

**“It’s such a Tangle”:
The complexities of choreography pedagogy in tertiary education**

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ABSTRACT

Choreography learning features as a valuable and essential part of dance education at tertiary level, especially as it inherently engages key 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration, and communication. These skills are relevant to diverse careers inside and outside the arts. Dance making is also unavoidably social, as is the teaching and learning of it. Consequently, this study interrogates the interwoven relationships choreography educators negotiate within the choreography education context. The study poses the question: Within tertiary choreography courses in New Zealand, what are three dance educators' meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography? Focussing on degree qualifications in Aotearoa New Zealand, the study aims to reveal the values, agendas, and dilemmas of the educators as they facilitate collaborative choreography learning.

The study is driven by a constructivist, qualitative methodology, engaging semi-structured interviews with three experienced choreography educators. The researcher's expertise is positioned alongside the participants' in order to find new understandings of the complexities of choreography teaching and learning in bachelor's degrees. Data is presented through a narrative, interweaving the three participants' voices and my own. Through thematic analysis the pedagogical entanglements choreography educators negotiate are unpicked. Themes addressed include collaborative choreography learning being a complex creative environment, perceptions and dilemmas of the teacher-student relationship, the subtext of the choreography classroom, choreographic-collaborative pedagogies.

This study has significance for conversations within dance education in the areas of teacher education, pedagogical professional development, choreography learning in high schools and higher education, as well as in professional and community dance contexts. The study contributes to growing literature interrogating choreographic relationships. The findings may contribute to scholarship in the broader areas of creativity and collaboration.

*For the ghosts who haunt these pages,
and the living who have supported the writing of them.*

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FIGURES

Figure 1: The choreography educator's pedagogical entanglements

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Pedagogical Dilemmas in Choreography Education¹

It is 5.45pm on Thursday, and there is a gentle knock at my office door. "Come in" I call out, and Macy, who is in my first year choreography class, pokes her head around the door and asks "have you got time for a chat?" She looks upset and I say "of course! Come on in." I get up and close the door behind her, as I'm feeling it might be that kind of conversation.

"Take a seat." I sit down myself, and ask Macy how her day is going. "Oh, it's ok. I just had rehearsal..." "Oh, great!" I say, "how did it go?" "Well... it's been quite difficult time..." "How so?" I feel I know what she is about to say, but I try to give space for her to articulate in her own words.

"Ummm... I'm just finding it really difficult to work with my team. I feel as though every idea I have just gets shut down. We're supposed to be working together. I kinda feel like I should just give up offering". "Hmmm... ok, that does sound difficult. Can you tell me about how you let the group know you have an idea?" "Well... I guess I try to interject when we get stuck. I can see a way of solving the issue, but Joe and Kimiora always start arguing. I hate confrontation! So, I'll say "I've got an idea," but then Joe always says we don't have time. And I think yeah! The arguing takes up all the time! But even when I try to say my idea, I get told that it won't work. But we haven't even tried it! I just want to try!"

"Hmmm, interesting, that sounds really tough. Do you know if anyone else in the group is feeling the same way as you? Perhaps you can support each other, and back each other up?" "Yeah, Kimiora and I have been talking about it, but she's nervous because Joe told her that he knew best because he's been dancing longer than her. But Kimi's been dancing for ages, but just not contemporary... Can I ask you something?" "Sure" I say, "why did you put us all together in the same group?"

I explain that the decisions are partly random, as they are made in the first class of the course, but also that I try to mix and match according to what I know already: movement style, ability, background, ethnicity, physique, personality. "I also try to mix up the people who I know are already friends." "Why?" "Because I want you to learn how to make new friends as you collaborate. I just have this sneaking suspicion that if you get to know one another, you might understand each other a bit better. And that's a really important skill that I want you all to have. Remember how we talked in class the other day about building relationships and rituals

¹ All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

with your team members?” “Yeah.” “Has your group tried anything?” “No not really.” “That’s ok, how about you all make time to have coffee or lunch together before your next rehearsal?” “Yeah ok, I’ll try.” “Great, and I think it will be helpful for us all to brainstorm some more strategies towards this in our next class. You’re not the only group having some challenges.”

The conversation I have with Macy is similar to the one I had the day before with Joe. And going by the experiences I have every year teaching my first-year choreography course in the Bachelor of Dance Studies, it is probably going to be repeated for Kimiora the next day. What will likely unfold is that there are differences of opinion, personality and understanding. Or at least different perspectives of what collaboration should look and feel like. Perhaps there is a lack of empathy for others’ creative needs, perhaps there is fear, or maybe there is simply a lack of experience of getting to know people in a stressful creative context. Dance making has a way of bringing people’s vulnerabilities, self-judgment and questions of evolving identity to the fore.

My students arrive at the first-year choreography course in their second semester of study. They are diverse in every sense of the word. Even their creative histories are varied, with some very skilled already with making innovative movement using complex creative strategies and ideas, and others who have never made a dance before. Some have worked together to make up dances their whole lives, and others have only ever performed steps dictated to them. However, as I reflect upon this, I recognise that there is a central thread of difference and disconnection that weaves the ever-present dilemmas together.

I ponder what these annual conversations mean for the students. I think, ultimately, this points to inadequate skills in the art of collaboration. As I muse what it means for me as their teacher, I consider how I can bring the interpersonal skills into focus, alongside the necessary creative skills in my choreography classes. I wonder if I am doing enough to support the students’ collaborative learning, or if I am making too many assumptions about what they already know.

Collaboration has always been an area of curiosity for me. Aside from having these conversations with my students, my professional performing career was littered with challenging collaborative situations. Much of my early dance career was defined by fear of the hierarchical collaborative relationships with choreographers I worked with. There were times

where I was yelled at, berated, and humiliated, and I often felt my own personal and creative needs were neglected. In other creative processes, I thought I was not loud enough, or even bossy enough. I felt the same apprehension of confrontation as Macy and would avoid it at all costs. This meant that often I would stay silent and earned a reputation for being extremely shy. Subsequently, this made me believe that perhaps I did not really have anything to contribute and was not very creative. Now, years later, I know that I prefer to listen and observe. My brain ticks over, and I can solve issues quickly. I observe the ‘subtext’ of the room and can unpick why certain situations evolve. What I still struggle with is finding the right moment to interject into a conversation, especially if there are others who like to talk! Another issue I have faced is when I have done my very best to create what I think is a positive collaborative climate, but the people I am working with have entirely different ideas about what that should look and feel like. But there were also times where collaboration felt safe, where I could be myself, and where the dance studio felt alive with laughter and creative potential. I knew my ideas would be valued even if they were not used in the choreography, and my collaborators became beautiful lifelong friends.

Within my own tertiary dance and choreography training, I do not recall learning anything about how to work well with others, in the role of choreographer, or as a dancer. The focus was always on learning basic creative skills to make dances: how to negotiate time, space, energy, structure, and tools for developing movement. My early literature searches for this study also echo this, with much scholarship emphasising compositional and creative skill development (Davenport, 2006b, 2006a; Giguere, 2019; Hämäläinen, 2002; Lavender & Predock-Linnell, 2016; Roche & Burrige, 2022; Van Dyke, 2001, 2005). Yet, dance making is inherently social (Barbour, 2008) and demands the use of interpersonal skills (Risner, 2000) throughout the entire creative process, regardless of the mode or degree of collaboration.

In conversations about teaching choreography with my colleagues it became quickly evident that they face the same challenges in their classes. Through these discussions I also recognise the reasons why I deeply care about collaboration. On a microscale, I see that the collaborative challenges can at times overshadow the creative achievements of my students. The social dilemmas pull their focus so strongly that they no longer enjoy dance making. If nothing else, I want my students to enjoy coming to class because I believe that fun is the key to learning. On a macro scale, I worry about some of the global issues we face, that stem from perceptions of difference and disconnection. I wonder how our tiny slice of the world might

be different, if we all knew how to deliberately grow our connection, empathy, and understanding a little better. Wherever our students end up in the world, I hope that their collaborative skills can be transferable and aid them in building healthy relationships in any workplace, and in life.

Collaboration is at the heart of this study. The choreography class, in the context of higher education, is one place where people and their identities, background, experiences, and ideas collide. In the choreography class, we not only learn the creative skills to make a dance, but also explore the creation of relationships.

1.2. The Research Questions

The first step of this study has been to identify a central and guiding research question. Hanstein (1999) states that “[t]he questions you ask reflect what interests you about the field of dance and how you see the world of dance” (p. 27). A research question points towards discovering “meaning, cause, relationship, interpretation or significance” (Hanstein, 1999, p. 27). This research does not aim to ‘fix’ Macy’s collaborative dilemma. Rather, it aims to better understand causes of collaborative problems, the significance of having collaborative skills as told by educators, and pedagogies that may foster collaboration. With these points in mind, the following research question has directed this study.

Within tertiary choreography courses in New Zealand, what are three dance educators’ meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography?

The above question identifies the specific research context of this study: tertiary choreography education within New Zealand. The focus is on educators’ perspectives of teaching choreography, within bachelor’s degrees in dance.

The following sub questions focus upon the key issues informing the main question. They also seek to connect back to the concerns revealed within the opening narrative. These sub queries developed from my areas of interest and prompted areas of discussions with the dance educators who participated in the research.

- What are dance educators' perceptions of pedagogy within collaborative choreography education?
- How are these perspectives negotiated as educators prepare, teach, and assess collaborative choreography?
- When teaching choreography, how are pedagogical and collaborative dilemmas attended to with diverse student cohorts?

This qualitative study values data gathered through interviews. It aims to critically examine how choreography educators teach collaborative dance making, and to understand the issues that inform choreography pedagogy.

1.3. Choreography Definitions

In order to more fully understand what choreography education might entail, it is pertinent to first unpack what choreography is. The term *choreography* can refer to the finished dance work made by a choreographer (sometimes collaboratively with a group of dancers), through a creative process (Hagood & Kahlich, 2007). Within the 21st century and within the scope of this research, the term choreography refers to a broad spectrum of artistic outcomes that in some way attend to how movement is positioned in space and time (Flatt, 2019; Kim, 2016). Additionally, this may include experimental arts, somatic practices, interdisciplinary practices, and other arts forms. In this research the terms *choreography*, *dance* and *product* are used to encompass the performable outcome.

Choreography can be performed or filmed, and may exist in solo, duet, trio, or group form. This study asserts that choreography may be created with and performed by professional dancers, students, recreational dancers, or any other community group. It may take place in the dance studio, in educational or community contexts, with any age group or demographic of people. It may be for any recreational, wellness, medical, social, educational, or professional artistic purpose. Therefore, a *choreographer* may be someone who makes dances as a professional artistic pursuit within a specific dance form as a career or recreationally, or someone who works in another field but who may engage in choreographic practices as part of their work. This broad definition of choreography, and of who can be a choreographer, is important, as this research identifies that students learning about choreography may use their creative and collaborative skills in any of the areas or forms above in their lives or careers. In

this study the terms *choreographer*, *maker*, or *creator* are used interchangeably, as are *leader* or *facilitator*, when discussing the nuances of choreographic collaboration.

Within this research, the terms *choreographic process*, *creative process*, and *dance making* are used interchangeably. These terms pertain to the time spent to explore, develop, and create choreography. Dance scholarship indicates that this process may take many forms, and there are numerous methods and strategies that can be used (Ashley, 2003; Fournier, 2003; Gardner, 2007, 2011; Kirsh et al., 2009; Lavender, 2006; Lavender Predock-Linell & Predock-Linnell, 2016). The choreographer and dancers move through a process of “sorting, sifting, editing, forming, making, and remaking” (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, p. 237) the dance material. The choreographic process may be multimodal (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005) and include games, experiments, brainstorming, research, discussion, and engagement with other art forms.

It is important to point out that dance making is inherently social and collaborative (Barbour, 2008; Foster-Sproull, 2021; Gardner, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2011; Kim, 2022; Kirsh et al., 2009; Knox, 2013; Martin, 1985, 1998; Risner, 2000). Various social interactions take place in order to make the dance as well as within the choreography. This thesis aims to tease out the issues that may arise within the teaching and learning of choreographic collaboration and contribute to scholarship in this area. This research explores how dance educators view and understand their role and how they approach teaching dance making in bachelor’s degrees in Aotearoa.

This study accepts that within the landscape of dance in Aotearoa New Zealand, choreography may be many things. Within tertiary dance education, it can be made predominantly in a contemporary dance form. However, the term *contemporary dance* can encompass a myriad of styles, genres, approaches, and influences, including western contemporary dance techniques, improvisation, hip hop, ballet, cultural forms, lyrical dance, commercial dance, or fusions of any of these. Contemporary dance can be made in response to almost any line of abstract or practical inquiry that a choreographer chooses, for example a movement vocabulary, or themes and concepts of interest (Kwan, 2017). This research takes contemporary dance as a broad term that means, of the ‘now’ (Poullaude & Solomon, 2007) and that reflects the lives and interests of the people doing it, as well as being of the landscape within which it takes place (Cassani & Griffiths, 2016). For tertiary dance students in New

Zealand, this includes the dance histories and backgrounds they bring to their study, their identities, imaginations, curiosities, and their future aspirations.

1.4. The Research Context

The context of this study is tertiary dance education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This section discusses this context and unpacks how bachelor's degrees in dance are umbrellaed within universities and other tertiary providers.

1.4.1. Tertiary education in New Zealand

In Aotearoa, *tertiary education* is the name given to study that follows the previous 13 years of formal schooling which typically ends when students are approximately aged 17-18 years. In other contexts, tertiary education may be known as college or higher education. Tertiary education encompasses a range of qualifications offered within institutions including private training establishments, universities,² wānanga,³ workplace training and Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology.⁴ The Ministry of Education (MoE) provides strategic direction, develops policy and monitors the performance of New Zealand Crown Entities for tertiary education.

² In New Zealand, a university is defined as a higher education institution that has all of the following characteristics: (A) they are primarily concerned with more advanced learning, the principal aim being to develop intellectual independence, (B) their research and teaching are closely interdependent and most of their teaching is done by people who are active in advancing knowledge, (C) they meet international standards of research and teaching, (D) they are a repository of knowledge and expertise, (E) they accept a role as critic and conscience of society; and (ii) that— (A) a university is characterised by a wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level, that maintains, advances, disseminates, and assists the application of knowledge, develops intellectual independence, and promotes community learning (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020, section 268).

³ A wānanga is characterised by teaching and research that maintains, advances, and disseminates knowledge and develops intellectual independence, and assists the application of knowledge regarding ahuatanga Māori (Māori tradition) according to tikanga Māori (Māori custom) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020, section 268).

⁴ Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology is the governing body for vocational training in New Zealand. This includes Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology (ITPs) (Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, 2021). Vocational training is posed as providing skills specific to particular employment pathways (Tertiary Education Commission, 2020). Qualifications available through these organisations range from Level 1 Certificates through to Level 9 Master's degrees, including Level 4 Apprenticeships.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) manages the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) within which all tertiary qualifications sit. Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 are certificates. Levels 5 and 6 provide certificates and diplomas. Level 7 includes diplomas, graduate diplomas, graduate certificates, and bachelor's degrees. Level 8 encompasses postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas, and bachelor's honours degrees. Master's degrees are Level 9 and doctoral study is Level 10. NZQA oversees non-university tertiary education providers and the secondary school curriculum which also covers Level 1-3 of the NZQF. Universities New Zealand/Te Pōkai Tara hold the responsibility for overseeing qualifications offered by Aotearoa's eight universities (Te Pōkai Tara - Universities New Zealand, 2023a). There are bachelor's degrees offered by all eight New Zealand universities, as well as by various other institutions such as Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology.

Prerequisites for bachelor's degrees typically include attaining Level 3 of the NZQF; and depending on the field of study, students may also be required to have prior experience and/or other academic achievements (The University of Auckland, n.d.). NZQA notes that graduates of bachelor's degrees should be able to:

- demonstrate intellectual independence, critical thinking and analytic rigour
- engage in self-directed learning
- demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject
- demonstrate the skills needed to acquire, understand and assess information from a range of sources
- demonstrate communication and collaborative skills (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.).

Qualifications from Levels 4-6 and non-bachelor's qualifications at Level 7 have a stronger focus on theoretical and/or technical skill and knowledge acquisition applicable to a specific field. There is lesser focus on self-directed and critical research focussed work and on creative and collaborative skills (New Zealand Qualifications Authority Mana Tohu Mātauranga O Aotearoa, 2016). Other distinctions between bachelor's degrees and other qualifications such as certificates and diplomas include that bachelor's degrees are predominantly taught by people who are actively engaged in high quality research and who are providing teaching-

research links throughout a curriculum (Te Pūkai Tara - Universities New Zealand, 2023b). Graduates of bachelor's degrees may also be eligible to pursue postgraduate study (Levels 8-10).

The guidelines for each level of tertiary study under the NZQF, such as those above, indicate the expected Graduate Outcomes (GOs). These outcomes lead to the formation of institutional and/or programme Graduate Profiles that dictate the attributes that graduates typically should develop through their study. The attributes include knowledge, values, and skills (Spronken-Smith et al., 2013) and include the domain within which these are attained (Te Pūkai Tara - Universities New Zealand, 2021). Graduate profiles typically speak to attaining skills in and about a specific discipline and 21st century competencies such as creativity and collaboration developed through a process of attaining discipline knowledge.

1.4.2. Tertiary dance education in New Zealand

This section provides contextual information about tertiary dance education within bachelor's degrees in Aotearoa and discusses the presence of choreography education within these.

Aotearoa's tertiary education landscape presents a variety of options for students to study dance at bachelor's degree level. The design of a bachelor's degree or course in dance must comply with the TEC guidelines, and the degrees must be deemed to be comparable to any other discipline of study. Various bachelor's degrees offer specialisation in dance, or in performing arts with a dance major. There are also a number of other degrees that offer dance components within the curriculum, such as bachelor's degrees in arts, creativity or education. The opportunities for studying dance can be found at the University of Auckland, Unitec Institute of Technology (as part of Te Pūkenga –New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology), Whitireia (also part of Te Pūkenga –New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology), the University of Waikato, and the University of Otago. The various bachelor's degrees with a focus on, or inclusion of dance, and specifically choreography education, are the focus of this research.

Through reviewing the various institutions' websites, curriculum documents, and personal communication with staff, choreography education appears within every school's curriculum.

Although, how choreography education is designed and delivered is dependent on the specific qualification and course aims. Each institution has differing dance and educational values, and as a consequence offers varying other subjects, such as dance education, anatomy, indigenous dance, community, or interdisciplinary practices. However, on reviewing each institution's website, there are choreographic components within every bachelor's qualification available where dance is a focus.

The University of Auckland (UoA) offers a three-year Bachelor of Dance Studies. A full spectrum of postgraduate dance qualifications is also on offer including a Postgraduate Diploma and Honours degree in Dance Studies, Master's degrees in Dance Studies, Community Dance, and Dance Movement Therapy, as well as a Doctor of Philosophy. The Bachelor of Dance Studies balances theory and practice, and the focus is on educating students towards diverse arts careers which may include performing and making, but also teaching, community practice, leadership, advocacy, research, backstage and production, and entrepreneurship. Within this degree, students are required to undertake a compulsory choreography course in each of the three years of their education. These courses have a strong focus on student-led choreography with collaborative skills becoming an imperative aspect of course content and assessment. Numerous other courses within the Bachelor of Dance Studies also feature collaborative choreographic learning moments, activities, assessments, and processes. Dance Studies students are typically extremely diverse in their backgrounds, dance histories, cultures, and interests. The audition process aims to understand the students' potential for a range of movement styles, community interests, passion and aspirations, creative and collaborative skills, and capacity for leadership. They must also attain the University's admission requirements which are NCEA Level 3, and University Entrance.⁵ The University of Auckland also requires all bachelor's degree students to undertake two General Education courses outside of their major. Dance Studies offers two courses for students outside of the Dance department. These are Introduction to Creative Practices, and Dance and Culture. Both courses have collaborative and choreographic elements within the curriculum.

⁵ University Entrance (UE) is the minimum student achievement needed to gain entry into one of New Zealand's eight universities. UE comprises of a range of NCEA credits including specific Literacy (reading and writing) and Numeracy credits as well as a range of credits in other approved NCEA subjects. Students may also enter University with a UE equivalent through the International Baccalaureate Diploma, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or General Certificate of Education (GCE) for example. Alternatively, there are other routes to enter university once applicants turn 20 years of age, or through recognition of prior tertiary study.

Unitec Institute of Technology, in Auckland, offers a three-year Bachelor of Performing and Screen Arts with a contemporary dance major. Students are accepted through an audition process where they are required to attend dance technique classes, choreographic workshops, an interview, and present a solo performance. The curriculum is built around training students' skills predominately in contemporary dance performance and choreography.

Whitireia (Wellington) offers a two-year Diploma in Dance, Musical Theatre or Māori/Pacific Dance. Following this, students have the option to complete a third year of study towards a Bachelor of Creativity specialising in Performing Arts. Students select an area of study to focus on. Options available are Māori and Pacific Dance, Commercial Dance, Drama or Musical Theatre. Alternatively, students can enter the three-year degree from year one, specialising in Māori, Samoan, Cook Island, or New Zealand contemporary dance. Applicants are required to have University Entrance to gain admission into the Bachelor of Creativity. This degree features discipline specific courses including dance styles and genres, and choreography, as well as generalist courses such as Creative Enterprise, Collaboration, and Culture and Contexts that are shared with Music and Digital Media specialisations.

The University of Waikato offers various dance and performing arts courses. At Waikato, dance can be taken as a minor specialisation, with courses offered in dance, and culture and communities, with dedicated courses towards the creation and performance of dance. It is clear dance at Waikato values creativity in context and appreciates dance as it connects to other disciplines and domains of study (University of Waikato, 2023a). Courses are available that specially attend to choreographic process, as well as others that explore choreography as relevant to various cultures and societal themes. There is a strong focus on dance within Aotearoa and relevant contemporary practitioners' work.

In 1927, the University of Otago introduced dance into the physical education curriculum and was the first institution to do so in New Zealand (Snook et al., 2014). The University currently offers dance as a minor subject, through a Bachelor of Performing Arts, or in singular courses as part of a Bachelor of Teaching. Courses aim to blend theory and practice and engage both vocational training methods and academic learning (University of Otago, n.d.). There are no specific choreography courses available. Choreography learning is embedded throughout numerous courses and in some cases is driven by a focus on the styles and methods of important choreographers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Other courses

interrogate choreography from cultural or western stylistic perspectives. The University of Otago is also home to the Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Community Dance. The fellowship offers dance practitioners and artists a six-month opportunity to engage in community dance projects and contribute to dance teaching and learning in the School of Performing Arts (University of Otago, 2021).

A range of universities across Aotearoa provide one year graduate teaching diplomas for students who already have a recognised dance qualification. This pathway enables students to gain an additional qualification to become a primary school teachers or high school dance teachers. Due to the content of the New Zealand Arts Curriculum and dance assessment standards of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) for high school students, there is a key focus on choreography in these courses. Some of the Universities' three-year Bachelor of Education degrees also offer singular courses with a dance/drama/arts education focus that are likely to have choreographic elements.

1.4.3. Tertiary choreography education in New Zealand

Choreography lies at the heart of most tertiary dance education in Aotearoa. As previously noted, some tertiary education institutions provide dance focussed bachelor's degrees and others offer singular dance courses within other disciplines, for example a Bachelor of Theatre, however, choreographic learning is a prominent thread present within all of these, either as specific choreography courses or within the curriculum of other dance courses (such as dance education, performance, or dance and culture).

The term *choreographic* refers to the nature of dance making as both process and product (Hagood & Kahlich, 2007). Extending this to *choreographic education*, at tertiary level this is focussed on developing the skills and dispositions required to recognise, appreciate, and critique choreography, and to move through a creative process and create a choreographic product as a result (Lavender, 1994, 2006, 2012; Lavender Predock-Linnell & Predock-Linnell, 2016). Students will learn various strategies to research, explore, generate, organise, and refine a piece of choreography. There may be a focus on compositional elements of form and structure. Choreographic education may also teach creative strategies such as improvisation, tasking, manipulating, and refining a movement vocabulary, and tools to explore dynamic, temporal, and spatial design (Butterworth, 2004; Knox, 2013; Stevens &

McKechnie, 2005). Additionally, choreographic education may bring the necessary interpersonal skills of collaboration, leadership, and communication into focus, alongside the creative skills. Noting the distinction between dance training and education (Koff, 2000, 2021), the term choreographic education is used to recognise the diversity and depth of choreographic teaching and learning, that it may engage pedagogies different to those typically used in dance training, has different aims, and values, and requires different content to be shared with students.

Through choreographic education in the 21st century, and an equal focus on creativity and collaboration, students are introduced to a realm of creativity that refutes some historical choreographic models where dancers are simply a ‘puppet’ (Butterworth, 2004; Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011) or ‘instrument’ (Barbour, 2008; Butterworth, 2004). Rowell (2000) notes that the “notion the of the dancer as the malleable material of the choreographer with its concomitant value system of the body as object has given way to a notion of the dancer as person and as thinking, feeling collaborator” (p. 196). Dancers are now recognised in many contexts as being “rational, imaginative, and contributive” (Arnold, 1988, p. 51) creative agents (Knox, 2013). Through such models, dancers may begin to understand the possibilities for decision-making and self-actualisation (Knox, 2013). This transformation of how the dancer’s role is perceived has been influenced by realities of freelance and portfolio dance careers, where artists often fluidly traverse both roles of dancer and choreographer. Additionally value systems within professional choreographic contexts are shifting towards fostering shared labour (Foster-Sproull, 2021; Roche, 2011, 2015), myriad modes of collaborative relationships between dancers and choreographers (Butterworth, 2004; Knox, 2013; Newall & Fortin, 2012), new labels for these roles being used to more accurately reflect creative contributions (Butterworth, 2004; Foster-Sproull, 2021; Newall & Fortin, 2012), and reimagining of hierarchies within dance making (Knox, 2013; Koff, 2021).

The basic priority of much dance education can be proposed as the teaching and learning of both creative and collaborative skills, regardless of the possible career pathways or training objectives of each individual school. A key objective of choreography learning is to prepare students for the realities of the professional dance industry, whether working as a dancer, choreographer, teacher, or community practitioner. A range of dance making experiences supports students to understand the demands of these roles as well as to understand

collaboration from other artists' perspectives. Beyond this, collaborative skills are recognised as being transferable to almost any other domain (Rowe et al., 2020, 2021).

Within choreography specific courses at tertiary level, students may participate in various pedagogic processes. They may work as a dancer learning, replicating, and performing an existing piece of choreography. Secondly, they may work as a dancer led through a choreographic process by a professional choreographer to create a new dance work. Alternatively, students learn how to facilitate their own creative processes and create their own choreography. Within the later process, students may work in a peer-peer relationship as choreographer or dancer, mimicking what they might learn in the prior process. Alternatively, students may be grouped to work in a more democratic (Butterworth, 2004) way where they all contribute to the creation of the dance work, but there is no leader. These approaches may have differing prominence at the different institutions due to the educational aims and graduate profiles for each qualification. For example, at Dance Studies (UoA) the focus is predominately on student-led choreography in order to develop students' collaborative and creative skills, applicable to diverse career pathways. Students are encouraged to develop curiosity about their own creative interests and to experiment with these to develop their own choreographic practice and voice. At Unitec Institute of Technology there is a split focus between student-led and professional choreographer-led creative processes because of the educational aim to prepare students for both choreography and performance careers.

Choreographic processes within tertiary education may result in a piece of choreography that is then performed. This outcome may be the focus of an assessment, or for the purpose of creating something to hook learning onto. The creation of choreography might itself be the focus in and of itself, or the choreographic experience might be an integrated approach through which to teach "across the curriculum" (Buck & Snook, 2017, p. 321). This research values both of these options within curriculum, pedagogy and assessment within the relevant bachelor's degrees. The focus is on the collaborative interactions that reveal themselves through these choreographic experiences.

Within choreographic education, various aspects of the choreographic learning may be assessed, including the students' performance of a choreographic product, the choreography itself, the creative process, and students' contributions and/or facilitation to this, and the

collaborative engagement throughout the process and/or performance. Again, this is dependent on the degree and institution's educational aims and graduate profiles.

Increasingly, choreographic education in Aotearoa can focus on engaging in traditional and contemporary indigenous dance forms. As a bicultural country, with a multicultural society, within Oceania this is considered a relevant and pertinent aspect of tertiary dance education. This can involve learning traditional dance and music from across the Pacific. Additionally, it may include exploring how to facilitate and create choreography in contemporary Māori and Pacific forms, with culturally sensitive and appropriate methods and processes (Banks, 2016; Bradshaw, 2015; Hughes, 2018; 'Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2020; Williams, 2015). Additionally, as students and choreographers gain dexterity in diverse dance styles, such as hip hop, they are creating new modes to fuse and cross dance genres.

Within choreographic education students may also learn about the lives and work of influential choreographers. This may be from a current, historical, or cultural perspective, about people who could be potential employers, or who may have developed ground-breaking creative methods or created seminal works.

1.5. Tertiary Dance Educators in New Zealand

This section discusses the typical prerequisites of becoming a choreography educator in tertiary education in Aotearoa. The section articulates the specific skills and experience required by those who teach within tertiary institutions, and then addresses the specific pathways of those who facilitate choreographic education in this context. This research also predominantly utilises the term *educator* rather than teacher. This aims to reflect the full scope of this role within tertiary education. This also nods to debates surrounding the distinction between dance training and dance education (Koff, 2000, 2021). This is pertinent to the research context and concept of choreographic collaboration.

Within university contexts, often a master's degree (Level 9) or study at PhD level (Level 10) is expected for employment, but this may vary within programmes and disciplines (Te Pōkai Tara - Universities New Zealand, 2018). Specifically of New Zealand's eight universities, The Education Act 1989 specifies that universities are institutions within which "research and teaching are closely interdependent and most of their teaching is done by people who are active in advancing knowledge" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1989, section

162(4)(a)). This is reiterated by the statement that qualifications including the words bachelor, master, or doctor can only be awarded if “taught mainly by people engaged in research” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1989, section 253B (3)). That is, no teaching qualification is required.

It is suggested that educators working at a tertiary level should be able to provide ‘quality’ education to students (Suddaby, 2019), however this is positioned as a challenging measure to define and assure (Boereboom, 2017). While there are qualification, registration and accreditation requirements in New Zealand for early childhood education, primary and secondary education, there are no such standards for tertiary educators. Boereboom, (2017) states,

Tertiary teachers are usually appointed on the basis of their knowledge, qualifications and experience in their subject areas, and entry into tertiary teaching does not require the completion of an initial teaching qualification. Typically the main requirement to become a tertiary teacher is a PhD or master’s in a relevant field. (para. 5)

Warburton (2008) echoes this statement, and his and Boereboom’s assertions problematise that an extensive knowledge of a subject area may not be sufficient to be a tertiary educator and that pedagogical knowledge is required. Tertiary educators should have the skills and expertise in the particular field, as relevant to the 21st century, be able to design and assess courses using a range of methods, have pedagogical and cultural dexterity, be competent in educational technologies and in fostering diversity and equity within learning environment.

To teach dance at tertiary level, extensive professional experience is required. Most of those teaching the various dance subjects will have had a career in dance that may have included teaching, choreography, and performance. They may have undertaken work in diverse dance contexts and within a range of roles. Through these activities they will likely have gained knowledge that will be applicable to their teaching, that in some cases may not have been taught in their own tertiary dance institution. This contributes to the ongoing development and refinement of tertiary dance education for the 21st century.

Tertiary dance educators in universities are likely to be engaged in research. This may take many forms, including creative practice. Publications/performances are peer reviewed and

disseminated publicly both within New Zealand and internationally. These strengthen the expected links between research and teaching, theory and practice within bachelor's degrees, as well as developing relevant interdisciplinarity.

Many people teaching in tertiary dance in New Zealand also have roles and relationships to national and international dance organisations, both connected to and outside of the realm of education. Engagement with these sorts of activities is seen to be advantageous for students learning, and for maintaining and developing professional practice and networks.

Additionally, they may have portfolio aspects to their careers and may teach dance, choreograph, and work in complementary roles (for example as a fitness instructor or producer) in a variety of contexts outside of their tertiary dance roles. It remains that discipline knowledge is required, though having pedagogical knowledge is optimal and desirable, but not required.

Within tertiary education, educators who facilitate choreographic learning would typically be required to have industry experience and are therefore often professional choreographers currently working, and/or with a background of choreographic work. They may also have worked for other choreographers as professional dancers throughout their careers. Within many of the bachelor's degrees in dance in Aotearoa choreography educators may be full-time lecturers working at a specific institution within the tertiary context. Alternatively, they may be freelance part-time tutors who teach at one or more institutions, often combined with portfolio careers, built upon a number of different dance activities. Tertiary choreography educators are also often people who may be able to provide employment opportunities to graduates, or introductions to people working in the choreography and performance areas of the wider dance sector.

While educators' pedagogical actions and intentions may or may not be fully understood by students, it can be proposed that educators are positioned at the heart of the choreography context. Within this, they are people responding to directives from institutions, facilitating the learning of choreographic knowledge, and preparing students for progression into arts careers. It would seem this is a precarious position to be in, and that much balancing of demands is required. Educators are deciding what to teach (Warburton, 2008), and how to teach it. I propose that as they do these things, they may not be able to anticipate all the challenges that pull on their skills. There is an intriguing degree of improvisation required in

order to teach choreography. It is these tensions, improvisations, demands, and surprises that this research seeks to understand. Further, Warburton (2008) asserts, content knowledge is not sufficient for 'good' teaching. My understanding is that choreography pedagogy requires content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Fortin, 1992). I add that teaching choreography requires self-knowledge as an essential basis to mentor, facilitate, and support students' creative work.

In much dance scholarship, choreographic pedagogy is identified as the teaching and learning of choreographic content (Davenport, 2006a, 2006b; Hämäläinen, 2002; Stevens, 2000; Van Dyke, 2005). However, within this research I make the distinction that choreography education or pedagogy is the teaching *about* choreography or the domain within which the teaching and learning of choreography happens. *Choreographic* education or pedagogy might employ choreographic thinking or skills within its approach to teaching. This foregrounds the creativity of how the teaching unfolds. Both terms are used within this thesis, where relevant. I draw attention to this distinction in order to more fully evidence the range of skills, knowledges, and reflective processes choreography educators utilise, and the challenges and questions they encounter, as they facilitate learning about dance making.

1.6. Significance of the Research

The significance of this present research may be seen in respect to the following points. The research indicates possible areas of improvement in teacher education for both dance and choreography at tertiary level but may also have implications for choreography teaching and learning in other contexts. The study may lead to better awareness of the issues, needs, and relevance of choreography educators' ongoing professional development and identification for support of other kinds. The findings of the study may provide deeper understanding of the realities of the planning, execution, and reflection upon choreography classes and courses as pertinent to the context of tertiary education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study provides insight into the pedagogical and personal management strategies that enable choreography learning to unfold in the current time. The study aims to gain deeper understanding of teacher's behaviours and values towards choreography teaching and learning and articulate pedagogical, professional, and personal concerns in relation to students' aspirations, needs and behaviours. The study's findings highlight the myriad demands, and at times, conflicting issues of choreography teaching in tertiary education and evidence the ways in which

educators respond. The study illuminates the threads of choreographic education that pull educators' attention and time and reveal the ways in which these may align with or detract from teaching and learning. Finally, the ways in which choreography educators filter learning into areas of explicit or formal curriculum (Flinders et al., 1986), hidden curriculum (being the "off-the-record" curriculum (Wren, 1993, as cited in Brownell, 2017, p. 206) often with a moral dimension (Greene, 1983)), and null curriculum (what is not taught and not part of any curriculum) (Eisner, 1979; Flinders et al., 1986)), indicates the many decisions they make and highlights the values that underpin them.

1.7. Thesis Overview

This chapter has provided an overview of the guiding research question, thematic direction and decisions made within the study. It has provided an introduction to how key terms are utilised throughout the thesis. The context of tertiary education and how choreography fits under the umbrella of dance education in New Zealand has been articulated.

Chapter 2 turns to the literature locating the present study in current debates and practices. It examines the current values and distinctions of choreography within the broader context of tertiary dance education and explores dance making as a creative and collaborative activity. The chapter addresses the context of choreography education in the context of New Zealand and explores the role of choreography educator and meanings of choreography pedagogy.

The methodology chapter follows, outlining this study's approach for interrogating educators' meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography in tertiary education in New Zealand, and sets the scene for valuing the relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology that guide this research. Following this, the theoretical framework is discussed along with the data collection and analysis methods. The chapter locates myself within the research; I provide information around the ethical considerations and procedures and discuss the notions of transparency within the research.

Chapter 4 presents the data gathered for this study. It is arranged as a narrative that reveals pertinent themes identified through the initial process of analysis. Within these, I, as the researcher, and the participants, engage in imagined collaborative discussions around the salient perspectives and experiences of what goes on in our choreography classrooms. My

own expertise allowed me to both contribute to the ‘conversation’ and make decisions around how to weave together the voices and ideas shared for the purpose of further analysis.

Chapter 5 identifies and explores the developed themes and aims to address the research questions. Each theme is unpacked, and relevant literature drawn upon to generate new understandings of the choreography educators’ experiences.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, wrapping back to where it started, summarising the findings of the study. Implications for tertiary choreography educators are noted and directions for future research are indicated.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the research question: Within tertiary choreography learning in New Zealand, what are three dance educators' meanings and experiences of teaching choreography? This literature review aims to survey existing scholarship in order to position this study within relevant discourse, inform the methodology and scope, as well as deepen engagement with various conversations of contexts and key terms. It identifies tensions, key debates, and gaps within the literature pertinent to this study.

Firstly, the chapter addresses the wider context of tertiary dance education, looking broadly, and then towards the specific context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The review then moves to consider choreography as a creative and collaborative practice. This discussion informs the following sections which explore choreographic education at tertiary level and then unpacks relevant scholarship pertaining to choreography educators and their pedagogies.

2.1. Tertiary Dance Education

This section discusses the broader context of dance education and unpacks how this determines how bachelor's degrees in dance are umbrellaed within universities and other tertiary providers. Firstly, a brief history of dance in higher education is provided, which leads to more specific discussion of current trends globally and within the New Zealand context.

Tertiary education, and bachelor's degrees, are a form of formal education, organised by a country's relevant organising bodies for education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). A bachelor's degree is a qualification that offers "academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics., 2012, p. 51) that require particular academic entry requirements and that are guided by appropriately qualified research active staff (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Formal education features systematic and standardised curriculum and assessment designed for learning and evidences a hierarchical pathway of learning to through the completion of a qualification (Belle, 1982; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). This supports the ideas that dance is a valued academic pathway (Davenport, 2017) in that academic skills are required and balanced with practical skills.

A pertinent discussion to have within this study, is of dance within the context of universities and bachelor's degrees, and the different priorities, values, and aims of dance education and dance training. This thesis has previously noted that the teaching and learning that takes place within universities in Aotearoa New Zealand is required to be research driven and focussed toward developing graduate attributes such as intellectual rigour, critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.). These are different outcomes to what is expected and required of other tertiary institutions with a vocational focus. These points lend themselves well to developing an understanding of why dance in bachelor's degrees is considered primarily to be dance education rather than dance training. Although, I point out that there may be elements of training that sit within the overarching dance education engaged within a dance degree. The path of dance education has direct implications for choreography curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy, and vice versa (Brown et al., 2017; Giguere, 2021) as well as who is able to teach it.

