Postproduction Focus Groups in Dance: A Case Study and Protocol

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ABSTRACT

The focus group as a pedagogical protocol for dance post-production provides student dancers with a venue in which to think deeply about their roles in the manifesting of an artistic work in an environment that often leaves little time for such reflection and expression. We present a case study on the use and benefits of focus group protocol as a valuable pedagogical tool for reflection about all aspects of the dance rehearsal and performance process. We show that students found the focus groups to be helpful in synthesizing their work by listening to peers, expressing themselves and bringing closure to the experience. We present information on setting up and running dance post-production focus groups including finding a facilitator, structuring the focus group, providing sample questions and showing how to analyze the qualitative data collected. We conclude with recommendations for incorporating focus groups as part of the dance post-production process.

INTRODUCTION

While focus groups are common in marketing, business and other domains, they are not typically used as a post-production reflective practice in academic dance. Focus groups, which are professionally facilitated group interviews, serve multiple purposes. In general, they glean information that can be used to guide future work or product development, they can promote a sense of community among participants and they give participants the chance to express themselves and hear the viewpoints of others. Within the dance domain, there are other potential

benefits to using this technique as a post-production protocol. Focus groups can facilitate an important student learning opportunity as part of post-production pedagogy since peer discussion provides time for valuable reflection and sharing.

This paper contributes a case study of focus groups as reflective post-production practice and detailed guidelines on how to conduct focus groups in dance. We first set the stage by summarizing typical post-production practices, considering the role of reflective pedagogy and describing the various benefits of focus groups. We then provide a longitudinal case study of the use of focus groups as post-production protocol over four years and eight different dance productions. In order to allow others to benefit from our experience, we provide a detailed section on how to design, facilitate and analyze results from a post-production focus group.

BACKGROUND

Post-Production Practices

While Larry Lavender's ORDER approach (Lavender 1996) and Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (Lerman 2003) provide excellent frameworks for reflective group discussions about works-in-progress to aid the continued work of the choreographers, formats for dance post-production debriefing are not as recognized. Though the choreographer may engage the dancers in a wrap-up session, opportunities for students to discuss the entirety of their rehearsal and performance experience in a neutral environment are less prevalent. For some dance productions, a typical process includes a "postmortem" conducted either with the entire group of choreographers, performers and crew or any subset thereof. This discussion is usually facilitated by a choreographer, production manager or departmental chair whose presence guides and tempers the conversation. Given this hierarchical group structure there can exist a culture of

appropriateness along with the possible perception of penalties or retribution for complaints. Hence, the conversation gravitates to the nuts and bolts of the production such as length of the warm-up class, preparation for staging and size or receptivity of the audiences. Rarely is there substantive discussion about the work of creating and rehearsing and how that process impacts the intellectual, emotional and artistic development of the student. Thus, educational opportunities to assist students in recognizing, articulating and synthesizing skill and knowledge acquisition embedded in the creative process are diminished. An extreme type of this meeting that focuses on praise and group bonding rather than introspection and reflection is often referred to as a "kumbayah" session, with connotations of invoking unity and interpersonal harmony.

Reflective Pedagogy

Philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer, John Dewey was the first to recognize the benefit of reflection in the learning process. His contention that reflective thought "converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action" (Dewey 1933), underscored that mere "doing" could be elevated into areas of critical thinking and analysis. Dewey knew that having students systematically consider what arises from the actual doing was the pedagogical linchpin that would result in the "intelligent action" that educators want students to achieve. More recent educators have supported Dewey's idea with Moon describing reflective practitioners as those who "understand how to think and learn from their experiences in practice and to apply and monitor the outcomes of learning" (Moon 1999). Ronald Barnett also speaks of the importance of reflection for the learners' well-being (Barnett 1997) and Cowan builds upon Donald Schon's "The Reflective Practitioner" (Schon 1984) to understand how analysis and reflection can impact learning (Cowan 1998).

