Resampled Music Production Workshops (SSWIPE): FWI Funding Statement

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Faculty/Area: Communication and New Media
Project Title: Resampled Music Production Workshops (SSWIPE)

Please summarize how the FWI funds have been spent:
Salaries and benefits: $2400.00 (facilitator honoraria)
Equipment: $1091.92 (technology, rentals)
Event Costs: $2677.00 (venue rental, catering, supplies, signage printing)
Transportation: $124.00 (Hamilton travel reimbursement, event day parking)
Website: $423.37 (domain and design)

Balance remaining: $0
Women are seriously underrepresented in the field of music production due to a number of social and systemic barriers. These barriers include a lack of access to technology, a lack of encouragement to use technology, shortages of same-sex/same-gender role models, and the marginalization of women’s contributions in the field. In response, I organized the event “Resampled music production workshops for women and trans folks” (formerly titled SSWIPE). My aim was to challenge some of these barriers and to encourage women and trans folk to engage in music production. 55 women and trans people of all experience levels participated in the free event, which took place on July 14, 2013.

One of the initial steps I took in organizing Resampled was to assemble a team of both graduate and undergraduate McMaster students to help perform outreach to the broader McMaster community. This team also collaboratively designed the “music technology playground” – an interactive audiovisual installation that was open to Resampled participants on the event day. This student team was present on July 14th to encourage participation and to “guide” attendees through the playground. Formulating the Resampled schedule was also a collaborative process. In the months leading up to the event I had a series of meetings with potential facilitators where we discussed their work experience and skills, and shared ideas for workshop topics. The result was an event program that spanned multiple disciplines within the music production and technology fields including “Home Recording Basics”, “DJ 101”, “Mixing Techniques”, “Hardware Looping”, and “Introduction to Analog Sound Synthesis”. This collaborative programming process proved to be effective as the event drew a full house of participants with diverse interests and skill sets.

Complementing the skills share portion of Resampled, Dr. Tara Rodgers, author of Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound, joined us for a guest Skype lecture during the lunch break. Rodgers shared her own research on women in audio production, emphasizing the ways women’s contributions in the field are often rendered invisible. The floor was then opened for an engaging group discussion facilitated by Rodgers.

During the registration process, participants were encouraged to share their interests and learning desires with the facilitators so that workshops could be tailored to suit the diverse backgrounds of the individuals present. This process provided McMaster student participants the opportunity to partake in a democratic, non-hierarchical, learning experience not typically offered in traditional education settings. Resampled participants all had the opportunity to meet other community members with overlapping interests, to learn from same-sex/gender professionals, to play with current music technologies, and to engage in meaningful discussion. Economic barriers that prevent access to many traditional educational spaces were not present at Resampled either, since the event was free and included a catered lunch.

In my FWI award letter it was recommended that I "seek ways to share the outcomes of the workshop with students at the University who were not able to attend.” I have taken action on this suggestion by composing a paper entitled “Resampling Gender in Music Production: Community Development and Participatory Learning at Play” that outlines Resampled’s mission.
and pedagogical approach, including its goal of working toward social justice through empowerment, community development, and participatory learning. The paper draws on participant feedback and critical discourses on women in music production to analyze the usefulness of Resampled as an approach for tackling inequality in the field. I have shared this report on the McMaster Digital Commons under the “Communication Studies and Multimedia” directory where a number of readers have since accessed it. Additionally, I performed an interview about Resampled for the McMaster Daily News. The article was published on McMaster’s homepage for the week of August 20, 2013.

Resampled stands out from other research projects by emphasizing action, collaboration, and community. It acknowledges the issue of inequality in the audio production field while also initiating a method of confronting the problem. Feedback I received from participants indicated that Resampled fostered new connections and inspired the continued exploration of music production. I intend to continue Resampled as an annual event in order for the project to have further lasting impact. A more thoughtful and deliberate approach to outreach will be a major consideration for future Resampled events in order to improve inclusion. I would love to transform Resampled into a larger collaborative collective, to co-organize with a group of women and trans people who are further connected to various racialized communities and involved in a wider variety of music production work across genres.

The need for this type of opportunity for women and trans people in Toronto became apparent shortly after Resampled registration opened. The event was publicized through a dedicated website (www.resampledworkshops.com); social media event pages; emails to various student, friend, and industry networks; and through word of mouth. Registration was launched on June 20, and by July 6 workshop registration was full and booked slightly above capacity. Some women showed their support by offering volunteer time, and a few media outlets published articles to help spread the word as well. Overall the response was inspiring and spoke volumes about the necessity of such a project. I sincerely appreciate the support of Forward With Integrity, which made Resampled possible!

1 http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/cmst_grad_research/
2 http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/push-the-button-bringing-music-production-to-the-masses/