of arts-based research allowed me to experience my research question in a holistic way. I was able to sit with the question, collect data, incubate what was collected while taking a step back to inspect the process as a whole. This lead to my creative synthesis of a performance piece that continued to change throughout the process, until illumination hit.

Moustakas (1990) wrote, "The process of discovery leads investigators to new images and meanings regarding human phenomena, but also to realizations relevant to their own experiences and lives" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). When I first wanted to research the performance of sexuality in a classroom, I was nervous about digging into this deeply personal subject. Sex is perhaps the definition of someone's private life. However, as my research continued, I discovered that my own core beliefs about how we perform our sexuality was much more relevant than the content itself. What were my own insecurities about performing sexuality? Was I self-conscious about being the only married person in the cohort? Do I feel outside of any kind of sexual interest or attraction from cohort members? Is this research my way of still being relevant in that respect? The only way to begin exploring these questions having to do with social/sexual performance was to turn inward and uncover where these questions originated for me as the researcher in the first place. What messages about sex and sexuality are we unconsciously communicating to our clients?

Heuristic research states that we have tacit knowledge that exists in our bodies. Tacit knowledge is a continually growing, multi-leveled, deep structural organization that exists outside of ordinary awareness and is the foundation on which all other knowledge stands (Moustakas 1990). It is all about the researcher: the idea that I know things in my experience of the world, that knowledge is a value that I carry. Heuristic inquiry focuses on my feelings rather than thoughts, which is perfect for my exploration into sexual identity because my experience is based on feelings from my past leading me to now.

Concrete "facts" and "concept" have much less to do with my exploration process than discovering what is going on in my body when I live my performance of sexuality.

Let's take a step back now and discuss qualitative research as a philosophy. Qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, is research that explores a topic. According to Creswell (2009), "In comparison to quantitative research, qualitative inquiry employs different philosophical assumptions; strategies of inquiry; and methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation" (Creswell, 2009, p. 173). Qualitative research aims to gain insight into motivations, opinions, and people's underlying reasons for doing what they do. Tracy (2010) discussed, "This conceptual discrimination of qualitative ends from means provides an expansive or 'big tent' (Denzin, 2008) structure for qualitative quality while still celebrating the complex differences among various paradigms" (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). Tracy also wrote that good qualitative research is marked by (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). When exploring my own performance of sexual identity in the classroom, the themes that surface revolve around me being honest and reflective in my data collecting. If I come out of a class period and something resonates with me having to do with performing sexual identity, synthesizing it means seeing where it resonates in my body and what feelings come up for me.

First and foremost, I have to be honest with myself about what struck me in terms of performance of sexuality as well as what effect it had on me in the moment, and after. I have to talk about my own insecurities about feeling outside of any sexual tension in the cohort, feelings of embarrassment about living such a straight-performing life because I am married to a man. I must reach the essence of how complicated these varying truths are; being happy and in love and a limitation to the sexuality I perform publicly. A resentment to the identity I feel I am being pushed into. As a married woman, I rarely am assumed as queer and I feel as though I have to stress that point because it is a part of my identity, I don't like being pushed to the identity of a straight woman, which is my choice, but I don't have control over what other people think about me without a deeper interaction.

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The drama therapy classroom is a perfect place to feel these complexities: it is a strange middle ground between a personal space and a professional space. The lines of self-disclosure are blurry, as are the lines of personal opinion-sharing. How do we conduct ourselves?

In terms of ethics, the heuristic method of inquiry is interesting because while it does not involve any human subjects, it deeply involves the researcher at the vulnerable center of the project. As Sela-Smith (2002) maintained, "Once access is made through feeling experiences, wholes that were formed out of limited or flawed awareness can be recon-structed by new, corrected, complete, or reinterpreted information, and the meanings that propel our lives can be transformed" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 62). Sela-Smith talks about what researchers and people resist most in their lives, the "I-Who-Feels" (p.62). I am exposing truths about my past and present throughout this entire process. Even though no outsiders are seeing my data collection and thought process, I am. What does this research have the possibility to change for me? The vulnerability factor could possibly be more intense due to it being about sex, a very sensitive subject in the lives of humans; in my life.

When I began this research, I was worried about the ethical considerations of using stories from my classmates in relation to how I reacted and where my identity sat amongst them, what they brought up for me. However, throughout the process of conducting my data, I realize other people's stories barely come into it at all; it is mostly about my reactions to their various everyday performances. I barely mention my classmates themselves, even in my naked audio diaries.