In seeking distinction, dance training focusses on vocational dance skills such as the learning, replication, and performance of specified steps (Schupp & Clemente, 2010). Typically, the aim is preparing students for careers in dance performance. Within higher education, institutions that aim to prepare dancers for performance pathways may be known as conservatoires, with narrower curriculum tailored towards the techniques and physical rigour required by these vocational pathways. Alternatively, dance education focusses on engaging the whole learner, in relationship with “self, others, and the environment” (Koff, 2000, p. 28). Koff (2000) identifies that self-expression and self-knowledge are the central aims of dance education. These goals have direct synergy to choreography education, which would seem to be a potent context for such explorations to take place through the use of choreographic themes, stimulus, and tasks.

Perhaps dance learning can be placed on a scale, with dance training at one end and dance education at the other. Why place dance education and training onto a scale? Koff (2000) suggests that dance education and training are not comparable. Extending this perspective, I argue that dance learning within a tertiary context might necessitate the ability to flex according to diverse student career aspirations, curriculum needs, graduate profiles, and industry demands (Byrnes et al., 2018). Therefore, at times within a dance education context, elements of training may be relevant. Gilbert (2005) raises that learning about dance (thinking, writing) must be balanced with learning through dancing, echoing Buck's (2022)

and Koff and Warner's (2001) passage of teaching and learning 'about, in, and through' dance as being a valid way of perceiving the breath and aims of dance education.

The values and objectives that drive dance education have implications for the pedagogies engaged. Dance training typically utilises pedagogies of transmission, positioning the teacher as the holder of knowledge on which students' learning is dependant (Green, 1999, 2002). Within dance technique learning, for example, historically students are rendered silent and submissive, or as Green (2002) states "docile bodies" (p. 99). The literature also evidences the ways in which these pedagogies may be inherited (Warburton, 2008) and progressed to become choreographers' approaches to leadership within professional contexts (Barbour, 2008; Knox, 2013). In contrast, dance education may utilise pedagogies that are concerned with viewing the learner holistically, fostering voice and agency, and through humanising (Risner & Schupp, 2020), decolonising (Østern et al., 2021; Schupp, 2022), constructivist (Huddy & Stevens, 2014; Rowe & Buck, 2013), student-centred (A. K. Brown, 2014; Leijen et al., 2009; Råman, 2009; Sööt & Leijen, 2012) and transformative (Østern, 2017) teaching and learning relationships. Connected to this is the relevance of the teacher also viewing themselves holistically and reflecting upon how their experiences and identity impact upon how they teach and how they view their students (Koff, 2021).

2.1.1. Tertiary dance education in New Zealand

Edward Warburton (2011) asks "what's up with the New Zealand dance scene?" (p. 2) indicating towards a plethora of dance education scholarship emerging out of Aotearoa. Dance Studies at The University of Auckland is internationally recognised as a hub of dance education, community dance, and practice-led research (Rowe et al., 2015) and significant research explores these areas with a focus on Aotearoa and beyond. Other institutions such as the University of Waikato and the University of Otago are, and historically have been, the home to academics and students who also engage in and publish dance research.

Tertiary dance education in New Zealand is a stepping stone towards a number of careers in the arts, though not all careers require tertiary study (for example commercial dance performance). Many graduates forge careers as professional performers and choreographers, but especially out of the "humanistic" liberal arts' education (Buck, 2007) of The University of Auckland others move into myriad other avenues of teaching and community practice, arts

administration, and entrepreneurship in the wider arts industry. Freelance and portfolio careers are a necessary 21st century pathway for graduates to anticipate and the education provided through bachelor's degrees recognises this. A liberal arts context appreciates diversity and difference and is an approach to education that does not seek to provide education towards a specific vocation, even though students do enrol in named degrees, such as a Bachelor of Dance Studies. A liberal arts education holds a humanist concern and therefore aims to provide an education towards the critical and moral education of the mind (Munzel, 2003). The term liberal arts has been used to contrast vocational training (Brint et al., 2005). However, it is important to note that within this study, institutions such as Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology do offer bachelor's degrees, although they may not be considered to provide a 'strict' liberal arts education. Instead, they may be positioned to balance academic arts education and conservatoire style vocational training. Tertiary dance education within a liberal arts university context asks students to consider "how will their love of and expertise in dance help create [a better] future?" (Buck, 2015, p. 166). These sorts of "big questions" (Stinson, 2007, p. 144) create scope for students and educators to address societal and cultural concerns, global issues, and how the arts can be used in response (O'Connor & Aitken, 2014).

Student cohorts within New Zealand's degree programmes feature diversity in every sense of the term. Within the two dance specific bachelor's degrees, at The University of Auckland and Unitec Institute of Technology, students enter with a range of dance and cultural backgrounds (Byrnes et al., 2018). This also includes an increasing number of international students (Wang, 2021). This diversity demands that educators and peers attend to it and as such develop cultural competencies (Gay, 2013). Teachers have been noted as 'cultural bridge builders' (Bennett, 2004; Skrefsrud, 2020). In this way, teachers foster connections of empathy, understanding, and curiosity between students. This is particularly relevant to choreographic education where differences of all kinds are explicitly invited into the creative process, through creative themes, concept, stimulus, and artistry (Knox, 2013) and may even become a kind of cultural capital (Leung et al., 2008). These differences may also be the fuel for collaborative challenges that can emerge within student groups (Pauli et al., 2008).

In tertiary dance education in New Zealand, connections are made (as they are elsewhere) to broader global concerns and this fosters the capacity for dance to be used as "agent for reflection, for change and for transformation" (Buck & Meiners, 2017, p. 39). UNESCO's

Goals for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2015) and the Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education (Korea R. Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2011) are two documents that guide curriculum and assessment, values, and aspirations of dance degrees and also provide connection between students, scholarship and real world problems. Through dance education, the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks are acquired by future teachers, artists, administrators, advocates, and leaders to enact UNESCO's goals through the arts. A sense of civic responsibility and potential is developed (Schupp, 2019) as students are enabled to envision themselves as change makers as a result of their university dance education.

2.2. Choreography Meanings

This research focusses on choreography teaching and learning within tertiary dance education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Due to the wide range of dance being made in this context and the diversity of students making it, this may include for example, western dance forms, predominantly contemporary dance, or indigenous or fusion genres such as Māori or Pacific contemporary dance (Bradshaw, 2015; Knox & Martin, 2014; Millar, 2014; O'Donnell, 2019; Schultz, 2014; Williams, 2015). The skills, dance experiences, aspirations, meanings of dance and who can be a dancer or maker, and cultural and dance backgrounds influence the creative processes and products. Simply, choreography may be defined as making dances (Butterworth & Wildschut, 2009) although perhaps re-making, developing, restaging and creative peer-peer or peer-teacher moments in choreography courses might also be encapsulated in this study. Choreography is creative (Kirsh, 2011; Kirsh et al., 2009; Pakes, 2018) and engages a creative process (Hagood & Kahlich, 2007; Smith-Autard, 2014) whereby those involved generate and contribute ideas towards the construction of a new dance (Arnold, 1988, 2005; Kirsh et al., 2009; Risner, 2000). Further, choreography is identified as being inherently social (Barbour, 2008; Foster-Sproull, 2017; Gardner, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2011; Kirsh et al., 2009; Knox, 2013; R. Martin, 1985, 1998; Risner, 2000), drawing on various interpersonal skills (Knox, 2019), and utilising collaborative relationships (Butterworth, 2004; Farrer, 2018; Newall & Fortin, 2012).

That dance making is both creative and collaborative provides implications for choreographic education and, therefore, for the people teaching it. The following sections address literature pertaining to these two important aspects of dance making.

2.2.1. *Choreography is a creative activity*

Dance making requires creativity. Choreography is made through a creative research process (Spatz, 2018) where bodies are organised in time and space (Klien, 2007; Klein & Noeth, 2011), with the intention usually being to create a performance product. Within tertiary education, this performance product might be a creative artefact that is assessed.

Choreography may also involve the design of other elements such as objects or sound (Flatt, 2019) which indicates additional potential aspects of choreography curriculum.

Choreography may be made with and for different contexts and groups of people, and at times the process itself is the goal (Sawyer, 2000). Choreographic practice, or the choreographic process, therefore, is the act of exploring the various decisions available when making dance (Fournier, 2003; Grove et al., 2005; Kirsh, 2011; Kirsh et al., 2009; Stevens & McKechnie, 2005). It is this collection of attributes that contribute towards the development of choreography courses within higher education, and certainly within New Zealand.

A choreographic process may imply a predominately embodied investigation (Ashley, 2003; Stevens & McKechnie, 2005) whereby the dancers, and the choreographer “think things out not only in words, but also with their bodies” (Fournier, 2003, p. 2), or as Ashley (2003) notes, to explore a “qualitative physical puzzle” (p. 68). However, dance making is far more than a purely physical pursuit. The choreographic process may be multi-modal (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005) and provoke corporeal and intellectual problem solving artistically through analysing concepts or themes. This alludes to some of the various threads that may need to be woven together within choreography curriculum: movement design, art practices, and creative thinking.

There are specific steps, stages, and strategies within the choreographic process that require creativity and will as a result likely ensure more novel contributions. Most significant is the movement generation or investigation process (Risner, 1992). The movement investigation stage aims to experiment with and develop the movement language, and to generate the movement phrases to then be structured into the choreographic work. Firstly, improvisation and experimentation may be utilised to explore thematic and movement ideas and begin to build relationships and community. The umbrella of improvisation is vast and may or may not be deeply engaged within choreography curriculum. It may also be provided as a separate course, to complement choreography, in some contexts.

There are several movement generation processes available to dance-makers including the choreographer *showing* movement to the dancers who then “observe and reproduce” the movement (Kirsh et al., 2009, p. 190). This process assists dancers to understand a choreographer’s vision and movement style or physicality (Fournier, 2003) and would be most akin to a didactic choreographic leadership style (Butterworth, 2004; Fournier, 2003) and a transmissive pedagogy (Sööt & Viskus, 2014). *Making on* is a process where the choreographer works directly with dancers, offering instructions or questions, to construct movement phrases in real time. For example, they may propose ‘can you step over their right leg, with a spin, and place your hand on their shoulder as they lunge?’ This method involves problem solving from all involved (Fournier, 2003) and may be an example of how creativity emerges in the interaction between people (Sawyer, 1999). This is a more collaborative approach. *Tasking* is an extremely important and valued movement generation process, and in my professional experience is the method most prevalently used by choreographers within the New Zealand dance industry. Therefore, it is vital that students experience this process and gain an understanding of task design and response. As an egalitarian collaborative process, tasking is where the choreographic leader creates a provocation, problem, or question and invites the dancers to respond in movement or multimodally as image, text, artefact, or physical state (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005). Tasking invites the dancers to explicitly engage their agency, creativity, and imagination to generate a response. Tasking relies on the dancers’ unique abilities to respond to the task (Coton, 1975; Kirsh et al., 2009) and may also be a useful way for choreographers to get to know their dancers better. Tasking has been explored as a process where dancers turn an idea into “a visible thought” (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005, p. 244). The tasking process may involve research and brainstorming (Butterworth, 2004) by the respondent in order to create a considered and innovative contribution.

Choreographer Wayne McGregor has also proposed that if dancers create the movement they will then perform, they “are likely to imbue it with greater feeling, affect or quality ... [through such] intentionality they will find the phrase easier to remember” (Kirsh et al., 2009, p. 192). As the choreographic strategies move into increasingly more collaborative modes, they bring with them questions around authorship and acknowledgment (Kolb, 2013). This warrants important conversations for choreography educators to have in their classrooms, especially when many students bring with them limited collaborative dance making experiences and may perceive collaborative choreography to be ‘lazy’ or undesirable. This is pertinent when graduates may find themselves in professional, community and educational

dance contexts, where collaborative dance making is in fact hugely valued, monopolises on the collective's skills, and is creatively enhancing and responsive to those involved.

Following the movement generation processes, the collaborators would move through various other stages such as manipulation and development of movement material, micro and macro structuring, rehearsing, refining, and evaluating (Lavender, 2006), character or artistry development, receiving and implementing feedback, 'running' (Risner, 1992) and cleaning the work (Fournier, 2003), performance, and reflection. Each stage of the process requires awareness and knowledge of the decisions and choices available (Klein & Noeth, 2011) and an ability to balance the needs of the work with the needs of the people involved.

These various stages and strategies indicate the necessary skills choreography educators would be expected to share with their students. Such learning requires a range of pedagogies and the ability to flexibly shift and respond to the creative learning and issues that emerge. The myriad processes available to dancer-makers also alludes to the collaborative skills required as they communicate, lead, follow, respond, and make decisions. This additional layer of choreographic education complexifies the responsibilities of the teacher to provide a balanced and thorough education in choreography. It is not enough to teach *what* the strategies are, they need to also teach *how* to engage in them. Specifically, I question how we teach students to be creative, to feel creative, and to be creatively dexterous (Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011).

Given that there is no right or wrong way to make dances, it can be argued that providing a range of strategies and experiences is important, as is supporting students to invent their own processes (Butterworth & Wildschut, 2018). Subsequently, choreography curriculums are informed by how educators perceive necessary and foundational dance making skills, how these are extended upon, whilst ensuring graduates are ready for the professional processes they may encounter in the dance industry.

2.2.2. *Choreography is a collaborative activity*

Broadly, collaboration can be defined as two or more people working together to create something or achieve the same goal (Barbour, 2008). Therefore it can be argued that all

choreographic processes are in some way collaborative. This has direct implications for the teaching and learning of choreography.

Much scholarship has focussed on the role of the choreographer, although recently literature has attended to the role dancers play contemporary dance making, and even more specifically within collaborative choreographic processes. Dancers may be required to contribute in a variety of ways to the creation of choreography, including creating or inventing new movement as well as artistically informing their movement and journey through a dance work (Arnold, 1988, 2000; Kirsh et al, 2009; Lavender, 2006; Risner, 1992, 1995, 2000; Roche, 2011; Stevens & McKechnie, 2005; Vincs, 2004). Additionally, over the course of a dancer's career they may be required to work with different choreographers. This can present the challenge of needing to respond within a choreographic process to choreographers' demands, their different dance making methods and movement styles (Butterworth & Popat, 2004; Zeitner-Smith, 2010). Roche, (2011) offers the notion that contemporary dancers have a "moving identity" in that they become flexible in their embodied reconciliation of different choreographic experiences and expectations (p. 105). Choreographers and dancers are also required to be adept in what may be called "creative dexterity" (Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011, p. 41). For a dancer, this means the skill of being able to adapt and respond accordingly to the various requirements of choreographer and their process. Furthermore, Roche (2011) and Rowe and Zeitner-Smith (2011) appear to posit a space for dancers to be seen as intelligent beings rather than mere bodies performing the movement, subsequently presenting new definitions of the divisions of labour in choreographic practice. Through recognising the evolving demands on professional contemporary dancers, these authors specifically acknowledge the growing responsibilities of dancers to intellectually engage and contribute to a choreographic process.

The responding to a choreographers' requests, process, or ideas is even more complex in an educational setting due to the people involved potentially having less refined social skills. Additionally, the students in a class cohort are likely to have established and shifting relationships, and possible conflicts, for example. These indicate further demands the teacher may face as they teach choreography but most also negotiate a class's social dynamics.

As we begin to understand the myriad social interactions that take place between the choreographer and dancers it is worth exploring choreographic roles. Historically the

choreographer has been positioned at the ‘top’ of the working hierarchy within dance making. This infers the ways in which a choreographer may wield power over dancers (Gardner, 2011; Green, 1999). Choreographic roles have been the subject of scholarship which aims to address “dominant hierarchical working processes” (Barbour, 2008, p. 41) and to “disentangle notions of power in the relationship between dancers and choreographers” (p. i). Such scholarship brings with it the agenda to address the silencing of dancers’ voices (Green, 2002; Knox, 2013; Roche, 2011) and to highlight the ways in which choreographic collaboration in the 21st century might reimagine the labour and acknowledgment of choreographic roles (Gardner, 2007; Roche, 2011; Rowell, 2000).

This scholarship indicates issues that may be of value to address within choreographic curriculums, particularly within New Zealand where it has been acknowledged that “practices of dance making in the professional dance ‘industry’, [are] not only unsustainable but sometimes even harmful to dancers and choreographers (Barbour, 2008, p. 41). Similarly, Lakes (2005) has addressed issues of power, authoritarianism, and abuse within choreographic relationship in the education and the professional dance world. Such research indicates that the dance industry still has some way to go in addressing these issues. Tertiary dance education contexts are therefore a necessary and important site in which to arm young practitioners with alternative and healthy collaborative experiences.

2.3. Choreography Education

Choreography is positioned as being central to the dance profession and therefore to dance education (Davenport, 2006b; Lavender Predock-Linnell & Predock-Linnell, 2016) Arguably, the aim of choreography education is to teach students to make dances. But more specifically, the goal is for students to develop the creative and collaborative sensibilities (Dou et al., 2021), skills, and confidence required to make dances (Lavender, 2006). As an extension of this, the objective of choreography in tertiary education is to bridge the gap between pre-tertiary choreography experiences with the evolving demands of the professional industry.

Choreography as a thread of dance education at tertiary level has evolved over time. An influential composition teacher, Louis Horst, started working in 1928 in New York (Lippencott, 1969). With a focus on the correct rules of composition, he positioned himself as the authority on his students’ work. Hämäläinen (2002) chooses to view Horst’s authoritarian

pedagogy from the perspective of a behaviourist conception of learning (Skinner, 1974) which engages an instructional pedagogical approach whereby the teacher wants “to produce an appropriate response and then reinforce it” (Warburton, 2009, p. 334). Further, this can be understood as a way of dominating students psychologically and limiting their autonomy (Uibu & Kikas, 2014). In contrast to Hämäläinen (2002), Lakes (2005) identifies Horst as someone engaging in abusive pedagogical practices which appears to have incited fear amongst his students (Soares, 1992), reinforcing his position as the ‘expert’ (Green, 1999, 2002).

From there, several choreography teachers, including Doris Humphrey, Robert Dunn, Alma Hawkins and Smith-Autard (Hämäläinen, 2002) developed their own approaches to choreography pedagogy. It appears a shift took place from a conception of the teacher as sole authority to one where the student directs their own process and following their own curiosities. These developments also invited a more open approach to dance making beyond compositional rules, with critical evaluation becoming a partnership between teacher and student (Hämäläinen, 2002).

Perhaps of most relevance for dance making in the current time is the work of Larry Lavender (1994, 1995, 1997, 2006, 2009, 2012) and Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2016) who advocate for the choreography teacher relinquishing authority and students developing their own critical consciousness. The breadth of Lavender’s scholarship articulates the various ways in which choreography educators support learning, through fostering students’ creative agency and their investment in their ideas and process. Tubman (2022) agrees with Lavender’s (2006) assertions that choreographic education can support students’ self-expression but points out that this makes the educator responsible for “the development of these traits” (Tubman, 2022, p. 12).

The literature evidences that choreographic education allows students to self-actualise in particular ways. Related to this is a clear mandate that within choreographic education students are to explore and develop their unique choreographic voice (Byrnes et al., 2018; Lavender Predock-Linnell & Predock-Linnell, 2016). The question is, how does the choreography educator support this?

While much scholarship appears to focus on teaching the composition elements of dance making the other relevant skills that choreographers require appear to be absent. As Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2016) assert students learn to be choreographers through the development of their “critical consciousness; the ability to describe, analyse, interpret, evaluate, and imagine/implement revisions to their own and others’ dances” (p. 195). However, I argue that this is also insufficient to fulfill the role of choreographer effectively. In problematising Lavender and Predock-Linnell’s (2016) statement above, within the New Zealand context, a question emerges around how students are prepared for choreography learning within tertiary education. Students who bring dance experience into bachelor’s degrees typically enter through two pathways, or a combination of both. Firstly, they may have dance experience from local dance studios where they learned western dance forms recreationally or vocationally. This pathway in New Zealand typically provides little creative or social preparation for tertiary education, and authentic choreographic experiences that reflect tertiary education and the professional industry can be rare. The focus on such environment is on learning steps and performing. Interestingly in these contexts, often ‘choreography’ classes are focussed upon a piece of choreography created by the teacher, or a choreographer, and students are expected to learn and replicate the movement material at speed. While this may give students diverse experiences of movement vocabulary and style it does not teach choreography skills, strategies, or models. Alternatively, or in addition, students may engage with dance as a subject in the New Zealand Curriculum. In this literature review I focus on the most relevant part of a student’s engagement with dance, and this is as part of the final three years of high school, within the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). NCEA Dance in New Zealand’s high schools exposes students to four stands of dance learning (Te Kete Ipurangi, 2012), which clearly reflect those choreographic attributes noted by Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2016) above.

Lavender and Predock-Linnell, (2016) clearly assert the power of the role of the choreographer and identify the “parasitic” (p. 196) nature of the rest of the professional dance industry upon the choreographer. Therefore, I ask, if the role of the choreographer carries so much weight and responsibility, what education is provided to young dance-makers to enable them to make dances with a breadth of awareness and expertise required in this role? The role of choreographer is a role of leadership (Butterworth, 2004; Byrnes et al., 2018; Flønes et al., 2022; Foster-Sproull, 2021; Gerecke & Levin, 2018; Knox, 2013; Østern, 2020). It therefore requires skill in communication, problem solving, people management, emotional

intelligence, visioning, motivation, and engages concerns for ethics and equity (Elmuti et al., 2005). It also highlights a possible duty of care to the people they engage (Atwijuka & Caldwell, 2017; Ciulla, 2009), for their creative and personal wellbeing.

If these skills are absent, or the leadership style is authoritarian, autocratic, or transactional, and as the literature shows, the choreographer may be the very reason that detrimental working relationships and environments persist, and their attributes perpetuated in negative and harmful ways (Lakes, 2005; Shilcutt et al., 2021). This then positions the choreography education context as responsible for students' leadership development. Subsequently, in conjunction the context also needs to attend to those who will work with the choreographer as dancers, and collaborators, and supporters. Therefore, the list of required learning of various followership and collaborative skills expands to respond to the diverse people, needs and aspirations present within the choreography classroom. New Zealand universities' graduate profiles cite leadership and social skills as being valued graduate attributes and suggest these skills are desired within the workplace (University of Otago, 2023; University of Auckland, 2023; University of Waikato, 2023b), but if these fall consistently into the hidden curriculum, or null curriculum, are students actually receiving the education relevant in order to develop these skills, are they even being developed, or, therefore, are institutions making promises they cannot keep?

This literature review has ascertained that there is limited scholarship that attends to choreography pedagogy (Stevens, 2000). This dearth is a perplexing disconnect from the plethora of dance education scholarship that attests to how dance is and can be used to teach personal and interpersonal skills as part of a moral and holistic education. This gap within the scholarship could indicate either it is not a consideration within choreography teaching and learning, that there is limited skill present for current teacher-scholars, or there is limited awareness of the realities of choreography education holding space for numerous other pertinent learning opportunities.

Stevens (2000) appears to value the idea that students should learn choreography skills from the 'masters.' While this may have, as Stevens (2000) notes, historical and cultural value relevant to a wider dance education, this learning is predominantly focussed on the performance product and does not mention learning about the artists' or practitioners' processes. This provocation is supported by Davenport (2006) who addresses the fact that

composition courses may not attend to the creative process required to actually make dances. Further studying the ‘masters’ may have implications whereby students are learning about seminal works that may have been made through authoritarian processes, such as those interrogated by Lakes (2005). This ethical problem begs the question, what do we value within our choreography courses and which parts of a possible choreographic education do we place into the curriculum, the hidden curriculum, or null curriculum, and why? Subsequently, how may we be enhancing or limiting the skills and experiences students encounter and how might this impact their industry preparedness? These skills pertain to the development of students’ own ethics, morals, their worldview, and creative and collaborative values. These in turn affect the ways in which the role of choreographer is enacted by future generations of dance leaders, and has the potential to overturn, or perpetuate, the detrimental working environments noted earlier.

Furthermore, I problematise that the suggestion of studying the “‘best” of the best’ for Stevens (2000, p. 89) appears to mean famous choreographers of western dance forms. ‘Best’ is of course a subjective word. Additionally, language such as “acceptable” and “successful” are determined to be problematic (Davenport, 2006a, p. 26). Additionally, within the diverse student cohorts and aspired career pathways we see within dance degrees in New Zealand, observing the ‘best’ choreographers’ work may or may not be relevant. Who decides which choreographers to focus upon, and which choreographic conventions are valued over others? Finally, Stevens (2000) view that vocational choreography training, and not academic study of choreography, engages students’ “personal imagination and expression” (p. 89) appears to contrast dramatically with the extensive body of research of Lavender (1994, 1995, 1997, 2006, 2009, 2012) and Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2016) who argue that choreography within undergraduate courses explicitly invites engagement with these parts of student identity and experience.

The question of process versus product within choreography education emerges within the literature (Ashley, 2003; Davenport, 2006a, 2006b; Lavender, 1994, 1995, 2006, 2009, 2012; Milling & Green, 2014). However, in my professional experience I have observed that, in reality, process and product fold into one another. Hämäläinen (2002) untangles the ways in which the focus on product or process has evolved through choreography education historically. This evolution evidences an initial focus on performance product and the teacher being the holder of knowledge (Green, 1999, 2002), and gradually invites the student

choreographer more and more into a constructivist learning process and into critical conversations about their process, but also positions them as the authority on the work they are making (Hämäläinen, 2002).

In several cases the scholarship begins to reveal the relationship between choreography teacher and students within tertiary education. In particular Lavender (1994, 1995, 1997, 2006, 2009, 2012) and Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2016) allude to the ways in which choreography pedagogy is enacted, and the various aspects of the choreography learning pathway into professional dance making require the educator to attend to. This literature is some of the richest and most useful scholarship in understanding the pedagogical methods teachers might use to teach dance making with a focus on both “skills of *composition* in dance” (Lavender & Predock-Linnell, 2016, p. 198, original emphasis) and on responding to various “pedagogical burden[s]” (Lavender & Predock-Linnell, 2016, p. 198) that choreography education reveals for the teacher.

Certain language used within the literature raises issues when it is used to indicate why particular choices are made about content and pedagogy. For example, Van Dyke (2005) exposes that she starts teaching with a “traditional way of making dances” (p. 117). But I ask: which tradition? How might associated assumptions influence what is valued within assessment? Van Dyke (2005) states her approach is guided by “what I think good choreography is” (p. 116). Again, I ask what does ‘good’ mean, according to who and in which context? (Davenport, 2006b). More broadly, I propose the questions could be what are useful/relevant/interesting/novel choreography skills? How might they be offered, discovered, tested, learned, evidenced, and assessed? Furthermore, which skills are we referring to and why? These might include creative, interpersonal, and personal skills.

Given that choreography is a creative activity and therefore students are expected to develop their creative abilities within choreography education, Rowe and Zeitner-Smith’s (2011) research on ‘creativity dexterity’ is a useful way of viewing the necessity for the ability to shift and flex one’s creative skills in relation to different contexts, relationships, or requirements. Rowe and Zeitner-Smith (2011) propose adaptability between techniques and creative practices as the “creative dexterity,” that is, “an ability to flexibly adapt to the different levels of creative engagement required by different choreographic circumstances” (p. 42).

Choreography education highlights collaboration as a required skill and as a learning strategy. In tertiary dance education, the collaborative process of learning is valued highly as the learning product in pedagogy (Roche & Huddy, 2015), since it enables plentiful opportunities for students to learn and create together (Schupp, 2015). However, it is clear that collaborative choreography does not always result in positive experiences for students.

The literature reveals that choreography education inherently permits particular kinds of engagement from students. Ashley (2003) observed that students are able to “deepen self-knowledge” and “evaluate, re-evaluate, confront and reconstruct self” (p. 69). She notes that this takes place in relation to interactions with self and others. Similarly, Hawkins (1954) proposes that as students create something that comes from them: “he must clarify his feelings and sort out and organize his ideas. Through this process he gains a new awareness of self and a feeling of integration” (p. 92-93). These points of developing understanding of self and others attest to the ways in which choreography education is valuable within a dance student’s education. This is well aligned with the previous discussion of the values of dance education and indicates that pedagogy suited to explicitly exploring self-actualisation as part of the choreographic process would be beneficial to student learning.

2.3.1. Choreography curriculum

The literature evidences that there are two main approaches to designing a dance making curriculum. One focusses primarily on composition knowledge, and the other explores choreography learning more broadly. The key distinction, I believe, is that composition courses attend to dance making as a series of practical steps or strategies to make dances through considering compatibility, relationships, and fusion of movement material, and the development of an aesthetic eye (Smith-Autard, 2014). Choreography education appears to widen the lens of the choreography context and position other elements of dance making as equally important to the composition skills, such as collaboration, personal development, and critical thinking. Davenport (2006a) adds that while composition courses implicitly require creativity to be evidenced in student work, teachers do not always teach the “activity” of being creative, “which itself requires critical reasoning” (p. 25). This has implications for how curriculums are built, how the duration of choreography courses might be spent, and which skills are assessed and how.

It is possible that a composition curriculum might be more relevant to conservatoire dance training and the production of western concert dance (Davenport, 2006b). Alternatively, I argue that the range of possible career pathways students move into from liberal arts dance degrees demands acquisition of 21st century skills, such as the creative and collaborative understandings developed within a broader choreography curriculum. Choreography education may also more effectively respond to diverse student needs and interests and specifically to the cultural diversity that may be present within dance making classes in Aotearoa.

A further very relevant possibility gained from the holistic nature of choreography education, in contrast to composition, is that choreography creates space to more explicitly attend to 21st century skills (Battelle for Kids, 2019b, 2019a). Graduate profiles illustrate the focus on these skills (University of Otago, 2023; University of Auckland, 2023; University of Waikato, 2023b) and choreography is fertile ground for creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication to be fostered. It is likely that a composition curriculum simply would not attend to these. Within a liberal arts and dance education environment the domain specific skills to make dances may or may not be useful to diverse graduates, however the soft skills developed will transfer well to other environments within and beyond dance.

It could be assumed that where aspects of making choreography are not attended to in the curriculum (for example collaborative skills within a composition course), this learning falls into the hidden or null curriculum (Brownell, 2017; Wren, 1999) From here numerous questions can be raised, are choreography teachers aware of this learning? Do they engage with it, or not? Why and how? What impact does this have on students and graduates? Is there an implication here that indicates some composition teachers do not have the skills or expertise to teach the skills that fall into these additional curriculums? This again nods to Warburton's (2008) request for dance educators to have balanced content and pedagogical knowledge.

2.3.2. Choreography educators

When considering who choreography educators are, they frequently identify as people who bring professional choreography experience and a creative practice (Davenport, 2006a; Stevens, 2000). This could be perceived as indicating the necessity for choreography

educators to hold content knowledge in order to teach dance making. Stevens (2000) suggests that a choreography teacher is a product of their own choreographic background, inadvertently drawing attention to the problem of inherited pedagogies (Warburton, 2008) whereby teachers teach in the way they were taught. It would also seem that choreography content and values might be inherited along with pedagogies, and subsequently students may receive an outdated or irrelevant choreography learning experience. This raises questions around how choreography educators develop their approach and curriculum in relation to more recent scholarship and changes in the industry.

Specifically in the New Zealand context, Tubman's (2022) research interrogates students' perceptions of their choreography teachers' engagement through the lens of ethics of care theory (Noddings, 1988, 2002, 2012b, 2013). Her findings evidence the ways in which students' perceptions of their teacher, for example, how they view their teacher's reputation or pedagogical approach, influences their overall experiences of making choreography. The research revealed that students view their teacher's role differently within choreography education than in dance technique classes, for example (Tubman, 2022). Emerging themes from Tubman's study are pertinent to the present research in providing understanding of expectations students have of the power, emotional availability, and vulnerability of the teacher when teaching choreography. These points lead to significant questions from the teachers' pedagogical and personal perspectives. For example, how do teachers experience these expectations towards their pedagogical approach: how do they negotiate their own emotions in relation to students'; and, as Tubman (2022) proposes, "how might teachers and students interpret and experience caring actions differently" (p. 39)? Subsequently, how might this impact the effectiveness of the teaching and learning relationships and reveal further issues for aspects of assessment, class planning, and hidden curriculum?

There is a view that presents a binary between 'the artist' and 'the educator'. This problematic perspective suggests that we might be one or the other, or that perhaps we must be more experienced or knowledgeable about one over the other. Sööt and Viskus (2014) name this the "grand myth of the artist-educator divide" (p. 294). In my opinion, such a chasm serves no purpose and may in fact limit the creative possibilities that come into play within choreography education. Likewise, Risner (2010) asks how we might reconcile the "intimate educational connections between the dance artist and the dance teacher/educator" (p. 98). This dichotomy fails to recognise the diversity of skills and experiences a person may

bring, especially pertinent within an arts landscape like New Zealand's that is shifting to value portfolios careers and where freelance pathways are a necessity. I also question how a perceived incongruence between professional expertise and emerging scholarly experience within the academy might be used by more senior academics in order to justify "academic gatekeeping" (Moravec, 2021, p. 222), siloing roles, identities, and services, within educational, academic and creative contexts. In the case of the present study the participants do offer a balance of pedagogical knowledge, scholarly understanding, and choreographic expertise. The congruency of their roles might only enhance their skill as choreography educators, in that they may be able to draw from and combine their knowledge in infinite ways for their students' benefit.

Given the context of this research which explores choreography educators who teach in bachelor's degrees, the educators are likely employed as academics, who are noted as fulfilling the role of 'critic and conscience of society' (Grace, 2010). But how does this relate to the teaching and learning of choreography? What are choreography educators' responsibilities in the academy, and what are the associated implications for pedagogy? One could apply the notion of critic and conscience to the choreography learning context in that the educator might promote intellectual and creative freedoms (Shephard, 2020), uphold the quality of the art being made, as relevant to the evolving demands and trends of the professional industry, to call for and foster the kinds of communities in the classroom we wish to see in the world, and make comment upon the responsibilities of artists to be advocates and leaders in the 21st century.

2.3.3. Choreography pedagogies

How do students actually become "better choreographers"? (Lavender & Predock-Linnell, 2016, p. 295), and how do educators support this? Davenport, (2006b) critically considers "if teachers in higher education and performing arts high schools have taken upon themselves to 'turn out' the next generation of choreographers, then pedagogy must be examined" (p. 5). Much literature focuses on choreography curriculum content and despite referring to "choreographic pedagogy" in fact only attends to the 'what' of the teaching, and little on the 'how' or 'why'. Both Stevens (2000) and Van Dyke (2005) indicate literature about choreography pedagogy but do little to offer insight into which conversations they are referring.

So which “supportive teaching behaviours” (Davenport, 2006, p. 25) are present within choreography education? Lavender’s (1994, 1995, 1997, 2006, 2009, 2012) body of research responds well to this query by articulating a range of pedagogical methods to support the development of students’ critical choreographic skills. Lavender (2012) draws attention to the possibilities of decision making that choreographic practice offers. Of particular use to guide students towards and through their creative decisions the IDEA process and Creative Process Mentoring strategies (Lavender, 2012) provides detailed suggestions to guide students through the different aspects and steps of dance-making. The purpose of these are to focus on the process rather than the product (Lavender, 2006, 2012). Through engaging in dialogue, Lavender (2009) suggests the teacher may be able to capture “an active collaborative energy that enhances the teaching-learning transaction” (p. 378). This can be understood as akin to a constructivist pedagogy where the teacher and student are equally generative as they create, through their interactions, new knowledge (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Buck, 2022; Ottey, 1996) about the work being made, as well as more broadly the creative process, choreography, learning, and their world.

It can be proposed that choreography education simply cannot be taught through a transmissive pedagogy. Transmissive pedagogy has historically dominated dance learning and aims to position the teacher as expert (Burnidge, 2012; Dyer, 2009; Stinson, 2015; Warburton, 2008) who delivers information ‘into’ the students, often in a way that disregards their ability to think or create their own ways of being and knowing (Koff, 2021; Shapiro, 2016). The student, as the ‘vessel’ then replicates what they have learned. Instead, student-centred and constructivist pedagogies (Richardson, 2003) can be considered relevant to a choreography context where students investigate their own creative lines of inquiry and respond to their own needs, curiosities, and imaginations.

But what are choreography educators (as opposed to composition teachers) doing when they teach? Davenport (2006a) states they are engaging, sharing, modelling, controlling, guiding the various elements of the choreography courses and teaching/learning moment and there is the need to remain flexible about the process and outcome. Furthermore, the teacher/choreographer’s creative expertise is drawn upon in order to inform the pedagogical decisions made (Davenport, 2006a). This would indicate that with choreography learning a transmissive pedagogy is less relevant and useful than in composition course. Meaning, teaching choreography is potentially a more complex activity requiring deeper content and

pedagogical knowledge, and therefore, demands a more improvisational, creative, and experiential pedagogical approach. This may explain the limited evidence of pedagogical concern present within the literature around composition curriculum.

Van Dyke (2005) proposes relevant questions such as “what is the best way to teach choreography ...? How much can be done? How much should be done? Where do we start?” (p. 116). Stevens (2000) asks, “who is best equipped to teach choreography at undergraduate level” (p. 88)? Artists and academics may create their own choreography pedagogy based upon their experience and values, but there does not appear to be consensus about what best practice might be (Stevens, 2000). This indicates that there is a lack of choreography pedagogy education available for teachers who may find themselves teaching, or desire to teach choreography in higher education. Stevens (2000) identification of the kinds of people who may teach within a university context also alludes to the fact that artists and academics may bring divergent skills, knowledge and ideas about what choreography is and how it should/could be taught.

The “choreographic teaching methods” (Stevens, 2000, p. 87) offered within the literature were found to predominantly focus upon the teaching of composition skills relevant to western concert dance, taught through the process of students making a dance which is then critiqued by the teacher, improved by the students, and then presented to an audience, who is ideally pleased with what they witness (Davenport, 2006b). Davenport (2006a) identifies that a pedagogical model and curriculum design where student work is critiqued by the teacher may be insufficient for creative development. This also means that the creative process by which the work is made is rendered less important than the product, when in actuality this process is the very activity that calls upon students’ creativity and produces the choreographic challenges that develop students’ creative skills. The product is simply a consequence of the decisions made along the way. This might position the creative process as worthy of deeper consideration and assessment within the curriculum.

I argue that the methods, activities, and tasks communicated within much of the research are but one part of choreography pedagogy. These reveal content knowledge, but give insight into the pedagogical knowledge, the pedagogical content knowledge (Fortin, 1993), or even the pedagogical hidden choreography curriculum knowledge choreography educators may need to possess.

In relation to how choreography educators might engage or evidence their pedagogical content knowledge, Davenport (2006b) rigorously insists that,

the point of developing an educationally provocative approach to teaching composition is to honor high standards and creativity within the discipline of dance, to develop pedagogical insight, to demystify choreographic processes, and possibly even to insure greater effectiveness more often. ... creative problem-solving emanates from the stumped artist or teacher whose mind reaches for a solution. (p. 5)

This statement from Davenport (2006b) feels beautifully evocative of the effort and labour that a choreography educator might undertake in teaching; not simply reaching for the easiest solution in order to prompt a student to refine their work in accordance with our own artistic preferences (Davenport, 2006b). But rather, to assess our own values, assumptions, and inclinations, to reach into the unknown as we teach, at the risk of these providing friction, revealing what we do not know, to topple us from our pedestal, and push us to redefine our methodology or ideology.