Reflection involves the learner in questioning, making judgments and prompting action. In addition to synthesizing information and integrating new learning, reflective practice helps the student to assess performance levels, acknowledge conditions, situations and behaviors; to avoid damaging habits and to diffuse frustration and fear. Further, the conscious examination of experience can prompt new ways of working, accelerating progress and improvement (Birkenhead 2001). For instance, the student dancer may realize, upon reflection, a deficit in ability to learn new movement material quickly and accurately, prompting new strategies for improving this skill.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are multiple participant interviews on a given topic, where one gathers information from various people over one or several meetings (Merton 1946, Wilkinson 2004). A facilitator leads the session by asking questions or prompting discussion topics. Participants, usually seated around a conference table, discuss topics and answer the questions posed by the facilitator or respond to comments of other participants. Focus groups typically involve anywhere from 3-8 participants, though there can be as few as 2 and up to 12 or more. Participants are selected for inclusion because they tend to have at least one commonality, such as having been part of an event, being the same age, or engaging in a similar habit.

Focus groups elicit declarative knowledge from participants, such as participants' subjective experiences, understanding of events or systems, opinions regarding issues or scenarios, and preferences (Cooke 1984). Focus groups adopt the perspective that the participant is the expert on their subjective experience and understanding; knowledge elicitation through verbalization is the best way to access this subjective expertise.

Focus groups range from very structured to very freeform. In structured focus groups,

the facilitator asks a predetermined series of questions, and encourages a certain amount of discussion close to the targeted topics. In unstructured focus groups, the facilitator encourages participants to build on and to comment on each other's responses so as to evolve the topics. In this way, participants can tell the facilitator what is relevant, which may or may not have been included in the script of questions. One main benefit of eliciting information through focus groups instead of multiple one-on-one interviews is that the group discussion can reveal areas of consensus and disagreements in the topic domain.

The questions posed in a focus group should be composed to meet the goals of the study, and these questions should ideally be designed to be free of bias. Questions should be worded to probe both positive and negative aspects of any given situation or experience. Questions can cover areas such as:

- describe your experience

- what was important from your perspective

- what worked well and what didn't work well

- what was surprising or unexpected

- what did you learn

These broad areas of enquiry are typically tailored to the specific context. The section "Facilitating Conversation" gives examples of how these questions can be tailored to the context of a dance post-production focus group.

Focus Groups as a Therapeutic Activity

Focus groups are often used for the benefit of eliciting knowledge, however, literature on focus groups does not discuss the experience of participating in a focus group and its effect on participants. Focus group sessions can have a similar format to segments of psychological group

therapy sessions, where a group of 5-10 people share perceptions and understandings of an experience.

Similar to group therapy, the focus group setting provides participants time and space to engage in therapeutic experiences. In reviewing the twelve therapeutic mechanisms (Yalom, 2005) that are part of group therapy, the following eight mechanisms are also relevant to focus groups, with `Imparting information', 'Self-expression' and 'Self-understanding' standing out as salient aspects of the focus group experience.

- Universality: The exploration and acknowledgment of shared experiences and feelings among group members. This validates feelings, reduces the sense of isolation and can raise self-esteem.

- **Imparting information**: It is often reported that group therapy members benefit from learning factual information from other members in the group.

- Development of socializing techniques: A group setting provides a social environment to practice and improve members' interpersonal skills.

- Imitative behavior: A group setting provides examples of social behavior such as sharing feelings, showing concern, and supporting others, and these can be present as the therapist or focus group facilitator directs the session to be professional and non-judgmental.

- Cohesiveness: People have an instinctive need to belong to groups, and it is theorized that personal development takes place within a social context. Cohesion is defined by a sense of belonging, acceptance, and validation.

- **Self-expression**: Self-expression can be a mix of emotion and subjective experience; catharsis is the relief from distress through self-disclosure and self-expression. In a focus

group, participants are provided with a context to be heard, and therefore can "feel" heard.

- Interpersonal learning: Not only do members understand their stories better through self-expression, they can gain a greater understanding of themselves through the process of interacting with others - receiving feedback in terms of verbal responses and observing the effect of their interactions on others.

- **Self-understanding**: This category refers to achieving greater self-awareness by gaining a better understanding of the relationship of the topic at hand and the self. In a focus group context, this refers to a greater understanding of the member's role in an experience or preferences.

● *Therapeutic Mechanisms*	*Group Therapy*	*Focus Groups*
Universality	X	x
Altruism	X	
Instillation of hope	X	
Imparting information	X	**X**
Corrective recapitulation of the primary family experience	X	
Development of socializing techniques	X	x
Imitative behavior	X	x
Cohesiveness	X	x
Existential factors	X	
Self-expression	X	**X**
Interpersonal learning	X	x
Self-understanding	X	**X**

Table 1. Shared Therapeutic Mechanisms of Group Therapy and Focus Groups, where 'X' refers to a fully supported mechanism and 'x' refers to a partially supported mechanism

Table 1 shows all twelve therapeutic mechanisms and their roles in group therapy and

focus groups. This demonstrates that focus groups can foster several therapeutic effects, mainly through informational and self-expression sources, as participants are brought together to discuss a particular topic. The focus group provides a setting for social interaction, thus there are also indirect benefits from being part of a safe, mediated social experience.