The ethical consideration looming in my head is, what if I want to include these anecdotes in my final performance for the research and my classmates see it and recognize their stories or instances including them? What I have done is fictionalize the stories/instances enough so that they are unidentifiable and unrecognizable, but still an accurate rendition of the feeling and the same life-scenario one could find elsewhere.

Data Collection

The six phases of Heuristic inquiry according to Moustakas (1990) are as follows-- initial engagement: researcher identifies what is being researched, immersion: the

researcher reaches inward to get to tacit knowledge and lives the question consciously and unconsciously, incubation: the researcher takes a step back from the question and let's what has just occurred marinate within them, illumination: the researcher discovers new meaning and awareness from the process, explication: new insight and new meaning is found and starts to crystalize, and lastly, creative synthesis: the researcher tells the transformative "story" of the process. Moustakas talked about how this process of finding your question starts with a call or an idea that keeps circling in the researcher's head and body. Heuristic research starts with the researcher's own experience. Moustakas (1990) wrote, "In the heuristic process I am personally involved. I am searching for qualities, conditions, and relationships that underlie a fundamental question, issue, or concern" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). I have been so curious about how we perform our sexual politics and identities in the classroom and never had a clear reason why I was so curious. The question just kept looming and leading to more questions: how does our performance of identity push others into an identity? How do I perform my sexual identity with the limitations of the label of being married even though I identify as queer? In what situations, must we speak up about our sexual identity? What does it say about us if we don't make our identity known in class? Does it mean it doesn't exist? If we talk about our sexual identity does it make it true? My data collection has been a process of making uncensored audio diaries and private online journaling.

Moustakas (1990) wrote, "Heuristic inquiry requires one to be open, receptive, and attuned to all the facets of one's experience of a phenomenon, allowing comprehension and compassion to mingle and recognizing the place and unit of intellect, emotion, and spirit" (p. 16). This is exactly how I approached all of my data collection; being open to whatever surfaces through the process of answering the question, while being honest about how the process affects me spiritually, emotionally, politically, and socially. This is what Moustakas (1990) calls a "self-dialogue" in which the researcher starts the process from intuition, and then has it flow and proceed to many different forms of consciousness within the researcher. This is not the same as "reporting" the feeling, but to have a conversation with it (Moustakas, 1990, p.11).

The specific data collection I did for the immersion phase of the heuristic process was as follows: Every time there was a situation in the classroom revolving around

sexuality/performing sexual identity, I would jot down one or two words in my notebook and wait until I got home to flesh it out. Depending on what kind of state I was in, I would either put a tape into a recorder and just start talking, or I would journal on my computer. If I was angry and heated about an idea or feeling like I needed to work through a thought, I would speak into the recorder. If there was an idea that interested me or a situation that I wanted to think about more deeply, I would journal about it. I wanted to journal about it in a way that made me feel like it was for something besides just myself, even though no one would see it. Sometimes the internet is the perfect place to fulfill this feeling. The internet is a very interesting phenomenon. I used to hate it. I hated Instagram, and Facebook, and twitter, and everything else. I thought it was "fake." What does "fake" even mean? The dictionary will tell you it means "not genuine" or "counterfeit." When I started to use the internet and its various forms of social media, I began to realize it's main feature, to me, was documentation. It could be used as a public diary, but also, a private diary. That's what I did to collect some of my data. I opened a private Tumblr where I journaled constantly, and no one had any access to it but me, though I could access it anywhere with access to the internet. This felt somehow different than writing in a handwritten journal or adding to a computer document. There was something visceral about it; something validating. Like my audience was myself, so far, and that's who it needed to be.

The uncensored audio diaries were just as satisfying. Not in an insidious, voyeuristic kind of way (given the nature of my topic), in a way that made me feel I was talking to someone, about something; and that person was myself. Through the heuristic process, I was my own audience, which maybe for the first time in my life felt like that was what I needed. I needed to uncover pieces of myself that I was finding all over the classroom that had to do with my past and present. Sometimes I would go on and on in my audio diaries about some moments that I thought held meaning (because I felt like they should) but I would continuously skip over them and never finish the thought.