Pedagogical content knowledge (Fortin, 1993) requires educators to be “highly experienced in the subject content, capable of understanding the contexts”, and for them to “possess highly refined perception skills” (Hämäläinen, 2002, p. 44). This is especially pertinent to choreography education where educators need to perceive the interwoven nature of a students’ learning, the creative process and the dance being made as a consequence of both these avenues. Eisner (1996) calls this ability perception connoisseurship. This implies both the expertise of the teacher, as well as an ability to appreciate and understand the “characteristics and qualities” (Eisner, 2005, p. 49). of what they are looking at. And, as such “knowing what to look for, being able to recognise skill, form and imagination” (Eisner, 2005, p. 49).

It has been identified that the choreography class presents the possibility of unique and meaningful relationships student-student and student-teacher. Tubman (2022) found that the creative context of choreography demands vulnerability from students, and that sharing ideas can be “terrifying” (p. 21). Therefore, it can be asked how choreography educators negotiate, facilitate and lead students through creative processes with this in mind. Picking up again on the relevance of Tubman’s (2022) study, the question of a pedagogy of care arises.

The literature surrounding choreographic roles (Butterworth, 2004; Byrnes et al., 2018; Newall & Fortin, 2012) also provides critical questions of how choreography educators might approach their roles. In which ways do educators extend into various positions of leading, mentoring, modelling, collaborating, choreographing, facilitating, teaching, or impeding the creative work of their students? Butterworth's (2004) didactic to democratic model of choreographic relationships provides a framework that articulates various collaborative relationships. The challenge of this research however is that while the scope of the relationships is described, the skills to be in those relationships are not attended to. Extending this into the pedagogy, the *how* of teaching such relationships is also absent.

Warburton (2008) rightly argues for pedagogical knowledge when teaching dance. However, his assertion of "pedagogy as choreography" (p. 11) is an evocative and extremely relevant proposition for the present study. The notion of choreography pedagogy being choreographic in itself alludes to questions: In which ways could a choreography teacher be choreographing their pedagogy? How might a choreographic approach to teaching support students' creative learning? How could choreography pedagogies mimic aspects of the choreographic process and therefore enhance curriculum engagement?

2.4. Choreography Education in New Zealand

Certain scholarship attending to tertiary choreography education specifically in New Zealand has grown out of postgraduate and academic staff research projects in Dance Studies at The University of Auckland (Jones, 2020; 'Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2020; Rowe et al., 2020; Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011; Tubman, 2022; Yang, 2020). These studies, and others such as those of Ashley and Nakamura (2011), Barbour (2014), and East (2007, 2011) flesh out the various ways in which choreography is taught within Aotearoa and give insight into the unique approaches to content, and the cultural and pedagogical dilemmas of this context. These studies also present research that is relevant to other cultural contexts, and complements scholarship that attends to tertiary dance education more broadly. Student experiences of choreography are the focus of some scholarship (B. Jones, 2020; 'Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2020; Tubman, 2022; Yang, 2020), with other studies engaging with teacher's experiences, pedagogies, or curriculum (East, 2011, 2019; Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011).

Of most significance to the present study is Tubman's (2022) research which explored tertiary students' perceptions of their choreography teachers through the lens of ethics of care theory (Noddings, 1988, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2012b, 2012c, 2013). Tubman's (2022) research found that students have particular expectations of their choreography teachers in relation to their experiences of creative and emotional vulnerability, that do not exist in other areas of the dance curriculum. When students perceive their choreography teachers as providers of individualised care, to show engrossment and enthusiasm, and to be responsive to students needs in the ways that students wish, students' creativity is enhanced and typically they have more positive and meaningful choreographic experiences. Furthermore, students desire trusting and reciprocal relationships with their teachers, as well as safety, and clear communication/feedback (Tubman, 2022). The findings of Tubman's (2022) study are relevant to the present research in providing insights around how teachers and students perceive one another within choreography education, and how their expectations may align, or not, and subsequently can produce issues within the classroom.

Jones' (2020) auto narrative study interrogated her experiences of creative motivation within collaborative choreography in the Bachelor of Dance Studies degree. The study revealed the ways in which students might experience social interdependence as a motivating factor within their creative processes. Of pertinence, Jones' (2020) study identified further questions that the present study may begin to respond to. For example, "how might transactions of collaborative decision making, present various obstacles in a student's learning, and how is it complex?" (p. 39). The implication of such a question for the present study is in the concern for how a teacher might influence how these collaborative choreographic experiences play out. Assuming that choreography educators are aware of students' collaborative and creative challenges whilst dance making, how do they choose to guide, shift or propose relevant learning, why and when? Furthermore, Jones' (2020) research adds to the body of scholarship which asks questions of how collaboration can be taught and facilitated within higher education and dance contexts.

How choreography education responds and engages with cultural challenges is pertinent within New Zealand's multicultural context within the Pacific (Byrnes et al., 2018; Rowe et al., 2015). Addressing these cultural concerns, 'Ofamo'oni and Rowe (2020) unpack the specific cultural needs of Pacific undergraduate students and their particular culturally relevant ways of engaging in collaborative practices. The authors' *Māfana* framework

articulates students' experiences aspirations for choreography learning as a collective process, in ways that are pertinent to our locations within Oceania, and in order to effectively support and engage students from indigenous backgrounds. 'Ofamo'oni and Rowe (2020) identify "how, when left in a learning space beyond the oversight of a teacher, [students] began to resurrect their shared cultural values and practices" (p. 2-3). This indicates perhaps there is an absence of relevant opportunities for Pacific, and likely Māori, students to engage in collaborative and group learning in culturally germane ways that support their learning, identity affirmation, and creativity. I question how the use of the word oversight might lead towards possible issues of teachers' power, control and curriculum or pedagogical limitations in this context. This provokes a consideration of how choreography educators might (better) respond to the diverse cultural needs of students, within classes, and how they might invite students' cultural competence, collaborative relationships, and community building skills into the classroom.

Another relevant study is that of Yang (2020) who deals with Chinese students' experiences of cultural difference and marginalisation within choreography education in Aotearoa. Yang (2020) found that within undergraduate collaborative choreographic processes, international students experiences can be "influenced by negative intercultural attitudes" (p. 83) of local students. This can be due to challenges of language, time limitations, and perceptions and assumptions about the value of cultural difference (Yang, 2020). These issues are pertinent to this study which focusses on teachers' experiences of facilitating students' collaborative choreography. How are educators fostering appreciation and positive engagement with diversity within their classrooms, and how can choreography education be used to develop students' cultural competence?

Both 'Ofamo'oni and Rowe's (2020) and Yang's (2020) research points to an important layer of consideration within choreography learning; that of cultural difference. It is noted that collaborative work can be used as a deliberate strategy to encourage intercultural student relationships (Buchmüller et al., 2021; O'Brien & Eriksson, 2008; Repman et al., 2007). With Aotearoa being a bi-cultural country with a multicultural society (Napan et al., 2020), culture (of all kinds) is a significant and unavoidable aspect of the choreography class that demands response and skill. It is clear that within the western frameworks of the liberal arts university context of New Zealand, there remains scope for teaching and learning to be more responsive and inviting of different ways of knowing, being, relating, and creating. With institutions

encouraging the acceptance of international students and requiring courses to engage with particular student demographics, choreography education can become both a creatively fertile and challenging cultural context.

The broader cultural context implicitly pushes educators, who are at the centre of the collision between curriculum, students, and cultures, into a position where they must know (or learn) how to negotiate tensions, climate, culture, and relationships within the choreography classroom. Beyond this, collaborative attributes such as empathy, curiosity, and communication are also pulled clearly into view. This provides questions about the professional expertise and development of choreography educators. How do educators view such challenges and experiences? How do they develop their own cultural competencies? What support and professional learning is available? How is this perceived by students? And, in what ways might a teacher's own cultural identity influence how these interactions play out?

Furthermore, attending to the notion of culture, issues of cultural understanding and difference within the choreography classroom are likely to be broader than ethnicity. It has been found that while diversity can have positive effects on problem solving (Curşeu & Pluut, 2013), it can also be the source of social challenges in collaborative group work (Clark & Baker, 2006; Yang, 2020). Within choreography courses, students hail from myriad dance backgrounds, styles, and cultures, bring various abilities, aspirations, and attitudes towards what makes 'good' choreography. They differ in prior collaborative experiences, perceptions of leadership and followership, perceptions, and expectations of the role of the teacher, and diverse experiences and ideas towards embodiment, touch, gender, sexuality, faith, communication, personality, lifestyle, time management, and more. This points to both obvious and invisible differences, and to intersectionality, that may influence how students and educators perceive, understand, and work with one another. In this way, the notions of intercultural competence and collaborative skill intersect and demand awareness and responsiveness from both students and educators.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of literature relevant to the research question. Key debates and tensions pertaining to dance education and choreography education have been

explored. Choreography was interrogated as a creative and collaborative activity, as was the role of choreography educator and choreography pedagogies. The New Zealand context has been explored and the ways in which this might affect how choreography education is enacted.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology for examining the research question: Within tertiary choreography courses in New Zealand, what are three dance educators' meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography?

The objective of a study design is to attend to the needs of the research question and the context it is situated within (Nelson et al., 1992; Wildemuth, 1993). Writing this chapter encouraged me to “establish what [I am] trying to achieve ... [and to] understand the implications” (Mason, 2002, p. 4) of what I aimed to do and how I chose to do it. Through this process I critically considered my assumptions about the research and how these impacted upon the development of the study (Mason, 2002a).

Within this chapter, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research are unpacked, as these viewpoints drive the methodological decisions that follow (Al-Saadi, 2014; Grix, 2004; Mack, 2010; Mills et al., 2006; Moon et al., 1991). The chapter then addresses the theoretical framework of the study, which includes post-positivist, qualitative, and constructivist paradigms. This leads to articulation of the narrative method. Within this section, the demographic and selection of the participants is explained. Following this, my position as a researcher is noted in regard to how this impacted the study. Semi-structured interviews are explored as the data collection method. An articulation of thematic analysis follows. Finally, issues concerning the trustworthiness and validity of the research, including the ethical considerations made, are outlined along with the challenges and limitations of the research.

3.1. Ontology

What is ‘reality’, and what is it that I sought to know within this research (Kuada, 2012; Schraw, 2013)? The study of ontology calls into question what we believe about reality and the relationship between human beings and the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Levers, 2013). Mack (2010) suggests that “ontology is the starting point which will likely lead to your own theoretical framework” (p. 5).

In the case of this research, I sought to understand what tertiary educators' perspectives of teaching choreography are, and how they make meaning from their experiences. Although the educators are working within the same wider New Zealand tertiary dance context, they all have different experiences and perspectives. Given this, I selected to engage a relativist ontological stance within this research. Ontological relativism maintains that there are multiple socially constructed realities (Guba, 1992; Kuada, 2012) – as many realities as there are people (Levers, 2013). Lee (2012) stated that “the very raw stuff of our world created by one cognitive agent is different from that of another agent ... there exist multiple realities rather than multiple conceptualizations of one reality” (p. 407). This perspective recognises that while the broader context of tertiary dance in New Zealand may offer a range of teaching and learning situations, there can also be nuances of understanding and interpretation between the choreography educators of the same situation. There may be intersecting experiences, within the very same institution, collaboration, class, rehearsal, or creative task that can be experienced differently. This can be due to the educators' interpretations of the wider context, prior learning, backgrounds, or relationships, and these influence how situations are perceived.

Mack (2010) suggests that a “researcher's intentions, goals and philosophical assumptions are inextricably linked with the research they do” (p. 5). Additionally, my ontological and epistemological assumptions within this research stemmed from my experiences of the tertiary dance education domain. These experiences of teaching and learning choreographic collaboration were the seeds of this research journey. In assessing my own pedagogical ontological stance, my views aligned with Schraw's (2013), who states:

A relativist position assumes that each learner constructs a unique knowledge base that is different but equal to other learners' knowledge. Teachers with relativist world views deny the primacy of their own knowledge and emphasize their role in creating an environment where students can learn to think independently. They also assume that knowledge must differ among students to the extent that the reality in which students construct and apply knowledge is different among students. (p. 3)

It may also be understood that a relativist ontology aligns with the act of collaboration (Schraw, 2013). Each participant has their own individual experience and meaning-making process as they teach choreography. In this way, learning about collaborative choreography inherently requires a degree of student-centredness, due to the infinite potential ways that a

collaborative learning task might unfold. Educators and students respond to the creative collaborative learning as it develops, recognising that each person involved may hold a unique perspective, rather than the teacher presupposing the realist collaborative information that should be transmitted to students. A relativist ontological stance creates space for these multiple layers of reality and experience to be present and valid within the study.

3.2. Epistemology

The study of epistemology interrogates how we know what we know and aims to understand “the relationship between the inquirer and the knowable, or between the knower and the respondent” (Lee, 2012, p. 207). Reflecting upon the epistemological underpinnings of this research clarified the values that drive it and revealed the kinds of understandings I sought. It also indicated how I might go about generating such understandings with the research participants.

This research has taken the relativist stance that there is no singular ontological reality or truth; our ontological worlds are informed by our diverse epistemological experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The epistemological assumptions that underpin this research are that knowledge is created and recreated in the mind of a person, as they interact with their world, and in relation to their previously acquired experiences and understandings (Ackermann, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Murphy, 1997). This thinking was useful within this research, as a constructivist stance acknowledges that a person’s ontology may shift as their experiences overlap, meld, consolidate or contradict one another (Dougiamas, 1998). This notion provoked questions, such as: How do dance educators form their meanings of collaboration, and how does this inform what and how they teach within their choreography courses? How have their meanings changed over time and what influenced this? In support of the myriad ways these questions can be answered, Crotty (1998) suggests that each person’s “way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other” (p. 58).

Al-Saadi (2014) notes that epistemology can also be what is “regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline” (p. 2). A constructivist epistemology is inherent within the context of choreographic collaboration, in that the people involved are engaged in their own unique experience of generating contributions and meaning within a collective dance making process (Knox, 2013). A constructivist epistemology is widely engaged within dance education research (Cameron Frichtel, 2017; Huddy & Stevens, 2014; Johnson & Milling, 2015;

Melchior, 2011). As with the ontological perspective, my pedagogical values and experiences informed my epistemological position. My beliefs about the choreographic collaborative learning context and the role of the teacher within this are that of facilitation and responsiveness to the emerging creative journeys of the students. We learn and discover together, stumbling and falling upon meaning as we go. This is also reflective of a constructivist epistemological stance.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

Developing from the ontological and epistemological values discussed above, this section introduces the paradigms engaged that guide the research journey. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) propose that paradigms are the “net” (p. 183) that contains the ontological and epistemological positions of the research. These paradigms worked to maintain the worldview that is ‘taken for granted’ throughout the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Post-positivist, qualitative and constructivist paradigms were selected to draw together the threads of appreciation for multiple socially constructed realities, and co-created understandings, equally valuing the researcher and participants’ voices.

3.3.1. Post-positivism

To explore how tertiary dance educators in New Zealand perceive teaching choreography, a post-positivist paradigm was selected. Like the relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology, post-positivist research takes the stance that there are multiple truths and realities (Borland, 1990; Ryan, 2006) and that these are socially constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In addition, post-positivist research also recognises that realities may be flawed, fallible and can only be approximated (Charney, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). This research has not sought to reveal or prove one singular truth. It aimed to appreciate all voices and perspectives equally. Within this study, I aimed to understand what is relevant to the participants on their terms and in their context (Borland, 1990; Ryan, 2006).

Within a post-positivist paradigm, it is acknowledged that the researcher is complexly entwined with the researched (Borland, 1990). Within this research, I, as the researcher, sought to interpret and make meaning *with* the people involved (Ryan, 2006) and this required me to utilise my own knowledge of the research context. This has echoed the

constructivist epistemology and paradigm and draws in my positioning as an educational connoisseur within the research.

3.3.2. *Qualitative approach*

Qualitative research “plays with words instead of numbers” (Lewis, 1997, p. 87), often aiming to explore how the world is interpreted, understood, experienced and created by people (Mason, 2002). Hence, facts and figures that might be analysed or quantified were not the focus. Instead, the aim was to create contextual understandings of tertiary choreography through garnering and generating “rich descriptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 10). These descriptions required “nuanced and detailed data” and sought to understand “complexity, detail and context” (Mason, 2002, p. 3).

This research investigated the experiences of a small, specific group of dance educators and attended to what is meaningful to them within their unique context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) of tertiary choreography teaching. This focus allowed,

a wide array of dimensions of the social world [to be explored], including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences, and imaginings ..., the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of meanings that they generate. (Mason, 2002, p. 1)

Qualitative research is also proposed to be relevant to educational research because of its immediate focus on people, what they do and how they relate (Eisner, 1998). Relevant to this research, Eisner (1998) states that “[t]he arts are paradigm cases of qualitative intelligence in action” (p. 6). The context and central activity that guides this research is choreography education, within which ways of thinking and being, such as creativity and collaboration, are implicit. This qualitative thinking and action can be examined, and qualitative research values data that speaks to thinking, meanings, values, feelings, and experiences. The data that captures such qualities can be in the form of stories, observations, anecdotes, feelings, and questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2013).

3.3.3. Constructivist frame

A constructivist theoretical frame was selected to guide this research. As both a philosophical viewpoint and a methodology (Snook, 2012) constructivist research aims to “understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge” (Mertens, 1998, p. 11). In the case of this research, the participants involved shared their meanings of teaching choreography tertiary dance education, and together we considered how these may have been formed, as they participate in ongoing choreographic teaching and learning with their colleagues and students.

Similarly, to qualitative and post-positivist research, a constructivist approach recognises that within a research process, the researcher plays an influential and iterative role in gaining, examining, and interpreting data. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that the “investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (p. 111). This meant that my knowledge was valued in dialogue with the participants and consequentially impacted how we made meaning together.

3.4. Research Methods

The theoretical framework above directed the study towards numerous suitable research methods. Each of these methods provide different perspectives for understanding the phenomena investigated within this research. Within this section I also discuss the people with whom I generate the narratives: the research participants. I articulate how and why they were selected, through the method of purposeful sampling.

3.4.1. Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative method through which the aim is to seek understanding of human experience (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Bell (2002) notes that “narrative inquiry rests on the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures” (p. 207), for example emplotment and temporal trajectory. Relevant to this, is the distinction made by Connelly and Clandinin, (1990), and Carpenter and Emerald (2009) between ‘story’ being the phenomenon under

study, and ‘narrative’ being the process through which a researcher studies the stories and experience. Similarly, Bruner (1985) and Polkinghorne (1995) note that narrative inquiry can take two forms: paradigmatic analysis and narrative analysis. Paradigmatic analysis works with the narratives received *as* data. Narrative analysis aims to “synthesise or configure” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12) elements of field data into a narrative research text (Kim, 2016). This then provides a profile or case study for further analysis. A group of narrative vignettes united by research theme may provide more depth and nuanced insight than a singular example (Seidman, 1991).

It should be noted that narrative research aims toward verisimilitude, rather than truth (Bruner, 1985). The narrative creation results from the collaborative interactions between participant and researcher (Tierney, 1993) in the interviews. What the participants offered the research process was subjective, selective, and incomplete, and the analysis and narrative construction are the work of the researcher (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this way, this process required my expertise and observations to again be woven into the experiences and thoughts offered by the participants, and this results in a further layer of constructivist epistemology.

This research engaged a “recursive, reflexive process” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 1) to organise and present the data, in the case of this research, the interview transcripts. This process required an initial analysis of the material available, to decide which content to include and which to leave out through the assessment of themes. The aim of engaging a narrative inquiry method was to seek “relational significance” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7) between the participant’s experiences as a way to build meaning through plot creation. Selected parts of the transcripts were “constituted” and made “functions” of the narrative (Bruner, 1991, p. 8). With consideration for temporal organisation, relationships were drawn between events, ideas, and experiences to generate a coherent plot. Including details of cultural context and various relationships was also important to ensure that the narratives were grounded in the particular ‘realities’ of each participant and the wider research milieu of collaborative choreography education. These draw attention to possible meanings as they emerge (Dollard, 1935). The narrative created then became the data for interpretation and analysis (Reissman, 2005).

The narrative presented as Chapter 4 was constructed by weaving together the three individual participants’ voices, stitched together with my own as an imagined group

conversation. This is similar to ‘composite narratives’ (Johnston et al., 2021; McElhinney & Kennedy, 2022; Willis, 2019) where several interview transcripts are combined to form a single story. In the present study, however, I chose to maintain attribution of experiences and perspectives to each individual rather than integrating them into a sole person’s story. Borrowing the words of Willis (2019), I found “the picture thrown out by the data was richer, more tangled and more personal than I had anticipated” (p. 473). In response to this, I made the decision towards polyphony (Niemi et al., 2010) or polyvocality (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2018) in order to unpick and organise the data received. I wished to further reveal the expertise of the educators within our community, reflect the intersecting nature of our relationships, and illuminate the nuances and distinctions within pertinent themes in preparation for Chapter 5. The combined narrative also allowed me to edit the participants’ words more effectively, with the aim to conceal identity and protect confidentiality. It also allowed me to maintain my “interactive voice” as narrator (Niemi et al., 2010, p. 140) in evidencing the decisions made around how, and where, to introduce key themes, with the ability to share my own experiences at relevant points in the conversation.

3.4.1.1. Participants and purposeful sampling

To gather perspectives of how collaboration is taught within choreography tertiary dance education in New Zealand, three participants were sought from a pool of approximately 15 tertiary dance educators. It was specified on the invitation to participate, that the educators should either be currently teaching, or have taught in the past two years, within this context.

Purposeful sampling was employed as a strategy to further identify the most suitable potential participants from a pool of options. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) is a method whereby the researcher deliberately, rather than randomly (Ezzy, 2002; Mays & Pope, 1995; Reed et al., 1996) seeks participants based on their own knowledge of the research area (Morse, 1991). The people sought should have appropriate expertise in the field of study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Diers, 1979; Glaser, 1978) and are thought likely to be “articulate, reflective, and willing to share” their perspectives (Morse, 1991, p. 127). Purposeful sampling within qualitative research allows the focus to be on a small number of participants who offer richness and depth of response (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

Morse (1991) proposes that a study may begin with seeking participants whose experience in the area under investigation might be more general; then, as the research develops, and key themes emerge the researcher may choose to seek new participants with deeper expertise in specific areas. However, due to the small pool of potential participants, this research immediately sought people considered to have specific expertise in the area. A primary selection was choreography educators who teach in full-time dance courses in the two largest dance focussed bachelor degree programmes: Dance Studies (University of Auckland) and Performing and Screen Arts (Unitec Institute of Technology) It was anticipated that these potential participants would have the most extensive and in-depth experience of the research area and were likely to be teaching elements of collaboration and choreography regularly. An open invitation email was sent directly to the current educators at the two institutions mentioned above. This encouraged a first wave of interviewees with relevant experience.

To provide opportunity for a secondary selection of volunteers, the same open invitation was sent out on New Zealand dance distribution lists and posted on nationwide dance Facebook pages. This open call aimed to attract educators who have taught in tertiary dance institutions in the past two years but who are not currently teaching or who I was not aware of. Additionally, they may have been teaching in courses that are considered part-time, or that are part of other qualifications, for example an education degree, from the University of Otago or the University of Waikato. These volunteers were able to self-identify as suitable for participation and proved to have relevant experience in the research area. This also provided opportunity to include potential participants whose experience or perspective may be “atypical” (Morse, 1991, p. 129) to ensure a breadth of responses.

3.5. Position of the Researcher

This section of the chapter aims to provide a reflexive discussion of my position as the researcher within this study. This is important as a person’s background, social position, experiences, and values may affect relationships with participants, how data is gathered, and knowledge generated within the study (Berger, 2015; Chavez, 2008; Costley et al., 2010)

Of direct relevance to this study, my dance background required consideration. I have sustained a 22-year career in the arts, primarily working within dance organisations in various capacities. This was preceded by four years of full-time dance training at the New Zealand

School of Dance (1998-2001) where I majored in both classical ballet and contemporary dance. My later dance education included a Postgraduate Diploma in Creative and Performing Arts (2011) and Master of Creative and Performing Arts (2013) through the Dance Studies Programme at The University of Auckland. Throughout my education in both institutions, I engaged in choreographic learning that required me to work collaboratively with my peers. My dance career began with extensive performing work, both within contemporary dance companies, as well as in freelance contexts. I have also developed choreographic and teaching practices. I recognise that within all areas of my career I have needed to be creatively and collaboratively dexterous to shift roles, responsibilities, and relationships in order to work effectively in diverse contexts. I also acknowledge that although my training at the New Zealand School of Dance was geared towards preparing me for a career in dance creation and performance, there was little focus placed on developing choreographic skills beyond compositional elements. Additionally, we were thrust into choreographic processes with professional dance-makers with little preparation. It was not until I experienced several challenging collaborative experiences within my professional career that a curiosity about collaboration developed. Subsequently, I began asking questions about what and how I and those around me had learned, or perhaps not learned, about working within creative contexts. These experiences of engaging in and observing collaborative choreographic processes in both my dance training and throughout my career are what drives my interest in pursuing this research. My work within my master's degree, which explored professional contemporary dancers' experiences of agency within choreographic collaboration, also underpins this research and informs the kinds of questions I ask.

Pertinent to this study, I have taught dance making classes and courses to diverse learners in recreational, community, vocational, and professional dance contexts. Within my role as Lecturer within the Dance Studies programme, I teach a range of courses that include choreographic or creative learning moments, most specifically first- and second-year choreographic courses. I also manage annual international professional development tours for our third-year students. This particular activity incorporates further choreographic learning as well as an explicit focus on developing collaborative skills through 'real-world' choreographic processes with professional practitioners, with an aim to prepare students for a range of arts careers. These teaching experiences have brought to the fore many of the

questions that guide this research. They also inform how I move through the research processes and work with the participants to draw out and interpret their experiences.

As Greene (2014) notes “[a]s qualitative researchers, what stories we are told, how they are relayed to us, and the narratives that we form and share with others are inevitably influenced by our position and experiences as a researcher in relation to our participants” (p. 1). My dance background is not dissimilar to that of my participants in that I have engaged in a diverse range of arts opportunities throughout my career and have also taught in a range of tertiary dance contexts. From this perspective, I am well positioned to be perceived as an ‘insider’ within the study. The insider/outsider paradigm (Naples, 1996) is a way of attending to the positionality of the researcher in relation to the participants and/or the field of study.

An insider researcher can be described as someone who studies the social group of which they are a member (Greene, 2014); someone who possesses deep knowledge and understanding of the research context; or someone who has attributes of an “identity which is aligned or shared with participants (Chavez, 2008, p. 475). Chavez (2008) offers further categorisation of the insider researcher as being either a total insider, who shares both multiple identities and/or particular experiences with their participants, or a partial insider who shares limited identities and who has a level of separation from the researched community. Within this research I “hold prior knowledge and understandings of the group I wish to study, and am also a member of that group” (Greene, 2014, p. 2). The particularities of my background which might position me as a member and give me unique insight and understanding of the participants’ experiences include my tertiary dance education, the fact that I am living and working in the arts in New Zealand, the diversity of experiences within my dance career, and my ongoing reputation. With this in mind, it is possible that I might occupy both positions of total insider and partial insider, depending on my relationship and commonalities with each individual participant. In support of this, Taylor (2011) and Naples (1996) note that the positionality of a researcher is always changeable and malleable due to how the researcher and participant might perceive one another. These shifts might even take place within a single interview, for example “a participant may draw us near as a member of the ingroup, but in the next moment, because of a social difference (gender, class, age, region), may distance herself from the researcher” (Chavez, 2008, p. 478).

There are various advantages and challenges associated with insider research which have been considered. Taylor (2011) states that “[i]nsider research is not faultless, nor should one assume that as an insider, one necessarily offers an absolute or correct way of seeing and/or reading the culture under investigation” (p. 6). Instead, we might consider that “every view is *a way of seeing, not the way of seeing*” (Wolcott, 1999, p. 137). Gergen and Gergen (2003) suggest that we must recognise the nature of our polyvocality, acknowledging our “multiplicity of competing and often contradictory values, political impulses, conceptions of good, notions of desire and sense of our ‘selves’ as person” (p. 595). This aligns with the post-positivist, qualitative, and constructivist grounded theory perspectives. It is proposed that insider researchers might offer or achieve a “nuanced and unique insight” (Chavez, 2008, p. 476) into the research area that develops from their prior knowledge and/or ability to perceive small domain specific details, behaviours, and covert emotional responses, while also understanding wider contextual information. It is also proposed that insiders might be granted immediate access to and rapport with participants (Chavez, 2008; Delyser, 2001; Merriam et al., 2001; Sherif, 2001). Indeed, this was the case with this research where potential participants were easily located, and eager to be involved. This may have been a result of my reputation and diverse involvement within New Zealand’s dance community.

It was important to understand that insider research posed challenges in knowing where the boundaries of the research and researcher/participant relationships lie (Chavez, 2008). The issue of finding common understanding of where the role of researcher and participant begin and end arose, as I have worked with some participants within various other dance activities and in social settings beyond the interviews. This may have caused problems in that the participants may have had concerns about me continuing the research through observation in these situations. Steps to avoid this were taken within the ethical procedures and in providing clarity within the interviews, that interviews were the only data collection method included within the research. Possibly, the notion of polyvocality (Gergen & Gergen, 2003) is useful here for both myself, and the participants, in that we are able to recognise each other’s multiple roles within the dance community and how we shift and engage in different ways within different contexts, from researcher to peer to workshop participant, or from teacher to interviewee to audience member.

3.6. Data Collection

How did the present study gather tertiary dance educators' experiences and perspectives on teaching collaboration with choreographic learning? Suzuki et al. (2007) suggest that "the sources from which we draw and the tools that we employ in data collection determine the data that we produce, the meanings that we craft from those data, and the knowledge claims that we make" (p. 296). It was important to consider which methods were most suited to encouraging the dance educators to share stories, perspectives, experiences, and aspirations, and which methods aligned with the constructivist lens applied to this study.

Interviews were selected as the data collection method. The following discusses the use of qualitative and semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1. Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews are conversations guided by the researcher (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Warren, 2012). They attempt to "understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 3). They aim to garner rich, in-depth material that reveals the interviewees' unique perspectives on the specific area of curiosity (Turner, 2010). Through listening to what is and is not said, qualitative interviewers search for opportunities to unpack ideas important to the participant. These conversations also allow for different perspectives of the same phenomena to be valued and co-created within each interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Qualitative interviews are a relevant tool to draw out first hand personal issues (Geertz, 1973), what people think, why they do certain things, what they feel about these things, and in cases that require experiences and examples of phenomena (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). They may allude to how and why things change over time.

Qualitative interviews are well aligned with the constructivist epistemological viewpoint of this study as they seek to create meaning within the interactions between participant and interviewer (Kvale, 2007; Warren, 2012). The metaphors of the qualitative interviewer as "traveller" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 57) and "wandering with" (Kvale, 1996, p. 4) illustrate the notions of exploring and engaging with new landscapes (the interviewee's experiences). There are several benefits to utilising qualitative interviews as data collection

method. They may enable rapport to be built between parties. Interviewees may experience greater feelings of being valued as the interview process manifests personal connection and responsiveness throughout. Additionally, the qualitative nature may encourage the interviewee to feel they may articulate themselves in ways that feel comfortable.

Within the realm of qualitative research there is a family of interview methods to choose from, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Structured interviews offer no deviation from set questions and little flexibility in how and when they are posed to the interviewees. Benefits of structured interviews are that there may be greater consistency and uniformity within the information offered (Grix, 2004). This is proposed to have potential to make the analysis process easier due to the similarity of structure and themes that may emerge (Bryman, 2001). However, the interviewer is not able to follow interesting or relevant tangents, or gather more detail, even if pertinent to the study (Grix, 2004). Semi-structured interviews have some set topics and questions that can be attended to within the flow of conversation. This method allows for questions to be posed in a natural way, and for follow-up questions that might reveal useful information. The researcher is able to probe deeper into specific experiences or ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher the opportunity to build, add or change interview questions (Olson, 2011), as they engage in each interview with the participants, either between interviewees, or between interviews with each participant. Unstructured interviews utilise loose topics or questions that are offered spontaneously (Grix, 2004). This may result in less clarity of focus within the responses. Both semi-structured and unstructured interviews aim to allow the respondent to communicate in detail and depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It is noted that these two types of interviews may be more complicated to analyse due to the scope of difference in subjects discussed and key themes revealed. Nonetheless, I selected to engage in two semi-structured interviews with each participant.

3.6.1.1. Individual semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews have been described as a “responsive” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31) and purposeful conversation (Burgess, 1984; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The key feature of a semi-structured interview is that it is flexible, without a set order and allows the researcher to follow lines of enquiry about relevant topics as they emerge within the conversation (Grix, 2004; Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews can also be sensitive

towards the interviewee; this may evolve through different language being used to ask key questions, reordering of topics, or tangents being followed. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) articulate that semi-structured interviews have “the purpose of obtaining descriptions of [the participants’] life world” (p. 3). The descriptions may arrive as explanations, stories, illustrations, or further questions.

The purpose was to reflexively generate new knowledge within the conversation (Brinkmann, 2007). “Semi structured interviews also give the interviewer a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participants in the process itself” (Brinkman, 2013, p. 21). Through assuming a “[d]eliberate naivete” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 28) and avoiding presuppositions I aimed to engage in an authentic interpersonal interaction with the participants.

An individual interview allows the researcher to focus on one participant at a time. It is also proposed that individual interviews may allow a greater sense of trust between parties due to the sense of confidentiality and discretion (Brinkman, 2013). The conversation is able to flow in such a way that the interviewee will not be interrupted or contradicted by other respondents (Brinkman, 2013). The individual interviews, like conversations, can then be woven into narratives, which was the case of this thesis. The meta narrative honours each individual as a source of data but also honours the reality of shared meanings and experiences.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face or virtually over Zoom, depending on the Covid-19 situation at the time and the participants’ travel commitments. While in person interviews were preferable, virtual interviews still provide the emotional and “flesh and blood” information of body language, gesture, and facial expression (Brinkman, 2013, p. 28). This extra layer of valuable non-verbal communication can provide useful nuggets of information relevant to the creation of the narratives and analysis process.

Each participant engaged in two one-hour interviews. A flexible topic guide was used for the first interview with each interviewee as a way to steer the conversation (Ritchie et al., 2013). The guide included both themes for discussion, as well as open-ended questions that aim to provoke rich research material. For the second interview with each participant a new topic guide was utilised in tandem with specific questions unique to each participant. The new

topic guide was developed as themes emerged across participants in the initial interview round. Emerging topic guides encouraged careful planning on my behalf about how to elicit information relevant to the study's aims, and also aided the flow of conversation.

3.7. Thematic Analysis

The rigor with which the data analysis process is conducted will impact the degree to which the research is considered credible (Morse, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). This study employed reflexive thematic analysis as a process of assessing the data as it was generated and received, to filter data and construct the narrative (Chapter 4), and the discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 5.

Thematic analysis is a data analysis process which involves identifying themes or patterns that appear pertinent within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Reflexive thematic analysis is a branch of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (Braun et al., 2016, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022) which considers the researcher's reflexivity and subjectivity as central to the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021b), and as Gough and Madill (2012) suggest, a resource to "contextualize and enrich" (p. 374) the research processes. This aligns well with the constructivist framework this study employs, along with my position as an intimate insider (Taylor, 2011) with significant expertise within the research context. Braun and Clarke (2019) pose thematic analysis as an "adventure" (p. 592) for the researcher to approach the enactment of their analysis processes with theoretical flexibility. Braun and Clarke, (2021) argue that themes do not simply 'emerge' from the data. Instead, themes are 'developed' (Braun et al., 2016), 'constructed' (Braun et al., 2018) or 'generated' through the "creative labour" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594) of the researcher.

Initially the reflexive thematic analysis involved a manual transcription process, reading, re-reading the data, noting down immediate ideas (Braun et al., 2016), and drawing connections between different parts of each interview, as well as across interviews with the different participants. Transcription has been argued as an essential part of the analysis process where meanings are begun to be created (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998). Following this, I identified themes that were pertinent to the research questions (Braun et al., 2016) and appeared meaningful to the participants. The themes identified were a range of both semantic and latent themes, meaning certain themes were more explicit and obvious based on topics or

language provided by the participants. Alternatively, latent themes were generated by assessing the data for underlying meanings and interpreting how these might be theorised to offer insight into the educator's experiences. Following the construction of the compositive narrative, the most significant themes were arranged into a possible framework for discussion in Chapter 5. This aimed to present a coherent analytic narrative which is the interpretive journey I have selected to present to the reader (Braun et al., 2016).

3.8. Trustworthiness and Validity

The following sections describe the considerations made towards ensuring the trustworthiness and validity of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) ask "how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to" (p. 290)? Evaluating the trustworthiness and validity of the research process allows the researcher to have confidence in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and for the findings to be positioned as meaningful and relevant. Trustworthiness is concerned with whether the researcher's analysis accurately represents the participants' experiences and ideas (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.8.1. Member checking

Engaging participants further to solicit their perspectives on the emerging ideas and findings (Kornbluh, 2015) is proposed as an important ethical responsibility of the researcher. This is in order to ensure the participants are accurately reflected and represented within the research, to seek other possible meanings, and to encourage researchers to reflect upon their possible bias (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is a useful way for researchers to establish this kind of purposeful collaborative and reciprocal meaning-making within the research processes (Chase, 2017). This aligns with the constructivist stance of this study.

Member checking can foster trustworthiness within the research (Kornbluh, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is the consideration that the analysis "accurately reflects the lived experiences of the participants" (Kornbluh, 2015, p. 397). It is possible that a researcher's perspective or research agenda may overly influence their analysis. Member checking enabled me to ensure I understood the participants correctly, and that interpretations and analysis would progress with a greater sense of trust in the data.

Two member check methods were used within this research. Firstly, participants were offered an opportunity to review their interview transcripts. This process enabled the participants to adjust, add to, or delete their statements, and to ensure what they have said matched how they intended it. This step was important as it allowed the participants to remove any comments that they believed may have misrepresented their meaning (Birt et al., 2016). Secondly, the follow-up interview allowed scope to member check elements of the first interview within the discussion. This was a chance to co-construct meaning with the participant and confirm, modify, and verify initial interpretations (Birt et al., 2016).

3.8.2. Ethical considerations

As with any research involving participants, ethical considerations needed to be made. It is suggested that considering the “moral dilemmas” (Wiles, 2013, p. 2) of the research project encourage the researcher to think critically about how to respond to the possible ethical problems that stem from the specific research context. Researching a community which is small in size and known to the researcher requires an examination of ethical considerations and actions throughout every phase of the study (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). Such considerations included informed consent, identification of participants, right to withdraw, existing relationships and risk of coercion, confidentiality, and identification of third parties.