FOCUS GROUP CASE STUDY

We explored the use of focus groups as a reflective pedagogical tool through our participation in and research with the Dance.Draw project, a collaborative initiative between choreographers and computer scientists at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte investigating intersections of dance and technology. Over a period of 4 years, the Dance.Draw project produced eight staged dance works using multiple sensing technologies to create real-time performative interactivity.

The interfacing of the dance and science domains elicited a cross pollination and sharing of research methodologies and protocols. One of the most apparent and advantageous exchanges was the computer scientists' implementation of post-production dancer focus groups to glean information about how to improve the collaborative process in subsequent pieces. The choreographers were also interested in promoting student reflection relative to the rehearsal and performance process. At our institution and other institutions with dance departments, faculty choreographers typically do not regard student performers as human research subjects and consequently do not regularly solicit formalized post-production reflection from student dancers. However, the computer scientists in the Dance.Draw project viewed the dancers as human subjects, and a debriefing protocol with the dancers was therefore considered an important part of the research process.

The focus groups conducted in our project were approved by our Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews human-subjects research to ensure it is conducted according to internationally accepted ethical standards. One might ask whether all dance post-production focus groups would need to be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. Some educational research is considered exempt from IRB, and running a post-production focus group for the purpose of improving the production process for later classes would likely fall under the category of "Educational Research Potentially Considered Exempt: (Miser 2005) "

> 1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as:
>
> (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or
>
> (b) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

In our project, because we were publishing results related to the dancers' perceptions of the technology in computing-related venues, which really had nothing to do with the students learning in dance, we could not argue that this was standard educational practice. The dancers were 'research subjects' and so IRB review was critical to ensure that the dancers were treated ethically and there were no conflicts of interest in how they were treated.

Eight productions were staged as part of the Dance.Draw project and focus groups were held after each production. Dance.Draw's first efforts at implementing professionally facilitated focus groups for student dancers following a dance production provided further evidence of how rarely dancers are asked for feedback about their experiences in a creative process. As is typical for participants in their first focus group, dancers were initially hesitant to share their thoughts. Our protocol included guided, open-ended questions to encourage participants to synthesize and analyze their experiences. We aimed to make the setting safe by explaining to dancers that their

comments would remain anonymous, and by bringing in a 'neutral' facilitator, a concept we return to. For some it seemed as though this was the first time anyone had asked them questions about their participation in the creative process of rehearsing and performing. As is also typical with a skilled facilitator, as the focus group protocol progressed, the dancers spoke with increasing ease. The relevant information they revealed underscored the practical benefits of applying a strategy from the scientific domain to the artistic dance realm.

After the first Dance.Draw production and focus group, the feedback gained was considered very valuable for the choreographer as well as for the computer science researchers. For example, initial focus groups sparked a) ideas for changes made in future productions, and b) themes on how technology involved in the production process led to different kinds of greater awareness of their bodies in rehearsal, which later led to further research and an academic article (ANONYMIZED 2011). Building on this success, we ran post-production focus groups with dancers after all eight of the interactive dance works that were produced through Dance.Draw. One of the interesting effects is that we increasingly had dancers in the focus groups who had previously participated in project pieces, and therefore previously participated in focus groups. These dancers helped to make subsequent focus groups work more smoothly because trust had been built up. They were able to assure the newly participating dancers that in fact, they could be honest and open and the results would only be reported to the choreographer and research team in aggregate, anonymized form.

Case Study Survey

As the Dance.Draw project wrapped up, the investigators created a survey to ask the dancers about their experiences participating in the project and in the focus groups, in particular. The investigators had heard anecdotally from dancers that the focus group experience was

important and positive, and wanted to collect more detailed feedback on this. While there were

35 dancers who participated in Dance.Draw productions over the four years of the project, this

survey was distributed to the five dancers who had been in more than one Dance.Draw

production. The surveys were conducted by members of the Dance.Draw project, but not the

choreographers, and the dancers were assured that their anonymity would be protected. The

choreographers only saw anonymized quotes excerpted from the surveys. We discuss themes that

emerged from the survey data, which was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun

2014), by two of the (non-choreographic) researchers.