After data collection, the analysis process consisted of focusing on and going over auditorily and visually the diaries I have collected. I chose major concepts, themes, and/or scenarios that I remembered vividly, and made me feel either angry, attacked, different, or the same as the other people in my class. Moustakas (1990) stated that tacit

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knowledge: has the "capacity that allows one to sense the unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts" (p. 21). My process of incubation felt like it was happening throughout the entirety of the process, even as I was just forming my question. So much of the initial reason I wanted to do this research was because the way sex would come up in class would make me feel upset and unseen. At the time, I didn't know why. As I began to answer my question and collect my data, I learned to be more patient, both with myself and my classmates. I would try to look past my initial negative reactions, and write them down to be expanded upon when I got home; either on my computer or on tape. It was this part of the process that truly transformed how I reacted in the world, not acted, reacted. I would see moments of unrest as an opportunity to search deeper within myself, and try to see what parts of me were leaking out to make me feel this way. The moment of illumination I was to have came two days before I performed my final piece. This came about one week after the creative synthesis step of constructing it, completely unexpected.

Validity/Credibility

Moustakas (1990) said that the researcher is the judge of the validity herself and that the heuristic method cannot be determine by correlations or statistics at all (p. 32). Instead, the researcher needs to be as honest as possible in the data collection process, and be able to refer back to it to prove reliable.

Sela-Smith (2002) critiques Moustakas' model of research, propagating that throughout the heuristic process, the researcher must be ready for a large change both within their internal conscious structure, and out. She emphasizes that we do not acknowledge the "I-Who-Feels" part of us, which is the most crucial part of our research process. That as heuristic researchers, we must experience our own feelings and relate it to the tacit knowledge and non-verbal thought. (p. 62). In connecting to the "I-Who-Feels" part of us as researcher, we must experience our own resistance to these possible personal changes and cognitive dissonance that can accompany the process. Our research has the possibility to completely change the researcher's internal systems and ways of thinking, relating, and being in the world. We cannot be ambivalent or observatory in our research process.

Sela-Smith also critiqued Moustakas' method by stating that as researchers we cannot experience our projects in a vacuum; we can be transformed by others and surrounding society during our data collection process, and in fact that can give us a deeper understanding. She gives the example of Moustakas experiencing deep feelings of sadness and loneliness while standing over the bed of his sick daughter. He was able to feel the loneliness and sadness as he thought his daughter was feeling it. She says this is him experiencing loneliness as opposed to the experience of loneliness, the latter being more distanced from actual feelings. This more actualized, less ambivalent experiencing of loneliness happened through another person, and not merely himself. She argues that this transformation could not be achieved without Moustakas experiencing loneliness through his daughter (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 72). Sela-Smith concludes that people in the community come up with questions and research themselves. She asks researchers to find out issues and how to fix them, and approach improving social action by changing it. With the question of sexuality being performed in the classroom, I was truly transformed by the incubation process and the realizations that came out of that. They usually seemed mundane at first, an example being that I really don't like being in groups. Period. One's feeling about oneself can be completely turn upside down when in a group.

Arts-Based Research

In arts-based research, the art speaks for itself. Words are limited, and the art itself allows us to fill in those holes. Art acts as the way to translate knowledge and needs no further explanation. The difference between making art and arts based research is the intention of my question of performing sexual identity in the classroom. Shaun McNiff (1998) discussed the importance of this kind of research and describes his experience in describing a dream he had through arts-based methods. He wrote, "The artistic responses to the dream and the feelings of discomfort it evokes transform my relationship to the experience and take it to a new place" (McNiff, 1998, p. 37). The artist can look at a seemingly intangible phenomenon and gives them value that they do not normal have. The way the artist relays them to the public can have a massive social significance. (p. 38). The final performance is the conclusion of my research and the final process of creative synthesis. In this final phase, there is a transformation that takes place. The idea is the final presentation or "story" of the research depicts how the researcher transforms,

and ideally whoever reads the story (or sees the work of art) will be transformed by it. (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 69). Who really knows what people will take away from this presentation? It could appear disjointed to some. It could make a world of sense to some. It could change some people's lives. It changed mine. My final performance discusses how one's performance of sexuality can feel like it doesn't fit, or fits too much with everyone else's, and how this group dynamic that I wanted to put a voice to actually pointed to a larger anger.

Chapter 4: I Don't Relate: Performing Sexuality in the Classroom-The Script

My bias(es): A video

I am white. I am married to a man. I am straight performing. I am a queer woman; by that I mean I am interested in female identifying people as well as male identifying people in a romantic and sexual way. I am conventionally attractive i.e. thin, blonde hair, blue eyes, no deformities, no disabilities, no speech impediment. I am Jewish but not a practicing religious person. I consider myself happy. I also have developed a recent interest in puppies. You may think this is obvious but it is a recent development. I have an intact family that lives in Michigan, where I was born. I went to a prestigious and expensive liberal arts school for my undergraduate degree. I can afford to do a research project like this, as in my parents saved money for me to go to grad school and I had the mental and emotional space to invest in a research project that is not saving my own life or someone else's. Lastly, I am sexually active with my husband only. Normally, I wouldn't share that information but it applies to this project because my research is about performing sexuality.