The notion of ‘best practice’ has been interrogated within the realm of qualitative research ethics (Vanclay, Baines, & Taylor, 2013). As part of this conversation, transparency is positioned as a key aim to generate rigour and clarity of processes, through revealing to the research audience the procedures and decisions made. Tuval-Mashiach (2017) notes that the researcher has responsibility for several relationships within the research: “with the research participants, with the texts, with his or her discipline, and with the readers of the final report” (p. 128). Within this study, it was important to ensure that the research procedures and intentions were transparent within these relationships. Additionally, it was imperative that participants had adequate and appropriate information to make an informed decision to participate (Welsh, 1999). The potential participants were also provided information about the “purpose, procedures and potential risks” of their involvement (Welsh, 1999, p. 88-89). All information was given to potential participants via a Participant Information Sheet in advance of them agreeing to become involved. They also had opportunities throughout the research to ask questions or withdraw.

A second key consideration, linked to ensuring informed consent, was the likelihood of potential participants having established relationships with me, either as friends, colleagues, or acquaintances. Such relationships warrant ethical consideration with regard to power and coercion (McDermid et al., 2014), participant autonomy, and the future of the personal and/or professional relationships. Several processes were put in place, aiming to mitigate concerns about these relationships and to prompt ongoing negotiation of the possible issues. The process of recruitment, benefits of engaging in the research, and the voluntary nature of involvement were clearly articulated in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.

Perhaps the most pertinent ethical consideration is that I chose not to identify the participants, instead allocating each person a pseudonym. Although the research focusses on personal experiences of each educator, what is revealed within the study may have posed a significant risk to their careers, reputations or relationships. Related to this is that the participants mentioned third parties in their interviews, such as colleagues, institutions or students. This had obvious implications in that the participants are well known within the national, and in some cases international, tertiary dance education community, and the participants' colleagues, employers, and students may read the research. In an effort towards confidentiality and to allay potential issues arising, where possible third-party and contextual details were omitted from or allocated pseudonyms within the transcripts and thesis. However, participants were informed that this may not guarantee confidentiality or anonymity for themselves or those third parties.

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC number: 024428).

3.9. Challenges and Limitations of the Research

It is important to recognise that the research methodology selected, my position as a researcher, the research context, the ethical considerations, and the fact that this is a doctoral research project, presented inherent limitations and challenges (Simon & Goes, 2013). These factors had potential to influence the direction and scope, as well as to hinder some stages of the research journey. Reflecting upon the implications of these factors provoked deeper awareness of the pathway of the research and provided opportunity to consider how to combat these issues.

The first limitation and possible challenge was that New Zealand is a small country with a shrinking number of tertiary dance institutions and programmes. In the past few years at least three schools have closed down or been restructured, minimising dance curriculums. This means that there was a very limited current pool of dance educators working within this area. Tertiary dance educators may move onto other areas of teaching, and competition for employment can become even more challenging. An observation of the pool of tertiary dance educators, however, is that there appears to be a steady flow of emerging teachers entering the tertiary dance education community each year. This is due to the prevalence of freelance and portfolio careers for dance artists in New Zealand and the necessity to seek diverse dance employment. However, the nature of the freelance career might affect their availability for teaching work, creating more opportunities for educators to gain part-time and/or short teaching contracts.

A challenge within the present research was that due to the very small community of tertiary dance educators in New Zealand a significant portion of the potential participants were known to me. These existing relationships ranged from being an acquaintance, to close personal friendships or professional working relationships. This had the potential to offer the research both opportunities and challenges. These existing relationships meant that some participants felt more at ease and comfortable sharing detailed and personal information with me, which may have been beneficial to the research. They may also have felt a greater sense of trust in me as a researcher because of our previous interactions. Alternatively, these close relationships may have meant they felt a degree of suspicion about how I could perceive their ideas and experiences and perhaps place judgment on what they offer. Further to the ethical considerations, in order to negotiate this, I needed to ask questions to ensure the participants were feeling comfortable and had all the information they needed, and to reflect upon how I perceived, or perhaps made assumptions, within the process (Knox, 2013).

The participants were offered pseudonyms in an effort to conceal their identities, however, it is possible that some of the educators may have declined participation due to concerns about their identities being revealed through what they contribute. This may have further limited an already small pool of potential participants. Additionally, this risk may have affected what and how the participants were willing to share about their practice. It is possible this may have affected the direction of the research and limited the kinds, or depth, of data offered.

The time allowed for this research project may also be viewed as both a limitation. The time allocated for part-time doctoral research is six to eight years. Within this strict limitation, time management is vitally important so that the research maintains its sharp focus throughout. Six to eight years may also seem like a lengthy amount of time and if the research is drawn out, particularly through the field research or analysis stage there is potential for the focus to be lost or too many tangents to be followed. It was a priority to stay focussed on the aims of the research and continue to filter information out as themes were identified and the focus was further honed.

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter sought to outline the methodology selected for the purpose of exploring dance educators' meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography. The study hinges on the engagement of three participants and the constructivist frame invited my voice into the research as we co-created meaning. As Buck (2003) suggests, the "teachers were not just 'sources of data'; they were people with an interest in what this study aimed to understand" (p. 110). The relationships we share extend into the past and will continue well into the future as our paths cross in myriad ways throughout our careers and this demanded care and ethical consideration. The three educators offered insightful and generous accounts of their teaching. Their stories are shared in the chapter that follows.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter presents the data gathered through interviews with the three participants, Carys, Celeste, and Jette. Passages of their interview texts are interspersed with my own responses, drawn from journaling, interview notes, and written responses as I transcribed and analysed their words. Rather than present the participants' ideas separately, I have chosen to weave our words together into a polyvocal imagined conversation. As the following sections were arranged, I was able to consider contextual information that may be useful in understanding some of the participants' views, which are interrogated in Chapter 5: Discussion.

Additionally, because the interviews were informal and conversational, the questions I posed in each were phrased and ordered differently depending on the flow of ideas discussed. The process of reordering and combining the text in this chapter was a key process in analysing the educators' words. The headings that follow speak to the dominant and emerging themes that are further examined in Chapter 5: Discussion.

While the interviews were conducted individually in order to offer confidentiality, and to assist in offering potential anonymity, it made sense to me to consider the voices as interconnected. Our lives as artists, teachers and friends are entangled through the course of 20 years. We see each other in the crossover moments between our classes, at our respective institution's assessments, and as we celebrate the success of each other's students at their performances. And then, there are the multiple moments of collaborative choreographic work together, and the many social moments of being friends and colleagues. We speak regularly about teaching challenges and revelations. Additionally, through this process of constructing this chapter, I aimed to bring forth the aspects of choreographic collaboration I have been pondering for many years, to consider which of these are present within the data, and to offer clarity about the direction of the thesis. Simultaneously, I aimed to draw the reader into the world of our teaching lives and to illustrate our collective expertise in the creative task of 'being together' in a creative space.

4.1. Planning

I am sitting on the floor of my office. It is a humid day and I am not sure if I feel hot and bothered by the weather or by the size of the task I am undertaking. On the blue speckled and slightly scratchy carpet, to my left, are 38 hot pink square post-it notes in rows. My

scrawling handwriting looks nothing like a teacher's should, including a few with Ralph's clarifying notes added, in an attempt to map out a possible structure for my discussion chapter. To my right, are piles of multicoloured highlighted scraps of courses. On them are small chunks of text, some a few lines and others paragraphs, to try to filter through the some 70,000 transcribed interview words and my own narratives and notes.

As I work intuitively, it feels familiar. This is the same process I go through when making a dance and the same process I share with my first years as they learn to structure their own choreographies for the first time. Transferring each image, movement phrase, transition, and section onto post-it notes: grouping, filtering, editing, throwing away, and ordering. Reordering. Bringing back. Editing again and again. Second guessing the dynamic arc and temporal design. It always feels risky – what if I get it wrong? (There is no wrong). I can do this!

But “what *am* I doing?” I ask myself, pulling the intuitiveness of the process back towards critical analysis. I want the research narratives to reveal the dilemmas of choreographic collaboration that I have been reading and thinking about and the things I observe in my own teaching practice that appear to be valuable and important.

It feels like a huge privilege to be able to use the words, ideas, and experiences of these women. Between the four of us, we have some 70+ years of expertise in choreography, performing, and teaching, and somehow this is captured in a microscopic way on tiny pieces of paper. Each of us is pursuing postgraduate education in dance with foci on dance education, pedagogy, and/or choreographic practices. I laugh out loud to myself and shake my head. With a deep breath I continue filtering, making piles, lists, and lines on the floor.

4.2. Meeting

I imagine that the three participants are sitting with me on the floor of a dance studio, just like we have in reality over the course of the past 20 years within various choreographic processes, workshops, and classes. The research *is* like a choreographic process. How would we start? I think back to the many collaborative choreographic processes I have been part of and led, and know that every single one has begun with a small circle of humans sitting and talking. So, we are in the right place.

4.2.1. *Connecting*

I smile at my three collaborators, Carys, Jette, and Celeste, after we all sit down close to the corner of the room. The studio feels far too big for an intimate conversation between four people. We have had some banter together, catching up, before I called everyone to come and sit with me. They bring water bottles, takeaway coffees, and notebooks. I feel the anticipation in my body. Exhale. “Thank you so much for being here and for participating in my research. I’m really excited about this conversation. While we all know each other, perhaps we could take a moment to introduce ourselves to the reader?” I start by saying “I currently teach mainly first year choreography courses, but have in the past taught second year choreography as well. I am also involved in supporting students’ choreographic experiences through activities like the preparation for our international tours, where I’ve choreographed on the students myself, and also rehearsed other people’s choreography.”

The three women nod and I know they are listening. They show this through their eyes directed at me and their focussed energy. “What about you Carys?” I say, looking to my left.

I currently teach undergraduate choreography. I have also taught choreographic practice to varying degrees as a guest teacher, and a course leader, as a teacher, supporting students to make their own choreographic works for choreographic season, for graduation works, of which collaboration has been a huge component of the choreography that they make. So there’s a range of things across university [and other tertiary dance] contexts.

Carys has worked broadly across tertiary dance institutions in Aotearoa and has had an extensive 25-year career as a performer and choreographer. Her choreographic works have been shown nationally and internationally.

Carys looks to her left and smiles at Celeste as an invitation to share. There is a familiarity to this conversation, because we’ve all known each other for a very long time. I think back to one of my earliest professional experiences, where I was a dancer in a choreographic workshop with Celeste leading. We were both new graduates, nearly 21 years ago now.

I teach [across three levels of choreography] courses in our undergraduate degree.

Celeste has been teaching for many years, in a range of dance courses and has also made her own professional choreographic work. At her institution she facilitates choreography learning, and also choreographs work on students for various performances and assessments.

“What about you Jette?” Celeste asks, and we all laugh, because we all know what Jette does, and the working and personal relationships especially between the three of them are particularly extensive. I exhale because I know that the laughter means the connection is developing, that we are tuning into each other in this moment, now, here, in this conversation.

So, for the past, maybe five years I've been teaching a choreography course, not regularly, sometimes on, sometimes off, [...] where we teach choreography as a kind of process, and also facilitate the students to make their own work. And then the [other] the thing that I've been doing is making works on the students, which introduces them to a kind of professional environment. [...] when I think about where I've learned a lot about choreography, it's being in other people's processes and watching how people make, and make decisions, and how they structure a room, or how they might encourage people to develop their ideas, and that's the moment that I've felt that I've lived a huge amount.

I take a sip of coffee and I think to myself, wow! What a privilege it is to share some time with these women who have such a depth and breadth of experience in choreography in Aotearoa.

“So I can see that we all support our students' learning through a few different kinds of collaborative choreographic experiences. One is supporting student-led work, and the other is choreographing 'on' students, and this seems to be mostly facilitative processes that really reflect what's going on in professional environments in Aotearoa. So, the students work as co-creators of the work through contributing movement and ideas, through the direction of and towards the artistic vision of the choreographer.” I want to make sure I am correct, so I pause. My collaborators nod again. “Yeah,” they say. “Can you share with me, in a little bit more depth the kinds of student-led work, class tasks, and assessments you're doing that involve student collaboration?”

[For us] in first year that's where they learn collaborative tasking and how to work in a bigger group. At the end of the semester, they make a collaborative group work, which is assessed and that's meant to be putting into practice [what they learned earlier]. So there is an outcome. And in the duets [later on in their degree] they're dancing and making on themselves, and the collaborative group work, which is three or more people, they are dancing and making on themselves. [We decided] the first thing they make, they have to work with other people. I mean if the first thing is to make something on your own, when you don't even know what you're doing at dance school. It can be terrifying. And that was what we were finding. They were getting terrified of being by themselves. So we flipped it. And of course, it has problems as well. But yeah, I do think it's better than having to work by yourself straight away.

I am a little bit stunned at this revelation. I had never thought about it like that. In my course, the students make solos first and then move into collaborative work. I make a note in my notebook to give this some thought later on when I am updating my course outline.

Carys nods and describes her classes:

Yeah, most of the tasks are collaborative tasks, to some degree, or responsive to a stimulus. So, I guess what I'm trying to teach in terms of collaboration is the process of being together as a community, of people working together towards the creation of something. Those skills, I believe, are transferable to any other environment that one might be working within.

Being together as a community seems valid to this research and I wonder how this actually plays out in our classes.

Carys tells us more about this:

And so to create a community... a community that I want to be involved in is an inclusive community where everyone has a voice, and that we feel that we are contributing to something that is perhaps greater than ourselves, or has meaning beyond an individual experience. I guess in a choreographic classroom environment that can happen on a microscopic and a macroscopic level, the microscopic level being the ability to hear someone's opinion in a different way or to understand in a different way what might be going on for someone else. From another perspective it is also about collaborating with someone, bringing ideas into a project that you might never have thought about before. And then on a

macroscopic level, we're practising the things that we want to see in the broader universal context... we are voicing, and languaging, and diversity and inclusivity... those words that people do bandy about all the time... are potentially, in the perfect choreographic tasking moment what we're trying to do in the choreographic classroom. But nothing is ever perfect! But I guess that's what the aim is.

Carys continues,

It just depends on the class group and how experienced they are with making their own work or making work as a team. I might provide them a circuit of different things to do, so I just get a scope on how they're engaging with each of those different collaborative tasks. So some of the tasks in the circuit might be either working with one other person, small group tasking, in larger group tasking, and then maybe one person working on a group, and then a person working by themselves in collaboration with some ideas or stimulus.

In my journal I make a quick note about this word "scoping". This seems important and I think I need to ask later on, about which other methods are used to observe where students are at in their collaborative learning journey.

"And those things lead to various assessments?" I ask. Carys nods, "yes." I reply, "that sounds much like what I'm doing too, in preparing my first years towards their collaborative performance at the end of semester, where we make a full length show together, including, solos, duets, trios, and group work which they make through tasks set in class time. They also make a small group choreography as 'homework'. This isn't specifically assessed but it's part of their overall creative contribution to the show, which is. This is also what they reflect upon in an essay where they have to consider a collaborative moment they've had. We also delve into contact partnering, which for some, is their first encounter with working physically with another person's body. So lots of things come up then around bodies, respect, gender, safety... So they are assessed on their overall choreographic contribution and collaborative skills through the process, and their performance."

Our conversation continues, and I notice we are all using similar language to describe the kinds of activities we are doing, which primarily revolves around giving samples of

choreographic tasks. There is also a strong theme of mentoring students towards realising their own choreographic work for assessment and performance.

I make a few bullet points in my notebook to summarise what I have heard so far:

- Community building – seems to have implications for relationships and interpersonal skills. Collaboration is important.
- How do we learn to do what we do as choreography educators?
- Predicting and managing students' skill development and capabilities.
- Less about teaching and more about facilitating or guiding.

4.2.2. *Exploring collaboration*

I look up and say, “so the students are definitely working collaboratively throughout all our courses, that’s a given. I want to talk more about what’s going on in our classes and how we assess it in a moment, but perhaps first we should discuss what we actually think collaboration is, or perhaps more specifically what we each think choreographic collaboration is? I suppose this guides our pedagogy, and the content in our courses.” I think that it is good to find some shared meaning of the key concepts in this research. This might also give us some footholds to then move into sharing our values and teaching agendas. These women are smart and astute, and I know they will have purpose and rigour behind their pedagogical decisions. I also think about how we are still finding our way within this conversation and that the women are really looking to me to drive the discussion.

Carys jumps in to say clearly,

Collaboration is a practise of multiple people working together, to cohabitate around an idea, or co-birth and co-develop materials, or creative ideas for choreography. There's always some degree of collaboration going on. It doesn't really matter if it's a didactic choreographic process or not. The act of bringing your body and your performance to something is still a collaborative act, depending on how you look at it and talk about it.

I respond, “there is some great language in there, I think, that really describes the physicality and labour of collaboration. I also think about how actually, this also seems like what we are trying to do with students when we are teaching, that is also about ‘co-

habiting' an idea – the teaching and learning is co-habitation, or collectively trying to do something.” Celeste nods. She says,

Collaboration is bringing your skills to the table. And if we each bring our own skills, then what we make will be different from what we made it if we made it on our own.

I think this is also like teaching and learning! Jette agrees with Celeste, and adds on by saying,

[Collaboration is] the collision of different perspectives, and ideas, and practices. It means that you're making something together that you could never fathom of making by yourself. And so to let go of the thing that you want to make and be ok making the thing that is of the collision, of the people, will make. You can't lock onto your vision. You have to imagine that there's a fire in the middle and you're all sitting around it, and it's burning away. It's its own thing. It doesn't belong to any person. Everyone puts a piece of wood on it and it burns away. And you're not patch protecting your ideas, but you also trust that the thing... even if it's a complete dud, or whatever, but you really invest in the process of collaboration.

That is exactly what's happening right now in our conversation too, I think. As each of us adds to the discussion the meanings and ideas are being built.

I respond excitedly, “I love that metaphor! It's a bit like what I always say to my students: ‘You have to listen to the dance being made. You have to listen and feel your way through it, and the dance will tell you. You are essentially collaborating with the choreography too.’ I really think when you start to force choreography somewhere it doesn't want to go that's when you get blocked, or stuck, or something seems off with how it reads. Just like what happens with people.”

I think about the many conversations outside this research that I had had with these women, about collaboration and our shared knowledge that choreography is an unavoidably social activity. I know about some of the life changing experiences they have had in various professional settings that have impacted upon their values when teaching collaboration. But I want to talk about this more, now, to hear their ideas in their own words again. “So I get the sense that we all think collaboration is pretty important, which is why it's present in all our courses. But can you tell me in your own words, why? Why is collaboration important to you?”

Why does it exist so obviously in choreography? Or perhaps even, in the big scheme of things, why do you want students to engage collaboratively?"

Carys jumps in without pause, and her words are decisive and to the point:

Because this is the world, and you need to be in the world, and you're going to work with people you don't like working with. That's just a fact... yeah. So, the sooner students don't shy away from those challenging conversations or setting clear boundaries with others then, the better.

She pauses, her energy shifts, and then she says practically as if she has switched into 'educator mode',

And that it is one of the key creative skills that these students need to learn for the 21st century. So all of the 'four C's'... [creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, communication].

Celeste listens and then adds succinctly,

It's important because that's what they're going to be doing, if they choose a [dance] career, they are going to have to work with other people, all the time. ... And I think that's why those who don't become dancers are actually so good at all other jobs. They're so good, aren't they! They just do so well in all other fields. They have the ability to work in a group, to communicate, to collaborate.

I can hear the warmth and pride in her voice as she speaks, and I think of the many graduates that we all know who have huge success working in the dance industry, in a really wide range of careers.

I can see Carys wants to add more, so I wait...

I think my teaching process is a direct result of having been a dancer for several years and making my own work. So the process of teaching students is asking them to bring more of themselves to their practises. That means experiences, and skills, and ways of being in the world, and community connections, and other ways of moving that aren't what some students expect are required of them. And it's sort of easier said than done, of course. But it's a response to having been in environments where I've had to emulate and replicate, and recognising that as an individual I had a desire to make and be creative, and most processes didn't call

forth in me anything that sparked my imagination. And that's one of the true gifts and benefits of living a life is to be creative, and imaginative, and to be playful. And so choreography is a key zone that that can happen in. ... I never worked with choreographers who did that for me. There was always a degree of playing a part, being a good dancer, doing it right. There was a degree of authoritarian regime that I sort of had learned to manage very efficiently in order to survive, and to continue getting employment in those environments. So when I was a dancer I had to use my brains to figure out how to survive in an environment that did not really support my creativity, or took my creativity and put another person's name on it. So that's why collaborative practises and acknowledgement and attribution of all parties to the collaboration is really important to me as a maker.

I can hear pragmatism mixed with emotion in her voice. She continues,

So it's a strange mixture of knowing what I would have loved to have done when I was a dancer, and knowing as a choreographer what works. So those two things are sometimes at tension with each other because sometimes what works is not the most enjoyable thing to do, but it's necessary for the choreography, or for the class, or the moment in the piece that you're making. So there's that wanting to... initially wanting to instigate collaborative or creative environments that I would have enjoyed being involved in as a dancer.

I let this sit for a minute. Exhale. I nod. My dance career was filled with similar experiences, with only a few experiences of working with choreographers like Carys who changed my views of what generative, caring, stimulating collaborative choreographic processes could feel like. I start to wonder about how emotions fit into collaborative processes. It seems important somehow; the moments of joy, the moments of vulnerability, fear, excitement; the liberating moments of being able to be yourself, or of needing to conceal things, depending on who you might be working with. How do we go about negotiating these things with our students?

Jette's voice cuts into my thoughts and what she says is so beautiful, as she speaks about wanting to "seduce" the students into understanding how amazing a really positive collaborative process can be,

I remember, and I know that being in the choreographic process, and that feeling of being on fire [she clicks her fingers around like sparks] with someone. It is such an intoxicating, wonderful feeling. "You get me, and I get you, let's go!" Boom, boom, boom. Making gold. [She laughs] You're spinning breath into gold!

“I know that feeling! And I know it when I see it in my classes too,” I laugh.

I look at the time and push the conversation along. I feel a sense of responsibility as the holder of the conversation, to create space for thoughts to arise, but also for us to stay on track, and to ensure we finish on time.

“So we’re getting an understanding of what it actually is when we talk about collaboration, and why we care about it. But what are the foundational skills that you think a student needs to be able to collaborate well?”

Celeste identifies first that there are some specific choreographic roles that are being taught,

Doing it on yourself, and directing other people. That’s a skill they need to learn. [...] collaboratively making and dancing, and your own thing, it's so different to when you're collaborating with another director and directing other people.

She also states that,

We talk a lot about collaboration, and [that] it doesn't need to be an equally proportioned democracy.

I say, “yeah, I agree with that. It’s a fallacy that it’s going to be perfectly balanced between collaborators. I think sometimes students want it to be perfectly balanced in terms of how much they contribute, and others seem to really ignore this altogether and just sort of take over the process. I think the roles are just so nuanced and can change at any minute in the process, right? It’s giving the students a wide range of experiences to flex into those different leadership or followership roles, as well as being able to engage in an egalitarian collaborative relationship where power is shared. Being an inside or outside eye also takes different skills to, to look and observe the dance, but also to manage the other people. I guess as we do these activities in classes the interpersonal, and personal, skills reveal themselves, right?”

They all nod. Jette makes a note in her notebook, and I love that she is obviously wanting to recall what we discussed later on, maybe for her own practice. Carys mentions some collaborative ideals she suggests to her students:

Ways of speaking, ways of communicating expectations, setting expectations, preparing rehearsal materials, and being organised in order to send a message to the people you're working with about how you want your rehearsals to unfold, providing information to the students about risk and return.

Jette, thinks for a moment and states she thinks important collaborative skills are,

Communication. Respect. Boundaries. Mutual agreement. Expectations. And trust that the thing is worthwhile.

I think about how these skills can only be beneficial to any context or relationship. She thinks for a moment and contextualises these,

I think it's so practical, also it's about learning about how *you* collaborate, understanding *your* triggers, your fears or anxieties, your tendencies to be bossy, or controlling. ... It's a hard process to make work with people. ... So it's to be the centre of all the different ideas, and to negotiate all the desires of everyone involved, your dancers or your collaborators, or your teacher. It's really hard.

These points too are not so different for the choreography teacher, I think, knowing what you need and how you work really impacts upon how you feel in your classes and your relationships with students. Carys picks up on the mention of communication as being really important,

They need to be able to communicate their ideas and they need to be able to listen, at a fundamental level, and have an open mind. So at a very, very basic level, a student doesn't need anything more than their presence and their ability to imagine in tandem with other people, in a way that at its best, enables lots of voices to be present, depending on what's required at the task or of the work... knowing when to dive in, and knowing when to support or to allow other voices to come forwards.

Jette adds on to this point about communication, but raises the idea of tension or conflict,

It's the ability to stand up for your idea. It's the ability to have kind of like, a rub with someone where you disagree about something and to work it out, ... without spending heaps of time, but to give each moment its own little breath, or give each idea a little breath, and then figure out what the right thing is. I think it's the

communication through that process. I think it also about the ability to let go of your pride a little bit, around being right, and be like “nah, I was wrong about that, you were right,” or “I was wrong, we should do it this way,” or “ooh it’s not working,” “oh that idea didn’t work.” And I think... [big sigh], in collaboration... [...] I think for some of those students it’s about having a certain level of boundaries amongst one another around “this is the expectation and how we fulfill these expectations.” Or “this is the agreement for the group and how we respect each other,” but it’s also an understanding that the thing that you make with other people will never be what you make by yourself, and that it is a completely different entity.

I note that through our conversation the idea of boundaries comes up again and again – boundaries between students and boundaries between teacher and student. Also the idea of tension and conflict is really interesting. I observe in my classes that it always plays out in very interesting and stressful ways, and can have serious impacts on the students’ work, and on their level of enjoyment. But we will come back to that later. Celeste is nodding passionately, and adds on where Jette leaves off,

I think to be a really good collaborator you need to be aware of what you are bringing to it, and that's where it's really hard for first years, and for third years. To be a good collaborator, you have to be open to new possibilities, but you also have to hold on to what is important to you and be willing to fight for it. And in that fight, you may become more articulate, more clear in your ideas, which can be great skills. So you have to be open and adaptable, but you also have to hold onto what's important. You have to be aware of what you're bringing. And yeah, you have to listen, and lead, yeah you have to listen and lead. That’s hard man! That’s so hard. I don’t know how you teach that.

She laughs, and then sighs. “Yeah, it’s so hard. I know what you mean,” I say. I add, “I’m thinking about when I’m teaching and the moments when I start to understand what skills the students have, and what they are still learning. We see their self-awareness, or lack of, in the way that they manage themselves and how they interact with their peers, especially in the really stressful moments.”

Carys insightfully points out that,

[It] is actually quite a rare bunch of skills. It takes quite an exceptional young person to hold all of those things when they come into an undergraduate programme, and I guess many of the soft skills that we're teaching them at a first

year level would be in and around those things, more so than how to point their feet and swing their legs high and do multiple turns. It takes a particular individual to come to an undergraduate degree with all of those soft skills already ready to be used... to listen and to be active, and to be open minded, and to be creative. Those are a rich combination of things to have, and actually choreographing is hard. It's not easy [she laughs]. It's really hard, because more so than any dance moves, it's about working with people. And if we can't work with people effectively, if you can't give enough space for people to feel respected and heard when you're leading a moment, you're in trouble!

Celeste interjects to reiterate her point:

I don't know how you teach any of that without just giving them time to practice.

I hang on this for a moment, that someone with 20 years of experience in pedagogy and choreographic collaboration still feels that they do not know. Perhaps asking about some more specific teaching and learning moments might help. What are the pedagogical strategies that are used?

I pause for a moment and see if anyone wants to add anything. I shift my position on the floor. I am buying myself time to decide which path to take in the next part of our conversation. I think that perhaps diving into a conversation about how we teach, it might be good to get a deeper understanding about how we perceive 'good' collaboration. If we know what we want it to look and feel like, then we can understand what we need to do to achieve that.

I start by saying, "the things we're talking about really illuminate the ways that these skills reveal themselves in our classes, don't they? I've noticed the use of the word 'success,' what do you mean? What does successful collaboration look like?"

Celeste looks over to the open studio floor in front of her, as if she can see her class working,

So I'm watching this group of young people trying to negotiate making a dance. It's so hard. I'm looking at people talking and speaking with each other. They are facing each other. They are connecting with eye contact. I can see a conversation. Somebody's talking, somebody's listening. That person then responds. So this is successful, this is what I see is a successful collaborative practice. Talking,

listening, talking, listening... trying. Yeah, doing the thing, not just talking about it. One of my favourite things to say is “you just can't make it up in your mind.” It's got to be practised, yeah? So talking, listening, talking, listening, trying, trying, talking, listening, talking, listening, trying it out. Practising, practising it. Yeah, and... mainly the thing that I see when it's a really successful group is that they just all look so attentive to each other. Yeah. Um... and, frustrated and excited.

Jette sits taller and moves her hands rapidly around in front of her as if to describe the feeling of what she sees,

How I would describe it is that kind of sparky, energy, fire, or it feels generative. Something is happening. Whether it's to my taste or not, they are excited about what they're making. I would say that they would be laughing, most of the conversations are about the stuff they're making, so the excitement is not about them talking about something else, or something outside, or other people's choreography. They are very invested, and they are really embodied. Their enjoyment about the moment, is about the process of making. So, they're having a great time. ... And I think when those moments happen, you can't help but have a great time, because it's so kind of... wonderful. So, you see some people, and they're having a great time, but you notice that they're moving, they're moving constantly, they are returning back to it. Because they're invested in the thing they are making. And their conversations are constantly building on. They're not being restricted by a kind of refinement or a kind of perfectionism, but that it's moulded into an energetic kind of... propelling of it. They're not stuck going “one, two, one, two” and perfecting one moment over and over again.

Celeste is looking intently at Jette, leaning forward, and I can feel they have synced their energy as they talk. Celeste says,

Yeah, it looks, it almost feels like bubbling, it's bubbling, the space, because they are just... and it's quite swift. Because they're going talk, talk, talk, try, try, try. Yes. This. “Let's run it again.” Like it's just so, that process was just so swift. ... Oh, I've never had a group sustain that for five weeks though. Three weeks, four weeks later, never. Like, yeah, it's never all good because as we said before, making a dance is just hard slog, sometimes. So there may be one particular part of the process that really sparked, but then it all slows down again as they have to make editing decisions or sound decisions. But in terms of the relationships in that group that's working really well, I think it's kind of almost about just keeping out of the way. Yeah, just let them roll. Yeah. Yeah, having a quick check in, but yeah. Because often you see a lot of laughing and positivity.

I look back to Jette who says,

It's tumbling. What makes it look successful is when it takes on its own energy, and they're just kind of on the ride together. And it's really beautiful when you see it, and you go over to them and you've tried to resist the urge to interrupt them, but you just want to go over and be like "this is fantastic guys! Well done! I love what you're doing! Keep going! Maybe you could try to push that bit a bit further, in terms of the space" and give some feedback. But I'm not sure if that's the right approach, to kind of interrupt, and bring the dorky energy of the teacher in, you know!

"Yeah, this is interesting" I say. "I totally know what you mean about that energy when they're just tumbling together." I have seen these three women teach many times before and the energy they describe is also akin to their energy as teachers. But there is a question I try to work out in my head. In the way they are talking, I realise there is something about this notion of 'successful' collaboration as being about the social experience of the process and not necessarily about the quality of the product. I remember a recent moment where I questioned the relationship between positive energy and choreographic contribution within a group, and I flick back through my notebook to find a narrative I wrote a while earlier,

I'm looking around the studio, from my position crouched on the floor, halfway underneath the barre. I often sit under the barre somewhere, as a way to feel concealed, so I'm not overtly watching (surveying) the students' work. My eyes land on a trio right in the middle of the room. They are laughing hysterically, loudly. Laughing so much one of them falls to the floor clutching her tummy. Their eyes are streaming with tears. One leans on the other's shoulder. I look a little longer. What's going on here? Are they working? After a minute they try their movement sequence again and I realise they barely have any choreography. They are clearly having a lot of fun though, but I think they are stuck. I watch a little longer. The task is to make a contact trio using the provocation of push and pull. I can see their laughter is making their bodies weak and so they can't actually execute the push and pull actions properly. It almost becomes dangerous, but not quite, not yet. The movements they are trying to create simply don't work, which causes them to laugh even more. They are laughing at themselves, at each other, and at the movement. I stand up and wander over. "How are you going?" I say with a smile. "Good!" they all say with even bigger smiles. They are sweating, warm, physically, socially, energetically. "Can you show me what you have been working on?" The energy shifts to being a little heavy as they realise they have some accountability to the task, and to me. They show. "It's a good start" I say, implying that what they have made is only a beginning, and then lead into some suggestions for how to better position their bodies for the tricky movement. I go to walk away and turn back to add, "and... maybe... too much

happiness! Happiness is good, but make sure it doesn't get in the way of the work.” “Yeah, we know!” they agree.

In this moment I knew there was benefit to these three students having a rip-roaring time, and that this relationship would support them through the stressful moments in production week. However, the accountability to actually create material had slipped away. I suppose this provides a question around what we choose to value most in these moments. Perhaps it matters which student it is, what they need on a particular day, what the task is, what learning we can see evidenced, where we are heading in the course, what the class plan is, or how much time we have.

Jette pipes up,

[I've seen] some beautiful experiences of collaboration. Like [Nikau, Isla, and Mateo], they just went off! It's like they jumped in a bloody rocket and went to the moon. They were rehearsing all the time, they had their own language. They kind of managed to create this physical language and this thematic, or conceptual, language of the work that was totally nothing to do with me. I had no input and they would present small snippets of it to us, but it actually became quite a private thing for them, and I only really got an insight into it when I read their journals at the end of semester. The amount of narrative storytelling, they didn't even really ask for advice on lots of areas of the work. It felt like a really successful collaboration because they were able to provide lots of the pockets of need within the group. It's almost like they had a perfect crew. Like one person was able to manage the... they gelled in a way which meant they were self-sufficient. That doesn't mean that it's the most beneficial learning, because the challenges that [other groups] faced in pushing their work into this crazy experimental zone, or the challenges of [Hadley and Eve] and [Eve] spraining her ankle, but the fact that [Nikau, Isla and Mateo] were so self-sufficient, they didn't let any of that stuff occur, but I do think it was a very successful collaboration... because they made their own thing. They were thinking totally critically about everything, and that's why I felt like it was such a successful collaboration, was that I could step back, in a lot of ways.

Celeste jumps in and says,

Yeah! The group is engaged. And sometimes you just see people in that group, students in that group, like gaze away and, we've all done it, we gaze out that window and think when is going to be over? And that's sometimes when the collaborative relationships seem to get a bit forced because there's someone else

going like, “come on, we need to do that again!” And the other person’s like oh... let’s just... gaze out the window. But tension is... conflict... conflict and tension and difficulty are absolutely all part of successful collaboration... I think.

Carys says pragmatically about the idea of success,

To speak idealistically about such an environment, I would imagine that it's that sort of deeply productive flow state of being and working, where it's more likely that you're going to say, “yeah! Let's try that. And also I was thinking about this other thing. What do you think about that?” It's the spurring off of ideas from one person to the next and the sort of passing of the ball, the sharing of the load.

Carys adds how important it is for her that,

People don't feel traumatised at the end of it! That would be something that I would mark as successful. Maybe that the people in the collaborative group understand each other a little bit more, or they've built a common language. ... Other modes of success would be in the communication of ideas, the way that the ideas were communicated, the particular aesthetics to the work, that differentiate it from other works, so not a regurgitation of ideas or a replication of ideas but a uniquely new thing. Other ways to measure success might be in the way that the students spoke about the collaborative process, their takeaways, their ability to identify what they learnt through the process of working together.

From this part of our conversation, I get a sense of the values and aims the educators bring to their classes, and it is not all about making ‘good’ choreography. I make some notes:

- Knowing who you are and what you need (teacher and student).
- How do we create energy, flow, drive and connection in our classes?
- What do we see? What are we looking for? And how do we respond when we are teaching?
- Soft skills are important and choreography class teaches them beautifully. So how exactly are we doing it? Can we do it, or do we just let it happen?
- Are these soft skills also in play in the relationship between teacher and student?

4.2.3. *Relating*

We are really into our conversation now, and we have our own sparks flying. The conversation is slightly faster in pace and our bodies are move physical to punctuate our words. The dancery-ness of how we communicate seems to be coming through more strongly. I feel full of all the stories and ideas that have been shared.

I say, “I’m thinking about, how, I suppose in my own teaching practice sometimes it’s taking some ideas to class to facilitate discussion around, and other times, it’s looking for the ‘teachable moment’ and then pausing the class or group to talk about what’s going on. Is that how it is for you all? How do you talk about collaboration with your students? *Do* you talk about it?”

Carys starts by suggesting,

With the class structure that I generally run, it is task based towards some sort of collaborative end, or some sort of collaborative aesthetic end, then all of the teachable moments, ... are things that pop up in the way that people relate to each other in the process. And I don't have to script it. It always comes up.

Jette agrees and says,

We don’t talk directly to collaboration; we just do it. And I don’t know if that’s the right approach. I think after teaching this year I might take a different approach next year in terms of framing up... in terms of what it is, and what it can be, to prepare them, but I also think you never know, because each combination of each group is going to be so different every year. You can never predict the issues or the complexities that are going to arise with that particular group of human beings.

Carys is nodding as she listens and says,

I guess it's not explicit all of the time. I'm thinking about tangible examples, like I would talk about the range of processes. So at a second year level, I might talk about the range of processes that are, that the student might enter into as a maker or as a maker with people, being the spectrum, you know the classic Jo Butterworth spectrum, of which I've done a bunch of research into, in response to that spectrum, at the variety of different ways of negotiating each of those stages and how a dancer might interact with the conceptual stage, the making stage, the

performing stage. So I might do tasks where we move from a didactic practice, to a facilitative practice, so a student can understand the scope. But ... then beyond that, the expectation is that maybe then it's part of the fabric of the classroom.

She pauses and then continues,

So, I'm talking more about how you might instigate a meaningful choreographic process *with* people as a leader. But in second year I might talk about why it's important as a key skill to have, and how it might be transferable to other environments. And I think those conversations compute to a degree, but it's the doing of it, and the going out into the world, where the students actually have moments of realisation, like "oh! Alright I get it. I understand more now why collaboration is important," [laughs] as opposed to in the moment of teaching it.

I laugh, because I know that feeling, of trying so hard to get a point across to students and it is often only years later after they graduate that they tell you "ohhh, now I understand why you did that."

"Yeah." I say, "for me there are sort of three things I'm doing to support their collaborative learning. First, some quite practical suggestions when I put them in their groups, like 'set up a rehearsal schedule. Maybe you want to use a doodle poll for scheduling your time'. And then I also suggest things like go and have pizza together. Go and get to know each other, ask each other questions about your lives. I mean also I'm usually dealing with first years, by third year hopefully they're a bit more secure in themselves as a person; they've got themselves a bit settled. Whereas, first year, some of them don't even know how to have a conversation with another human being that's not on their phone." I take a breath and continue. "The second thing I've found really helpful is to identify in real time in tasks what I see going on in the room, just drawing attention to it in the middle of a task so then they can reflect upon what they are doing, for example 'right now I can see you making eye contact, I can see open bodies, I can feel the energy in the room shifting into something quite bouncy and playful'. Or, 'I can see some of you very closed off, I can see some sniggering and eye rolling, here's how that can make us feel...' So we talk a lot of about body language, and facial expressions, and actually saying the words, because, you know, we're not psychic!" I pause and then add, "And then the final thing is waiting for, the teachable moments, where you can go 'ah! Let's talk about that' interpersonal issue because it doesn't pan out the same way twice. It's different every single time, in every single group, in every single class. Although you might

have some strategies up your sleeve, you can't always predict what a group will need or how they will respond.”