Summative Closure

Overall, the five dancers who participated in multiple productions reported very positive

responses about the experience of the post-production focus groups. The dancers commented on

how the focus groups served as a form of closure for the three to four month intensive period of

each production. For example, one dancer noted: "I enjoy summarizing four months of rehearsals

into one long talk. It is a great way to end the experience." Similarly, another dancer noted: "I

like the focus groups. It is the only time when I could put the entire experience together and

summarize it." Finally, a third dancer noted: "By summarizing the entire experience, through the

ups and downs, I feel accomplished and satisfied by the work. Compared to other pieces, after

the last performance, the entire semester seems to be forgotten. But with the focus group, it ties

the knot and I leave with a satisfied feeling."

Impact and Agency

Another theme that emerged from these surveys was the importance, to the dancers, of

having their voices heard and the focus groups allowed this to happen. Traditionally,

choreographic processes tend to be quite hierarchical and dancers in academic settings often feel

that they have little agency in the process. This power differential can be exacerbated in situations where dancers receive academic credit, and thus a grade, through a dance practicum, as at our institution. The feeling of agency granted through the post-production focus group was expressed by one dancer who said, "They make me feel like my opinion as a dancer matters. Dancers don't often get consulted on things and it is nice to have someone ask for our opinion on how things went so we can brainstorm ideas to make things work more smoothly." The fact that an experience like this is unique was noted by another dancer, "I really liked getting to meet and discuss the pieces. I've never had the opportunity to do that for anything else." Finally, a third dancer described the satisfaction associated with having an impact through the focus group discussions: "I feel like my opinion matters more because there were suggestions that I made one semester that were actually taken and used the next semester."

Social Coherence

The focus groups helped to bring the dancers together and create social cohesion. The dancers found it useful to formally discuss among themselves how they perceived the production process. Once dancer described this: "It was interesting to hear what my fellow performers thought—what was similar to my thoughts and what was different to them. It also created a nice sense of community and openness within the dancers." Another dancer described how being intensely active with a group of people and then stopping very suddenly after the final performance can feel abrupt. She noted how the focus group provided closure: "Yes, I like the little bit of closure it provides. As dancers one or two pieces of choreography occupy your whole being for 3 months and then all of a sudden it's gone and totally irrelevant. I like being able to talk about it one final time with everyone involved." These comments demonstrate that the act of being in an academic dance production is educational and social, and the emotional needs of the

dancers should be considered.

Safety and Privacy

Finally, a few of the dancers commented on how the use of an outside facilitator was very important to the process. One dancer described this: "It creates a safe and neutral environment for the dancers to express their opinions on the choreographic and technological process." Another dancer, when asked if she would want to participate in focus groups after other dance productions, talked about how the structure of our focus groups made the experience positive, noting: "As long as they are run like these focus groups have been. I think that these focus groups have been a very professional way of voicing our opinions and problem solving and also just getting together to reminisce." Focus groups run by an outside facilitator, with results being aggregated and anonymized, and returned to the choreographer and other stakeholders AFTER the final grades have been submitted appear to be important factors for creating a safe and private environment where real constructive discussion can take place.

Frustrations

The dancers noted few frustrations relating to the focus group. One dancer did note that the session could easily turn into a gripe session, stating: "It was frustrating when my fellow dancers would complain about the choreographic process, mostly because I thought that their complaints were irrelevant to the information that Dance.Draw was looking for, and were just talking smack about their issues with the choreographer or the rehearsal process. Those issues will arise whether you are in school or in a company, working with technology or working with solely dance." However, no other dancers voiced complaints like this. One dancer did note that, "Some dancers are just frustrating to be with for too long." It is unclear as to whether this was meant in regard to the entire rehearsal process, giving voice to the unavoidable personality

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clashes, or just the focus group session, indicating the importance of keeping the session to no more that 90 minutes.

