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Informing Creativity: An Exploration Of Contemporary Dance Graduates' Experiences Of Creativity In Tasking Processes Within Professional Collaborative Dance-Making

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Abstract

Collaborative dance-making processes may be understood as a social experience as choreographers work with dancers to make movement for their dance work. This research focuses on the 'tasking' movement generation parts of the choreographic process, as it is one-way dancers creatively respond to the choreographer's invitations, provocations, activities, or stimulus. Looking through a qualitative and constructivist methodology, the question guiding this research was: What are recent contemporary dance graduates' experiences of creativity within the choreographic tasking process, and how do these experiences inform their perspectives of creativity? This research revealed four themes relating to the participants' experiences of creativity in tasking processes: open and structured tasking, the choreographic climate, communication within relationships, and feeling valued and respected in the tasking process. This research is relevant to scholarship in other areas of collaborative creative processes, as well as wider global areas of arts education, management, philosophy and psychology.

Keywords

education; creativity; dance; contemporary; tasking processes; choreography; dance making; affect; change; working environments

Biography

Emma Cosgrave is a professional contemporary dancer in the New Zealand dance industry and has worked with a variety of New Zealand established choreographers in diverse freelance and dance company contexts. Emma is also a Masters student at the University of Auckland, Dance Studies Programme where her research interests are in choreographic processes, creativity, and creative relationships. The research findings within this article have been collected over her Honours semester where she researched recent dance graduates' experiences and meanings of creativity in tasking processes within wider dance making.

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Introduction

As a professional contemporary dancer in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I have been involved in a wide range of company and freelance choreographic processes. Over four years, I have worked with emerging and established choreographers in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, and China. Through my professional dance experiences, creative challenges during tasking processes within wider dance making have been challenging to navigate. Processes of dance training and cultural norms can sometimes create a power hierarchy (Roche, 2011) which, from my observations, can place dancers in challenging encounters of managing relationships, feeling part of a group, and negotiating power dynamics and hierarchies in a range of dance-making processes. With such challenges in mind, I often wondered how creativity is experienced and understood by dancers during tasking processes. Therefore, the question driving this research was: What are contemporary dance graduates' experiences of creativity within the choreographic tasking process, and how do these experiences inform their perspectives of creativity?

A further three sub questions have emerged from this main question, which also informs this research. These questions include:

1. What are the dancers' significant creative experiences of tasking?
2. What creative challenges and questions do the dancers face within tasking processes

and how do they deal with these challenges?

3. What are the contributing factors to feeling creative within tasking processes?

Tasking processes are a kind of movement generation method as part of the wider choreographic process (Kirsh, Muntanyola, Jao, Lew, & Sugihara, 2009). In this research, 'tasking processes' refers to the dancers' role in making movement for the dance work (Butterworth, 2004; Fournier, 2003; Knox, 2013). This research focuses on the tasking process as one way of making movement for choreography; it can be seen as the first step into sensing "the personal journey a dancer may go on to create their response" (Knox, 2013, p. 42). This can mean that dancers work with their personal ideas, movements, and responses as contributions for the dance work.

Tasking processes can vary in time duration depending on the theme, funding, rehearsal, performance venue availability, personal schedules, and the availability of the choreographer and dancers involved. During tasking, the choreographer provides dancers with a series of provocations, activities, and/or questions to transform into physical and/or verbal responses (Butterworth, 2004; Fournier, 2003; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; McKechnie & Stevens, 2005; Minton, 2017; Risner, 2000). The tasking process, and the dancers' responses to the choreographer's task, may be multi modal, which means the dancer could reply through movement, an image, feeling or emotional state, dialogue or a manipulation of an object (Fournier, 2003; Knox, 2013; Risner, 2000). This might make the creative process highly individualized, varying between each

choreographer and their schedule (Butterworth, 2017; Kirsh et al., 2009). Additionally, various themes, ideas, personal experiences or issues the choreographer may bring into the tasking process, as well as the logistical factors including the venue space, availability, resources or payments, can make the tasking process diverse (Singh, Latulipe, Carroll, & Lottridge, 2011). These aspects of the choreographic process may influence and/or inform dancers feeling of creativity and in turn influence how they engage in the tasking process (Ashley, 2015; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013). There is currently little literature attending to a dancers' role within tasking in the choreographic process, which may make it an important research area (Barbour, 2008).