I wonder out loud, “so you have all these sorts of things happening in class, do they ever come to talk to you outside of class time to say, ‘I’m having this problem with my group. What should I do?’ like that kind of stuff? For me it’s endless, emails, conversations, before, after class, knocks on my office door. It’s constant and often feels like school yard tattletales. ‘He said, she said.’ They come to talk to me instead of talking to each other.” Jette and Carys both agree and have numerous examples of this too.

Jette offers,

Yes! When they were making their works together, I had put them in their groups, they’d started choreographing together, immediately, because they’ve not selected these groups, immediately interpersonal issues arise from previous experiences. Immediately, I get emails saying, “I’m concerned about this person,” one student was like “you’ve put me in a group with this person. They don’t pull their weight. They don’t turn up on time.” This is the night after I’ve given out the groupings. So they’ve made all of these assumptions about how this project might go because of their knowledge of this person.

Likewise, Carys talks about receiving multiple emails from students in the middle of the night and we all talk about the nature of these often being students requesting “help” to fix social issues or to correct others’ behaviour. She gives a recent example,

She was emailing me, like long emails, we’re talking, sort of, four or five paragraphs long, complaining about multiple other students in the class, and calling on me to have a round robin discussion so they could all air their issues. Yeah, which is an interpersonal issue and it’s not my area of expertise. We were in the theatre at that time, and so I ended up, yes, instigating a circle discussion, but not so everyone could speak, but so I could say “can I remind you, that I’m here to help you with your choreography. As I noted at the beginning of the semester, any interpersonal issues should be dealt with those people. If you need it mediated, please get an additional friend, but that’s not my job, and we have limited time [here in the theatre].” And so that worked in the sense that it was acknowledged that I had received the emails and was addressing it, but rather to say, “I’m not going to be doing that because that is outside of my job description.” And it feels quite harsh, but actually this is not an uncommon thing, and I don’t want it anymore. I don’t want it anymore.

I wonder out loud, “do you think there’s a moment, when the students hit it and think ‘ohhhhh, this feels uncomfortable. This doesn’t feel quite right or quite good enough’ and that’s when they send the emails and it’s all ‘help me!’ I think that moment of conflict or the moment when their idea is challenged, or the moment when they have to articulate themselves, or step forward into leadership, all those social things that happen, if they can just go ‘I’m going in, and I’m going to figure it out as I go along’ that’s where the real learning happens. But if the shut down and they’re on the email going ‘help me, help me, fix, it, so-and-so said this’ you know, as the teacher, if they go through it, and it might be uncomfortable, if they learn to use their voice, and they learn to articulate, and they learn to back themselves, and compromise and listen, and try and find understanding, then the whole thing can be so amazing. But you can’t force them into it.”

Interestingly, Celeste says, she does not receive such communication from students,

Hardly ever in terms of the collaborative relationship. Sometimes, sometimes. I think ... after I saw [one] disastrous rehearsal, I think one of them was like, “I think we need to have a meeting.” But they talk about other things, but rarely is it like “can we talk about our collaboration?” It’s interesting, isn’t it?

This is interesting, and I wonder about possible reasons why. Different class cultures perhaps, perceptions of the teacher, course structure, differences in year levels and class relationships?

“Let’s have a quick break, shall we?” “Yeah, good idea” they say. They scatter for a moment to check phones, drink from water bottles, go out to the bathroom, and stretch cross legged on the floor.

I take the final sip of my coffee and make some notes in my journal. I stand up and wander into the middle of the room swinging my arms around by body side to side. Carys walks back into the studio. “Hey Carys, I was just thinking about what you said about the Butterworth, 2004 article.” We both stop in the middle of the room and turn to face each other. “I think the article is really useful, in some ways. I think for first year level it’s good to give language to some of the different choreographic relationships and to lead into discussions about contribution or perhaps the kinds of agency a dancer might have. Can we talk some more about that. What are your thoughts?”

I think that it's a really good place to springboard off, but it's not very nuanced. And you know, certainly with the students we teach, and these sorts of cultural competencies, and their interests, and their experiences prior to coming into [tertiary dance study], the Butterworth stuff is really great for a basic 'snack platter' of possibilities. But that's only one way, and collaboration happens in lots of different ways in different stages and phases of the choreographic process. And it's deeply tied to instinct and interpersonal relationships.

I reply "Yeah. That's the thing. I think that there's a whole bunch of stuff missing from the article. I don't think that making choreography collaboratively is as straight forward as going 'I'm the leader and now I'm going to instruct you.' or 'I'm the leader and now make up something up for me.' That doesn't actually unpack what the relationship is. A relationship is about a whole bunch of other things. That's just the way that they're inviting the contribution from the other people in the room. And I don't think that you could ever have a process where it fits so neatly into those little boxes. Carys agrees, saying,

Yeah, I guess we're all using it for want of a better way of explaining the nuances of a choreographic process to undergraduate students.

"Yeah, totally, totally. And also we're preparing students to go in the industry. But the industry has progressed into other models, in different ways of working, and the students want to invent their own ways of working. And so there's now this gap of how do we help them understand that the Butterworth framework is just one thing, it's just one way?"

Well, *some* students want to invent their own ways of working, and some students just want to put on a piece of music and stand in front of a mirror and make dance moves. And, you know, I guess it's in its own way that's an entirely valid way of making work as well.

Celeste walks back in and stops to join us. I say to her, "We were just talking about the Butterworth article. I feel like at some point you mentioned you also refer to it in your teaching?"

Yeah, we do. So at the start of their collaborative group work process, we take them through a teaching process based on [the] Didactic to Democratic model and they practice, without product, what it is to be didactic, what it is to be, you know, the middle ones, and then what it is to be fully democratic. And so they have like one to two weeks of just practising. And they observe each other, and

they reflect upon and talk about it. What worked? What didn't? And usually at the end of those two weeks, we all come to the conclusion that there's elements of all of that involved in collaboration. We always talk about how a fully democratic process is actually sort of almost beyond their skill level! [laughs].

I make a mental note about this point of student comprehension and progression and how we manage this as students make their way from first to third year. Celeste continues,

I think the Jo Butterworth model is really helpful for the dance studio dancers because they are so comfy in that didactic zone, right? So when I go "who's experienced didactic processes before?" They're all like, [this];

She shoots her hand up into the air as if to say "me! me!"

I laugh, because I definitely see this in my class too, and it does present particular perceptions about collaboration. "I love that you use the Jo Butterworth article. What do you think is missing from that framework, is there anything missing? Celeste thinks for a moment,

It's actually a combination of all those things. The way we make work now, is a combination of all that stuff, but sometimes you just need to be "5, 6, 7, 8". And that is absolutely valid. And sometimes you have to be like "let's all decide how we're going to start." But I think about [some professional], they seem so democratic and so concerned about how everyone feels, but I feel like the work's not rigorous enough! [claps on each word for emphasis]. Come on now! And then I also see that people are like "blah, blah, blah" and [thinking] "what an asshole". And what I think is missing is that you can pull on a didactic approach when you need it, you pull on democratic when you need it, but mostly you sit in that middle ground.

I say, "yeah, and that it's ok for one minute in rehearsal to be one way, and the next moment it's the other way, and it's ok to flex, and its ok to go 'oh, it's all good if my idea's not here,' it's ok! But what is important is to say the idea, but there's so much compromise that needs to happen, and that it's so nuanced. It's not black and white." Celeste agrees, "mmmmm",

Yeah, and I think probably what's missing in our training, and I don't know how you feel about this, is practising making without having to put that show on in six weeks. Practising making. Practising making. "Today I'm going to run rehearsal

in a group for all of us.” “Ok how do we do it? Who knows? But I get that practice at running.” And the next day I’m a dancer. I still think we could do more, how to practice choreographing, and collaborating.

I realise many of my questions have been about student collaboration, but I’m becoming aware of something else that seems to be going on for the educators. There are so many things we are trying to balance whilst we teach, and the curriculum is only one of those things. There is a lot of ‘hidden curriculum’ going on!

- Collaboration is multilayered and requires attention to aspects beyond the choreographic roles. It is about the relationship. How do we support students to build relationships?
- We cannot teach our students just one way to make a dance or one way to ‘be’ in the choreographic process. They have to learn to flex, and we have to flex our pedagogy.
- We want to help students learn to ‘be’ with themselves, with others, with us. To be patient, to be open, to be curious. How do we do this?

4.2.4. *Negotiating*

I say slowly as I work out my question, “We’ve talked a little bit about choreography assessments, but can we talk specifically, is collaboration assessed in your courses, and if so, how? I’m curious to hear your thoughts on this. In my first-year course, it *is* explicitly assessed in the second half of semester where we all start working together towards our show. The overall assessment includes criteria where marks are allocated towards their collaborative skills and how well they work together in terms of their communication, energy, curiosity and engagement with their peers’ ideas, so for example how invested they are learning each other’s movement, as well as how empathetic or supportive they are in all those in-between moments in rehearsal. So that’s really about how they are as a person in the group. Then their collaborative choreographic contributions are assessed as separate criteria, so that’s about, when we set a task with a partner or in a small group what they actually create together and how well that responds to the ideas, and the sort of innovation within that. So the assessments cover both the performance moment, as well as the entire choreographic process. This is all assessed by me and then moderated by another staff member who comes into a rehearsal to observe.”

Carys offers that,

Collaboration is assessed because all of the choreography is collaborative, and the grade for the choreography, that component of the assessment, the artefact that goes on stage, everyone receives the same grade from the group. In [another course] it's a bit more complicated, it's not assessed per say, because it's um... it is assessed in terms of how the students negotiate their performance moment. So, the support, the way that they work with others to achieve the goal of getting the performance on stage. It's a much more sort of wrap around collaborative moment but the choreographies are individually assessed in that year which brings up its own range of challenges. I think one of the benefits of collaborative choreography [in second year] is that for those students that don't see themselves necessarily as a choreographer, they have the opportunity to be bolstered by other participants in the group, to sort of elevate their skills and to present a product that might have been incredibly challenging for the individual student to achieve by themselves. Whereas the opposite happens in the third year, where students who do not want to be choreographers are still expected, under the current course structure, to choreograph.

Celeste says,

[For our class] there is assessment criteria that attends directly to how they worked as a collaborator. And we do that by an informal peer feedback. Also we also do that by tutor observation. So what we can see is how they're working in the collaborative group, which is interesting [laughs]. Because who knows, you know, and their rehearsals that they do out of hours, who knows?! But we're sort of looking for how they communicate, whether they're always leading, whether they're always listening. Yeah. And how they're sort of managing the group focus and energy together.

Carys pipes up,

Working with other people you have to rely on other people. It's can feel really risky. Especially when it's associated with assessments and grades.

Celeste nods and states,

We don't separate out who's done what within the assessments. We try to get them to understand that the work is assessed, and that they have some different marks depending on how they collaborated, how they performed.

Jette replies to the group by saying,

I think also, the big thing [with] the grades, each student in the same group gets the same grade for the choreography. They collaborate. And so there's a lot of chat, and concern, about people pulling their weight, and resentment around doing the work and having people ride on the back of you. And a conversation I ended up having was around like, do the work for yourself, don't worry, do the work because you want to. I think fairness is a funny thing.

I say, "Yeah, I've had similar experiences. I was chatting with some students recently who were complaining about the collaborative processes, and people getting good grades without doing much work, and I said to them 'do the work for yourself. That person's grade has nothing to do with you. And if they get an A, then cool. But it doesn't affect your grade. Do the work because *you* want the A. Do the work because *you* are invested in the process. Do the work because *you* care about your learning. That person's A+ or C- has nothing to do with you. And maybe they get a free turn sometimes, but focus on yourself. You can't control everything.' And what we know is that this might be uncomfortable for them at this moment, and they might disagree about the course structure or the assessment criteria, but what they learn about working with different kinds of people will be really valuable for them, wherever they end up. It might also be very valuable learning for the person who isn't perceived to be contributing as much as they should, for whatever reason."

Celeste adds on that where she teaches,

They do a written peer commentary. They answer a question about their group mates and how they worked as a collaborative group. It's been brutal in the past as well. Like sometimes people have used it as a point to like go, "[Amaia] never listened to me, she's really bossy. And she took over all the time and I hated that." Yeah. So that's been a disaster. So I would write about the three people in my group. And I would hand mine to... so they know it's gonna be [read by their peers], but they still go in for the kill. We read all of them and it helps us form our mark of how we assess them. That's part of the information. I'm like, oh wow, I didn't know. I observed [Amaia] being really assertive. But obviously all three of them commented that she didn't listen. So, you know, that's interesting. We've used it to, like, reflect back. We observe. We talk about it, at the start, we go "this is not your chance, to air your grievances. And of course, we would hope that that would happen in the process. "Oh, I'm feeling really not listened to, let's stop now." But it doesn't always happen. Some people, just love an end point to go and talk about all the things they wished happened. We hope that with the peer feedback that the student will just get more awareness of what they were like in a really formative way.

“Cool, so we’ve talked around a range of topics, which are more about the curriculum I guess, but I’m keen to hear about what you think the issues are that emerge out of these collaborative moments in your courses?” I say.

Carys says she has things to say about this. She is always so quick and decisive,

[It’s] very complicated in choreography, and I’m going to put it out there, that I think it’s the most complicated environment in a university context.

One of the reasons, she states, is that,

When you make something together with other people, you have to bring something of yourself to that process, and so everyone starts to have a voice, and having a voice in a creative process is a meaningful experience for dancers. Dancers, from my experience, oftentimes, want to give themselves to a creative process, and so collaboration is the sort of thing that can enable that to happen.

Jette adds on and extends this by saying,

I think they have to bring so much of themselves to the course. It’s laying it all out there. I mean, they choose how much they want to say but within technique a performing body is vulnerable, but [in choreography] you’re being taught the way to do things and then you get to figure out how you... you’re being told to figure out a way, your own way. And I think that can feel so expansive. And I think lots of students like to know what to do to get to the next point. They like to have a very clear linear pathway. And the fact that the creative practice is not linear, you can’t just go “I do this, and then I do this, and I do this, and then I’ll get a great product.” the fact is, it’s much more complex and convoluted...

“Yeah,” Carys agrees,

Because the students are bringing their own stories... to put into form. They’re bringing, potentially, something that that has been inside them to life, and, um, you know I don’t believe that dance is therapy, but I do believe that there’s aspects of dance that allow us to process certain things in particular strange ways. I think it feels really personal for the students.

Celeste brings us back to reality as she often does with her practical attitude, saying,

Uuuuggghhhhh! But then I'm just like, "let's just make a dance!" [laughs]. It's not about the whole world. It's not about what happened to you when you were three. It's not... but it is. But it's not....

I sigh. "And also, at the end of the day, it's just part of the curriculum, we're just trying to learn the choreographic skills, to get through the course, to get the degree, for the career. Yeah, and also, I don't know if you think this as well, there's something about choreography that's like, their hearts are *so* in it! And they might love technique, but it's not the 'thing.' And they might love teaching, but it's not the 'thing.' But there's something about choreography that's like life or death to them. But it's just choreography. It's just dance moves. It's okay! I mean we want it to be important. We want it to be meaningful, because then they do better work. But there's something in it that's like [gulps]. It's not your life's work."

Celeste says,

But yes, teaching them that it *is* you, but it's also just a dance, is a really hard one for them because often they come into dance because "it's the only place I can be myself," "it's the way I express myself". Yeah, cool! But also, fuck, just make the thing!

And we all laugh because we so know what she means!

From here we move to talking briefly about whether it is our responsibility to be teaching interpersonal skills within the choreographic classroom. I wonder how we should fit this additional layer of learning into courses that are already driven by time and performance pressures. We do not come to a clear answer about that, but Carys notes,

I think they just don't get it at home, potentially. I don't know. I mean I think also it's probably just a really easy thing to say that maybe students aren't getting critical conversations at home. Maybe that's just an easy way of thinking about it. Maybe we need to do more somewhere. They are adults. We're not teaching high school students. But I do feel that maybe they're not getting some information in their final high school years, and I do also recognise we've been through a Covid period, and so a lot of the interpersonal communication stuff has not played out in the studio as it normally would.

I note, "Well, I do think there's a gap somewhere, but where does the gap get filled, and by who? And I think that it does play out in choreography class in ways that it doesn't play out

elsewhere. And I think it comes from, like, what we've talked about, that it's so personal to the students, and they so want to get it right. And there's also a lot of fear, and vulnerability which means that things just happen in choreography that they don't in their other classes."

Carys is quick to suggest other important learnings,

Cultural competencies, and religious backgrounds... family dynamics.

We talk about this for quite some time. We are all in agreement about the idea that we want the students to bring their full selves to the process, and that the students frequently want to make work about aspects of their identities, cultural background, home life and life experiences. All the women have many ideas about why this is important and how it complicates things in the choreography class.

This feels like another pause in the conversation, and I let the ideas sit for a moment before speaking again. I write in my notebook:

- Choreography is important and meaningful (and stressful) for students.
- What are we actually trying to teach?
- Whose responsibility it is to teach it?

4.2.5. *Pedagogical challenges*

I smile at the women. "So, I know what skilled educators you all are, and I've seen you teach in various moments, but I'd love to hear in your own words a bit more about how you'd describe your pedagogy. What kind of teacher are you? How do you see yourself? What are the things you're actually trying to do when you teach and why? What are your specific strategies for facilitating these collaborative moments? What are the challenges you face as a teacher and what do you do about these? Big questions I know, but I'm happy for you to dive into talking about whatever comes to mind."

The three women openly talked about challenges and strategies. Carys began talking about the challenges of group work and strategies she employs to work through subsequent learning issues,

Some students feel like they've been lumped with people they don't want to choreograph with, and they feel like they're dragging them through.

Jette is nodding strongly in agreement. "Yeah, that's a good point." I muse. "So let's talk about that. Do you divide them up into groups? Do they make their own groups? What is that process?" We talk at length about the many different ways we try to pair students up or place them into group. I get the sense that generally for in class tasks it is random or self-selection. However, grouping students for assessment and performance work is extremely challenging and many factors are considered. All the educators, except myself, discuss taking recommendations from the students into consideration. The reasons I do not do this at first-year level is that I really want the students to learn from one another and share their different perspectives, but also to build relationships with people in the class they do not know well yet. Ideally this builds stronger relationships to sustain them through the rest of their degree as a cohort. The three women say that after calling for suggestions from the students, they then move into various methods like spreadsheets or post-it notes to finalise groups, whilst exploring personalities, availability and schedules, managing student workloads, movement identities and established relationships. The conversation also includes various suggestions about numbers of groups we make, and we conclude that even though we always aim to 'get it right,' sometimes we get it very wrong. This part of the conversation is very lively, with us laughing at our efforts and failures. I get a very strong sense of the labour that goes into these decisions, and that our decisions can really impact the students' collaborative choreographic experiences and attitudes.

Carys shares,

It doesn't matter how many times I caution them to work with people that they know will be able to turn up to their rehearsals; the students have beautiful big ideas, and they have a vision of their work, how it will be on stage, and they pick the people that they love and care about and wanna work with, and they don't necessarily always think about how their collaborators schedules are going to impact though the work itself.

She also adds that things are complicated in class,

Inter-class dynamics, personalities, friendships are really challenged, [especially for students in many groups] which means that then you're rehearsing all the

time, and when we come to the group tasking in class time, whose group do you go with? What do you do? How do you make those decisions? So, good learning opportunity for those students, and some students are very good with boundaries and managing, and others are not.

Celeste has a lot to say about her experiences of doing this and interestingly aims to make final decisions publicly with all students together,

I feel quite proud of where I've got to with this process. I set it out clearly, "to that first meeting, bring who you want to work with. Bring the knowledge that any of that could change at any time. And also, that I am leading this process, and that I will make the final decision." ... I let them talk about it at the start, and then we put up who they want to work with, and start shifting around... [...] And then [Kahurangi] has been cast in, "ugh, I'm in nine pieces" and someone else is like, "I haven't been cast in anything." ... by the time they get to third year they've sort of decided that they're not really so worried. So some of them are just like, "that's cool. I'll just dance in one." Or they know more about their mental health and their ability to get through these intense projects. I've had students be cast in something and then say "I want to be taken out of your work because I'm not interested in your ideas." So in third year they seem to be getting better and better at articulating that. One of them last year was like "can you talk about your ideas? Oh no I'm definitely not interested in working with that." I think they looked slightly taken aback, but they were just like, "okay", yeah, and they got someone else. Really interesting. And a good thing. So again, it's just trying to keep it all in that room and not a terribly negative bitchy social state afterwards. And so that's why I've tried so hard to try and get it out in the room. [...] Really delicate. People get hurt and upset. And yeah, it's very heightened. The energy in the room is very intense and I've gotten so much better at it over the years. And now I announce at the start, "this is going to be really full on, some of you are going to feel really upset. We're going to get it all out together in the room and none of us are going to talk about this in a bitchy way behind our friends' backs." And it takes like 3 hours! [she laughs] But I just commit to doing it in his space, so that we talk about it. And I'm sure they still bitch about it, but.... everyone gets sorted in that time, with me present.

Jette is thinking intently; she goes through a similar process of discussing in class and then making final decisions,

I think it's also trying to challenge them away from the easiest option. I offer them an opportunity to have a chat about their ideas. ... So we hear what everyone is interested in and then we go into some groups and do a 'shop around' and have a chat to some

people, and then they all send me a list of students who they'd like to collaborate with, and then you definitely get a message from three girls who all say "I want to work in this trio," and you go, [laughs]. "I know why you want to, because you're best friends." What can happen if we just twist that a little bit? Because that can cause a really different outcome to what you might have made before, or made outside of class. [...] Interestingly I felt really nervous this year about [the groups I decided upon].

"Why was that?" I ask. Jette replies,

Because I think I made a couple of [casting] choices that I thought some students might – there's quite a hierarchy in that class. There're big leaders who kind of get what they want a lot of the time, or are very popular,

Ooohh, interesting. "How do you spot a big leader?" Jette says clearly,

It's the person people congregate around as they leave the room. It's often the person who, I can think of one particular student, who cares the least but is the most talented. They're talented but they don't show that they care.

I agree, "yeah, the last person in the circle, or the first person, so a big leader can really pull the class in a very positive and generative direction or pull the class the other way into distraction and fragmentation. It can be dangerous." Jette adds, speaking specifically about a recent experience with a student in her class,

Yeah, it's odd. And obviously she must show her peers that she cares for them to love her. But she also shows a carelessness [about what we're doing] which is kind of dangerous. I struggled with a couple of the students around this.

I say, "it's tricky, aye, because you've spoken about wanting to get them enthusiastic and involved, get the spark going, but you've got this quite powerful person in the room who's just like 'yeah, whatever'. So you're just working it, to try to convince them to engage". Jette answers,

Yes. And I think that's where a bunch of our interpersonal issues have occurred because our energies were constantly battling, where every time she lay down on the floor, I'm like, oh my teaching has failed, you know? So it starts to feel like, ok! Get up! Come on! Because it feels really personal as well. That's the thing you're bringing as a teacher, your enthusiasm, and the [student's] energy is

seeping throughout the class and counteracting everyone's learning. That's the frustrating thing.

I think for a moment, take a slow inhale and then respond, "yeah... as we talk today, I'm realising there's another layer of collaboration in the room, and that's between the student and the teacher. And so you're trying to get them to collaborate and make choreography with each other, but you're also trying to collaborate with each student in their learning. Our relationship is really influential in the room. It affects all the social stuff that happens in front of you in the groups as well, it's quite complicated." I continue, "it seems to me that there's these two things working in tandem actually, that sometimes the peer-to-peer problems are the same issues that you have teacher to student. In terms of the listening and responding and reciprocity within the teaching and learning, the teacher is at the centre of that, trying to help the student learn how to be a 'good student' with those same skills: communication, listening, giving space, understanding, openness, all of that stuff. But that's the same stuff that you're trying to get the students to do peer-to-peer: listen to each other, give space, not roll your eyes, you know all of that stuff. And yeah, I'm just trying to understand, are we teaching them how to 'be' with us, so that they can then 'be' with another student collaboratively? What do you think about that?"

Carys states,

Yeah, I mean, I would agree with that. But I'd also add that I think there's a third element that's working in this environment and that's the aesthetic element. We're making artwork, and that requires a perspective, and aesthetic eye, an opinion about something. Yeah, and that is sometimes at odds with collaborative processes because multiple voices lead towards the dissipation of one singular direction. ... So there's that, there's the aesthetic, and then there's the interpersonal, and then there's the teacher-student relationship.

I say, "wow, it's a tangle, isn't it? So they're grappling with like, what is it that I'm trying to do creatively, and how do I appease my desire to make something meaningful and personal, but also, then I have to do it in collaboration with this other person with their own questions. And so I'm compromising my ideas. I'm trying to figure out and let go of my own things, but then I'm also in relation with this other person and their ideas. And so that's a tangle. And then the teacher's saying, 'be clear about your ideas, stay strong, but, have you thought about this, and

what about this?’ So the student’s constantly shedding and trying to hold on at the same time. It’s quite a dilemma, I think.”

As we talk an issue seems to emerge around how students perceive their educator within choreography learning. I think back to the revelation that the educator-student relationship can have a huge impact upon what goes on socially in the studio. It seems that there is both something around choreography pedagogy, and the foregrounding of identity in the choreography learning contexts, that impacts these interpersonal relationships.

Carys talks about her pedagogy,

I want to be collegial. I want to have really good banter, but I also want there to be a boundary because I know that it can get very very blurry. ... And sometimes students get it twisted, but yes, it's really tricky.

She continues,

I think encountering teachers in a choreographic environment is sometimes a little bit like “huh? How come they’re so casual?” And that’s why some students can get a bit twisted, like casual doesn't mean without rules, casual doesn't mean without expectations, and casual doesn't mean without rigour. In fact, casual to me, means so much experience and rigour that you can have a casual way of communicating because there's just nothing left to prove.

I think about how such a deeply relational pedagogy might be understood by the students, where we are deeply in conversation so much of the time about their personal ideas, that it could be confusing for students, and educators, to know where the boundaries could be. I ask Carys, “can you talk about what that boundary is? Where is that boundary for you and how do you think your students perceive you?” She replies,

I don't know how students perceive me. Sometimes I think they perceive me as like a fun auntie, and other times they think I’m really hard arse [laughs]. ... When you have banter with students sometimes what happens is that the students start to slip into this notion of like... oh she's one of us, it's all good, and then they start calling me [by my surname] and then they start, you know, emailing me at 11:00 o'clock in the evening and on the weekends. Then so to create the boundaries I have to have a talk with the students at the beginning of the course to say “I'm here to support your choreographic development. You are adults. I'm

not here to parent you or to be a friend. I am here to teach you how to choreograph something. [...] Let me help you choreograph. Some students respond really well to that, and some students don't clock it and I get treated like an additional mother sometimes, or students sort of have expectations of me well beyond my male colleagues.

She goes on to explain,

There were some major issues with some students, which I would like to speak about for a minute, because I just wonder whether through explaining it there could be a way to understand it [she laughs] and do this better in the future. ... Sometimes there is a particularly strong individual in class who has visions of what they believe they can and can't do, or should and shouldn't do, irrespective of whether that's good or not for the rest of the group. [Sophie], I found really challenging because she called on me a lot of times, almost to confess what was going on in the group and, you know, like what was happening to her, and what was going on her in the classroom, to which I could sense that there was some form of trying to pull me into something that I didn't want to be pulled into, and so I had to create some quite strong boundaries around her, that I have not had to do before.

I invite Carys to talk a little more about what she means. She tells us about extreme examples of students revealing very personal information to her. Jette and I have had many very similar experiences. Carys sounds tired and frustrated, as she says,

Emotional manipulation by students. Particular targeted stories. Sharing of information structured in a way to position students to look one way and position another student to look another way. It feels really wrong for me to have a one-sided conversation with someone about someone else when it's nothing to do with the choreographic classroom. I do not want anything to do with it. ... It feels like a mechanism of self-protection on the student's behalf sometimes... I understand that some students are sensitive, and scared, and worried. I understand that there can be some really dangerous interpersonal issues in class, and I do feel that if it's dangerous or unsafe then we should know, so that we can separate people. ... What's risky is because we're talking about collaboration, about the breaking down of barriers to understand each other, there is oftentimes the need to share something of yourself in order to be welcomed into the group. I want to instigate those environments for the students, but I don't necessarily want myself to be pulled inside it.

I say to the group, "I think that's it's a complicated thing, isn't it, for a student, because I know that some of the issues that are coming at you, from the student's perspective, when you

are in that role as the choreography teacher, and they do perceive you in that way of being a parent, some of those issues are to do with their collaborative relationships. And some of them, I have absolutely no interest in having this discussion with you, go and see a counsellor. How do you perceive that boundary of this as productive learning and education with collaborative skills, and this is not my area? It's becoming harder and harder for me to listen to the, what feels like, tattletales, or the reporting on other students. I'm not the police. Sure, come to me when you've tried everything you can think of and you've taken a chance to communicate. I'm happy to facilitate, but I'm not going to solve all the problems for you. For one, I simply don't have the time, I don't have the energy, and the students want to be treated like adults, so here you go. But so often it feels very bitchy, really yucky. I so want them to understand that it's in their power to change things around, to shift the energy, to have fun, to be kind. It's not happening to them, they are doing it." Carys is nodding,

It's a very specific thing that I'm really working on at the moment because I know as women, the expectation of us is that we deal with the emotional stuff and I don't want to do that. ... I feel very strongly about it because women are more often than not expected to act like a mother figure for students, in a choreographic environment, when my male peers in similar roles have not experienced the same thing. And I want to actively contribute to a change in the field and the way that students view their female teachers. Because I'm not interested in being a parent to my students. I've got kids of my own and they take all of my parental energy. That's not my role. My role is to help you choreograph.

Celeste tells us about her attitude when she started teaching choreography,

I was so gung-ho and I would put way too much of my own. I would just... I would be like, oh, I'd been watching those groups and I'd just be like in, in, in, all the time. I think as times gone on, and older, motherhood experience, it's like, what is the least I can do? I feel like I've been able to observe when people need help my whole life, but also I've gotten better, better at just like doing less, less, less, holding back, and holding back and see if that group will actually just find that moment [clicks] themselves... rather than jumping in.

I take a moment to reflect on my own journey into motherhood and how it may have affected my teaching. We talk for quite some time around the issues of being female choreography teachers, and the perceptions we believe we are dealing with. Not all of us have our own

children but we all discuss that we are aware that there are maternal expectations for care and labour. As we talk, I make notes:

- Time, availability, and energy for teaching bleeds out of the classroom and into other areas of our academic lives, and beyond.
- Choreography seems to demand significantly more time than other courses.
- Students' perceptions of mothering, motherhood and our roles are intertwined.
- The emotional labour of supporting students' emotions.
- We are constantly adjusting our boundaries.

4.2.6. *Responding*

I let the conversation run for several minutes and listen. The topic moves to what we are doing when we are in the teaching moment, in the middle of a class. We set up choreographic tasks for students to explore and then look for the 'clues' about what to do next.

Carys says,

As a teacher, you have to read the room, like what is required of this room? That is part of the collaboration as well, because as leader you need to sort of go... energetically, I'm sensing that.... Other times I'm trying to read the energy of the room, what is needed here for the students to achieve on the things we know we need to achieve, the objectives and aims of the course, the stepping towards an assessment moment?

I say, "yeah, awesome. Let's go to 'reading the room'. Maybe you've split them all up into their assessment groups, or you've just given them a task and they've partnered up, when you're reading the room. Specially looking at the social stuff that's going on, what are you looking at? What are the kinds of things that you see?"

Carys raises ideas around,

An energy, an attitude, a vibe, yeah. In dance there's a lot of subtext that I've spent the last sort of 25 odd years reading as a choreographer, and sometimes that is to do with what the choreography is... what story the choreography is telling, but more often than not it's about what is happening in the dynamics between the people in the room and how they work together. And that's also part of what I'm

looking at when I'm looking at the students. What are the dynamics here? How are they interacting? Does this feel right? What am I going to have to do to jump in and defrag any tension? Or how might I also identify who's working really well looking around the room.

When I ask her to tell us what she means when she uses the word 'subtext' she says,

Body language, microaggressions, energy between people, the way that bodies are in space, tension.

Celeste gives examples of what she might see,

So if I'm looking at a group that is worrying [laughs] sometimes it's just all talking. Yeah, just all talking. And a lot of people talking and not much listening. There's also sometimes just one person talking the whole time and the other people sort of... looking daggers at each other. As they are like, "oh God, she wants... she's got another idea." Also, it's like the space is stagnant. They're just... There's not a sense of testing or experimenting or playing or trying. It just is... It looks like they're hardly doing anything. Very rarely, very rarely do they fight with each other. Yeah, very rarely see that. And so that's generally when I step in, and go "cool... how's it going?" It's a stupid question. It's designed to be stupid [laughs].

Jette and Carys share that they use almost the exact same interjection as Celeste. I laugh because this is exactly what I say too. "Yeah. I wander over and I'm like "how are you going?" as if I'm a bit clueless and haven't been watching. Why do I do that? I want them to figure out for themselves what is going on, and try to articulate what the issue might be so they can unpack it and figure out for themselves what to do about the issue." Carys shares,

I just go "hey, guys. What's going on? What's going on? What's going on?" [laughs] and just try and keep it light. But the "what's going on" is because I want someone to explain to me what they feel is going on. I have noticed something so I just need some feedback to affirm that what I suspected is going on, is actually the deal. Because you know, I'm not right all the time. I think I get it wrong sometimes. I don't know. I fuck things up like everyone. But, yeah, but, "what's going on?" And then students might be sort of silent sometimes or like, "oh, no, no, we're fine" like that, and sometimes one person will speak. Sometimes both will speak. Sometimes asking the question is enough to dissipate the energy and students will be like "oh no, ohhh, we'll just go again." And I'm speaking about groups of two. In larger groups, it can be even more complicated because,

dynamics of groups of people, and expectations, and it's complicated choreographing on multiple people. It's complicated.

I laugh to myself at how I too always say “how are you guys going?” I go on, reflecting back to what Celeste shared, “that just made me think about something, about the fact that it's very rarely fighting. I'm curious about that. Maybe we'll come back to that. And I'm curious about that because I wonder why they don't fight. Because sometimes I wonder if they do have a fight that might be better; that it might actually help them to have a conversation. But they don't fight. They shut down. That's my observation anyway.”

I think for a moment, and add, “I'm always trying to get them to talk to each other. We talk a lot about having adult conversations – and that is the ability to try to clearly express your point of view, even if that is uncomfortable. But to do this in a way that feels right and that is respectful and generative. And also, to listen and receive information without getting the ‘yeah, buts,’ even if that is also uncomfortable, and makes us see ourselves in a way we don't necessarily like to hear. They often just shut down and come to talk to me about their peers and sometimes I'll have three or four members of a group all come individually, or in pairs, come to talk but they don't seem to be able to have an honest and difficult conversation with each other. I do wonder if there's the perception that conflict or fighting is bad. They don't want to hurt each other's feeling, or they don't want to cause a problem, even if that's at their own expense. They want me to fix it, to be the bad guy. I think they think that collaboration should be seamless and easy. It can be for sure, but it can also be really hard work.”

I wonder if the women notice that their students have trouble talking with each other and ask about this. Carys states,

I really do encourage the students to talk to each other as well, to say what's okay. At a base level, you should be able to say to someone that you are dancing with, “please don't touch me like that,” or “don't touch me.” ... [I want to see] that they will talk immediately, without any hesitation on whether their voice will be received, judged. And that's a huge hurdle for our students.

She goes on to offer insight into why she thinks students sometimes might be challenged in speaking up within the choreographic environment,

Because our students come from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds, and some of those backgrounds meaning that they have not been empowered to speak freely in such an environment. They have to experience it in a number of different ways before they might feel that they can speak up freely in such a circle. There's sort of, a range of potential backgrounds that our students might have experienced that mean that they communicate in different ways. Those backgrounds can involve balletic lineages where dancers might not be encouraged to have a voice within their training. Maybe some studio backgrounds, maybe some church backgrounds; environments where there are clear delineated hierarchies that have potentially taught our students that a teacher-student relationship occurs in a particular hierarchical way.

Jette notes that teaching choreography is inherently dialogical,

I think in a class where so much of it comes from these narratives, and conceptual discussions around being alive, not just as a way into how we look at ideas and how we look at bodies as political. [When] we started the course, we started talking about choreography, about like, big ideas around like... subjectivity, like the idea that your opinion might be different to someone else's.

We talk quite extensively about things we see that give us information about how the students are going and what they might need. It is clear we are constantly looking and feeling what is going on. Our conversation also leads to discussion around something less concrete, something a bit mysterious, something energetic. It is about the feeling or energy of what is going on in the room. I know exactly what the three women are talking about, so I try to push our conversation into building some language around what this thing is. Carys it is "juju" as she attempts to describe what it is. Various language used are "vibe" and "sparky, energy, fire" (Jette). Celeste says sometimes it looks like the space is "bubbling." Carys gives an example,

It is very clear in partnering if there are issues between people because of the way that people protect their energy when in contact with someone else. Because when you touch someone, you're exchanging energy. At a very basic level, you're putting the heat of your body onto another person's body. That's an exchange of energy. So you can't hide it. You think you are hiding it, but you can't hide it. So yeah, that's one instance when a person's dynamics, interpersonal dynamics can become really clear in partnering.

I consider this idea in relation to the energy or "heat" between teacher and student too. All four of us are very attuned to ways we can do this within our professional careers as

dancers and this has infiltrated into our teaching practice. I also think back to Jette's example of the students laying on the floor apparently disinterested and how this action gives off energy. This also means that as a teacher we have to carefully negotiate our own energy in response.

I am wondering what it is the women actually do after they have looked at their students and perhaps garnered information from them. The three of them mention ways of 'shifting energy' and making interventions, either towards a group's creative challenges or social issues. All three women state clearly that they will usually go straight in with creative suggestions even if they can clearly see interpersonal dynamics might be the problem. This is the opposite to what I tend to do.

Celeste tells us, after she approaches a group and asks how they are going, she is,

Intervening to help in a way that kind of prompts them to get going yet. So just to shift up the energy so that there's just a bit more action. I'm hoping what will happen is.... I am not interested at that point in finding out why it's stagnant... so that's complicated. I'm not interested in having a counselling session about their relationships with each other. Because again, the task is we're making a dance, so I don't need to know the complex social relationships that may be, sort of, holding you back. I just need to know "what are you working on?" "What about trying this?" So just that new thing, [clicks fingers like sparks] that fresh new idea. Then they can all... the interaction with the task then becomes about them and me, not about being together. They go "Celeste suggested that." It takes the emphasis out of the social relationships of the group and into a relationship with me. And if it's a failure, it's cool... "That didn't work, oh but how about we try this?" So it's like, it's like giving them space from themselves.

I think this idea is quite interesting. I suppose educators are little bit like magicians in how they direct focus towards or away from certain things going on in the room. This is also akin to making choreography where we can try to lure the viewer's eye towards a particular location in space, performer, or part of a movement.