Overall, the results from our survey showed that the post-production focus groups were a very positive experience for dancers, provide a safe place to learn from others, voice opinions, provide feedback, reminisce and create a sense of closure for the production work. These themes support the therapeutic benefits of focus groups: imparting information, self-expression and self-understanding. The results that were provided to the choreographer and the research team allowed adjustments to various aspects of the choreographic and research process in subsequent productions and gave the choreographer valuable insights into the dancers' perspectives on the academic dance production process. For example, the choreographers learned that the dancers, as a whole, wanted to be part of the choreographic decision-making team and to understand, in much greater detail, the intent of the choreographer; so the choreographers began to rely increasingly on direct input from the dancers in subsequent productions. They also learned that the dancers wanted a deeper understanding of how the technology (including interactive sensing, lighting, costuming, etc.) being used in the production worked, so that they could feel more a part of the production team. At a meta-level, the project team learned that the dancers greatly appreciated the focus groups as an opportunity to synthesize and bring closure to their experience in a production. Such insights could not have been gleaned from university-wide course feedback surveys, which are very high-level, general and focus on the teacher's preparation and presentation, rather than on the student experience or learning.

For the choreographers involved, the introduction of facilitated reflection also influenced previously unaddressed power structures that had permeated the production process at our institution. The advent of receiving dancers' feedback in this manner chipped away at any latent,

unintentional perceptions that dancers were merely subjects fulfilling a duty, and that their opinions of the process were an impediment to the work's progress. The focus groups became tools of empowerment for the dancers, broadcasting a message that dancers' feedback was imperative to the success of this and future collaborations.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Focus groups can be used effectively by individual faculty choreographers who can work from a template of standardized questions that are developed/augmented by facilitators and participants. The goals of the focus groups as a reflective pedagogical tool in post-production dance are two-fold: 1) to gather information on the production process with the aim to learn about what worked well and what didn't, to improve the process over time, and 2) to provide a safe, therapeutic forum for dancers to reflect on their experience.

Facilitators

There are several ways to approach setting up focus groups with qualified facilitators by accessing the resources available on most university campuses. Focus group specialists in Counseling or Advising Centers and Departments of Human Factors, Psychology, Sociology and Communications may be willing to share their expertise as part of their university service, research or in exchange for concert tickets. Graduate students or senior undergraduates from those disciplines, who have focus group training could also serve in this capacity while gaining valuable experience. Those trained in running focus groups have learned to assess participant needs and to design a focus group script based on those needs. They have learned to moderate group discussion by prompting responses in a neutral, non-judgmental, and safe manner. This includes noticing participants' language and spontaneously rephrasing questions using the

language and terms of the participants. Finally, training includes how to analyze the transcript, such as noticing assumptions, interpreting themes and drawing insights and conclusions.

It is important that the facilitator is neutral, respected, objective and trusted with the confidential focus group information. 'Neutral' refers to a person who is outside the dance hierarchy, has no conflicts of interests with participants, and impartial in terms of future interactions with dance student participants. These qualities are essential so students do not feel compromised in expressing their true thoughts, and so their anonymity is protected. It is also necessary for the selected facilitator to see the choreographic work in performance since the process of creating and performing it will be central to the discussion.

Setting and Timing

The date of the focus group session relative to the final performance needs to be carefully considered and determined well in advance. Once the actual session begins, it is important that the facilitator provide the format and ground rules of the focus group session so participants understand what to expect and what will be expected of them. Duration of focus group sessions are generally 1 to 1.5 hours. Provision of refreshments (such as pizza and water) encourage a comfortable, informal environment that promotes conversation.

Privacy and Consent

If the results of the focus group are to be used as part of academic research, either by the choreographer, students, the facilitator or any other parties to the process, the research must first be approved by the institution's academic review board. This will involve describing the purpose of the research and creating consent forms that the focus group participants will be required to sign in order to participate. Regardless of whether the focus group results are to be used as research, or simply used by the choreographer to gather feedback and give students the

opportunity for closure, participants need to understand how the focus group results will be used.

The focus group must be conducted in a confidential manner and students should know that responses will be anonymized before being reported or summarized, in order to encourage free expression and complete candor. All participants must agree that neither participants nor facilitator will disclose any information divulged in the focus group sessions, beyond what has been outlined by the facilitator. The use and purpose of audio/video recording and/or note taking by participants and/or facilitator must be clear to all.

It is helpful for the facilitator to state the length of the session and the general format for the discussions. By explaining the process, participants will understand the protocol and thus feel freer to contribute, building off each other's answers spontaneously without additional prompting. For instance, knowing that once the facilitator presents the question or topic, participants can either voluntarily offer responses or be afforded the opportunity by going around in circle to hear each person's view on a certain subject, provides a structure conducive to open communication. It is important to have an atmosphere conducive to focus group discussion so a room with comfortable seating should be available for the session. The facilitator and participants sit in a circle to eliminate a sense of hierarchy and so everyone can see each other.