This research examines three dancers' experiences of creativity during tasking processes within collaborative dance making contexts. Collaborative dance making may be understood as a social activity between the choreographer and dancer, as well as between dancers (Ananya & Albright, 1999; Albright & Gere, 2003; Knox, 2013; Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez-Colberg, 2002; Rouhiainen & Hämäläinen, 2013). The social aspects within choreographic dance processes may involve the choreographer and dancer to verbally and nonverbally communicate: discussing, testing, and sharing movement and ideas with one another (Gilfillan, 2016; Knox, 2013). Because of this, dancers can be recognized as co-authors and creators of the dance work (Ashley, 2015; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013; Kirsh et al., 2009).

The present article explores the experiences and understandings of creativity for three

contemporary dance graduates. Their experiences of working in tasking processes are important for understanding the significant roles dancers have in choreographic processes. Firstly, I discuss previous research on creativity, tasking, and choreographic processes, where two theories of creativity were selected to explore the research question. Finke, Ward, and Smith (1992, 1995, 2013) focus on the individual's thought processes, patterns and feelings towards creativity. Amabile et al. (1989, 1998, 1996, 2011, 2012, 2018) compliments this by examining creativity in a collaborative social context. Secondly, I outline the research methodologies and methods used to conduct the research. Finally, I present findings on the various understandings and creative experiences my participants have had during tasking processes. Furthermore, I propose areas that this research could elaborate or extend on in future.

Creativity And Tasking Processes From A Dancer's Perspective

This section draws on relevant scholarship in the areas of creativity and tasking processes in collaborative dance-making to provide further understanding of the research topic (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan 2008; Hart, 2018) and to situate this research within dance scholarship (Booth, 2016). Creativity has been a subject of disagreement among many scholars (Amabile, 2018; Gardner, 1993; Guilford, 1967; Smith, 2005) based on the diverse understandings and perspectives towards what makes an individual creative. In this research, 'creativity' refers to the process or feeling that an individual is engaging with when undergoing the creative tasking process. That is, to either create an end

product, be able to work more effectively in collaborative creative climates, or engage in new content to learn more about themselves in the creative process (Amabile, 2018).

This research engages in the creative geneplore framework used to describe basic cognitive processes of creativity (Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013). The geneplore model consists of two processes: the generative phase and an exploratory phase. The generative phase is when an individual makes mental representations and structures from their current environment. These can be internal dialogues, transformations, communication to self and others, objects, or assumptions about an individual's creative outcomes. Secondly, the exploratory phase is when an individual seeks to make understandings of their experiences that are specific to their creative process. Examples of how individuals might make meanings out of their experiences include looking for limitations in their outcomes, interpretations, and applications of world knowledge. In relation to my research, a dancer investigating and generating movement for the choreographer in the tasking process may undergo some of these creative processes (Kirsh et al., 2009; Smith-Autard, 2005).

Amabile (2018) addresses the social environment in collaboration as an important aspect to an individual's creativity, as "social variables represent one of the most promising avenues for influencing creative behavior" (p. xv). This may mean that creating in a social environment can easily influence an individual's feelings towards or hinder their creativity. In effect, creativity in

collaborative working environments will fall into six general categories of challenge, freedom, resources, work group features, supervisory encouragement and organizational support (Amabile et al., 1996, 1989, 2012). Highlighting freedom, for example, Amabile et al. (1996) implies that creativity thrives when the employer grants freedom to the employee by providing them with agency and autonomy of control. In a tasking process, a choreographer who sets up an environment for a dancer to take agency could allow the dancer to feel creative when making movement.

On an individual level, Amabile (1988) believes that each individual has three components to feeling creative: expertise (intellectual thinking), creative thinking skills (how flexible and imaginative people are with solving problems), and motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic). The first to be influenced by the collaborative environment is the individual's intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1988). In a choreographic environment, this might suggest that changes can happen rapidly which could provoke short term creative challenges for dancers when working through choreographic tasks. Finke et al. (1992, 1995, 2013) suggests that cognitive creative theories are vital to understanding creativity and are valuable in the creative process. A cognitive creative approach can be a long-term explorative process for an individual, whereas aspects in the working environment can shift rapidly, affecting the individual's creativity in the short term (Amabile et al., 1996).