Carys shares,

Well, you've got to give them some space to start with, to figure some things out. I've seen lots of groups of students under those conditions where one person

naturally takes the lead, which may work a group, or it may just work because that person has a particular personality type or aptitude towards voicing? Or the interpersonal dynamics of the particular group dictates that that person is immediately looked to for information about where to go, and where to start, and how to continue. And so, yeah, there's been multiple approaches and sort of sharing decision making skills within a group. The first one is to, like I was saying before, scope out the dynamics of the group and see, let them figure things out a little bit themselves and jump in when you note that there's some support that's required at a teaching and learning level. But with some groups there are students with some strong dynamics that just make it a real requirement of the teacher to be actively involved in every stage of the choreographic process [laughs].

Celeste sighs and adds,

The line is always shifting. I have definitely had moments where I've sat groups down and gone like “we need to talk about this, and let's, and let's not even attempt the work. Let's just talk about the relationships and let's see what's going on.”

Jette agrees and says,

I guess the way that I would try to teach that, would be to try to present a seduction of myself to their ideas, you know. Say they do this one move, I'm like “oh!” and then I go into how I would seduce myself into it more by demonstration, “you could go here, or you could go there, or here.” and you're trying to clear a couple of pathways for them, you know, just the beginning of the pathway, but to not take the lead. You're just providing the rope a little bit, out of the hole. You're not just leaving them there and going “sort it out. Good luck to that.”

From this I get a sense of the tremendous effort the women expend to support their students, even in the moments when it is challenging, and when they know the students will not necessarily like the response. There is a sense of providing options, ideas, and questions, but rarely solutions. I also perceive that the women are aiming to stretch their students little by little, and then at other times they decide to give a big ‘push’ – when they think the students need it or can cope with it. I can relate to this. Sometimes I get this ‘right’ and sometimes I get it ‘wrong’ too!

I write some final thoughts in my journal about this part of our conversation:

- Student diversity, boundaries, communication.

- How we understand what students need and how we respond.
- Our expertise helps us to do this. What is that expertise?
- The effort and energy we want to see our students engage with collaboratively is the same effort and energy we aim to generate in our teaching and in the teaching/learning relationship.

I look at the clock and realise we have gone a little bit overtime. The conversation has just been so fun and interesting, we kept talking and talking. “Hey, I think we should finish there. We could talk for hours more, but I know I’ve got more than enough content. I’m sure it will be too much! Thank you so much! I’ve loved our conversation today. I’m so grateful to have you all involved and it’s such a privilege to be able to hold your stories. Now I have to transcribe them!”. We all laugh because we all know how long it takes. “You’re welcome!” they each say. Carys, jumps up and states, “I’ve got to go to a meeting!” “Bye!” we all call after her, “see you next week!” Jette says. Jette, Celeste and I slowly get up, stretching on the way from floor to standing. We keep chatting about what is coming up in our courses and more broadly in our workplaces. The conversation turns to a show we saw recently, and we comment on the nature of the reviews it received. The chat continues all the way up to the door and we each have a hug before departing. “Thank you again!” I call after them as they walk away together.

4.3. Conclusion

Through this chapter I aimed to reveal the beginnings of the thematic analysis through an imagined collaborative conversation. Our constructed narrative revealed the following dominant themes: the choreography education context being complex with many interwoven demands placed on the educator; students’ aspirations to engage their histories, experiences and identities in their dance making, social experiences having a significant impact upon their choreographic learning, and the educator’s role in negotiating these; the teacher-student relationship and how this reveals personal and professional tensions for the educators; and finally the educators’ knowledge of their classrooms and their expertise, and how this informs their pedagogies. Additionally, through these themes the dialogic, relational and collaborative aspects of choreography

pedagogies are revealed. These themes are addressed in the chapter that follows, Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter addresses the central research question which drives this thesis: Within tertiary choreography courses in New Zealand, what are three dance educators' meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography? Here, the dominant themes that were developed out of the data collection and analysis are presented and discussed. Three overarching and entangled themes are analysed, each with their own interrelated sub themes. These include: collaborative-choreography learning being a complex creative context; perceptions and dilemmas of the educator-student relationship; and the choreography educators' expertise and pedagogies.

Within this analysis I draw strongly on my extensive experiences of teaching choreography within tertiary environments. My expertise is positioned alongside relevant literature and the experiences of the participants in order to find new understandings of the complexities that inform choreography teaching and learning in bachelor's degrees in Aotearoa.

5.1. "The most Complicated Environment in a University Context" (Carys): Unpicking the Challenges of the Collaborative Choreographic Learning Context

On reviewing the interview transcripts, an underlying belief about the choreographic context appeared to drive the educators' perceptions of other creative-collaborative and pedagogical tensions. It became apparent that before any other issues might be attended to, the idea that the context of choreography education is deeply complicated needed to be unpacked as a possible underpinning to the numerous other challenges revealed. Carys stated, "it's very complicated in choreography, and I'm going to put it out there, that I think it's the most complicated environment in a university context." I do not believe this statement is intended to undermine the challenges of other learning areas. Instead, Carys aimed to identify that dance making is a web fraught with challenges and pedagogical complexities that perhaps are absent or of lesser influence in other areas of dance curriculum. Knowing that the participants are all engaged in teaching courses in dance technique, performance, dance education, and allied subjects such as history or dance writing, made such comments all the more pertinent. I add here that I believe the choreographic-collaborative teaching and learning context is extremely challenging for both educators and students (John-Steiner et al., 1998; Le et al., 2018).

The data in the present study suggests that not only is the choreography education context challenging, but all three women explicitly stated they believe dance making itself is 'hard.' Carys noted "it's not easy." Celeste added on that "making a dance, it's not a fantasy or a dream. You know, it's not romantic" and "making a dance is just hard slog." Clarifying further Celeste stated, "you need to apply skills and strategies and test. Because things will go wrong. Yeah, it's hard work." Carys gave a little more detail about creativity noting, "constructing things that have not yet been constructed is always a challenge. It's an entirely new thing." Importantly for these educators, if dance making is difficult, then teaching it is likely to be difficult also.

'Creativity' generally refers to the skills and dispositions needed for generating ideas and products that are a) relatively novel, b) high in quality, and c) appropriate to the task at hand (Feldman et al., 1994). These conditions are well aligned with the creative objectives of choreography education in Aotearoa. Being creative is challenging and requires effort (Glăveanu, 2016; Glück et al., 2002). As noted in the literature review chapter of this thesis, the choreographic process is a creative pursuit, therefore, learning dance making skills requires creative dexterity (Rowe & Zeitner-Smith, 2011), choreographic cognition (Stevens et al., 2001) and creative agency (Farrer, 2018; Knox, 2013) as they engage in different dance making processes. The ability to exercise these skills might enable a student, or group of students, to move effectively through the choreography process, which might require divergent thinking, destabilisation, risk, problem solving, and conflict, for example. This also has significant pedagogical implications for educators as they aim to satisfy the demands of curriculum whilst also attending to unpredictable and nuanced student needs.

In asking why making choreography is a challenging activity in education, Jette offered the following observation:

I think lots of [students] like to know, what to do to get to the next point. They like to have a very clear linear pathway. ... The creative practice is not linear, you can't just go "I do this, and then I do this, and I do this, and then I'll get a great product." It's much more complex and convoluted.

Carys agreed, offering a rationale for why students might find dance making challenging: "you're making your creative offer and putting it out into the world, and students sometimes come to us from teaching and learning environments that tell them

what to do and how to do it.” This alludes to the diversity of students in our classrooms and the range of choreographic experiences they may have had prior to their tertiary education. These differences can, in my experience, mean challenges for students as they bring their values and beliefs together about what ‘good’ choreography is. Celeste also spoke of the need to attend to students’ ideas about what dance making is due to their past experiences, and at times the need to ‘undo’ learning as part of her courses. My experience is similar. Additionally, Carys’ statement indicates a further difference within student cohorts. She went on to speak specifically about students from “balletic lineages,” and how these students often struggle to find their own creativity and to use their voices actively to communicate when making choreography. She stated that this may be due to traditional pedagogies frequently still used within dance training contexts, as well as typical didactic methods (Butterworth, 2004) to make choreography ‘on’ young dancers for performances and competitions, with a focus on transmission and replication (Warburton, 2008). It could be understood that some students’ experiences and perceptions continue to perpetuate certain social problems unless educators actively work to provide learning experiences that counter limiting beliefs about what choreography is and can be, and how it might be made collaboratively. This again, points to areas of learning that choreography educators must attend to before, or as they move through their planned curriculum.

Within the context of this research, and after establishing that dance making itself is a challenging activity, I am mindful of the literature that speaks to how divergent meanings of creativity inform students’ collaborative experiences. It has been noted that different people are likely to possess differing ideas of what creativity might look like (Glück et al., 2002), or that what is valued (Amabile, 1983; Taylor & Littleton, 2012). Hence, this might produce both creative and collaborative challenges for groups of students, as well as for students to understand course content, assessment, or pedagogies. Hence, an implication emerging from this study is that a teacher’s ability to foster students’ interpersonal skills requires attention, willingness, and expertise (Rowe et al., 2020). Choreography educators require these skills, or must learn them (Quinn, 2012).

In discussing further, the challenges of dancing making, the women spoke of the social dilemmas of choreography as an added layer of complication for their students. Carys noted “to get them to work with other people to make something entirely new that has not been

seen before ... it can be really hard.” Jette agreed as she suggested, “It’s a hard process to make work with people. ... to be the centre of all the different ideas, and to negotiate all the desires of everyone involved, your dancers or your collaborators, or your teacher.” Carys stated her agreement: “It’s really hard, because more so than any dance moves, it’s about working with people. And if we can’t work with people effectively, if you can’t give enough space for people to feel respected and heard when you’re leading a moment, you’re in trouble!”

The statement “you’re in trouble” might allude to both the necessity of interpersonal skills and how issues can gain momentum within the process, as well as the possible impacts of social dilemmas can have on the choreographic product being made. I discussed in our second interview with Jette the contradiction that we often expect students to discover what their individual ‘creative voice’ is, but then place students into groups to work on projects together. This is likely to provide another layer of complication for students as they negotiate their own and their peers’ creative needs and aspirations. And, as they do this, they are still negotiating the various stages of development of their practical dance making skills.

This thesis aims to understand the nature of collaborative choreography learning from the teacher’s perspective. In aiming to unpick the challenges of the choreography education context it became important to hone in on the relationship between teacher and student. Following on from here, other relationships emerge as tightly knit into the fabric of the choreography classroom, for example, individual students’ needs, desires, and visions, educators’ values and decisions, curriculum and institutional requirements, industry preparedness and graduate profiles, diversity of career paths, performance outcomes, and the important question of what makes ‘good’ art and expert artists. Carys and Celeste identified tensions in these classroom demands that at times can create pedagogical contradictions or dilemmas. Carys stated,

It’s a strange mixture of knowing what I would have loved to have done when I was a dancer, and knowing as a choreographer what works. So those two things are sometimes at tension with each other because sometimes what works is not the most enjoyable thing to do, but it’s necessary for the choreography, or for the class, or the moment in the piece that you’re making.

Similarly, Celeste spoke about the need to flex the aims of the courses and her teaching, depending on what she thinks the students require,

There's that kind of facilitating and drawing out of their own interests, and then also sometimes it's being like... yeah, didactic, ... sometimes it's being a bit firm, a taskmaster, to give them that kind of structure, because they can get lost amongst themselves.

Placing these sorts of pedagogical tensions alongside demands such as assessment, interpersonal problems, student aspirations and perceptions, teaching values, and curriculum pressures, the many threads that can pull educators' attention, energy, and emotion into different directions are alluded to. These can be proposed as pedagogical or educational entanglements (Dowd, 2017; Letts & Sandlin, 2017; Onsès & Hernández-Hernández, 2017; Tinning, 2018). The notion of pedagogical entanglement nods to the intersecting teaching and ethical demands of the classroom and the way in which they are enmeshed (Tinning, 2018) as the educator "grapples with, enacts, and/or navigates issues of entanglement" (Letts & Sandlin, 2017, p. 181). Letts and Sandlin describe "how teachers get tangled up in/by teaching" (p. 182). Carys for example, explicitly stated "I'm just a choreography teacher. I just teach choreography and I make choreography," indicating how she wishes to perceive her role and put boundaries around it, presumably to avoid such tangles. This attitude appeared to be in response to particular situations she has found herself in with students, as a result of some of these intersecting dilemmas. The findings of this study suggest that choreography educators are indeed bound with such entanglements as they move through the micro moments of class activities, build relationships with students, and as they plan and execute their curriculum as part of the wider bachelor's degrees.

Snaza (2017) notes that as educators,

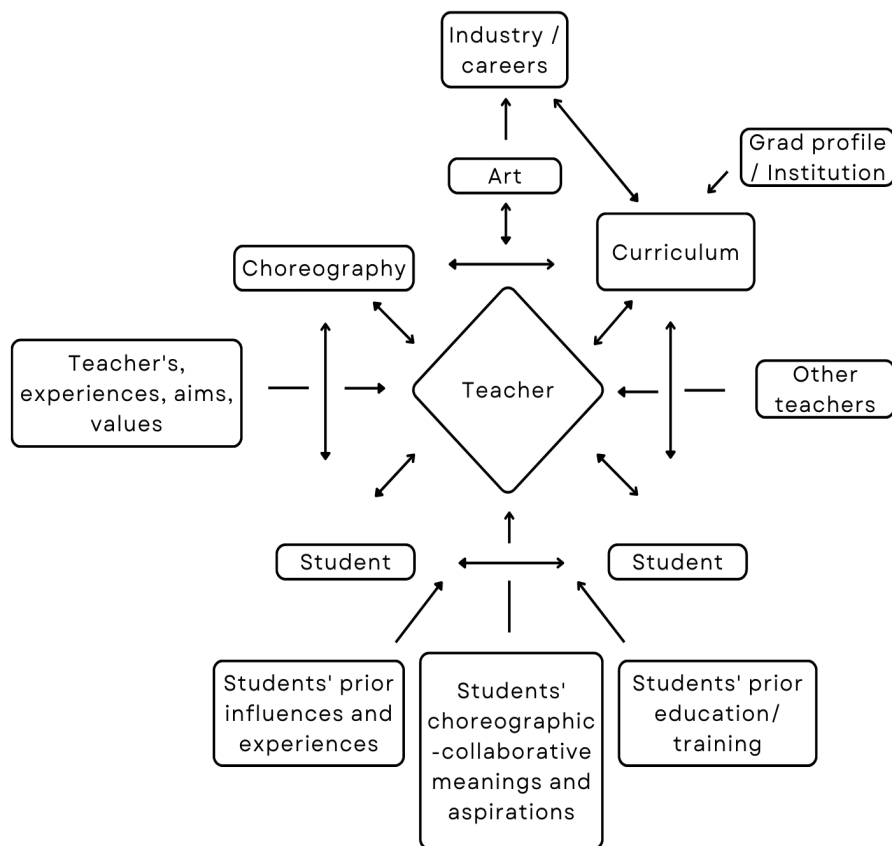
we are, at everyone moment, caught up in – and indeed, made by – entanglements with others that are aleatory, contingent, and shifting. Education, for me, names any practice where different bodies – some of them will be human – come together in order to collectively attend or attune to these entanglements. (p. 269)

Snaza's words raise two relevant points. At times these threads are unpredictable and take educators by surprise. This was certainly evidenced in numerous ways within the data.

Additionally, perhaps our role as educators is not to try to predict these rhizomatic knots (de Freitas, 2012), but rather to tune into the ‘frequency’ of the dilemmas and engage in “responsible responding” (Skuce & Kornelsen, 2018, p. 121). Similarly, Letts and Sandlin (2017) suggest that a teacher’s aim might not need to be to “un-knot the complexities of these intertwined issues, but rather to honor the entanglement of thoughts, emotions and issues and strive to learn more about and from it” (p. 181). As a way of understanding this, I extend on Lusted’s (1986) and Buck’s (2003) models which speak to the presence and importance of multiple and two-way relationships within the teaching context.

Figure 1

The choreography educator’s pedagogical entanglements



This diagram attends to the tangle of various agentic influences present within choreography education. The teacher is placed at the heart (Buck, 2022) of the choreography education context, not to overturn what is very much a student-centred learning context (Foster-Sproull, 2021), but instead in order to understand and articulate the educator’s role and the

complexities of all that they juggle. I draw on Biesta's (2012) and Priestley et al.'s (2015) thoughts around recognising the role of the teacher as the 'engine' in a lesson, the person who may initiate attention and direct the quality of learning.

The teacher is always making judgments about their teaching and in order to do this they must balance the various "purposes that frame their practice" (Biesta, 2012, p. 36). In the diagram above it is the demands that surround the teacher and provide messaging about purposes, aims, values, and pathways, which may not always align.

Although this thesis is clearly centred around the choreography educators' experiences, more relevant to the construction of this diagram was the way the educators' nuanced meanings and experiences revealed they are essentially holding space for the collisions of these actors and "actants" (Bennett, 2010, p. ix) to take place. Further, in analysing the data I began to see the educator as a sort of conductor or dramaturg (Østern, 2021) of the choreography learning climate. How teachers reveal and articulate their 'teaching selves' (Ergas, 2017) within the choreographic-collaborative educational context was a topic that emerged again and again within the present study.

The upcoming sub-sections of 5.1 discuss further complexities identified within the context of collaborative-choreographic learning in tertiary dance education. These are choreography learning as a location for identity building and assertion, students' vulnerability and fear, curriculum pressures such as time and assessment, and students' creative-collaborative skill development.

5.1.1. "They have to bring so much of themselves" (Jette): Choreography learning as a location for identity building and assertion

The three educators spoke about their students bringing, and wanting to bring, themselves holistically to their dance making practice. For example, Jette stated "the students are very much wanting to bring their personal histories to their making." Encompassed in this can be facets of their background, life experiences, family, cultures, world views, religions, trauma mental health challenges, and dance identities. This aspiration is in direct opposition to the problematic adage "leave your personal problems at the studio door" (Blom & Chaplin, 1982, p. xx) and the positioning of dancers, and indeed students, as a 'blank canvas,' a 'vessel,' or an

instrument to be used (Barbour, 2008; Butterworth, 2004) within dance making. The educators also expressed that they expect students to bring themselves to their learning as a necessary part of their choreographic practice. For example, Carys identified that “when you make something together with other people, you have to bring something of yourself to that process.” Further, she communicated that her pedagogy invites this, saying,

The process of teaching students is asking them to bring more of themselves to their practises. That means experiences, and skills, and ways of being in the world, and community connections, and other ways of moving that aren't what some students expect are required of them. And it's sort of easier said than done, of course.

Additionally, she shared,

It's the same as coaching a dancer to perform a role, is to ask them to bring their experiences to interface with the content and to fill the content up with a rich body of experiences; it's such a cerebral thing to discuss with undergraduate students often. Some students really get it, that they can bring, and populate their work with the stuff that interests them, their experiences, their ancestry, with all of those things that they carry with them every day. That it doesn't have to be shut outside the door.

There is a growing body of dance scholarship that explores the ways in which dance making is a site for the engagement of the dancer's full self, including identity, experiences, and imagination (Critien & Ollis, 2006; Farrer, 2018; Knox, 2013; Roche, 2011, 2015). Such literature reflects 21st century shifts in labour and acknowledgement within the professional industry to recognise dancers as holistic and agentic actors who contribute creatively to the creation of contemporary dance (Arnold, 1988) alongside the choreographer. It also evidences that artists utilise aspects of their identity to draw from as a creative stimulus, to generate movement, to enhance their artistry within performance, and that the choreographic process can be an identity building and affirming context. When speaking of 'bringing oneself' to the choreographic process, Carys articulated, “the students are bringing their own stories to put into form.” It appears that frequently students wish to make bold statements about who they are and their place in the world. Jette commented about a particular group choreography about cultural identity: “They really wanted to put their flag in the ground, as like, this is us.” Risner and Stinson (2010) usefully warn “the stories that emerge ... can be raw and painful” (p. 17) as students share the experiences they wish to put into choreographic form.

Engagement with identity has been researched as a beneficial part of choreographic practice (Critien & Ollis, 2006; Farrer, 2018; Knox, 2013; Roche, 2011, 2015). Identity has been described as “people’s concepts of which they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg & Abram, 1988, p. 2). As we can see from the example above, students may choose to engage their genealogies and engage “as an active agent contributing to it themselves” (Farrer, 2018, p. 55). Further, when dancers create, they draw from what they know and imagine, but also from their personal interests. Professional contemporary dancers deliberately engage their identities to stimulate movement ideas and responses, regardless of whether a choreographer deliberately invites this (Knox, 2013). Aligned with this idea is Carl Rogers’ (1954) perception of creativity: “Novelty grows out of the unique qualities of the individual in his interaction with the materials of experience. Creativity always has the stamp of the individual upon its product” (p. 250). Of choreography education, Lavender and Predock-Linnell (2016) assert that some tasks within the choreographic process “invite students to delve into their memories, beliefs, hopes, fears, and dreams and then to generate simple movement sequences, or even whole dances, that symbolize or represent these facets of the students’ unique identities” (p. 196-197). From this, one can assert that whether educators encourage it or not, students will engage themes of identity within their creative processes. This leads to questions of how educators invite, negotiate, and facilitate engagement with identity.

Complicating identity engagement within choreography, all three educators also noted that their students were in varying stages of ‘figuring out who they are’ more broadly within their bachelor’s degrees, and that identities shift and change through the three years. Carys stated,

The students are all at a phase in their lives where they might be considering what their place is in the world, and where they fit in, what they want to say politically, what they align with, and they might be experiencing their bodies in new ways, and they might be experiencing sexuality and faith in new ways, and they might be questioning a lot of stuff. So when they put those political positions and experiences and thoughts into choreography, that makes it even more personal.

As noted, the choreographic process is a context where identity building and assertion may take place. Predock-Linell and Predock-Linell (2011) propose that aspects of dance making “put students in touch with their authentic selves, and help them to find their unique artistic identities” (p. 195). Roche (2015) extends this by acknowledging that dance making might

“destabilise” identities but may also concurrently remodel new ones (p. 117). This awareness indicates the enormous learning potential and opportunity for students’ personal growth within the choreography context. However, Carys’ comment “easier said than done” indicates the desire of wanting to create space for students do engage in this way, but recognising the difficulties that may arise in doing so. This also draws attention to the responsibility of the educator to foster this and carry the associated challenges that might emerge for each individual student whilst still holding together curriculum, class cohorts, and attending to assessment timelines, for example. This also prompts questions around how much responsibility choreography educators should take on for supporting these wider identity explorations, and consequentially where the boundaries might be for involving oneself in students’ personal lives.

The use of identity was generally posited as a useful and positive aspect of thematic research for students, “that can be brought in, in the right ways, in the right environment, with the right support” (Carys). However, there are times when perhaps, students can get a little too caught up in the thematics of the work and this can negatively influence progression through the creative process. Celeste spoke, as if wanting to say to the students, “it's not about the whole world. It's not about what happened to you when you were three. It's not... but it is. But it's not.” From this we might understand the dilemma for an educator in wanting to honour the student’s meaningful engagement with their stimulus but not, perhaps at the expense of other parts of the process. I take from Celeste’s comment that at times students’ thematic choices bleed into the realm of therapy. Carys asserted, “I don't believe that dance is therapy, but I do believe that there are aspects of dance that allow us to process certain things in particular strange ways.” Although, as Celeste stated, “I'm not interested in having a counselling session,” it is apparent that identity issues are frequently unpacked in particular ways within student choreography. Akin to Celeste’s comment, Carys stated clearly, “I don't want to be the hero. I don't want to be the guru. I don't want to be that person. I'm just a choreography teacher.” However, educators are implicated in this process, whether or not they wish to be. Mitchell (2022) interrogates the role of the educator in performer training, in the ‘third space’ between “not doing therapy, but also not not doing therapy” (p. 222). Mitchell (2022) offers pertinent questions relevant to the present study such as how the institution might support staff who are engaged within students’ creative work, that may respond to trauma, with a ‘typical’ response being that teachers “should not be doing therapy with students in the first place” (Mitchell, 2022, p. 223). Perhaps most relevant to extreme

cases is the question of whether educators feel qualified to negotiate (Mitchell, 2022) what might be perceived as students' therapeutic choreographic experiences. Carys' statement supports this as she said in certain teaching moments she feels "that's not my expertise."

Consequentially this further complicates the pedagogical and ethical dilemmas already present; especially in relation to how educators negotiate students' shifting identities, how they foster appropriate engagement with students' full selves in healthy and safe ways within the creative process, and what happens when educators might be drawn into aspects of students' lives that may cross boundaries for both parties. This subsequently indicates significant questions around teachers' education, professional development, and support in such moments. It is inevitable and unavoidable that these sorts of encounters between educators and students will continue to play out (Mitchell, 2022) in choreography education. If we are to argue that there is value to students bringing their full selves to the creative learning process, this begs the important question of how educators might be better equipped to negotiate such moments. Macro recommendations might include educators choosing to engage in trauma-informed pedagogy professional development, especially considering evidence that tertiary students bring increasingly more trauma, wellness, and identity challenges to their education (Arya et al., 2019; Pascoe et al., 2020; Whetten et al., 2022) . This discussion certainly warrants further conversation with academics' line managers, and more broadly with student and staff support services.

This discussion has arrived at the conclusion that to be creative it is impossible to not engage one's identity; further, within dance, it is in fact desirable and allows artists to self-actualise (Knox, 2013). It is also possible that within the context of choreography education, a student's ability to engage with their identity, or having identifiable unique attributes (Arnold, 1988; Roche, 2015) to create interesting contributions, may act as a sort of creative capital within collaboration (McBride et al., 2014). Hence, students may make assumptions about their peers' creative potential, subsequently making some students more desirable than others to work with. However, within one of the interviews, I realised potential a cause of collaborative tension, and stated to Celeste:

You've all spoken about this very explicit awareness that the students are wanting to bring themselves and that we're encouraging them to "bring your full self. Make work that's meaningful to you. What's important to you? Who are you?"

How does that inform your voice as a maker?" And so the subtext of that is: be unique, be an individual, figure out who you were, what do you want? But then we're saying "here, make it together, with these other people in this group who are also trying to figure out who they are too." And so maybe that's also part of why some collaborative problems unfold, because all the individuals in the group are trying to figure out who they are and what they like, and what their values are, and there's a direct assumption that there is going to be difference and diversity, but then you're going "but make it together, collaboratively!"

Farrer (2018) argues that dancers unite and reform their own identities whilst working collaboratively with others. Additionally, I can recall examples where students arrive at collaborative groups so set in their ideas about who they are that they are inflexible when relating to their peers. This raises questions about how educators might support these moments for students and what intra- and interpersonal learning experiences might scaffold collaborative choreographic work. Carys offered "that [identities] can be brought in, in the right ways, in the right environment, with the right support."

But what happens when students' identities explored in relationship with others' identities within an environment that provides space for openness, risk, and honesty around students' identities? Carys offered, "what's risky is because we're talking about collaboration, about the breaking down of barriers to understand each other, there is oftentimes the need to share something of yourself in order to be welcomed into the group." This risk could be understood as the revealing of oneself to others as intersecting with other things going on in the room. Viewing collaborative-choreographic practice and considering how identity plays out, it may be valid to consider the ways in which students' identities may become intertwined with one another within collaborative groups, and also how the identities of student and teacher may become entangled. Further, a risk may be in students understanding what might be safe or appropriate to share of themselves.

A further pedagogical dilemma the data revealed is how students perceive their teachers' identities when working with their own identity choreographically. Additionally, the educator's identity and expertise can be entangled or unravelled in complex ways as they work with students. Jette indicated awareness of her "intersectional layers of experience," saying,

Then there's the cultural things as well. For me, as a Pākehā woman, I know lots about this type of making, but I don't know about Siva inspired dance about their homeland. And I think that applying a Eurocentric lens to something that can be quite culturally different is problematic, and also caused social tension of like "you don't know me" or "you don't know my life." Which is totally fair.

Again, these sorts of moments may leave a teacher wondering how to balance the use of their expertise and perceptions of their identities, as well as their capacity to negotiate difference. It is possible that while students recognise or make assumptions about a teacher's identity, their expertise in working with difference might be quite different. Carys noted her observation that "it's easier for the students to be on board with those critical conversations if they know what it is that you do outside of those teaching and learning environments. Sometimes if a student knows my work, and has a respect for the work, that relationship is so much easier." I take "my work" to encompass choreographic works, as well as pedagogical expertise and career experiences more broadly as well.

Of particular relevance here is the need to address the cultural and ethnic differences present in the choreography classroom within Aotearoa as a culturally diverse country. This raises questions around who choreography educators are, what their cultural competencies are, how these are communicated to students. Furthermore, it could be argued that different groups of students may benefit and find creative and identity affirming value in working with choreographic mentors with relevant cultural expertise.

Consequently, it seems choreography educators may be drawn into particular circumstances and relationships with their students. It is emerging within this research that choreography pedagogies are deeply relational and dialogic (Østern et al., 2019). Because of the nature of certain conversations, it appears the educators are at times forced into zones that may at times be uncomfortable for them, meaning they are dealing with subject matter that is out of their area of expertise, or into the student's personal lives in inappropriate ways. The question emerging here is around where boundaries might lie, and how to discuss students work and ideas in a way that fulfills the mentoring aspects of choreography pedagogy without moving into a "counselling session" (Celeste). The other difficulty is that due to the nature of group work, these conversations may also be taking place with peers present, hence losing confidentiality and again affecting the psychological safety of the classroom space, and

perhaps influencing the way peers perceive one another. This, in turn, may affect how collaboration plays out.

This section explored issues surrounding students' engagement with their own identities within collaborative dance making contexts. It became apparent that the students' own explorations of identity have implications for the educators in terms of revealing and ringfencing their identities. The entanglement of identities within a lesson is real and as these educators clearly stated it requires management.

5.1.2. "Things just happen in choreography that don't in their other classes" (Sarah): Vulnerability and fear

In my discussion with Carys, I noted my observations of students being significantly more emotional within their choreography learning than in any other class. I stated, "it's so personal to them, and they so want to get it right. And there's also a lot of fear, and vulnerability which means that things happen in choreography that don't in their other classes." Throughout all the interviews the women raised organically the awareness that choreography courses are a potent moment in students' education where emotions bubble to the surface of collaborative dance making experiences.

Celeste noted emotions can be "heightened" in choreography learning, particularly in relation to peer-peer casting choices, saying "people get hurt and upset." Carys commented that,

Sometimes I think the student needs a critical conversation, and then we'll have that, then 10 minutes later, after I've moved on to another group of students, I'll see that that person is crying. You know, it's never my intention that I would make a student upset, but I think sometimes just that one-on-one conversation about ideas can feel incredibly confronting.

Jette also noted students feeling "upset," saying this can happen "when they do all of the things and the work doesn't become what they thought it was going to be, from following the method" or the feedback the teacher may have given. My own experiences of observing students' emotions within dance making, placed alongside the educators' comments leads me to question if such emotions are present because students care deeply about their work. As discussed above there are also issues of identity and life experiences enmeshed within

students' work that may mean it is challenging for them to separate themselves from their artwork.

It has been suggested that students perceive their engagement within choreography education to be more personal and demanding of emotional availability than other classes. The women's discussion around students' emotions within collaborative choreography align extremely well with recent research conducted of students' experiences in this context. Tubman, (2022) ascertained that the choreography learning context invites a different presence and relationship with emotion than within a dance technique class for example. Much dance training has historically expected students to behave in ways that might deny the presence of certain emotions (Pickard, 2012). However it may be observed that if students bring their 'full selves' to their work, emotions are an extension of this (Dirkx, 2008) due to the personal nature of students' thematic concerns.

The comments above about emotions suggest some points relevant to this study. First, we can see there is an expectation of vulnerability with choreography learnings and that being emotionally available for the sake of the artwork is perceived as essential. Second, is the comparison to other dance learning such as technique, suggesting that there is a view that choreography somehow comes from the self, and alludes to the individual's ideas, as opposed to technique class, for example, which may be perceived as only about the body. Additionally, movements in technique classes are typically not the students', so there is perhaps a lesser sense of ownership or responsibility in comparison to sharing movement you personally have created. Finally, the notion that relationships are "stronger" in choreography can be interpreted in several ways. Stronger might mean deeper in a more connected and supportive way. Stronger might also mean carrying more meaning or substance, perhaps with more pressure or accountability.

Stevens and McKechnie (2005) found that emotions are necessary within the choreographic process, and makers utilise these both as choreographic stimulus and as a way to enhance their performance and artistry (Knox, 2013). Key emotions identified by the participants were students' fear and vulnerability. Tubman's (2022) research found that dance students appreciate when they know their teacher values and will support them through vulnerability. Offering understanding of why emotions like vulnerability might be prevalently present, Carys stated,

It feels personal to the people doing it. Yeah, and it's bodies on stage, and bodies bring with them histories and experiences. If the person is bringing all of the stuff with them, it's incredibly vulnerable, and with that vulnerability is huge risk, and with risk comes the expectation as well, if I risk this, what may I get in return here?

From this comment it could be understood that vulnerability and fear are connected in this creative context: being vulnerable is part of being creative (Dubin, 2014), but this comes with risk, and is therefore a cause of fear (Dubin, 2014). This relationship between vulnerability and fear presents further demands for educators as they are teaching dance making, but must negotiate how students' emotions affect their ability to engage in their choreographic processes. When supporting students to be creatively vulnerable, to take risks despite their fear, scaffolding is a valuable strategy to support students' learning step-by-step towards their goal (Raymond, 2000). This may create a feeling of balancing safety with risk (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

The term vulnerability should first be attended to as it was frequently referred to within the interviews, but also because, in my experience, it features prevalently when students discuss their approaches to their work. It might seem that within a choreographic context there is a particular understanding of the value of vulnerability. It has been suggested that vulnerability is a potentially negative consequence of creative work (Crow, 2008), however the participants allude to the idea that perhaps within choreography education vulnerability is a desirable prerequisite to creativity and perhaps learning comes "from taking a risk" (Salvatore & Mcvarish, 2014, p. 48). Secondly looking at the social nature of the choreography class where peers are often discussing ideas, sharing and showing their work, "laying it all out there" (Jette) means they are also risking the possibility of critique.

In considering where vulnerability might come from, it is possible it stems from three key areas, from the possible risks of revealing yourself when 'putting yourself out there' which might include critique or ridicule for example (Yoder, 1993). Jette indicated that choreography requires vulnerability in trying something new or "a bit weird" and that this has the potential to cause "embarrassment." Vulnerability may also be caused by the social relationships between teacher-students and peer-peer which may draw in questions of power and be impacted by assessment and the desire to achieve highly.

Vulnerability in dance making may also be linked to performance quality, characterisation (Dubin, 2014), or the ability to act, or present various ideas, themes, or performance modes. Such choreography and performance demands may require dancers to be vulnerable in order to do so, especially when performance personas may be far from what they may consider their natural state, personal experience, or identity. It is possible students perceive that the ability to be vulnerable supports these experiences or allows them to expand their learning into new areas (Crawford et al., 2021). This leads to questions about whether this learning is in fact part of choreography curriculum and how it is taught, and points to increasing demands of educators' time, skills, and expertise. The educators did not address these questions within their interviews; however, this does support the suggestion that choreography educators may require skills in performance coaching, in order to support students learning, but also to navigate any associated student emotions.

In respect to fear, Celeste spoke about students being fearful of trying something new: "I think often students are driven by the fear of presenting their ideas. So they resort, they revert back to what they really know, or what they know is successful." This raises questions about the intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation for students to take creative risks (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012). This is an interesting perspective. From this comes the provocation of collaborative work being used as a sort of choreographic 'safety net.' Within my own first-year course, I deliberately have the students work on solos first and then move to collaborative work afterwards. I do this so that they might be on a more even foundational choreographic platform before working together. I hope this means their collaborative relationships might be more egalitarian as a result after many shifts of choreographic perceptions. I offer here, that it is possible that differences in student cohorts, institutions, or degree programmes mean that there is no 'one size fits all' solution for how to structure choreography courses, and, as such valuing diverse experience.

From here it also may be apparent that students express their feelings and experiences freely to choreography educators because of the nature of the creative space being generally accepting of emotions and due to the close relationships built with educators and peers. Assessing the data exposed two instances where students appear to be expecting emotional support from both the teacher and their peers/collaborators. Carys noted that she feels at times students move into a zone of "emotional manipulation," and it appeared that often personal information students reveal is not related to their choreographic work.

The many issues around students' engagement with identity and emotion also point to additional layers of the "hidden curriculum" (Stinson, 2005, p. 51) that educators are negotiating with this context. The ability to receive and consider feedback, engage in critical conversations about their work, and to negotiate disappointment are all prevalent experiences within choreography learning. While at times these can play out between peers, they are often negotiated with the teacher. Carys notes she often feels she is expected to deal with the "emotional stuff" students bring to class. Furthermore, I do consider that perhaps this is another example of the entangled challenges of communication, students' contexts, identities, relationships, and thematic interests that come to the fore in choreography class, unconsciously affect the teacher, and require their recognition.

5.1.3. "It's actually almost beyond their skill level" (Celeste): Collaborative learning expectations and progression

As the conversations with the three educators progressed, I became aware that perspectives and expectations of student learning shifted depending on which year level was the focus. Additionally, I noted that at times, the expectations held for second- or third-year students discussed were quite different to those I have for the first-year cohorts I usually teach. This indicated that we all have some knowledge and awareness of the development of our students and how they might progress through their studies. This awareness pertains to students' collaborative, choreographic, and personal development.

The women made mention of wanting to push their students or expand their thinking generally within choreography learning. Jette believes her role is to "push their practice" and to "push their worldview of dance beyond what they already know." She noted she wants to help her students "expand what they know about making through their own lens." Carys also aims to,

help the students understand what the scope of possibility is, of making work. So maybe broaden some horizons. Maybe help to consolidate what has already been learned, what they already have, what they already know, know what they bring with them.

The data showed evidence of the educators' knowledge of how their courses, through the progression of a three-year degree, scaffold (Melchior, 2011; Vygotskiĭ, 1987) students'

learning progression. Celeste stated simply, “we just advance the level of it and become less broken down with those [choreographic practice] strands and more about the entanglement [of them].” Jette and I also spoke about the choreographic development from first year to second year level increasing in complexity and requiring students to advance their ability to work with more “blurry” aspects such as metaphor and ambiguity (Knox, 2013, p. 13).

Carys shared that in her classes,

[Firstly] I might talk about why it's important as a key skill to have, and how it might be transferable to other environments. [Then following that level] the conversation's a bit different because the students are working on their own projects. So I'm talking more about how you might instigate a meaningful choreographic process *with* people as a leader. And I think those conversations compute to a degree, but it's the doing of it, and the going out into the world, where the students actually have moments of realisation, like “oh! Alright I get it. I understand more now why collaboration is important”, as opposed to in the moment of teaching it, [they're] “yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.”

Carys' comments show knowledge of how students are developing both their collaborative dexterity (Rowe et al., 2021) in a practical sense at second-year or third-year levels. Informed by my own experiences of teaching collaborative choreography to first-year university students for nearly 10 years, I posit that many students appear to lack the social skills required to move through collaborative choreographic class activities, and to engage in collaborative relationships that might sustain the creation of an assessment or performance product. This means as part of teaching choreography, teaching about collaboration is also necessary.