I have a complex history with feminism. In that, most of the self-identifying feminists I have met have found something in me that they did not agree with. and forced a teva wearing, Kathleen Hanna loving, no leg shaving, yelling is always good, agenda on me. When I would historically be in groups of all women it would always end up involving everyone having to love their bodies. Having to show their bodies. Performing their sexuality in comparing bodies. I was made to feel strange that I already loved my body in my own way. The issues I would have later with it had nothing to do with fear of being naked.

There has always a competition in groups of women about sex. Talk about the kind of sex one is having, who it is with, it's frequency, it's quirks and normalcies. There are discussions about period tracking apps and how they are great because they tell you when it's "safe" to have unprotected sex. This is just to prove that they are in fact, having sex. Multiple books written recently that are considered "edgy" and "politically relevant" and "feminist" have pages and pages devoted describing the woman who wrote its sexual

encounters in graphic detail. As if it is a shocking realization that women can talk about having sex.

I never felt like I fit with feminism, with groups of women. I was told I was "doing it wrong" if I didn't want to talk about my vagina, didn't worship Kathleen Hanna, didn't think Bell Hooks was still the most relevant text to revisit, if I didn't want to be angry whilst crocheting. It didn't even occur to me until three years ago that I was allowed to not like riot girl. I always related to women who spoke their mind but didn't consider themselves special. Women like Aaliyah, Liz Phair, and Cat Marnell. Or at least, who didn't scream to the world that they were special. I am so sick of hearing women scream. To me, feminism meant that if you were a woman, you could be whoever you wanted to be, and that without your female relationships you would be nowhere. There are few things I believe in more than women helping each other. But it took me a while to learn that. My husband helped me with that.

This might make some of you angry, some of you might relate to it. Some of you might not know what I'm talking about at all. To end this video I will say, I don't like being in groups of women. My entire cohort besides one person is entirely made up of women.

Why can't I touch it? (*Why Can't I Touch It?* by The Buzzcocks).

Confusion is sex

We are going to start with S&M? What? Sound and Movement. Actually S&M is a form of having sex, not just a drama therapy term. It actually requires some tying people up and whipping and more pain induced pleasure activities. Yes! Glad I'm not the only one who was thinking about that. *long beat* alright moving on from the S&M warm up.What keeps you up at night? The fact that I am religious and like to have sex. I have a boyfriend. We are good. I trust him. I have a boyfriend too (Harry Pussy). I'm thinking about…if….nevermind. I'm queer too! (Harry Pussy). You know who you and your husband remind me of? My uncle John and aunt Sally. You two are so cute and wholesome together!" When I walk into the room, everyone has to move out of the way. I'm really good at it…Good at what? Having sex. I have sex all the time. Oh, how? Did you read chapter two yet, I'm having the hardest time with it. I haven't had sex in a really

long time. It's weird. I think it's the program's fault. I have no sex drive whatsoever. I can barely feel my body. I'm getting skinnier and skinnier. I don't want anyone to touch me. I'm getting sad. This isn't normal. Everyone else is apparently having sex all the time. What's wrong with me? This must mean something is wrong with me. This must mean something is wrong with me. I just can't sacrifice my body right now. It's all I have. Because I have no space and no time. This is the only way I can have space and time. I can't tell anyone this. Why not? Haven't I already said why? Not really. This is already making me uncomfortable can we just forget about it and pretend that my sex life is normal like everyone else's and as soon as the lights go off that's all I want to do is have sex. That's what everyone else does. But that's not what you do? No. Not right now! The thought of sex makes me groan in dread. Not moan, groan. Why? I don't know. I just don't want to. Are you not attracted to your partner? I am. Are you sure. Yes. What do you think it is? Please stop chaotically problem solving this for me. I just want to help. So now I have a problem? It's a problem? It's a problem. It's a problem. I'm a problem. I don't like it. I don't like this. Please leave. Let's just pretend everything is going well. Let's just pretend that I'm tough. Let's just keep pretending I'm getting things done. Because I am getting things done! Like I always do. And I'm doing them well. Because I'm strong. Right? Please tell me I'm strong. I'm so tired of being strong.