This research focuses on the tasking process where the choreographer designs a task for the dancer/s to respond to through

movement (Knox, 2013). The tasking process might be more complex than just creating movement for the dance work as it involves communication, sharing of ideas and working with different people in the process. While a dancer is creating their response to the choreographer's task, they are intellectually navigating expectations in the process and carefully considering their reply (Arnold, 1988; Knox, 2013). From a dancers perspective, creating a response to the choreographer's task may involve personal research, gathering of thoughts, and brainstorming (Colville, Dalton & Tomkins, 1993; Farrer & Aujla, 2016), which is a key element in engaging creatively (Butterworth, 2004; Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013).

It is through the tasking process where dancers can make agentic decisions about their movement material (Foster, 2002, 2016; Gardner, 2003, 2007; Green, 2004; Knox, 2013). The choreographer's invitation to explore movement can allow dancers to bring prior knowledge, training background, interests and personal ideas into the movement generation process (Roche, 2015). Jennifer Roche (2015) shares that a dancer has "a moving identity" (2001, p. viii) which comes from personal movement qualities and prior dance experiences, as well as life experiences in and beyond dance. Knox (2013) further suggests that when personal movement qualities are explored, the dancer may experience self-actualizing moments, which could be where the dancer might become a co-creator in collaboration with others. The dancer thoughtfully engaging in how they might respond to the choreographer's task suggests that the dancer is involved and working creatively in tasking and the broader creative process

(Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996; Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Knox, 2013).

As dancers respond to the choreographer's task, they are clarifying their feelings and organizing ideas, suggesting that the dancer is undergoing a self-reflection process (Roche, 2015). Self-reflection can be seen as a learning tool which might lead to creative experiences in individuals (Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013). As dancers respond to the choreographer's task, they are undergoing a self-reflection process, by exploring possible movement outcomes (Finke et al., 1995; Roche, 2015). This could suggest dancers are engaging creatively in the tasking process.

Finally, creativity in the tasking process might occur when dancers feel curious about the choreographic task (Leslie, 2014). George Loewenstein (1994) proposes that "curiosity is the feeling of deprivation we experience when we focus on a gap in knowledge" (p. 55). Within the context of a choreographic process, the prior knowledge is the task, activity, or stimulus in the form of images, previous content being taught, or influences shown through a variety of sources such as, video, fine art, music, research, and so on (Kirsh et al., 2009). It is also sometimes the dancers and choreographers background, dance history and previous experiences. Many creative researchers are suggesting that knowledge and curiosity grow and build together (Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013; Leslie, 2014; Loewenstein, 1994; Simpson, 2017). This can be similar during collaborative tasking processes as choreographers and dancers engage in the sharing of understandings, ideas and

provocations to build the dance work together (Knox, 2013).

Methodology

This research explores three contemporary dancers' diverse experiences and understandings of creativity. Positioned in the data collection as a qualitative researcher, I aimed to reveal what was important and relevant to my participants by encouraging their epistemologies, ontologies and personalities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Green & Stinson, 1999; Garner, Wagner, & Kawulich, 2016). A qualitative approach supports the gathering of data in the form of experiences, behaviors and feelings (Dobscha & Alasuutari, 1997; Golafshani, 2003; Howard & Borland, 2001; Phillips & Burbles, 2000; Silverman, 2015), which has allowed me to "play with words instead of numbers" (Lewis, 1997, p. 87) in gathering diverse responses (Robson & Foster, 1989). Additionally, qualitative research allowed for the complexity, bias and beliefs of my participants' experiences (Ryan, 2006).

A constructivist methodology was chosen as it posits that the learner is actively involved and responsible for their own understanding and knowledge in the learning process (Allen, 1994; Amineh & Asl, 2015; Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Kiraly, 2014). Constructivism allowed me to be intimately involved in making meaning with the participant by "asking questions and interacting with the participants to bring self to the data analysis" (Wildy, 2003, p. 115).

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' previous experiences

and understandings of tasking in various and diverse collaborative tasking processes. Semi-structured interviews are an open conversation between the interviewer and interviewee about the researcher's topic (Schmidt, 2004; Seidman, 2013; Weiss, 1995). Interviewing in this manner provided the freedom to deviate away from my topic guide (Flyan, 2005) and engage in a natural conversation with each participant (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). For example, some questions were: Tell me about a time where you felt creatively engaged in the choreographic process? How and where did you first learn about creativity? What has been a challenge or barrier for you, creatively, within a tasking process? These questions allowed for further unpacking in the moment, gathering insights and perspectives from each participant (Deamley, 2005; Longhurst, 2003; Weiss, 1995).