Pertinent to this discussion is the fact that the context of this research is degree programmes in universities. Carys stated her expectations of her students within the university context: “We're not teaching high school students. We're not teaching primary school students, they are adults.” This reveals an attitude towards the expected behaviours and competencies for students within their choreographic collaborative learning. The typical first-year university student in Aotearoa is 17 to 18 years old, entering the year following the completion of their high school studies.

The women all discussed their students developing interpersonal awareness. As an example of the nature of her recent class cohort, Jette offered, when discussing how her students negotiated making choreography with peers absent from rehearsals,

The work that is made, is the work that is made, by the people that are there. So you just make with whoever is there and if they're not there then they can do another bit. They have to contribute. But I also think that's quite a mature way of dealing with things that I think the second-year group are not at the level of understanding of being able to chat about... so they get punitive. So "you're not in this section anymore!" or sending [their peers] videos every night, "you have to catch up!" so there's these two extremes of self-awareness of, if I'm not there then I have to contribute in a different way to this work.

Similarly Celeste offered, "I think to be a really good collaborator you need to be aware of what you are bringing to [the working relationship], and that's where it's really hard for first years, ... I don't think they get to that understanding [of self] until third year though". And, "in third year they seem to be getting better and better at articulating [what they want and need]". A question is raised here about how the educators actually know where students' learning might be at any given moment, and how subsequent decisions are made.

In my first-year class students must write an essay reflecting upon what they have learned about collaboration through our course. The rationale behind this is the hope that they will understand what they have learned, and subsequently it will become part of their toolbox as they progress into second- and third-year choreography. In those year levels the collaborative skills are more inherent within the curriculum, which is more focussed on the quality of artwork, and assessed more broadly within the wider performative moment.

The discussion around the amount of work the educators are at times putting into negotiating social issues between students indicates that perhaps prior learning is insufficient. Perhaps instead of proactive collaborative learning taking place the educators are expecting a level of emotional maturity, which when not available leads to an emergence of social issues, inadvertently sponsored by the teacher seeking choreography, collaboration, authenticity, examination of genuine feelings, and also the students feeding of each other's feelings. These

subsequently lead to a more haphazard approach to teaching collaboration, with a focus on extinguishing 'fires' rather than teaching the relevant interpersonal skills.

Speaking specifically of collaborative choreographic roles, Celeste noted of her first-year choreography students, "we always talk about how a fully democratic process is actually sort of almost beyond their skill level!" I must admit I generally hold my students to high standards but have low expectations for their collaborative skills. This sits alongside my assumption that their creative skills will be generally varied depending on their previous choreographic experience.

Here, Celeste is speaking about collaborative roles, such as co-creators (Barbour, 2008) which could also be considered domain specific knowledge. However, the appreciation for and articulation of labour and contribution is only one area of students' collaborative development. The other area, and arguably more important, is that of the soft skills pertaining to collaboration. Carys offered that, "it is actually quite a rare bunch of [social] skills. It takes a quite an exceptional young person to [already] hold all of those [skills] when they come into an undergraduate programme." I queried whether a lack of collaborative skills could potentially be the same lack of skills, or lack of experience, that influence certain negative interactions with the teachers.

Carys offered, "I do feel that maybe they're not getting some information in their final high school years, and I do also recognise we've been through a Covid period and so a lot of the interpersonal communication stuff has not played out in the studio as it normally would." She also questioned whether "they just don't get it at home, potentially." This would align with comments from students I have taught in the past who have said things like "thank you for having this conversation [about collaboration] with us. No one has talked to us about this before." This point could also align with what was previous noted about students entering higher education from some western dance style training avenues and lacking experience in interpersonal skills. Whether students are or are not being explicitly taught about interpersonal skills in other areas of their learning or home life could be debated, however I think a more pressing question might be around where these conversations could be situated and who should be having them. Carys noted "it's probably just a really easy thing to say that maybe students aren't getting critical conversations at home. Maybe that's just an easy way of thinking about it. Maybe we need to do more somewhere."

This thesis does not focus on mid- or post-pandemic experiences of teaching and learning collaborative choreography. However, Carys' statement does point to the considerations choreography educators may be giving to the holistic development of their students. It is possible that our current students' social development has suffered due to numerous lockdowns in their final years of high school and throughout their three years of tertiary (Heyang & Martin, 2021). Potentially, collaboration within choreography education is one context where this is amplified due to the nature of teacher-student and peer-peer interactions and the surrounding creative and curricular pressures.

5.2. “Another Layer of Collaboration in the Room” (Sarah): The Choreography Educator/Student Relationship

In interrogating the ways that the educators are required to negotiate students' collaborative choreography experiences, the conversations with the three educators continually led back to the relationship established between teacher and student. I began viewing this as an additional collaborative relationship within the choreography learning context. Much of the interview data pointed to choreography teaching as being extremely dialogical and relational (Eisner, 2005) and alluded to the myriad ways in which the educators flex their skills, persona, and pedagogical approaches in order to respond to student needs. This section aims to explore the peculiarities of the choreography teaching/learning relationships and how this can make for further complications for educators to navigate.

Perhaps the attributes of healthy and positive collaborative choreographic practice are the same as those required for a respectful and generative teaching and learning relationship. Celeste noted explicitly she does not become a choreographic collaborator within student groups. All three women spoke explicitly about their awareness that this kind of contribution to student work is not their role. However, after discussing the teaching of choreographic collaborative relationships, and the challenges that appear to consistently arise within the teaching and learning relationship, it became evident that the same interpersonal challenges can arise regardless of whether the relationship is student-student or student-teacher. Subsequently, and as the three educators revealed, choreography learning is constructivist, which profiles the relationships fostered by the teacher (Richardson, 2003). Choreography learning is also collaborative, and therefore a collaborative pedagogy (Howard, 2001; Smith et al., 2016) is required.

Some scholarship centred around ‘collaborative pedagogy’ (Adams, 1993; Adams, 2021; Campbell & Lassiter, 2010; Clifford, 1981; Omodan, 2021) focuses upon students in collaboration with one another with a teacher guiding this process. I position this as what is otherwise known as collaborative learning (Råman, 2009). Additionally, the term ‘collaborative teaching’ is typically utilised to describe teaching faculty collaborating to co-teach in some way (Robinson & Schaible, 1995). How I intend to differentiate ‘collaborative pedagogy’ here is through placing the teacher and student into a collaborative relationship with each other, in order for the learning to happen. Through attending to pedagogy as the *how* and *why* teaching takes place, I propose that it is the pedagogy itself that is collaborative, rather than this being *about* collaboration as a subject. A collaborative pedagogy recognises the tangles of teaching and learning, the ways in which they inform each other and are inseparable and co-dependant. Both the collaborative teaching-and-learning of choreography are reliant upon collaborative acts and intentions from both teacher and student. This might include collaborative behaviours such as contribution from both parties towards a shared goal, the collective brainstorming of ideas, compromise, adoption of and building upon the other’s ideas, experimentation, communication, and empathy. What is learned as a result of the collaborative pedagogy capitalises “on the possibility that the whole [of the learning] is greater than the sum of its parts” (Smith et al., 2016, p. 489). Like Harrington’s (2013) definition of a choreographic pedagogy, a collaborative pedagogy belongs “to those who create it” (p. 122) and is “informed and transformed by the experience of its actors” (p. 100)

A collaborative pedagogy inherently captures the reciprocal, relational, and dialogic nature of mentoring student choreographers (Lavender, 1994, 2006, 2009, 2012). This is required to adequately guide students through nuanced, deeply personal, and individualised processes. Through approaching choreography with a collaborative pedagogy, educators may also be able to model the skills they wish for their students to learn as part of a collaborative choreographic processes. This approach to forging relationships is likely to draw on the educators’ skills in embodiment, creativity and communication. It also recognises the agency, responsibility, and ownership students have over their contributions within this relationship. Smith et al. (2016) advocate for relational collaborative pedagogies that “intentionally create the conditions within which [students] can develop critical capacities to respond” to their learning and choreography pathway (p. 486).

Attending to a collaborative pedagogy indicates that greater attention could be paid to the initial stages of choreography courses, such as assisting students to understand the parameters of choreography teaching and learning relationships. Furthermore, this approach may be useful in attending to some of the possible issues educators face when students expect teachers to have all the answers. A collaborative approach to pedagogy brings the student's own creative agency and ownership of their learning into focus. Collaborative pedagogy may encourage the co-creation of learning taking place and might draw the student's attention to the fact that the teacher is not simply imparting the knowledge they hold inside them (Sööt & Viskus, 2014), but rather creating it in the process of shared labour, in response to the student as they learn about and co-create their choreography questions and solutions. It may support their learning that in choreography there is no 'correct' answer, method, or framework, and that in the teaching moment the teacher at times also may not know what to do.

Finally, in more explicitly exploring the skills required for successful and healthy collaborative relationships, students may be able to test these out in their interactions with teachers, see these skills modelled, and subsequently more actively take these practised skills back to their peer-peer collaborative choreographic relationships. In considering why this is important, the data shows that educators know students have varied interpersonal skills – especially at the first-year level. The three educators spoke to challenges in students' interactions, some of which appear to be personally and professionally difficult to deal with, and that the educators have developed skills and wisdom to deal with such situations. Furthermore, for students' interpersonal skill development this learning was occurring in the interactive, collaborative moments, formally and informally, structured into a lesson.

It is also possible that such teaching and learning relationships allow students to encounter the professional skills required to build relationships within the professional arts industry, in a safe learning environment. Additionally, the relationship with the teacher may provide scope to learn about collaborative ways of working that peer-peer relations might not, simply because peers are still developing their own interpersonal skills. This is especially relevant for those students who may have not been exposed to diverse teaching or choreographic relationships previously, in particular those that were not dominated by hierarchical (Rabkin, 2012), authoritarian (Buck & Rowe, 2015; Lakes, 2005; Stinson, 1993), or didactic (Butterworth, 2004; Parrish, 2001) teacher-learner relationships.

The following sections explore the sub themes of how students and educators perceive the educator's role and the issues that develop out of this, experiences of being a female choreography teacher, communication between educators and students, and educators' boundaries within choreography education.

5.2.1. "Sometimes students get it twisted" (Carys): Students' and educators' perceptions of the educator and their role

In exploring the teacher-student relationship and the issues that arise, perceptions of self within the teaching role, and how the students might perceive the choreography educator became relevant. After discussing a collaborative pedagogy, this also presents potential challenges for educators in how they might be perceived by students. Students' perceptions can make for further tensions as students pull on educators' personal time, energy, and resources because of their perceptions of what we may be capable of or willing to provide. It is possible that these perceptions indicate further nuances of choreography pedagogy, and how social interactions and collaborative dilemmas unfold in the dance studio. The educators expressed clear ideas of how they view themselves and how this resulted in various teaching strategies. For example, Jette noted she acts as a "key" to open various potentialities students can find in their choreographic work. Celeste spoke about being an "expert" on choreographic practice, especially with first-year students, but that her role becomes more complex as the courses move into more independent collaborative work.

The more pertinent side of these perceptions, however, appeared to be how students might view their educators and how they enact these perceptions. Carys and Jette both used the word "casual" to describe their teaching style, and Carys offered that perhaps knowledge of how she works professionally with people who are her friends means "students can get it a bit twisted." Here she is referring to the teaching and learning relationship and how students' perceptions might lead to particular kinds of communication, lack of boundaries and a perception of "she's one of us." This meaning that students might believe the relationship is a friendship rather than one of teaching and learning.

Seemingly, as a consequence of some students' perceptions of the educators, the educators gave examples of inappropriate, unkind, and unprofessional behaviour towards them. Interestingly, the issues of student perceptions of the educators did not appear to be about

choreographic learning itself so much as they were about the boundaries of the teacher's role and questions around the teacher as a person with their own thoughts, feelings, and responsibilities. Both Carys and Jette spoke of examples where students used written assessment work to "slate" the teacher (Carys) within a reflective journal assessment they knew the teacher would read. Carys and I also spoke about experiencing changes in student perceptions, as I expressed "at one moment we are placed on a pedestal" and the next moment "torn down if you don't give them an A" (Carys). These comments reveal a range of perceptions of the teacher and the precarious nature of teaching and learning relationships.

5.2.2. *"Expected to act like a mother figure" (Carys): Being a female choreography educator*

While this study did not set out to deliberately engage only female identifying educators, issues relating to being women, and being mothers, revealed themselves explicitly within the interviews and were at times the source of much frustration. The choreography education context in New Zealand is predominantly filled with women, and I do wonder how this might influence the ways in which students might perceive the choreography educator's role. The roles of being women, and for some of us parents, appear to be entangled with the role of choreography educator in ways that are at times uncomfortable or difficult. A comparison to male colleagues was drawn by Carys who stated, "students sort of have expectations of me well beyond my male colleagues" and "women are more often than not expected to act like a mother figure for students, in a choreographic environment, when my male peers in similar roles have not experienced the same thing."

Emerging from this is an expectation that as women we are perhaps more available with our time and energy and able to take on more emotional capacity for care (Celeste). Within my own work life, as an example, I experience high numbers of choreography students seeking outside of class time for problems not related to their choreographic learning, contacting me on social media platforms about class attendance and other personal issues, expecting replies to their emails outside of normal business hours, and wanting me to provide 'quick fixes' to creative or collaborative challenges. Issues around personal wellbeing and students' relationships are openly shared with a heavy expectation that we will provide the necessary support. At times it appears to me that students may be ill-equipped, or otherwise unsupported, to deal with personal challenges and are reluctant to see professionals for support. Carys expressed,

I get treated like an additional mother sometimes. ... it's a very it's a very specific thing that I'm really working on at the moment because I know as women, the expectation of us is that we deal with the emotional stuff, and I don't want to do that. What if I say no, and then what if I identify for my students that it's a 'no' from me, you won't get that from me, but you will get all this other stuff. And that stuff is valuable, that's what I'm here to do. That's where my expertise is. ... I want to actively contribute to a change in the field and the way that students view their female teachers. Because I'm not interested in being a parent to my students. That's not my role. My role is to help you choreograph.

It would seem that perhaps as female choreography educators, we are *perceived* as maternal because we may have children and *expected* to be maternal because we are women. Bernard (1964) proposes the notion of “academic momism” (p. 131) whereby students expect their women teachers to behave like mothers. This assumption means women in academia can be loaded with additional emotional labour. This may come in the form of supporting students through anxiety, needing to set boundaries with students, and carefully presenting feedback to (ideally) avoid being perceived negatively (El-Alayli et al., 2018).

In relation to the changing perceptions of self as a mother, I have had experiences where students' perceptions of me shifted when I became a parent. I recall one student within a choreography context saying, “you're so much more chilled out now that you're a mum!” I can remember at that moment wondering how this was possible. I only felt exhausted, overwhelmed, and panicked that I was not keeping up with all the demands of my teaching and wider life. “Chilled out” was not at all my experience. I concluded that perhaps I was not giving students the same extreme levels of time and energy because I simply could not anymore. But I was certainly still fulfilling the institutional expectations of my teaching role. This did however make me question whether I was still being a ‘good’ teacher even though might be offering less of myself, and whether I had been perceived somehow as harsh or more demanding previously. Celeste spoke about learning to “do less” in her teaching since becoming a mother, saying that previously,

I was so gung-ho, and I would put way too much of my own... I think as times gone on, and I've gotten older, motherhood experience, it's like, what is the least I can do? I've gotten better, better at just doing less, less, less, holding back, and holding back.

What is revealed from these statements is a sentiment around how much time, energy and emotional labour is available for teaching (Celeste, Carys) in relation to our parental responsibilities, and how far these perimeters might be pushed. Additionally, perceptions of gender and care are brought into view. It could be questioned whether students perceive that parental skills are relevant in some way to teaching, or that specific maternal skills are of value within choreography education. As an example, I recall a student stating to me that she expected her female choreography teachers to be more maternal and nurturing than male teachers. Burton (2022) asks of dance education at university level, “how is mothering interrelated to teaching and what are the pedagogical implications?” (p. 5).

‘Maternal thinking,’ as Noddings (1988) suggests, is “richly applicable to teaching” (p. 220). Much scholarship attests to the positive impacts of caring within educational contexts (Gose & Siemietkowski, 2018; Noddings, 2002, 2012b, 2013; Tubman, 2022; Warburton, 2004). However, Zhang (2007) problematises the “confluence of female roles – teacher and mother” (p. 518). She cautions against “demanding the impossible” (p. 520) of women and advises distinction between the teacher and the mother. The data in the present study suggests this is what the choreography educators desire also. Of value here is Zhang’s (2007) point that the ideal of bringing maternal qualities into education may be problematic, in reality, for those attempting to do it. What may be understood here is that as a result of these tensions the engagement with maternal qualities might be up to the teacher, as to how they wish to teach and show care, and to conflate or create distinction between their various life roles. As Casey (1990) notes, how maternal-ness is spoken about in scholarship is dependent on who is doing the talking. Therefore, perhaps it is best to listen to the women themselves and allow them to speak their own boundaries, service, and hopes for their role and pedagogy.

This discussion also warrants attention towards educators’ responsibilities within a choreography context, and the reality that these may be more demanding of time and energy than other areas of dance curriculum. We are expected to attend to more additional student rehearsals than other dance courses, engage more extensively and intimately in mentoring and coaching conversations, manage production weeks and performances, arrange costumes, music, oversee production and backstage activities, and manage the clean ups. As part of these moments, students’ anxieties are often enhanced, particularly during performance time, and during these periods we spend extensive hours in close proximity to students. The relationships bleed into mealtimes, weekends, and even travelling together. While these

periods can also be the source of much joy and connection with our students, many of these teaching and creative responsibilities mean that we can fall into a perceived caring or caregiver role. Additionally, the matters raised to our attention by students are often well beyond the scope of choreography teaching and learning. The educators are clearly invested in the creative development of their students and their work, but do not wish to hold the additional responsibilities of caring in parental ways, that, for them crosses pedagogical boundaries.

It can be suggested that many of these caring responsibilities, such as arranging costuming and making schedules, are beyond the realm of teaching, and could instead fall into the area of ‘women’s work’ (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Warburton, 2004), domestic duties (Hunt, 2015), or housekeeping (Herzig & Subramaniam, 2021). While I do not suggest that these activities are not important for students’ choreography learning, or that they should not take place; in fact there can be huge value in these moments. However, the question remains of how such duties expand the emotional and other labour women choreography educators undertake. Furthermore, how is this extensive additional presence and availability perceived by students, and consequentially, how might students’ expectations for their female choreography educators become higher than male educators, or educators of other dance subject areas?

It may also be perceived here that there is a transition that takes place for women, either they become parents and their time and energy within their work life are significantly more limited, and/or they achieve the ‘safety’ of a permanent full-time academic position. I can attest to this in both areas where childcare responsibilities mean I simply cannot be in the studio with students in the evenings as I previously might have offered. Additionally, there may be attitudes towards institutional appeasement for part-time educators as they hope for the security of a full-time position in the future. Carys spoke to this in her interview, saying,

Before I had a full-time job, I was a freelancer and my ability to provide for my family was specifically linked to the responses I had in the environments I worked in, whether I’d get hired again. And so, if I was teaching in an environment like the university or another tertiary dance training environment, if the student said that they appreciated my work, and that I was available, and accessible, and ‘cool’ I would get more employment. And this was a life and death situation. This was actually about the livelihood of several people that I was financially responsible

for. So I put up with a lot of stuff from students, contacting me at all hours, telling me things that I did not need to know, that was completely unprofessional for me to know, and then trying to manage that and remain an employable person. And now in a full-time job, it is a huge privilege to think about and reflect on being a freelancer and be able to make a decision now to have more boundaries to protect the work that I do in the studio with the students, in my family life.

The idea that educators might go ‘above and beyond’ the professional parameters of their role may also be driven by fear lingering from professional dance environments where they were deemed replaceable (Knox, 2018; Rankin, 2016) and that did not value their contributions (Arnold, 1988). Additionally, research shows that women academics are made more requests by students for extra pastoral support, and receive more demands (such as meetings, email responses or requests for “special favors”) from academically entitled students, than male academics (El-Alayli et al., 2018, p. 145). It could be asked what support tenured academics receive in relation to such issues. But perhaps more importantly, as Carys points out, how are part-time educators with less job security protected, in an environment where teaching roles in universities are scarce and desirable? This is especially pertinent when part-time choreography educators are often paid by the hour, and their work time might exceed this, especially when expectations from students do not align. Further, part-time staff may not be able to access the staff support services or employment benefits available to full-time academics. Extending this issue even further, while academics are generally extremely time poor (Harley et al., 2006; Ylijoki, 2021), part-time choreography educators are likely to be working in multiple other roles as freelancer artists and teachers. Therefore, their ability to dedicate additional and reasonable time and energy to student requests may be limited. This may prompt line managers and institutions to consider what support is put in place for part-time educators to manage such issues.

As educators we *do* care however the evidence might indicate it is the *about what* and *how* we care that is relevant to this problem. There was much evidence within this research that suggests students expect educators to care about parts of their personal lives that are, by the educators’ views, unprofessional or inappropriate for them to know. In my own experience of this, a student within a choreography learning context explained they would miss rehearsal. Instead of simply saying they had an urgent and important appointment, it was explained they needed urgent sexual health assistance and medicine. While we care about our students’

wellbeing, this sort of thing is both irrelevant to the teaching and learning context, irrelevant to the choreography, and puts both the teacher and students in a position of risk.

Linking these gender stereotypes and perceptions of choreography educators is the tension between our position as ‘carers’ and the expectation for our creative expertise or academic rigour. Carys spoke about feeling she needs to talk about her background and expertise, so that when students know that she knows what she is doing, she received a greater sense of respect in the classroom. This implies that perhaps without this she does not feel respected or valued within her role. This is similar to my own experience, where I have learned to make a ‘speech’ early on in choreography courses that clearly outlines my professional choreographic experience. I do not enjoy this moment, but I do believe it is useful in positioning my credibility to be in the teaching role. Simply put, teaching is easier when I have the respect of the students, and this does not always come automatically. Jette expressed the idea of a “seduction of the self” as she teaches in order to lure students towards, or convince them, of the value of choreographic ideas. This idea that we need to persuade our students of our credibility to be in the role of choreography educator is an interesting one. From Carys’ perspective she might believe she receives professional validation when she shares her expertise and hence, she receives more respect. In relation to this, Tubman’s (2022) study found that students may experience high levels of intimidation when they are aware of their teacher’s esteemed choreographic reputation and professional experience. This occurs even when they know a teacher is not actually “scary” (Tubman, 2022, p. 29). Interestingly, the present study did not locate any evidence that students perceive their teacher’s pedagogical expertise with the same attitude. Providing a further tension within educators’ experiences of sharing their expertise is that for female teachers might be perceived as too agentic or assertive and not adhering to the desired gender stereotype (El-Alayli et al., 2018). As a result, women teachers can be criticized as being “incompetent”, “insecure” or “self-promoting” when they share their achievements (Lazos, 2012).

So why do the choreography educators in the present research believe they need to assert themselves in these ways in order to receive what they believe is respect from students? Challenges of educators’ genders in higher education are not a novel area of study. But, in the case of the present research, what is it about the choreography context that amplifies such challenges? One reason may be the ways in which we pedagogically and personally engage with students. As Carys noted,

Encountering teachers in a choreographic environment is sometimes a little bit like “huh? How come they’re so casual?” And that’s why some students can get a bit twisted, like casual doesn't mean without rules, casual doesn't mean without expectations, and casual doesn't mean without rigour. In fact, casual to me means so much experience and rigour that you can have a casual way of communicating because there's just nothing left to prove.

I understand that in this case “casual” means, friendly, light, and playful. It is possible that teaching within a university context is different to what students may have experienced previously, with less control, and different behavioural expectations or opportunities. As Carys stated, students “are adults” and we therefore aim to treat them as such. For many students this may be the first time they have interacted with teachers in a way that does not position them hierarchically lower or as significantly more reliant on the teacher for pastoral and other care. In support of this, Carys pondered,

I think a lot of the relationships that some students might have experienced through their dance training, in the period leading up to their undergraduate education, might have led them to believe that it is a parental style relationship, hierarchically. And I just, I'm not interested in it.

A response to these issues could be to implement ways for students to be better prepared for the different approaches to teaching and learning in university contexts. I propose that it would be appropriate for both universities and feeder organisations to consider this. Specifically, this would be relevant to both high schools and dance schools, as it appears these contexts foster different perceptions of what dance education means and the different pedagogies and relationships students might encounter.

Pertinent to this discussion is the nature of choreography teaching which requires a large degree of individual mentoring. Through this one-to-one or small group interaction, featuring significant discussion, feedback, and observation, closer relationships may be formed (Acker & Feuerverger, 1996) than in other areas of the dance curriculum. It is possible that this closeness is perceived by students to bleed into a zone of friendship (El-Alayli et al., 2018), or at least familiarity, and therefore warranting particular behaviours. Whereas, for the choreography educators professional boundaries are maintained. This may be conflated with the nature of the communication between choreography educators and students, which invites students to be in a more balanced hierarchical relationship. Acker and Feuerverger

(1996) propose that students at university level are “old enough to participate in a ‘mature relationship’, yet they are structurally subordinate” (p. 418). However, the parameters around this may lead to misunderstandings, and be understood or enacted in various ways, by both different students and by different educators, hence further complicating the clarity of professional boundaries.

Stereotypically, women are generally perceived as warm and nurturing, and deviation to this can be received negatively (El-Alayli et al., 2018). In contrast, men are perceived through their level of competence (Lazos, 2012). This alone, indicates a tension for the educators. Returning to the question of why women choreography educators believe they need to work to receive respect from students, the data shows they feel they are expected to adhere to female gender roles, although they also believe they receive more respect in their teaching by evidencing their competence (choreographic background). In support of this finding, (El-Alayli et al., 2018) assert that women academics are required to work above and beyond their male counterparts in order to be perceived as competent by students.

5.2.3. “Critical conversations” (Carys): Communication between educator and students

A dominant pedagogy referred to by the educators was what Carys called “critical conversations.” Critical discussions and questioning of students’ work, processes, and challenges appear to be essential to all areas of teaching and learning choreographic practices for the three women. This aligns with my own pedagogical experience and aims. An exploration of the various moments where conversation features within our choreography classes further illustrates the collaborative nature of the teacher-student relationship and the many pedagogical challenges and entanglements that might unfold as these conversations take place.

As noted previously, choreography pedagogies are a direct step away from transmissive and demonstrative pedagogies (Sööt & Viskus, 2014). I believe this is, in part, due to the creative and collaborative nature of dance making, and the fact that dance making education within Aotearoa predominantly focusses upon student-led work. The focus is less upon instructional methods or rote learning of the ‘correct’ ways to create, and more so on student-centred facilitation and support of their creative journeys and choreographic visions. Therefore, a constructivist approach is necessary to foster the various skills required and to create a

community within which this can take place. Like the broader definitions of dance education, choreography pedagogies appear to be focussed on educating the student holistically (Koff, 2021). Hence, dialogue is one useful way to do this. Dialogical, dialectical, and relational pedagogies (Koff, 2021) have the potential to offer transformative experiences, as we help “our students engage the many aspects of themselves (across space and time) in conversation with each other and with the coursework” (Lysaker & Furuness, 2011, p. 188). This is useful, within choreography education, which reaches towards the transformation of creative ideas into physical form (Stevens & McKechnie, 2005), and ideally, transformation of the artist themselves consequently (Knox, 2013), or as a prerequisite to the creation of their choreography. Additionally, the interpersonal learning that takes place as ideas are shared through conversations is invaluable for the development skills relevant to choreographic collaboration.

Within other areas of choreographic practice, namely professional choreographic contexts, dialogue features as an essential part of all areas of the creative process. This is particularly pertinent, as much scholarship attests, to the nature of certain dance pedagogies and traditions which silence dancers (Green, 2002; Roche, 2011). Therefore, experiences of critical discussions are relevant to students, not only for their collaborative-choreographic development, but as they pursue diverse professional dance pathways. Dialogue has been identified as a valuable and meaningful aspect of professional practice (Anttila, 2007). Use of voice also allows dancers to make meaning more effectively and intimately within choreography (Knox, 2013). However, these dancers also identified the challenges associated with using voice, including didactic and authoritarian processes whereby use of voice is controlled. Dialogic pedagogies and developing students’ critical conversational skills are important within choreography education in order to shift certain inherited choreographic pedagogies and leadership styles present within the professional industry.

In the context of this research, a “critical conversation” (Carys) might be likened to a pedagogical approach known in art and design education as a ‘crit’ (Healy, 2016). Crits, or critical conversations, as a form of evaluation or creative mentoring can be utilised as effective form of studio (‘Ofamo’oni & Rowe, 2020; Rowe et al., 2020) or signature pedagogies, (Brown et al., 2011; Kearns, 2017; Kornetsky, 2017; Schrand & Eliason, 2012). These pedagogies aim to teach students about the profession they are moving into through engaging relevant processes and should support students in developing a critical disposition relevant to

their specific discipline (QAA Membership, 2019). Within a dance context, knowing how to receive critical feedback is a vital aspect of becoming a professional (Kearns, 2017). Within choreography education this might look like feedback (Duffy, 2015; Prichard, 2019), discussion (Lavender, 2009; Lavender & Sullivan, 2008; Minton, 2017), evaluation (Hämäläinen, 2002; Lavender, 1994), or mentoring (Lavender, 2006).

While the value of crits has been questioned in line with current art and design education (Healy, 2016; Percy, 2004; Simpson, 2012), I propose that this form of critical reflection and questioning is pertinent for students' creative and collaborative development. The need for these types of discussions is evidenced in the educators' experiences. For example, Carys pondered whether students receive much critical feedback on their choreography in previous moments in their education. She stated,

I could do a crit with a student, and it feels incredibly confronting, but actually all of the language being used is completely fair, kind, generous. We would never say "that's bad. You shouldn't have done that. Re-choreograph that now." We're saying "have you considered...?" "Why don't you look at this...?" "Have you thought about such and such, and this area of the work could do with a little bit of development... What do you think about this?" We're so careful with the language that we use with our students, because we don't want them to be traumatised by the experience of being a student in a dance environment.

The data reveals a further complication in that students at times misunderstand the purpose of such conversations about their work. Jette noted students frequently wanted to be told what to do, then become upset when they follow what they might perceive as instructions on how to make their work, and then are disappointed the work is not what they anticipated. The three educators were all clear that their role is not to push their personal artistic preferences onto students but rather support students to discover their own choreographic voice.

The research revealed several challenges related to these critical conversations, again indicating further pedagogical entanglements for the educators to negotiate. While many students appear to appreciate and expect critical conversations about their work, the educators noted at times students struggle with receiving feedback and responding to these discussions. The educators identified instances where they intentionally needed to mitigate challenges such as upsetting students or being met with defensiveness. This may link back to the previously discussed issues around being female teachers and the expectations some

students may have towards our behaviour. As El-Alayli et al., 2018) identify that female teachers are more likely to receive uncivil responses from students if not perceived as being adequately nurturing.

These points indicate a requirement of the choreography learning context. It is the student's level of maturity that determines their ability to engage in a quality communicative moment (Bowen, 1978). This leads to further questions around the diversity of students' needs in this context, and how educators negotiate this, as well as the problem of lack of prior learning experiences and personal development of each student.

From this, and drawing on my own expertise, it is necessary within choreography education to develop a dialogic class culture (Borstel, 2007). This has several benefits, including to divert attention away from the teacher as the choreographic 'expert', to enable students to foster critical conversations between one another, and to develop relevant collaborative skills related to communication and voice. However, this also has its challenges. As discussions are facilitated within classes, social tensions and students' hierarchies reveal themselves. Students validate the teacher because they are the expert. Yet, teachers minimise their 'expert-ness' in order to facilitate dialogue, collaboration and critical conversations.

Of relevance to this is the development of normative expectations for the dialogue that takes place in the classroom. Murphy et al. (2022) and Wade and Hammick (1999) suggest that the creation of community 'rules' are a useful place to start when fostering positive conversations. Jette gave the example of leading students through a session to create collaborative contracts as a response to interpersonal challenges within choreography groups. This contributes towards building a positive culture of dialogue. For example, setting boundaries for how student-student and/or student-teacher might engage in conversation, identifying best practice such as "we question or argue about ideas not people," and highlighting the value of questions like 'why?' and 'how?' (Murphy et al., 2022, p. 724). Also related to the topic of critical conversations is the necessity for the educators to provide learning towards and model what might be called generative, positive, healthy, or "productive talk" (Murphy et al., 2022, p. 724).

Celeste indicated that perhaps students perceive her as "annoying" for "asking too many questions." One of the most frequently discussed questions to students in all the interviews

was “how are you going?” Celeste noted that such a question is deliberately designed to “be stupid” and to invite students to articulate in their own words a real response. Responses might be around social issues, choreographic questions, or confidence in their process. Additionally, they are used by the women to affirm or clarify observations they may have of students’ work. This aligns well with Freire’s pedagogy of questions (Brass et al., 1985) which values social experience as a part of learning.

Additionally, these points draw attention to a further consideration, that of agency and voice for students. The ability to express, share, question, and disagree are all vital skills for dance graduates regardless of desired career pathway. However, this research reveals a further dilemma present within the choreographic classroom where these skills are fostered. As Carys noted students may hail from certain dance traditions where dialogue is limited. Therefore, students may arrive to choreography courses lacking relevant experience to engage appropriately in reflexive or critical discussion moments. Subsequently, these students need to be supported to understand the process and purpose of critical conversations as part of their choreography education. Similarly, I have noticed that students from some cultural backgrounds may refrain from contributing to discussions as a way of showing respect for the teacher. In these instances, the teacher must find ways of building connection and trust with the student in order to draw students into meaningful dialogue.

This exploration of dialogic pedagogy, and the various considerations educators are required to make, highlights the notion of difference within our classrooms. It is a reality that in dance degree programmes in Aotearoa students bring diverse dance experiences and cultural backgrounds. In attending to myriad student needs, the notion of ‘intersectional competence’ (Boveda, 2016; Boveda & Aronson, 2019) may be relevant. This describes the ways that educators understand and negotiate the intersecting socio-cultural markers that students, and indeed educators, bring to the teaching and learning moment. I argue here also that these markers become even more present and ‘activated’ within choreography education due to the ways in which identity is explicitly invited into the creative process as a valued choreographic stimulus.

This distinct attention to diversity and inclusion modelled by educators and fostered in choreography education is important to both support the interpersonal relationships present, but also to build explicit transferable skills. As Carys stated,

On a macroscopic level we're practising the things that we want to see in the broader universal context... we are voicing, and languaging, and [highlighting] diversity and inclusivity... those words that people do bandy about all the time... are potentially, in the perfect choreographic tasking moment what we're trying to do in the choreographic classroom.

This stance suggests that choreography education can and is being used as a political action towards the values and aspirations we hold for the world in which we wish to live. This is well aligned with my own agenda when teaching dance making due to my previous experiences working within authoritarian professional choreographic processes.

5.2.4. "I had to create some quite strong boundaries" (Carys): Educators' experiences of self and student protection

Developing out of this discussion around perceptions students may have of educators, Carys and Jette in particular spoke of numerous situations where they struck challenges with students' interactions and behaviours. They felt they needed to place boundaries within the teaching and learning relationship in order to protect their time, energy, and personal lives. For example, Carys spoke about a student's communication about interpersonal issues saying, "I could sense that there was some form of trying to pull me into something that I didn't want to be pulled into, and so I had to create some quite strong boundaries around her, that I have not had to do before."

A boundary can be described as an "edge that defines you as separate from others. A boundary is a limit that promotes integrity" (Katherine, 1991, p. 3). Boundaries are used to indicate and protect a person's "limit to what is safe and appropriate" (Katherine, 1991, p. 4). Boundaries indicate moral and ethical dimensions (Wilson et al., 2012) whereby the power of the teacher within the teaching and learning relationship is attended to through consideration of what constitutes professional behaviour. In education boundaries are necessary in order to maintain a degree of authority. Not through being authoritarian, but to be clear in prioritising and expecting particular behaviours, values and attitudes. Therefore, it can be understood that the enactment of boundaries is part of a teacher's pedagogical practice, in order to better define their identity as a 'teacher' and in turn to protect their private self. As an extension of this, I argue that professional behaviours are attributes foregrounded within choreography education, alongside the development of students' choreographic and

collaborative skills. As choreography educators we are looking for ways to “mirror the professional environment and expectations that would be held in a choreographic process” (Carys). This includes boundaries, relationships, expectations, and the voicing of these, from the perspective of choreographic leadership (choreographer, teacher, manager, or artistic director) and followership (dancer, student, employee, or collaborator).

It is unavoidable to discuss boundaries without addressing the power within the learning environment. In an educational context, the teacher holds a position of power and is therefore responsible for “balance[ing] the multiple roles and demonstrat[ing] professional and ethical boundaries” (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 140). Although it can also be argued that not all educators enact this power in the same way. Similarly, the diverse ways in which students may perceive and respond to a teacher’s position and use of power also warrants consideration. I argue that choreography education, as part of the wider dance education context, aims to, must, and inherently does directly refute more traditional behaviours of power seen within dance training, especially within technique classes (Green, 1999, 2002; S. Stinson, 1993). Such transmissive pedagogy of the traditional dance class monopolises on the power of the teacher as the holder of all knowledge and works to silence students into obedience and docility (Green, 2002). In contrast, choreography pedagogy is dependent on engaging students’ agency, in verbal, creative, and social respects, and therefore necessitates a more democratic engagement with power. In another way, the teacher’s power might be used to highlight the student’s agency and foster such a relationship that a student may feel safe and secure enough to engage with it. Furthermore, the student becomes the authority on their own ideas and processes. When attending to boundaries in the choreography learning context it is possible some students may encounter confusion about how to interact appropriately with their teacher (Wilson et al., 2012) because of the way the power differential might be enacted.

Boundaries (pedagogical, professional, and personal) leverage the teacher’s position and might be used as a kind of “disciplinary power” (Green, 2002,) in circumstances that beg safety for teacher, students, or class community. In this way, appropriate and professional behaviours can be articulated and enforced. Boundaries also might help students to understand what a teacher’s power might be used for, or not. As Carys noted, she experienced a student “trying to pull me into something that I didn't want to be pulled into” and this felt like “emotional manipulation” with respect to addressing a social issue they

wanted addressed. Carys did not believe the problem was relevant to the teaching and learning in her choreography class. As a result, Carys used her position of power within the classroom to set a boundary around the purpose of her role, to dictate the kinds of communication she would or would not receive, and she encouraged the class cohort to manage their relationships with their friends rather than rely on the teacher to attend to every request to “help me, help, help me!” (Jette). In this way, a teacher’s power may be used positively to model healthy boundaries for students as they learn to figure for themselves what they want, what their values and limitations are, and how they wish to engage professionally with their peers.

Aultman et al. (2009) note that power may oscillate between teacher and student. I think this is particularly important, and potentially confusing for students, within the choreography class where teaching and learning roles may lack clarity around power and hierarchy, and students are encouraged to have authority and agency within their dance making and learning processes. Aultman et al. (2009) suggest teachers use boundaries to consider where the “line” (p. 636) is within teaching and learning relationships. Participants in Aultman et al.’s. (2009) study showed concern with themselves crossing lines of student boundaries, and of students crossing their boundaries. Within the present study, the choreography educators did not mention crossing students’ boundaries. Although, they did appear to place boundaries in order to protect the safety and privacy of their students, to enhance the wellbeing of their classes, and to foster their own safety and management of time, energy, and personal lives.