Facilitating Conversation

Facilitators as moderators must be sensitive to the flow of the conversation, being aware of what needs further discussion and knowing when to rein in tangential comments. The responsibility of addressing all the topics within the time limit and prompting those who may exhibit limited participation rests with the facilitator. The facilitator must carefully word follow-up questions so as to avoid "leading the discussion" in a particular direction or influencing the conversation with personal value judgments (Janis 1982). There should be no sense that the

facilitator is validating or evaluating either verbally or nonverbally.

The sample starter questions shown in Table 2 could be used as the basis for a post-production dance focus group. Note that these questions are not yes/no questions, they elicit explanations rather than one-word responses. They are also prompting deep reflection. These questions could be augmented with questions that are specific to the dance production, especially if there was anything unique about the production (such as use of props, technology integration, spoken word audio, guest choreographer, etc.).

TABLE 2 Sample Starter Questions for a Postproduction Dance Focus Group

As you reflect on the rehearsal process for this piece, what were the positive and negative learning experiences that came out of this choreographic process and production?

Did you have expectations about how this work experience might unfold? Which expectations were met and which were not met?

What did you learn about yourself as a dancer and a person as a result of this process?

What did you learn about the creative process and/or choreography as a result of this production experience?

How did your dance knowledge and skill (technical, artistic, pedagogical, etc.) expand during the work process?

What were the negative or frustrating learning experiences that came out of this choreographic process and production?

Choreographers may also choose questions to probe for reactions to a specific creative methodology, research project or questions that are customized to a specific group of students.

Analyzing and Reporting Results

Focus groups yield qualitative verbal data (and non-verbal observations) that can be analyzed in several ways, depending on the goal of the study. In this section, we focus on the

techniques relevant to the analysis of qualitative data from focus groups[1]. Some analysis techniques yield more specificity on themes than is useful for pedagogical reflection: for example, we could manually code each statement into themes, and examine the frequency and ordering of themes, however this level of detail is unnecessary for the goals of improving the pedagogical process.

For the purposes of pedagogical reflection, insight-based and axial coding or are the most appropriate methods. Here, we refer to a straightforward review or listing of relevant information as insight-based analysis. For example, if we asked participants about barriers to adoption of a technology, we can create a list from each barrier that participants report. For our case study, insight-based analysis was used to account for participants' reflections on positive and negative aspects of the experience, to then create a listing of ways that the production process could be improved in future iterations. Axial coding categorizes qualitative data into themes (Babbie 2015, p. 386), which emphasizes the more important, general concepts in a verbal transcript. The numbers and the order of the themes are not by frequency. We used axial coding to better understand what aspects of the production experience were salient and important to participants. For example, the shared themes in the three 2012 focus groups were: Physical connection to Technology, Desire for Control and Immersive World. And the themes Balance and Process were more deeply explored and matured compared to post-production focus groups from previous years.

CONCLUSION

Using focus groups as dance post-production debriefings presents opportunities for student dancers to reflect upon and share experiences around their roles in the creation and

performance of a choreographic work. Survey results from the four-year Dance.Draw case study showed that the students appreciated having a facilitated time in which to think deeply about the creative process work and bring closure to their participation in the rehearsals and performances. Our findings indicated that the students perceived the benefit of the focus groups sessions with one saying, "The focus groups help me to be a more evaluative dancer and performer. I can evaluate the process that I am part of, how it is affecting me physically, mentally and emotionally and how I can contribute these feelings into my dancing." Dance post-production focus groups are vehicles for students to share feelings, perceptions, or revelations with their peers and by doing so, broaden and deepen their experiential learning.

The findings from this case study show the benefits of this dance post-production culminating activity by highlighting the importance of critical thinking, sharing, and synthesizing in a socially mediated environment. Steps, guidelines and sample questions are offered for implementing the focus group as a dance post-production reflective practice. Once a skilled facilitator is identified and a protocol established, these sessions can become a pro forma part of the dance production experience where students impart information, engage in self-expression and reap the benefit of self-understanding.

NOTES

1. See a manual on qualitative research methods (Babbie, 2015) for a broad overview of how qualitative data can be analyzed through approaches such as can grounded theory (Babbie, 2015, p. 296), coding (Babbie, 2015, p. 384). It is outside the scope of this article to discuss standards in qualitative research such as achieving saturation.

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