Data collection was completed over one month, where each of the three dancers participated in two interviews, which were one hour in duration. During early stages of data collection, I clarified the participants' ideas by asking follow-up questions on their perspectives. Semi-structured interviews, constructivism and qualitative research value my previous experiences alongside my participants' when interpreting their comments during thematic analysis (Terhard, 2003). Although my experiences were not analyzed in this research, it is important to acknowledge them as I am not able to fully remove my own perspectives from my analysis and interpretation (Wildy, 2003).

Three participants (Rosie, Bella and Christina) were selected on the basis that they graduated in either 2015 or 2016 from

a tertiary dance education institution and were working as emerging contemporary dance professionals at the time of data collection. I am interested in the perspectives of emerging professionals because I experienced personal challenges with creative encounters and tasking as an emerging professional dancer and tertiary student. Therefore, I was curious about interviewing tertiary dance graduates about their current understandings of creativity. Participants were recruited via social networks through formal invitation. This research complied with full ethical procedures and received ethical approval from the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee (reference number: 021168).

Experiences Of Creativity In The Tasking Process: “I Have To Let Go”

The thematic analysis revealed seven worthy areas of research. Some of the themes were: agency; ownership; acknowledgment as a co-creator in collaborative dance-making processes; creativity continues to be shaped and understood outside of the choreographic process; inner critics; relationships and roles a dancer plays within tasking processes; and the unconscious response to the task, that is, the sense of allowing and trust. The themes explored in this article are: dancers working in open and structured tasking, the choreographic climate, communication within relationships, and feeling valued and respected in the tasking process.

Firstly, I discuss the participants’ creative experiences in tasking processes. It is important to note that all of the participants had difficulty expressing their own

experiences of creativity in the tasking process. Bella noted a few times that “creativity is something very difficult to define”, which may suggest that creativity can come in many forms throughout the tasking process. Rosie noted that creativity in the tasking process is something that “just happens” while Christina explained that she is “still trying to figure it out”. Perhaps, their challenges relate back to Finke’s (2014) perspectives on creativity being something that does not appear yet is a process a person is working through when generating material. Creativity might also be something that the dancers were still figuring out as collaborators in choreographic tasking processes.

Another important aspect to emphasize is Rosie’s significant creative challenge in the tasking process:

The choreographer I was working with had a very specific vision of the vocabulary they were looking for [...]. We were making up [movement material] and at times I felt that because I knew [the choreographer] was looking for such a specific thing [...] the process to get there could become quite paralyzing. I really wanted to deliver the desired thing from my own making, but I had to find humility and accept the likelihood that the choreographer might significantly edit and redesign a lot of what I made.

Rosie’s experience might suggest that creativity becomes more apparent to the dancer when a task has tight guidelines and structures for them to navigate (Elder-Vass, 2010). This could make it hard for the

dancers to feel and think in a creative way. In Rosie's narrative above, the task she had been given felt too restrictive and it became overwhelming to create the response she wanted for the choreographer.

Christina also spoke about a challenging experience that captured her internal decision-making when generating movement:

I'm working with a choreographer at the moment and I felt like I knew what the choreographer wanted but it was challenging at the same time. It is a good challenge to make something you really like and that is my role but also something that [the choreographer] wants as well. I think it is possible to find a balance [of the two]. Sometimes the task did not align with what I am curious about. I think also on the choreographer's behalf they need to be clear with what they want to see in their dance work.

Perhaps, communication from the choreographer needs to be clear when giving instructions to the dancer. Finke et al. (1995) support clear communication and the sharing of ideas, as these are important cognitive processes to building creative learning. Therefore, communication is to ensure the dancer is able to understand their own feelings and meanings of creativity (Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013).

Christina suggested that clear communication with the choreographer was helpful to know her options of response. This makes communication a worthy point to be explored further. Clear understanding of the task may enable

dancers to create movement material that is authentically responsive for themselves and for the choreographic dance work (Knox, 2013). Furthermore, Christina's experiences suggest that if dancers work with themes that make them curious and feel they can offer something creative to the choreographer's task, they are more motivated and creatively stimulated to make movement and/or offer ideas to the choreographer (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996; Smith & Ward, 2012). The motivation aspect of the components of creativity (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996) within a choreographic process may be seen when a dancer has an inner passion to complete the choreographer's task. Dancers motivation may lead to more creative possibilities and solutions for dancers to explore and embody creatively.