"My client said I was so pretty!" Oh. "Let me say it one more time, my client said I was so pretty! Did your client tell you that? I think he's in love with me. So uncomfortable you know? Wow I'm so uneasy to know he thinks of me in that way. He thinks of me on his own time when we're not together. Has that ever happened to you?" "It's not a competition. You know, I mean graduating from the program and completing all of the assignments. That is not a competition."

A woman's work is never done (transition with music sample from *Baby, I Love You* by The Ronettes).

You could be happy

You could be happy. You have no idea what happy even means. You said your partner's gone. Why do I feel like I have to say partner? Husband is too heteronormative. It makes it sound like I have a hole inside of me. I'm afraid of what people will think.

That I'm Christian? That I'm square? That I'm like all of those other people? I think that's the one. I think that's the real one. That I'm just like everyone else. But what would your vagina say Emily? Goddamnit (not a Christian) it would say that it doesn't want to talk to you. That it doesn't want to talk to anyone sometimes. And that's okay for it not to want to talk sometimes. Is it ok? FUCK. Can I say fuck? Is that fucked up? For some reason I don't feel like I can declare myself one way or another, in here. And if I do does that make me a bitch? But as a feminist am I supposed to be okay with being a bitch or am I supposed to be mad about it? Also, don't hate me. Also, is it weird or empowering that I'm obsessed with my own breasts? Let me say that word again. Empowering. Women are always supposed to feel empowered, right? What other empowering activities do you have for us?

What about you? What about the group?

What about you? What about the group? What about you? What about you? What about the group? What about you? What about the group? I don't relate I don't relate I don't relate to anything I relate to barely nothing. Don't say too much, don't say too little but don't say too much. It's a very very very specific balance and you have to get absolutely right. Every time, absolutely right. What about you? What about the group? You're a feminist you're a feminist you can't get mad at anyone in your cohort because you're a feminist. The only person you can get mad at is….a boy. I don't show off. I don't show off at all. I don't show off my sexuality at all how could I? How could I show off my sexuality, it's because I'm not interesting. What? I don't know why I said that. But I'm blushing all of the time. It's like that thing where the boys have the lemons and the girls have the lemons. The girls say it's ok…the boys say it's fucking disgusting. I have to have the same feeling all the time. How could I show off my sexuality? I'll be accused of not sharing enough and if I don't share enough….then. Should I play Claire's tape? I feel like I want to but don't think it would be appropriate right now. But I'm second guessing myself like I always do. What about you? What about the group? What about you….no……What about the group?

Comfortable with weakness

Everyone is so weird and hard. If they're nice it's great but then I get scared too, in a juvenile way. "But if you were comfortable with the weakness than you would have played with it" What? "I said if you would have been comfortable with the weakness you would have played with it. You would have felt like you could have played with it. Instead of laughing it away. You really do laugh so many things away that you're not comfortable with." Than this is all my fault. Again. "No, it's not like that. I think you know that." Than what's it like? "We all have our things. You have your things. You don't want to be seen as weak." I don't. "Why?" That's for a different performance. But briefly, it's because I fear everyone thinks I'm weak all of the time. And boring. "WTF" I know wtf what a useless thing to think about oneself. "Well, you know, don't beat yourself up about it." Pffffff ok. "No seriously, just don't. For once. Try it."

Depriving yourself

There is a part of heterosexuality that always embarrasses me. But Are You Depriving Yourself for the Sake of the Group. (This is repeated over twenty times).

You're ugly

One day, I am showing a video of my client to my class. Like I always do. Like we have to do. She is eight years old. She is female. My client whispered something into the camera mischievously. Something that I didn't hear. That day I heard what it was: "you're ugly" she said. You're ugly. You're ugly. Immediately I felt proud. Confident. Seen. I felt these ways because in her own way, I felt like my client was professing to the world that I was different. That I was more special than all of those other "pretty" girls. I was ugly. I was beyond my outer beauty. I was separate. But I also knew she was wrong. I'm not ugly. As much as I want to identify as someone who is, I'm not. And this eight-year-old girl already knows, whether it's conscious or not, that a woman's worth is defined completely by her desirability. She already knows that the worst possible thing she could say to me was "you're ugly."

At least I'm hot

And then it occurred to me. I had once felt a very similar way for the exact opposite reason. I was on a tour of my performance art with musicians and performers I loved and respected. I was about to go on stage. This was in Washington, DC. I had just finished my first year of graduate school. I was tired, I hadn't practiced, I wasn't really ready to perform. I turned to the person next to me and almost unconsciously said, "at least I'm hot." To which they replied, "what?" I said again, "At least I'm hot. At least if this performance isn't very good, someone in the audience might want to have sex with me. So it really doesn't matter." The reality was my performance was sloppy, unrehearsed, and quite frankly not very good. But I knew that as soon as I went on stage, people would make the decision in a microsecond about whether I was deemed fuckable or not. It doesn't matter if my work is good or not. "You're hot" was the absolute best thing someone could say to me.