The instances shared where the educators articulated boundaries to students were usually in response to what may be known as a transgression or boundary violation. A personal experience of this is a student jokingly slapping me on the bottom, to which I immediately replied, “do not ever do that to me again, or to any other person in this class.” This is quite an obvious boundary transgression, however the majority of the boundaries stated by the educators were mostly related to students’ “uncivil behaviours” (Jiang et al., 2017, p. 579) rather than significant events. Such behaviours appeared to fit within the categories of challenging the authority of the teacher, being disrespectful or hostile to the teacher or peers, showing negative or unhelpful emotions, violating class community values or rules (Jiang et al., 2017), inappropriate communication, a disinterest in taking responsibility for behaviour or engagement with peers, and general disruptive or unprofessional behaviour.

There are a number of possible causes for student boundary transgressions, each of which may be caught up in the tangle of choreography pedagogy. It is possible that in some cases students take the freedom of expression allowed within the creative work to also mean freedom of relationship with the teacher, which results in transgression from the perspective of the educator. Secondly, the degree of sharing of personal information by students as part of their creative process and menteeship may lead them to believe their relationship with the teacher is closer and more intimate than may be professional. The nature of a teacher's individual teaching persona and pedagogical style may also impact how students perceive boundaries. In seeking understanding why some students might find it difficult to identify a teacher's boundary, Carys stated "I want to be collegial, I want to have really good banter, but I also want there to be a boundary because I know that it can get very, very blurry". All the educators spoke about using banter and storytelling in their classes, and wanting to create an environment where there was what could be called psychological safety (Rogers, 1961). This included an atmosphere of fun, playfulness and curiosity. Carys said,

I am constantly in dialogue with myself about what is appropriate to share, and I think I have certain mannerisms that I think make students feel... that I'm somehow... that I'm somehow more loose than what I am. Like, I swear sometimes, and I love to have a good laugh, and I have lots of crazy stories. But I only share particular stories in a particular way so that the students understand what a life can look like. But I don't want them to know anything about my family and I don't want them to know anything personal about me, really.

This perspective aligns well with Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam's (2013) assertion that boundaries allow educators to maintain emotional distance from students, and protect their mental health. It is possible that such emotional distance, again, especially from a woman, could be perceived by students as "cold, mean, or unfair" (Lazos, 2012, p. 179) particularly when students are often sharing personal information. Relevant to this is that boundaries might be helpful in indicating expectations for "the allocation of roles" (Owen, 1997, p. 163) of teacher and student. This may be particularly useful in circumstances where the roles feel blurred, for example, as Carys offered, "I'm not here to parent you or to be a friend." Much literature speaks to boundary transgressions by teachers (Barrett et al., 2006; Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Wilson et al., 2012). I consider this is likely because of the obvious "power differential" (Wilson et al., 2012) of educators. However, it is my experience that students engage in this sort of behaviour too. For example, students in choreography classes

commenting on my ‘scary face’ and appearance, engaging in behaviours that are overly familiar, or referring to aspects of my personal life which indicate they have found out information about me from another source.

The educators also spoke about encouraging their students to put relevant boundaries in place with one another in their collaborative work. For example, Carys stated “I encourage students to be really clear about their physical boundaries are. ... I want them to speak those words in a way that feels right to them.” Jette noted students needed her support to have conversations about expectations for positive collaborative working relationships. She stated, “I think for some of those students it’s about having a certain level of boundaries amongst one another, around this is the expectation, and how we fulfill these expectations. Or this is the agreement for the group.” From this we can ascertain that the educators view boundaries and their communication as a valuable aspect of collaborative choreography learning. The data suggests the educators provide opportunities for students to utilise their own agency to identify and articulate boundaries and expectations that are most relevant and appropriate to them as individuals, but that also support the collective and the aims of the creative process. Supporting students to have such conversations and reach consensus and respectful acceptance might assist in the generation of creative, physical, and psychological safety.

The ethical dimension of boundaries also leads to deliberation of the moral education we might be providing for students. Haines (2006) deliberates over whether choreography teaching and learning might enhance or impede moral education. However, I argue that choreography education is fertile ground for supporting students’ moral development. Despite this potential, it would appear the aspects of choreography education that could be monopolised upon are currently buried within the hidden curriculum. Between the three educators there appeared to be consensus that an important part of choreography learning is teaching students how to be ‘good people,’ to foster a sense of community and inclusion (Carys), to learn how to “gel” with each other (Jette), and to develop the ability to “listen and lead” (Celeste). These attributes may also be considered part of a moral education, and directly relate to 21st century skills that are sought after in the workplace.

Here I draw the connection between boundaries and safety within the choreography classroom. Relevant here are the notions of psychological safety and safe spaces. I personally find the notion of ‘safe spaces’ to be problematic. I love the sentiment and aspiration of a safe

space for all; however, how can a space be safe for all involved when each individual brings different wants, needs, expectations, ideas and boundaries to it? This is particularly complex when choreography educators are still encouraging students to “to be in their power and speak their truth in a way that feels right to them” (Carys). This implies that students may not yet feel safe nor confident in doing so, and the need to speak of boundaries indicates that a safe space has not yet been created.

When viewing boundaries and teacher-student relationships within choreography education, clearly nuances and shifts of boundaries exist that are perhaps not present or relevant within other areas of dance education. This warrants further research and understanding. The findings of the present study clearly indicate the educators are responding to students’ behaviours and as a consequence are putting boundaries in place to safely build relevant pedagogical relationships. There was some indication that these boundaries are then enacted in subsequent years or courses and accumulate for the educators as they observe the trends and student needs. I wonder how this points to the need for an even more proactive approach to boundary setting for choreography educators. Further, the women did speak about supporting their students to consider their own boundaries. Given that choreography learning does inherently involve social activities that may be considered fraught with challenges, perhaps personal management, boundaries, and communication may need to be a more explicit part of choreography education.

In addressing the impact of boundary transgressions and uncivil behaviours, it is evidenced that they can impact student achievement (Jiang et al., 2017). Additionally, there are links to teacher stress and burnout. This was alluded to by Carys who stated “I’m not going to be doing that because that is outside of my job description. And it feels quite harsh, but actually [dealing with students’ personal problems] is not an uncommon thing, and I don’t want it anymore. I don’t want it anymore.” I recall the frustration and weariness in her voice as she expressed this.

It is possible the educators are already addressing boundary transgressions in their classes in some way, but further research is warranted. This also indicates that choreography teachers may require support from their departments, especially when students respond negatively to boundaries communicated. Furthermore, as it has been noted, women may need additional support, as research has shown that they are likely to be treated more unfairly by students in

such situations than their male colleagues (El-Alayli et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2017). This is relevant and likely necessitates discussion about boundaries across dance curriculums to ensure consistent messaging is in place with colleagues, as relevant to distinct courses.

I also suspect there would be an opportunity for educators to address institutional codes of conduct and consider how these might be reflected within their relationships with students in choreography courses.

5.3. “You have to read the Room” (Carys): Pedagogical Sensing, Understanding and Meaning-making

A pertinent theme developing out of the data was the ways in which the educators gathered information about their students’ needs and then respond accordingly. All the educators spoke at length about the ways in which they engage in their students’ learning, and their creative and collaborative processes. Language used to describe these actions included ‘observing,’ seeing/watching/looking, ‘sensing,’ ‘feeling,’ ‘reflecting,’ and ‘listening.’ This language shows the educators are engaging their senses in order to perceive their students’ experiences. For example, ‘listening’ was used in an auditory sense, but also to ‘hear’ in an embodied way.

Similarly, within my teaching practice I am constantly watching students work and ‘listening’ to or ‘feeling’ the room to understand what is going on and what is required. I believe this skill is the most valuable asset I have as a teacher, more so than my choreographic content knowledge (Fortin, 1993). For the three educators and I, these actions are all deliberate in order to ascertain information about the students’ individual and collaborative creative experiences, social issues, and any other dilemmas that might emerge and potentially impede progression through a task or process. Through the interviews I also came to the conclusion that these are the same ‘sensing and feeling’ sensitivity and awareness that we are aiming to foster in our students within peer-peer collaboration.

5.3.1. “I’m like a key” (Jette): Choreographic expertise and observations

In order to identify the factors that push and pull learning in various directions, educators may need to “attend and attune” (Letts & Sandlin, 2017, p. 183) to what is said, and unsaid,

in the classroom. Carys stated “you have to read the room.” Broadly this can be understood as searching for information about what is required pedagogically. Implicated in this is how the educators view their role as a mentor or guide through students learning journey. Jette noted, “I’m like a key” to explain that she is constantly looking for which ‘doors’ she can open for her students, and how best to open them. This also alludes to her expertise in knowing what the doors might be, and how, or where they can exist. Developing out of this, is the capacity for educators to notice students’ thinking. I propose here that within choreography education, this cognition encompasses creativity, social interaction, as well as physical thinking. This embodied cognition (Kirsh, 2011) becomes evident to us as we watch students exploring movement and testing out choreographic ideas.

The significant data articulating the educators’ extensive pedagogical skills in this area raises the question of how they acquired this knowledge. As noted previously, the three educators and I have not received any formal teacher education to prepare us for teaching choreography. Our pedagogical and choreographic skills have been acquired through some post-graduate qualifications in dance, but predominantly from working ‘on the job’, through trial and error, in diverse educational and creative contexts over a number of years. This experiential learning enables a teacher to develop pedagogical content knowledge which Fortin (1993) notes “consists of blending content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge” (p. 37). However, Fortin (1993) warns that pedagogical content knowledge does not necessarily simply emerge from the teaching experience.

Specific to this nuanced expertise the educators possess is the ability to sense and feel what is required in the choreography classroom and in students’ learning and collaborative choreographic processes. The educators alluded to this being developed out of their portfolio of professional choreographic experiences. Carys stated,

In dance there's a lot of subtext that I've spent the last sort of 25 odd years 'reading' as a choreographer, and sometimes that is to do with what the choreography is, what the choreography is telling, but more often than not it's about what is happening in the dynamics between the people in the room and how they work together.

It was Carys’ intention here to suggest that watching dancers make dance and watching dances requires the same meaning-making skills, and this is part of her professional expertise.

Choreographic practice develops particular domain specific knowledge (Pakes, 2018). In seeking understanding of the educators' skills in this area, discussion of choreographic epistemology (Pakes, 2018; Risner, 2000) and phronesis is relevant. Risner (2000) positions the choreographic process as an activity within which meaning is made and through which dancers develop knowledge. Carys' statement illustrates Pakes' (2018) proposal that

the experienced artist's knowledge [of] *how* would be embodied in her conduct of the creative process: it informs the way the choreographer relates to her dancers, generates movement material, manipulates and edits that material and orchestrates the variety of choreographic elements within the emerging work. (p. 12, emphasis added)

I agree, through my own journey of working as a dancer and choreographer, that it is the practical experience of dance making that informs our knowledge of how to teach these skills. Phronesis refers to this 'practical wisdom' (Kim, 2022; Kinsella & Pitman, 2012), which is concerned with questions like 'what should I do in this situation?' As Pakes (2018) suggests "being able to analyse existing choreography or explain why it is effective" (p. 12) is a useful 'knowing what' skill. But in the case of choreography education, it is the knowing how to make dances that is part of the valuable pedagogical contribution. In other words, choreographic phronesis becomes part of the educator's pedagogical phronesis.

It is important to note here that the educators clearly expressed their understanding that when they observe students' choreography they know how to "fix it in an instant" (Celeste), but it is, as Celeste stated "not my job to make their work better." Jette suggested that she is willing to offer suggestions to students, to "help them investigate what they're interested in and then to reveal other ways so that they can expand what they know about making through their own lens." But she stressed they must make their own judgements about what is best for their choreography. It appears the educators' objective is to identify how to foster each students' creative learning and not to direct their choreography.

Returning to the educators' abilities to read what is going on for a student creatively or collaboratively, is utilising their choreographic wisdom (phronesis) as a pedagogical tool to interpret a student's learning process. When working within a professional choreographic context, this knowledge might be described as instinctual, but the demands of the pedagogical moment brings this embodied knowledge into reflective awareness (Pakes, 2018) and

therefore becomes part of the choreographic epistemology shared in the teaching and learning context. The data evidences the educators' wide perceptions of the myriad impacts on student choreographers' learning, and the numerous ways they might respond. Eisner (2002) states in regard to phronesis,

Practical reasoning is deliberative, it takes into account local circumstances, it weighs tradeoffs, it is riddled with uncertainties, it depends upon judgement, profits from wisdom, addresses particulars, it deals with contingencies, is iterative and shifts aims in process when necessary. (p. 376)

Choreography is constructivist at its core, in that choreographic knowledge and choreography itself "is the creation of an inventive mind interacting with a universe which itself is a part of what humans construe in the process of interaction" (Eisner, 2002, p. 380). Therefore, choreography education can be proposed as demanding a constructivist approach to generate relevant knowledge. Many aspects of choreography learning cannot be taught by a transmissive pedagogy (Fortin, 1993; Melchior, 2011) and require an appropriate responsiveness that comes from the teacher's phronesis.

As Carys suggested she has been working in dance for "25 odd years," with the other educators and I each having 10 to 25 years of experience. The 'wisdom' aspect of phronesis is developed over time. As Eisner (2002) states, "a phronimos, a practically wise person" develops this "through experience" (p. 381). This draws attention to the various approaches to teaching choreography found within the literature, the absence of discussion around how choreography pedagogy is developed, and how an educator's approach to teaching dance making might shift over time. Additionally, addressing the nuances of choreography education requires domain specific knowledge, as well as practical wisdom of both pedagogy and dance making. I attest that within my own teaching career the pedagogical question has changed from 'what should I teach?' to 'how and why should I teach?', now assuming also that the 'what' is somewhat slippery, unstable, and spontaneous, as are the 'when' and for 'whom.'

As Warburton (2008) and Fortin (1993) explore, these points raise questions around the balance of pedagogical and content knowledge. But further, if phronesis is developed over time, I ask what support could be provided for emerging educators? In tertiary education in New Zealand, these people are often practitioners with a developing body of choreographic

work and who may have technique teaching experience. They may have little or no pedagogical qualifications. As this thesis reveals there are other aspects of the dance making teaching and learning context that demand educators to have particular kinds of expertise. This provides scope for proposing that choreography educators may require additional mentoring, and/or supplementary education where available.

I turn now to the question of how a teacher engages their phronesis expertise to “read the room” (Carys). Eisner states “the perception of classrooms is a reading, an interpretation. We make meaning” (p. 380). What the educators are doing in class when they are in various ways listening and observing students is akin to ‘professional noticing’ (Rooney & Boud, 2019), or ‘teacher noticing’ (Barnhart & van Es, 2015; Luna & Selmer, 2021; Mason, 2021; Schack et al., 2017; Sherin, 2017). Teacher noticing theory attends to the professional practice educators engage in to critically reflect upon what they ‘see’ within classrooms. Through observation, this practice aims to seek out information about students’ thinking and provides scope to understanding the possibilities of how they may respond. Teacher noticing can be framed as part of an educator’s pedagogical tool kit.

Rooney and Boud (2019) highlight professional noticing skills as a key concern of higher education regardless of practice or discipline. Mason (2002) offers that professional noticing is the process of watching someone intentionally to “become aware of something that they do (a task they set, a pattern of speech they employ, a gesture they use, a question they ask)” (p. 30). This information garnered then leads to decisions about how to respond. This study reveals that the choreography educators are not only noticing visually but also noticing through listening aurally and by sensing and feeling the energy of the room. Within choreography education, examples of what the educators notice are “when the activity starts to calm and maybe students start to move away from each other” (Carys), collaborative groups “laughing” and “they’re having a great time, but you notice that they’re moving, they’re moving constantly, they are returning back to it” (Jette), “they don't know how to touch each other in partnering. They're not used to it. Their weight's always on their own weight” (Carys), or “sometimes just one person talking the whole time and the other people sort of, looking daggers at each other” (Celeste).

Many of the pertinent teaching moments the educators offered appeared to be like what Rooney and Boud, (2019) call “noticing in context.” In the case of expert professionals, the

complex and simultaneous moments that take place within a specific context that are relevant to the particular domain are able to be noticed. This is in opposition to the ‘focussed observation’ that a novice teacher might be capable of (Rooney & Boud, 2019). Alternatively, the examples provided were what might be “noticing of significance” (Rooney & Boud, 2019) where the educators identified salient moments that deviate from the normal learning patterns students might show in their classes. This points to the myriad possibilities choreography educators need to be aware of and required to attend to at any time. I propose that this is complicated by the diversity of students’ processes, creative ideas, collaborative dynamics, creative pace/timeline, prior experiences, and ability to be at ease with creative risk, for example.

But is there something ‘special’ about a choreography teacher’s noticing? The peculiarity of this finding indicates that choreography educators appear to go well beyond noticing visually. Their noticing practice extends well into embodied and energetic modes of perception. Additionally, it seems the educators may notice through a choreographic lens the meanings of metaphor, imagery, or character interactions in order to understand students’ learning. They notice the broad entanglements within a student’s own personal, creative, learning, and social journeys and how these may or may not be represented within the choreographic product.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the themes generated through thematic analysis for the purpose of answering the research question: Within tertiary choreography courses in New Zealand, what are three dance educators’ meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography? It has been ascertained that the choreography context is extremely complex with educators negotiating numerous pedagogical entanglements (Letts & Sandlin, 2017). These entanglements pull their attention and expertise in conflicting directions. The entanglements pertain to the educators’ personal and professional identities, pedagogies, experiences, issues and wishes in relation to the students’ identities, experiences, challenges and aspirations. The pedagogical relationship between choreography educator and students was explored. This revealed nuances of a choreography pedagogy as being relational, dialogic and collaborative, and addressed specific encounters of communication where students’ creative challenges can emerge. Additionally interrogating the educator-students relationship has demonstrated that a myriad of issues develops out of the complexities of this relationship

and have impacts upon both the students and educators. Specific problems related to perceptions, gender, boundaries, and communication have been addressed. Furthermore, it was identified that choreography educators deal with intimate personal information from students and at times boundaries are required. The chapter has also identified that peer-peer relationships within choreography are also often a source of challenges which are demand mediation by the educators.

6. CONCLUSION

My notebook sits open on my desk, and I look up at the rows of pink post-it notes that are now pinned on the wall. Each post-it identifies areas of expertise, problems encountered, and questions posed, some of which have made it into the thesis, and many have not. For a moment I let myself get lost in the feeling that emanates off the wall. Through the interviews with the three choreography educators, I have been a fly on the wall in numerous choreography classes. I have seen, heard and felt their passion, energy, and frustration. Being a choreography teacher means focussing on the art, teaching the art practice, and holding high expectations for the creative product. But it also means carrying a heavy load of care, students' stories, our own emotions, and of reflecting upon every conversation, every pedagogical decision, and every work of art as a representation of the complicated human beings who made it. It is inescapable.

This study has responded to the research question: Within tertiary choreography courses in New Zealand, what are three dance educators' meanings and experiences of teaching collaborative choreography? This final chapter offers a summary of the research findings that answer this question and interweaves reflections on the methodology and participant pool. I articulate my recommendations for the future of choreography educators and education tertiary contexts. Directions for future research are noted and a final conclusion to this thesis are provided.

6.1. Summary of Key Findings

This research invited three experienced choreography educators to share their experiences of teaching choreography in bachelor's degrees in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through semi-structured conversational interviews, they each offered detailed insights into their pedagogical practice, their learnings, and struggles, as they teach dance making. The research utilised only a small number of participants, and therefore the study did not aim to provide a representative view of an entire participant pool. Instead, the research gained extremely rich and nuanced data that provides new comprehension about what it means for individuals to teach choreography. The findings, however, are likely to be relevant to choreography educators in other cultural and educational contexts.

The study found that choreography education is an extremely complex context that places significant and conflicting demands on the educator. In this sense, their skills, personal and

professional lives are pulled in various directions by student needs and desires, their own needs and boundaries, and the myriad shifting expectations of tertiary institutions and the professional dance community. They must also respond to the tug of current and historical choreography trends from the surrounding educational and professional dance contexts. There is no 'textbook' for teaching choreography to the diverse students and needs we encounter. The three educators evidenced their skill, confidence, and diverse expertise through the stories they shared and their apparent willingness to unpack these experiences in their interviews. As a result, there were many moments of pedagogical reflection and insight generated by them, akin to self-study methodology which may be used to improve oneself (Russell, 2002) and to create new understandings of both teaching, and the world (Hamilton, 2004). Stinson (2016) shares that for her, "difficult issues are not limited to my work; rather, they weave together the personal and professional dimensions of my life as I try to figure out what I believe and how to live it" (p. 54). Indeed, this study has shown that our professional and personal entanglements as choreography educators are complex, but also a source of meaning, purpose, and expression.

It is clear that the educators rely heavily on their previous experiences to inform their pedagogical choices and are hugely aware of and responsive to their students' needs. The three educators are well equipped to negotiate many of the challenges they face, and flex according to the contrasting pressures. However, teaching choreography means, for the three women, responding to ever-changing student dilemmas. It was also revealed that problems frequently emerge, not due to the choreographic work, but more so because of all the other factors present in the choreography classroom. The notion of pedagogical entanglements (Dowd, 2017; Letts & Sandlin, 2017; Onsès & Hernández-Hernández, 2017; Tinning, 2018) was used to understand what and how the educators manage the interwoven pressures of the classroom.

The findings of the study show that for both students and educators who we are and what we bring is important, and a holistic view of each other (Rogers, 1961) is equally valuable in the choreographic space (Knox, 2013). Within the making and teaching of choreography, identities, personalities, values and perspectives are present and utilised. For students, who they are is their source of creative impetus, and the creative process reciprocates to the students and allows for their self-actualisation. This process of identity construction and affirmation has implications for the teacher and asks for their guidance and response, whether

they are prepared for this or not. This is the pedagogical ‘trouble’ of perceiving students holistically within dance education. Intertwined with this are the teacher’s personal and professional identities, their skills, personas, and questions.

This study has perceived the educator as residing at the centre of the choreography learning context, and clearly students position their teachers there too. As a result, the educators are forced to work intimately and creatively with their students. Dialogue and relationships are imperative and were shown to be necessary to teach choreography but are also often the source of pedagogical challenges. The choreography context is also identified as unique in that students’ identities, relationship, challenges, and at times trauma, are openly engaged within their choreographic work. This was identified as being significantly more so than in other areas of dance curriculum. This means the educators are lured into particular kinds of situations with students that can be uncomfortable and raise issues of boundaries, pastoral care, and limitations of support for both teachers and students. Subsequently teachers can find themselves in positions of councillor, mother, or caregiver, well beyond their expectations for their teaching role. This indicates that gender is still an issue with dance education (Clegg et al., 2016; Muntanyola Saura, 2009; Stinson, 2005) and warrants attention.

Within choreography education, while overtly student-centred, the teacher is required to act as a lubricant for the social interactions of everyone in the room. Students must be enabled to collaborate, but in many cases are still developing their interpersonal skills and understanding of choreographic roles. Their interactions can be driven by fear and vulnerability and aspirations for success, and consequentially collaborative work can, and does, go awry. As such, choreography educators are required to teach collaboration, but most also model and foster the modes and tones of encounter with another that mean collaboration can take place in positive, generative, and healthy ways. This part of the curriculum and hidden curriculum is challenging to effectively balance with the creative aspects of dance making.

Because of the nature of the choreography education context the teachers encounter students’ needs that collide with both their personal and professional identities and boundaries.

Themes of being a woman, and a parental figure emerged as a source of tension.

Choreography teachers protect their own wellness, time, and energy through the increasing use of boundaries. Additionally at times, it would appear the educators push certain kinds of student demands into the null curriculum (Cahapay, 2021; Eisner, 1979; Flinders et al., 1986;

Noddings, 2012a) as a mechanism of self-protection. It is clear also, that the hidden curriculum (Brownell, 2017; Stinson, 2005; Wren, 1999) of choreography education is significant. While the educators spoke of wanting to focus on dance making, the realities suggest that while they recognise the value and content of the hidden curriculum it continues to overflow. Interestingly, much of the hidden curriculum around ‘how to be together’ is the source of, and the answer to, many challenges in the classroom.

A significant question emerging out of this study is what choreography education encompasses, and what it should include/not include and why? This study illuminated that the many, many issues that fall into the hidden and null curriculums might actually be fuel for making art. Stinson (2001) reminds us that “we teach more than dance whether we intend to or not” (p. 32). So how might we harness these curriculums as effectively as we harness the explicit curriculum? How could choreography education be monopolised to explore issues of gender, power, communication and relationships? How can the teaching and learning of choreographic collaboration be further exploited to explore the “things that we want to see in the broader universal context” (Carys)?

The study found that students respond well to knowing who their teachers are, and at times the teachers utilise their professional experience and reputation to leverage respect in the classroom. This tension of balancing professional and pedagogical skills quietly emerged through the data as a ‘sticking point’ for the educators as they navigate boundaries, contribution to students’ choreographic learning journeys and how to enact their authority in the classroom. Part of this tension is revealed in students’ attitudes around choreographic success and disappointment when the so-called ‘professionals’ are unwilling or unable to provide the explicit kinds of information and/or direction students want. As choreography education is, for these three educators, inherently constructivist, it calls upon students to approach their learning with reflexivity, self-awareness and self-regulation, interpersonal negotiation, problem solving, and the ability to co-construct and re-construct beliefs and attitudes and learning (Murphy, 1997). In the present study, educators are guides and mentors, not “gurus” (Carys), and teachers and their students must be prepared for creative and personal instability and risk.

The findings show that choreography pedagogy is a multifaceted practice using strategies that are choreographic, relational, collaborative, dialogic, and improvisational. While there is still

much to be understood about the educators' pedagogical practices, the study revealed the diversity of behaviours, actions, and strategies they engage to teach dance making. A further tension was revealed in that students respond in different ways to our pedagogies, and it would seem at times further communication might be required so that students fully comprehend what we choose to do and why.

6.2. Recommendations

The findings of this study have led to several recommendations for the future of choreography education and the role of choreography educators.

Martin (1976) asks “what should we do with a hidden curriculum when we find one?” (p. 135). This study has shown that the hidden curriculum of choreography is large and looming. This warrants addressing which content belongs there, which learning may be better brought into the explicit curriculum, and which aspects may be more effectively engaged to achieve choreography education's objectives. Furthermore, if we reveal this curriculum to students (Portelli, 1993), and value it thoroughly, this may mean that choreography learning is even more aligned with the notion of education (rather than training). Subsequently students' overt experiences of the hidden curriculum may have positive impacts on their learning as they learn to articulate their transferable skills in preparation for career pathways.

I question whether aspects of choreography courses may no longer be fit for purpose in their current form. With the heavily loaded hidden curriculum and the myriad demands placed on educators to respond to social and other issues that stem out of dance making, this warrants further reflection to address which parts of curriculum are effective and which might be revised. I offer that this is likely to be context dependant and reliant on, institutions' graduate profiles, relevant pathways into and out of tertiary dance education in Aotearoa, and student demographics.

It cannot be assumed that the interpersonal and boundary issues the educators faced were isolated issues. Due to the evidence that indicates choreography education is a complicated context, and that educators can be frequently drawn into students' problems, I recommend that dance departments and institutions assess what support is available and listen to what might be required by educators. In the same way that a therapist might engage with their

own therapy, I propose that choreography educators may benefit from social and psychological support, whether it be regular and ongoing or a form of ‘triage’ support. Assistance in communicating boundaries may be required and associated with this is a need for a culture shift in choreography classes where students have previously been able to transgress boundaries frequently. I also identify that such support needs to be relevant and provided by practitioners who understand the academic and creative context, as well as teaching and learning relationships with adult students.

More work may need to be done to support students’ understanding about teaching and learning relationships and the ethical and moral dimensions of these. It is advisable for educators to consider when and how to deliver relevant information to their classes. It appears that this takes place as a response to issues when they arise, but that educators accumulate boundaries and expectations for teaching and learning relationships and class culture. Taking a more proactive and preventative approach incorporating class or “collaborative contracts” (Jette) may be a beneficial action to ensure class members understand appropriate behaviours with their peers and teachers. Following on, it will be advantageous for educators to receive support from line managers. Due to the extensive additional work that choreography educators dedicate to their courses, it is important that they do not become the default teacher for extra pastoral care and other duties as a result of the close relationships developed in choreography classes. This has implications for the ongoing communication of student support services.

The issues raised around perceptions of the teacher must be addressed. Specifically, the tensions around gender, students’ behaviour towards female teachers, and the expectations for emotional and domestic labour for women teachers warrant attention. If not, these remain yet another aspect of choreography that can perpetuates stereotypes and inherited pedagogies and leadership roles. If we are to propose that choreography is able to address real world problems through creative research of relevant themes and concepts, and if choreography really can be a context where we teach and learn about people and their experiences and meanings, then such issues can be explored explicitly within dance making education. Attending to the educator’s role and students’ perceptions of it, may require a multi-pronged approach, of which I offer the following: teachers planning ahead to explicitly introduce their role and expectations for boundaries, interactions, communication and behaviour. This may make for clarity for students as they commence and continue choreography learning.

The educators revealed their understandings that at times sharing personal stories and experiences can be of value within choreography education, therefore it can be proposed that sharing information relevant to their experiences of teaching and gender may also be useful in illustrating the lived experiences of gender within the dance community, of which students may encounter within their own professional journeys as well. Additionally discussing gender is relevant and may be helpful when teaching other areas of choreography education, especially in relation to touch, consent, and contact partnering for example. Finally, it will be valid for educators to directly link their teaching of gender issues to relevant scholarship in order to evidence that these are very real issues with significant implications and not simply an individual person's perception. And as such, addressing gender issues might become part of the moral education suggested choreography learning can offer. Finally, introducing institutional codes of conduct within classes may be a further support resource for teachers in building relationships and communicating boundaries with students.

There are several areas where choreography educators may benefit from professional development due to the various pressures of the creative contexts. For example, trauma informed pedagogy (Carello & Butler, 2014; Harrison et al., 2023), conflict resolution (Blunk et al., 2017; Jones, 2004), collaborative facilitation (Rowe et al., 2020; Sjølie et al., 2021) and in further developing pedagogical cultural competencies (Hughes, 2018; 'Ofamo'oni & Rowe, 2020). These areas would allow choreography educators to feel more equipped to negotiate the various issues they face, as well as to assert their expertise and credibility with students.

The study revealed that collaborative skills are hugely valued but not fully attended to. These skills are clearly essential to both dance making, and to the class's social cohesion, and within the teaching and learning relationship. The educators showed awareness of the relevance of these skills and identified that dance graduates do collaborate well in the workforce. How the collaborative aptitude develops from tertiary education to the workplace is unclear. However, there was significant evidence that suggested while collaborative skills are imperative, they appear to always fall 'second best' to the creative skills of dance making. Either, there is either insufficient time and scope within curriculums, apprehension around expertise or interest in delving more deeply into this area of skill question. I argue that if we are to claim that our graduates do collaborate well as a result of the education they receive, we need to ensure we are more explicitly fostering these skills and not assuming that simply doing it is enough. This recommendation may require educators to undertake relevant professional development, and

likely redesign aspects of their curriculum. This may have impacts on how curriculum can be planned through course duration, as well as assessment briefs and criteria. Further, this warrants consideration of where collaborative skills might be learned more broadly within tertiary dance education. Choreography education should not be expected to solely fulfil this area of dance curriculum and the more learning experiences students have of collaborating with different people, in different contexts, and for different purposes, the more astute their interpersonal skills will be.

6.3. Directions for Further Research

Several themes were developed through the analysis process that were unable to be explored due to the limitations and scope of the study. However, these do provide pathways for further research within the realm of choreography pedagogy and learning. Some of these themes included scrutinising the choreography educator's role in teaching for 21st century skills within dance making, the diversity of arts careers and graduate profiles with examination of how choreography education attends to these, or not, and the associated pedagogies and curricula designs that influences them; meanings of, and pedagogies that foster student agency and voice within choreography education. These avenues all present viable and useful directions for future research.

Significant data was gathered within this study that speaks to the multiple pressures within the choreography education context that impact teachers' and students' experiences, including time and assessment pressure, and collaborative grouping and pairings. While aspects of these themes have been explored, further scholarship that hones in on the nuances of choreography education would likely reveal useful insights for educators in managing the ongoing demands of their classrooms, and in appeasing certain challenges students face that hinder their creative explorations.

A stimulating theme that could not be fully explored within this study was what choreography pedagogy might specifically be, and how it may be 'choreographic' in itself. Building upon the threads within this thesis of choreography pedagogy being relational, dialogic, constructivist, and collaborative, the educators spoke around topics of improvisatory pedagogies (Henriksen et al., 2017; Leach & Stevens, 2020; Sawyer, 2006; Sawyer, 2000, 2004), various methods akin to dramaturgy (Behrndt, 2010; Bleeker, 2003; Burge, 2016; Østern, 2021), and of creatively manipulating the temporal, spatial (Lambert, 2011; Mercer, 2008; Østern, 2010;

Twiner et al., 2013), energetic, and attentive aspects of their students' learning, curriculums, and classrooms; just as we do when we make dances.

The study engaged three very experienced choreography educators, and due to their expertise, they were, as anticipated, able to thoroughly articulate their experience, meanings, and attitudes towards teaching choreography and explain their pedagogies in nuanced ways. While the findings of this study do indicate some implications relevant to early career educators, focussing more specifically on younger or less experienced teachers would be of benefit. This could lead to useful directions for further education or professional development and may support a case for mentoring from those more experienced. Hence, building a robust community of choreography educators who can learn from one another. This may be beneficial in relation to social support pertaining to the findings around boundaries and transgressions within educator-student relationships.

Taking a more specific look at the findings of this study through the lenses of the hidden and null curriculum would be useful in determining whether current choreography curriculums are still fit for purpose. In reviewing the findings of this study, I propose that further attention could be paid to the social aspects of dance making, both in collaborative work and in educator-student relationships. Consequentially, the questions are raised as to where these important areas of dance education should be positioned, where time might be found, and who has the expertise to teach them. It has been evidenced that choreography education is a potent context for such learning to take place, however curriculums are already bursting. Perhaps further research might appease this and indicate where flexibility and restructuring could occur.

The fact that the participants within the study were all women provided a particular viewpoint, and as such, issues related to being a woman in the choreography learning environment became a focus. Inviting more diverse gender identities into a similar study would no doubt reveal further complexities. Interrogation of the entanglements of gender, touch, authority, power, voice, respect, and identity would warrant attention and may reveal data of different nuance and significance. Additionally, I believe that digging more deeply and explicitly into women's experiences would also reveal further insights. Attending to such research through a feminist lens would also unveil further complexities to be unpicked, and for greater nuances of individual and intersectional experiences to be explored.

The study provided an in-depth interrogation of choreography teaching and considered the ways in which students might perceive their educators and their pedagogies. This, along with studies such as Tubman's (2022) examination of students' experiences of how their teachers' care within choreography education indicates that turning attention to students' experiences would provide pertinent scope for further research. Additionally, the review of literature suggests that students' voices are mostly absent from choreography education scholarship. Given the immense number of dilemmas that emerge around students' creativity, relationships, identity, and vulnerability, honing in to listen carefully and respond accordingly in our future curricular design would be useful, as would be reflecting again upon our pedagogies.

The present study has also revealed some disconnection between NCEA Dance making practices and expectations of student work within bachelor's degrees. Pre-tertiary dance education in high schools would reveal the connections and disconnections between choreography pedagogy in higher education. The present study has raised the question of who is responsible for much of the social education some students appear to be missing when they arrive at tertiary dance pathways. The present study indicates that there are possibly gaps with NCEA dance education that may be relevant to be responded to. Further research into the experiences of choreography teachers in this context would likely reveal insight into how this context might better prepare and connect students to their future tertiary choreography learning, and how tertiary choreography educators might better prepare to receive students' challenges.

I also recognise a significant gap in the choreography education of those students pursuing a vocational dance training route into tertiary dance study. This divide indicates the potential for research and the design of choreographic experiences relevant to those students in order to prepare them for tertiary study. Additionally, extending research into vocational tertiary study, like the New Zealand School of Dance, and how teachers experience choreography teaching in these contexts could be warranted to build a fuller picture of how choreography teaching and learning takes place in Aotearoa.

6.4. Circling Back: Ending and Beginning Again

By the time I engage in the oral examination for this research it will be time for me to begin teaching my annual first-year choreography course. I look forward to it immensely every year. But this year will be different. Different because of the new cohort and all the quirks they bring, the unique mix of personalities, identities, and aspirations, the fears and collisions of ideas; but, more so, different due to the immediate and profound impact this study has had on my thinking and pedagogy. This study has provided numerous moments to bring the issues, dilemmas, and revelations of teaching into view. I am inspired by my peers' insight, expertise, and skill in how they navigate the microscopic demands of the choreography classroom ecosystem, as well as how they remain aspirational, rigorous, and connected. I also feel proud of the ways in which we all support our students through a part of their dance journeys and assist them to seek answers to their big, big creative questions.

At the very least, this doctoral study has impacted my own teaching practice. Reflecting upon my own identity as a female choreography teacher, the emerging issues have solidified the meanings and significance of experiences I have had over the past decade of teaching choreography. I feel the flex I can make now as a woman, a mother, an artist, and as a human to both be myself within the pedagogical moment, but also protect myself. Engaging in this research has revealed to me how much I know, and how much I do not know, about education, choreography, teaching, connecting with young people, and wanting to impact my students' lives for the better. It has provided moments of vulnerability and instability as well as clarification and confidence within my teaching practice, my research career, and has reaffirmed my aspiration for choreography learning to be safe, self-actualising, and, above all, enjoyable.

I have kept asking, "What does it all mean?" "What is it all for?" Choreography is about so much more than making dances. It is a way for us to learn how to be ourselves, or someone else, to learn how to relate, how to grow, how to reflect the world as we see it, to challenge the status quo, to propose a wild idea, to put up a fight, to shift perspectives, to show beauty bold enough to take our breath away, to process the experiences of our lives, and to change the world into the place we desire it to be. To do all this, to share how it might be possible ... what a responsibility for the choreography educator to carry. Despite the challenges, as this study has shown, still we carry it. I carry it because I truly believe that there is something

magical that takes place when a group of young people come together to learn how to make a dance. The dance itself may be more or less important, more or less ‘good,’ but what I value most is the transformation that takes place as a consequence. My students are changed, and so am I.

In the final weeks of writing this thesis, I come across these meaningful words from Risner and Stinson (2010) about social justice in teacher education,

Teachers who care are often called to become therapists and social workers for their students. Anyone who doesn’t care doesn’t belong in the teaching profession. But those who do care often become burned out after a few years, because more students with more challenges keep coming. ... It means we try not just to help future teachers fit into the world as it is, but to create a world that is more just, more fair, as well as one that is more compassionate. ... We did not choose to become politicians or community organizers. At the same time, we believe that dance educators have a role to play in creating a better world for their students to enter, and further, that failure to think about the larger social world is problematic for our students, ourselves, and our art. (p. 2-3)

Choreography holds close the aspiration of ‘world building.’ So does choreography education and those who teach it.

I gather my first-year students into a circle. I can see in their eyes the anticipation, excitement, and fear. I smile.

“Over the next six weeks, we’re going to have an adventure together... I don’t know where we’re going, but we’ll get somewhere, and we’ll make sure we’re all there together at the end.” And so, we begin.

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