Finally, having the choice and freedom to make agentic decisions in tasking processes (Knox, 2013) can align with Christina and Rosie's experiences of seeking creatively fulfilling moments in tasking, where they can be honest about what they would like to make for the choreographic dance work. Feeling torn between being honest to themselves and the choreographer means that dancers thoughtfully organize their thought processes during tasking (Knox, 2013) to ensure they offer a response that is true to themselves and to the choreographer's task (Arnold, 2000).

Open And Structured Tasking: "Restriction Gives You Freedom"

All participants spoke about tasks that were either open, more structured in approach, or a combination of the two. An open approach refers to the choreographer giving dancers loose parameters to work within

(DeLahunta, Clarke, & Barnard, 2012). A more structured approach is where the choreographer is very clear and precise in their aims for what they want dancers to achieve (Brown & Duguid, 2001).

All of the participants discussed what it feels like when they are given open parameters in tasking. They spoke of times when they have had a choreographer provide a task that may appear broad, vague and sometimes confusing, without enough information to inspire their tasking responses. Bella offered the notion that in working within extremely open parameters it “can be really hard to see how [Bella] wants to move, or how to integrate other ideas into [Bella’s] practice”, and that the response could “end up being a replica of something [Bella] had learned”. This might mean that finding new ways to express the choreographer’s task can be a challenge when working under open parameters (Smith-Autard, 2005; Bilton & Cummings, 2014). That is, a dancer investigating and generating movement in the tasking process might be using the *geneplore* model in creative cognition theory (Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013). Examples of how individuals might make meaning out of their experiences through the *geneplore* method include looking for limitations in their outcomes, interpretations, and applications of world knowledge. Bella suggested that making movement that is a replica of previously learned choreography is a negative aspect to feeling creative. Creative literature proposes that the level of guidance from the person in charge can reduce an individual’s feeling of creativity as their level of “cognitive flexibility may reduce” (Kim & Zhong, 2017, p. 1). This might mean that Bella’s opportunities to

discover and play in the tasking process are decreased within open tasks.

In contrast, structured tasks were described as creatively fulfilling, which I interpret as being dependent on the choreographer. Notably, tasking can be a unique creative process that offers both creatively fulfilling and challenging experiences for dancers (Abra, 1994; Barbour, 2008; Knox, 2013). Rosie expressed, “if I get incredibly tight parameters put on me, it can be liberating. It’s almost freer because there are fewer choices to make.” Christina also noted that some restriction gives her freedom, where her “mind goes racing and [she can] think of all the things [she] can do and play with”. Working within a specific task, where the choreographer has communicated clear guidelines, can be creatively fulfilling (Brown & Duguid, 2001; DeLahunta et al., 2012) for both Rosie and Christina. For example:

A choreographer I was working with recently gave me a solo task, which had clear parameters of time, space, character and music I had to work with...but other than that it was completely up to my interpretation. From the way the task was communicated, I felt I had the freedom to create movement based on my own interpretations of the choreographer’s provocation. As a result, I put a lot more responsibility on myself to define what I was reaching for in the solo. (Rosie)

Perhaps, clear communication from the choreographer about their task, with room for the dancer to play within, can provide dancers such as Rosie a sense of freedom

and agency (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Knox, 2013). As Rosie is able to then make decisions about how she chooses to respond to the choreographer's task. On the other hand, all participants discussed what it feels like when they are given open parameters in tasking. They spoke of times when they have had a choreographer provide a task that may appear broad, vague and sometimes confusing, without enough information to inspire their tasking responses.