So the f* what?**

How does this affect my work as a drama therapist with clients? You may have been wondering that this whole time. I definitely have. I wanted to research how we perform sexuality in the classroom. I realized I was actually researching something much bigger. I have been mad at the wrong thing the entire time. When I watch the video of my biases, the first thing I did for this performance, it seems like a completely different person. I was so angry. I was angry at women. I was angry at feminism. I was angry at what I thought were manipulative attempts to perform desirability in front of a group. I thought I was angry that everyone thought I was "too normal" for being married to a man. In reality, I was angry that being off the market might hinder me in some way. That not being available was a detriment. In reality, I was angry at the trap that we are all in. The cage, that we as women, are constantly in. I am angry that as women, and even as people, we believe, we know, that our worth is completely based on our beauty, desirability, and essentially whether someone wants to have sex with us or not. That someone could want to have sex with us or not. When I watch myself on video, it feels like I am watching someone who has been tricked into being angry at other women, at my classmates for what I used to see as being complicit in this. Now, I realize I am just as

much as much a part of it, and that this is happening in every facet of society. Performing sexuality in the classroom is a miniscule example of how we have to perform sexuality wherever we go. Because if we don't, we are consciously, or unconsciously, deemed useless by those around us. We exist to others if we are deemed desirable. I will end this performance with a question: how do we break this? Can we break this?

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The conclusion I came to in the *So the f*** What?* section of my performance came as quite a shock. The first day I rehearsed the piece in the theatre that I performed it, I had finished what I thought was the end of the piece, in which I discussed an instance of a mother and daughter fighting and the mother saying, "just be nice to me now, you have your whole life to be angry." However, this didn't fit. I came to the sudden illumination phase of the heuristic process in which I realized that I had been angry at the wrong thing the entire time, as I say in the last act of my script. My conclusion used to be discussing what I saw as being "real" and how important it is to break out of certain roles i.e. student, teacher, classmate etc. This is a valid thought pertaining to my heuristic process, however, it was absolutely not the end result. The end result sprung out at me like a fountain in the middle of my first rehearsal. Watching my whole piece in front of me forced me to look at and more importantly, inspect my own anger. I realized that I had been so angry at certain people and various acts of performing sexuality that I thought were merely to get attention and be accepted. I was actually angry at the fact that we feel like we need to feel desired at all times in order to feel validated, or even truly seen at all. Especially as a non-male, this sat with me in an extremely uneasy way. Once I figured this out I re-wrote the last three monologues of my performance, two days before putting it up. My piece was finally complete and the heuristic process truly proved itself to me in that moment.

After the performance was finished there was a twenty-minute question and answer session that felt a bit strange, but I am glad it happened. It was difficult for me to accept the beginnings of people's own processes in themselves with this subject matter. I had just gone through an enormously transformative process on my own about how I perform my sexuality, and it felt difficult to hear the uneasiness I felt at the beginning of my journey sitting with various people in various ways. I was also in a sort of altered state from just completing the performance I had poured my life into over the last year. I remember saying that we had twenty minutes to discuss the performance, and there was a fifteen second silence; it didn't look like people were smiling. When people starting speaking up about their opinions and experiences, my brain had an extremely difficult time receiving any of it. This is not to say I didn't value what people had to say, it was

just nearly impossible for me to take it in. Some spoke about academic observations, intellectual ideas about what performance is, disagreeing with my conclusion, and their own personal experiences with some of the concepts I discussed. I was so completely distanced from these responses from the audience; some of them I wasn't even able to understand.

I would love to continue to perform this piece for schools, creative arts therapies departments, training groups, and any kind of setting where learning takes place. I feel as though I've started a dialogue that has been missing in much of the discussions about sexuality to date: why do we need to perform it at all? Do we? Is there an option? Is it a choice? How does one's social locators and biases effect one's performance? Through this experience, I realized there was a giant wall of information behind every choice I made, or perceived performance that I reacted to. Without the heuristic process, I would have never reached any of these further questions that I know are deeply important to our next steps as the field of the creative arts therapies; so much of what we do is self-expression of ourselves and our clients. Sexuality plays a large role in this and will continue to.

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