

Creative Choice in Dance Rehearsals: A New Qualitative Methodology

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Keywords: Creative Choice, Cognitive Ethnography, Social Networks Analysis, Distributed Cognition, Simmelian Ties

Creative choice is an individual act. Nonetheless, a longitudinal cognitive ethnography of a prestigious London dance company puts forward how dance rehearsals are made of social relationships of production ((Kirsh et al, 2009, Muntanyola & Kirsh, 2010). The products of creativity are also minute but crucial modifications of transitory stages of development (Feyerabend, 1987, Bourdieu, 1998, Faulkner & Becker, 2009). Our hypothesis is that the dancers' patterns interactions shape individual creative choices in movement production.

Distribution & Modality

We collected data on the dancers' instruction following, distinguishing perceptually based interactions (looking at each other), from those mainly verbal (asking for advice or corrections), or affective in nature (friendships and intimate relationships). The application of Social Network Analysis (SNA) to the collected behavioral data provided a reticular representation of creative choice (see figure 1). We determined the degree of social interaction according to centrality measures and simmelian ties. There was a high density of interrelations around a central node, the most experienced dancer in the company, which acted as an information filter.

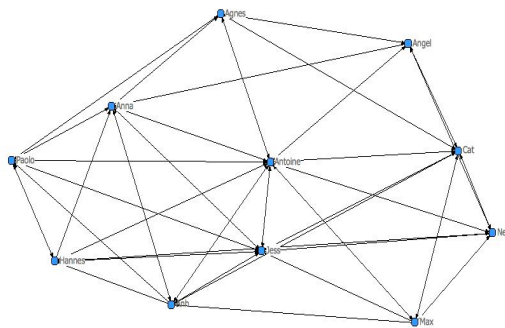


Figure 1. The dancers' verbal interactions

Dancers create movement following the choreographer's instructions. In order to obtain new movements, the choreographer as an expert engages in an objectifying relationship with the dancer (Rannou & Roarik, 2006). Her body becomes an instrument for exploration of the choreographer's imagery. His creative choices include deciding on the amount and type of information provided in rehearsal. Through interviews and observation, we defined the instructions' modalities. Verbal instructions were scarce. The degree of body awareness experienced by the dancers

increased when the choreographer was more specific in explaining a task and its relation to the piece as a whole. In order to attribute conceptual meaning to their own movements, they were dependent on the tasks' degree of verbalization.

Conclusion

Observation of the *actum* in rehearsal time showed how instructions are necessarily interactive. Social Network Analysis allowed us to understand rehearsals as a distributed cognitive system (Hollan et al, 2000). Interactions among dancers were frequent and mostly verbal, and included a surrogate figure, which acted as an information hub. Nevertheless, the dancers depend on the instruction's modality, specifically on the amount of verbal information coming from the choreographer. Further analysis will measure the amount and modality of information transmitted both vertically and horizontally, in order to see if verbal interaction among dancers compensates effectively for the lack of verbal feedback from the choreographer.

Acknowledgements

The Fulbright Commission, the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) funded this research.

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