Bella further proposed that a combination of structured and unstructured tasking is easier for her creative discoveries. Bella shared one experience, "although the choreographer had ideas in mind of what she wanted me to do, I had room to play within her task. It allowed me to release, make movement, and reflect". A combination of structured and unstructured guidelines in a task is supported by Finke (1996) who suggests it is beneficial for an individual to have a balance between the "structured and spontaneous aspects of creative thinking" (p. 390). Drawing further on Amabile's (1988) notion of creativity in collaborative working environments, "creativity thrives when [choreographers] let people decide how to climb a mountain; they needn't however, let [dancers] choose which one" (p. 81). Agency may tie-in closely with the generative and explorative phases of the geneplore model, alongside Finke's ideas about structure (Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013), as Bella was taking in pre-information the choreographer told her while tasking and re-phrased this into new information. This can be seen through the act of doing (Finke et al., 1992; Amabile, 1998), which could have resulted in deeper understandings and feelings of creativity for Bella in the tasking process.

Dancers having "active choice and agency" (Rosie) when navigating through open or structured tasking, allows dancers to feel creatively fulfilled and able to respond more interestingly to the choreographer's task (Knox, 2013). Perhaps, it is because dancers drive their response themselves (Elliot & du Gay, 2009; Risner, 2000). Dancers might then be consistently navigating their responses within tasking (Roche, 2011). Roche (2011) proposes that the dancer has "a moving identity" (p. viii) that comes from personal movement qualities and prior dance experience. Knox (2013) builds on notions of a dancer having a moving identity, suggesting when movement qualities are explored, the dancer may experience self-actualizing moments.

Within the tasking process, a dancer may have "choice and agency" (Bella) to how they wish to respond to the choreographer's task, by blending their pre-knowledge and personal information. Through Finke's (1996) geneplore model, Rosie and Bella are reconstructing pre-existing knowledge of the choreographer's task into something achievable for them. Perhaps providing dancers with a clear task and allowing room for them to interpret and adapt their responses, could be equally fulfilling creatively, as working within a restrictive or free structure.

Creating The Choreographic Climate: "Energy In The Room"

The social climate that occurs within collaborative dance-making processes may be an important theme to consider as dancers work alongside choreographers, using many modes of verbal and nonverbal exchanges (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005).

Climate may be understood as the atmosphere, mood and the social dialogue between people (Amabile et al., 1996; Knox, 2013). All three participants often alluded to the collaborative choreographic environment as influencing their feeling of creativity within tasking processes. Particularly, they referred to the energy in the room, how the tasking process was being “held” (Rosie) and the responsibility they had in shifting their feelings of creativity within the tasking climate.

Christina discussed the “energy in the room” within the tasking process, sharing that “trying to make up movement can be challenging as I am surrounded by a lot of factors that can change what I am making [...], sometimes it is difficult when there are heaps of dancers in the room”. The energy in the room may have been determined by the number of dancers that were working alongside Christina. What went on in the studio environment played an important part in the tasking process, as it influenced her responses to the choreographer’s task. The explorative phase of the geneplore model would suggest that Christina might have been making mental representations of the environment she was in to influence her feelings of creativity (Finke et al., 1992, 1995).

It is noted that social environments can “shift rapidly affecting the individual’s creativity” (Amabile, 1988, p. 78). More specifically, an individual’s motivation to complete the task at hand or their drive to continue, is the first to be influenced by the collaborative environment (Amabile, 1988). Christina may have been referring to the social climate of tasking as her feelings of creativity altered depending on who was

in the room. Christina referred back to the energy people brought into the studio, sharing “if I close off completely in the room, the energy in the space can decrease”. Christina explained that a “closed” way of working in the tasking process can create “tension” amongst dancers and a feeling of “comparing” oneself and one’s creations to others. Christina’s perspectives suggest the environment can have an influence on a dancer’s internal decision making and the outcome they are seeking to create (Amabile 1988; Amabile et al., 1996; Finke et al., 1992, 1995).

Bella and Rosie commented that the choreographic climate needs to be set up effectively for them to feel ready to create movement. The environmental “set up” (Rosie) could refer to the social working environment, including the structure of the day, who is involved, and the other dancers, as they all influence the creativity of others (Amabile, 1988; Finke et al., 1992, 1995, 2013). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Keith Sawyer (1995) suggests “creating a harmonious, meaningful environment in space and time helps you to become personally creative” (p. 146). For Bella, reading the room is an important skill to “tap into” what is “needed” from her in order to “keep things flowing”. This might mean that she has a responsibility to “speak up and ask questions” (Bella) if she does not know or understand the choreographer’s task. Bella may have been hinting that the way a choreographer facilitates tasking can impact her feelings towards creativity, which in turn may alter the way she chooses to respond to the choreographer’s task.

The active “choice” Rosie has in tasking, with how she chooses to respond to the choreographer’s task, or the climate can allow her to take “responsibility” for her creativity. Rosie’s preference to work in this way allows her to “have that power” in which she becomes “more resilient in [her] creative possibilities”. This idea of choice and responsibility for her own decision making are key aspects of an individual’s agency (Knox, 2013). As a whole, dancers may be seeking creative experiences in climates that foster their agentic decision making so they can feel more creative in the tasking process. Agency could lead to dancers exploring their epistemologies and ontologies in the tasking process, as “there is no you prior to your choices and actions” (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 19).

Williams (2002) proposes that when an individual feel that their ideas will be heavily judged by an outside eye, they may be less inclined to communicate these ideas to other people. When individuals feel their ideas will be perceived as useful, they will project these to others in the room. Christina, Bella, and Rosie’s experiences of tasking suggest that working in collaborative dance-making largely affects the dancer’s feelings of creativity. Secondly, the way choreographers are running the process can impact the dancer’s feelings towards what they are making.

Communication Within A Relationship: “On The Same Page”

Building a relationship and having open communication between the choreographer and the dancer are two correlating themes that appeared in each participant experiences. Throughout collaborative dance-making processes, and in tasking,

building a relationship with the choreographer was highlighted as an important process for all three participants. An open relationship may be defined as the ability “to chat” (Bella) or “ask questions” (Rosie) for the choreographer to understand how the dancer might approach their responses. Christina achieves this by sitting down with choreographers “outside of the studio”; otherwise, it does not feel “very real in the studio space, if there is no relationship or comfort”. Getting to know the choreographer allows for a deeper connection and realization that they are human. This is not to say the choreographer is not human, although aspects of training, dance-making processes, and the way the room is facilitated may influence how dancers view the choreographer (Hanna, 1987). This may relate to fear of feeling judged or misunderstood and, therefore, working in an open relationship allows people to ask questions, to feel clear on what their intentions are for the task, so they can generate creative responses (Williams, 2002).

Rosie affirms Bella and Christina’s suggestions that “the more the choreographer communicates in a positive way the better result they will get out of me” (Rosie), in which Christina advocates clear communication “creates a healthier working environment”. The choreographic process is seen as a social process (Amabile, 1988; Butterworth, 2004; Barbour, 2008; Elder-Vass, 2010; Knox, 2013; Risner, 2000) and “can change easily and have immediate observable effects on [an individual’s] performance” (Risner, 2000, p. 12). This may mean that creating movement in a social environment can easily influence an individual’s feeling towards their understandings of creativity.

Perhaps a choreographer working to communicate themselves in a way that is encouraging and empowering, dancers may feel that they can fulfil their creative role in the tasking process. Rosie suggested that the negotiation between her and the choreographer “is a balance” and an ongoing “relationship”. In her view, “choreographers cannot be expected to be perfect communicators at all times...they have their creative challenges to manage”. As a result, Rosie further shares, “my capacity to deal with more frustrated or emotionally charged feedback from a choreographer changes depending on my emotional state”. It is possible that the role between choreographer and dancer is to communicate clearly when needed to ensure both parties are working towards a shared goal and/or have the same feelings towards the creative process.

Feeling Valued And Respected In The Tasking Process: “It’s Personal”

A key theme that emerged is the feeling of being valued and respected in the tasking process. This ranged from external factors, such as dancers being recognized for their creative offers and having ownership over their movement, as well as internal factors, such as the dancers taking responsibility for creating respect and value for themselves in tasking processes.

Bella and Christina discussed a concern around the importance of feeling valued and respected in the tasking process. I understood this to mean that the participants hoped that their whole self, including their personality, backgrounds, ideas and offers, are appreciated during the tasking process (Knox, 2013; Risner, 2000). Bella shared that being valued as an

artist allows her “to offer more in the process because it is a personal experience: It is me and my body on stage”. Christina also places significance on feeling valued while she is creating movement material for choreographers: “I think being recognized for my work is important as it brings equal respect amongst choreographers and dancers”. Working collaboratively and for the choreographer to invite the dancers to share the space with them may allow “dancers to feel secure and valued” (Risner, 2000, p. 23). Perhaps, recognition through financial payment for the dancers’ involvement adds to feelings of equal respect. Risner (2000) goes further to propose that dancers working in the tasking process are putting their full “trust and dependency on others” (p. 162). This might suggest that the feeling of being valued can come from others in the tasking process. This can heighten how a dancer feels towards what they are offering, potentially resulting in further detail, thought, ideas and movement flowing with ease (Lavender, 2017; Risner, 2000).

I wondered how being valued is communicated to the dancers to result in their feelings and understandings of creativity to be informed. Bella shared that, in one instance, her favourite process occurred when “the choreographer started [the] process with a whole list of [tasks] about going into the unknown and trusting herself”. Bella continued to say, “I remember one day saying to the choreographer, oh my gosh, I cannot believe how everything is related, it is all interconnected to how I have been thinking and feeling. [The choreographer] was like just roll with it, you’re on this flow state”. I gather two things from these comments. The first, relating to the idea of

communication, is through dialogue, the choreographer created a positive social climate for the dancer to feel valued through their ideas, thoughts and responses. Second, the choreographer's encouragement towards Bella, "[to] just roll with it, you're on this flow state," helped her to feel valued and able to maximize "productivity and motivation" (Amabile, 1988, p. 78).

Feeling valued in the tasking process may allow the dancer to feel "positive and safe to explore movement" (Bella). This emphasizes the importance of dancers feeling valued, as the work dancers are generating in the process is personal and can sometimes be emotionally or physically intense (Knox, 2013; Risner, 1992). A dancer being valued for who they are in the process is an important aspect of feeling creative in tasking processes.

Another aspect of feeling creative is for the dancer to be acknowledged for their responses they contribute to the overall choreographic work. Christina recognizes that dancers have a lot of "creative responsibility" during the tasking process, as dancers may be "relating and constructing knowledge in a very real way" (Redfern, 1973, p. 112). Perhaps, the relationship between the dancer and their responsibility might need further recognition within "performance programmes and websites" (Christina), or within dance-making and tasking processes. Christina shared, "it is easy to focus my mind on being a body that the choreographer uses, rather than knowing I can add more to it as well, or I can bring my own thing". Perhaps, a dancer's creative responsibility and involvement could be viewed as a co-creator and generator of the

dance work (Barr, 2005; Barbour, 2008). Not having your name credited "online" and in "programmes" (Christina), or not receiving financial payment can diminish ownership dancers feel when people come to watch the dance work. Questions of ownership in collaborative dance making is an important aspect to consider for further research.

Conclusion

Rosie, Bella and Christina spoke about various experiences, feelings, perspectives and understandings of creativity in tasking processes. The dancers' experiences revealed some influences that impede on creativity, as well as the complexities of feeling creative. It had been revealed that the feelings of creativity can change depending on the creative process, context, and the choreographer's task. For example, the social climate, how tasking processes are being held, the responsibility of the dancer and the choreographer, each can influence how a dancer feels towards their creativity. In summary, this research addresses the complex journey of creativity through four themes: Open and structured tasks, the choreographic climate, communication within relationships, as well as feeling valued and respected in the tasking process. For some dancers, it can be challenging to communicate feelings about creatively to others or understanding this themselves.

Questions that have arisen from this research pertain to how dancers learn about their boundaries; specifically, communication about non-fulfilling creative moments, impactful environments, inner dialogues, and emotional responses. A smaller focus could be on how dancers

work with their “inner critic” and feelings of shame (Brown, 2012; Elliot & Elliott, 2000) within the tasking process. Perhaps, examining and/or combining other stages of the choreographic process could reveal the fluidity of creativity throughout the entire collaborative dance-making process.

This research provides choreographers with new insights into how a dancer may be feeling and experiencing creativity within the tasking process. A deeper understanding of creativity in tasking may allow for new understandings of creativity to emerge that could apply to other kinds of creative processes. Furthermore, this research may contribute to scholarly areas of choreographic education, creativity within dance making, choreographic practice and dance leadership.

Finally, the research findings could help early career contemporary dancers to understand the tasking process in detail and what might be required of them, creatively. These findings may also contribute to creative processes for dance and/or broader arts practitioners who use tasking as a method to generate and make movement material. As a result, a deeper understanding of tasking within wider dance making may allow choreographers and dancers to work more effectively in future creative processes. Overall, this research may reveal diverse ways in which creativity is experienced for contemporary dancers and, through this knowledge, could contribute to other styles or approaches to dance.

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