Collaborative Creativity;
An inspection of the Violet Disruption project

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1. Introduction

Despite a long tradition of research focused on individual creativity (Rietzschel et al., 2009), group creativity research is a fairly new field. However, even with considerable scepticism about the creative potential of groups just thirty years ago (see Diehl and Stroebe, 1987; Nemeth and Staw, 1989), subsequent positive empirical and theoretical developments have established a strong grounding (Paulus and Nijstad, 2019). This essay aims to contribute to this literature by investigating collaborative creativity in the ideation process for the Violet Disruption project.

2. Definitions

Traditionally, creativity has been defined as a process that gives rise to original and useful ideas (Mayseless et al., 2017). In relation, several researchers have used the term creative collaboration (alternatively, collaborative creativity) with regards to design practice (Lerdahl, 2001). In this essay, collaborative creativity is defined as a social process that promotes the creative process through collaborative partnerships (Mercer and Littleton, 2007, cited in Astutik et al., 2016).

3. Models of Collaborative Creativity

3.1 John-Steiner's model of creative collaboration

Creativity had previously been explored as a social phenomenon in earlier academic work (Amabile, 1983, cited in Barrett et al., 2021). However, the concept of active co-contribution to creative production was first investigated in John-Steiner's model of creative collaboration (Barrett et al., 2021).

It encompasses four patterns of collaboration: **distributed, complementary, family** and **integrative** (John-Steiner, 2000).

1) **Distributed collaboration** happens spontaneously and loosely, where ideas, after being shared, are appropriated for collective purposes.

   - My initial response to the brief was that liberation is enhanced by being a collective, so I thought of having individuals express themselves individually and physically, which would then form a collective piece digitally. Faiza and Pranjal thought about how physical scars could be a reminder of violence for victims and wanted to liberate them from that.

   - Together, we agreed that people are more their souls, their identities, than their bodies.

   - I was also reminded of the Stardust book series I used to read, the opening lines of which were that we are all made of stardust.

   - Therefore, combining the idea of a collective and people as their souls, I proposed a collective experience where participants could visualize our souls via small particles (like stardust) that could contract, expand, and vibrate.

2) **Complementary collaboration** relies on interdependent expertise and knowledge in pursuit of a common goal.

   - Pranjal, with his knowledge of coding, explained that it would be possible for us to code this expanding particle idea.

3) **Family collaboration** is rooted in the approach to familial relationships, focusing on the relationships between members and relying on a sense of belonging to manage conflict.

   - This was not as relevant – there was very little conflict to manage.

4) **Integrative collaboration** focuses on joint efforts "effecting transformative change" (John-Steiner, 2000: 203).

- Our joint efforts changed an initial idea of scars being a physical representation of violence to that of people as more than their bodies, to the souls represented as particles that would expand as a digital avatar.

3.2 Search for Ideas in Associative Memory (SIAM) model

A cognitive model of collaborative idea generation that has been well described in literature is that of Nijstad and Stroebe's (2006, as cited in Paulus et al., 2010) Search for Ideas in Associative Memory (SIAM) model. It theorizes idea generation in a group to be a "conscious search through long-term memory" (Paulus et al., 2010: 196). Long-term memory is associative, meaning more strongly related concepts are more likely to be retrieved together quickly than weakly related concepts. The SIAM model, thus, highlights the ability of groups to activate less accessible categories of ideas from long-term memory (Brown et al., 1998).

- After the initial ideation outlined in the previous model, we remembered that the brief required us to design a way for people to embody this digital avatar. How could we combine having people express themselves physically, through their bodies, whilst also showing that they would be more than their bodies? The SIAM model illustrates how this subsequent prompt, created by the group, was answered.
- I was reminded of the piece Angry Women by Annie Abrahams, where women, on their webcams, remotely expressed their anger, which was then combined into a video projection. Therefore, I suggested that we encourage participants to scream as a mode of self-expression, the volume of which to the particles could react to.
- Here, I consciously combed through my memory for any artwork that uses elements of the body as a response to previous idea generation.
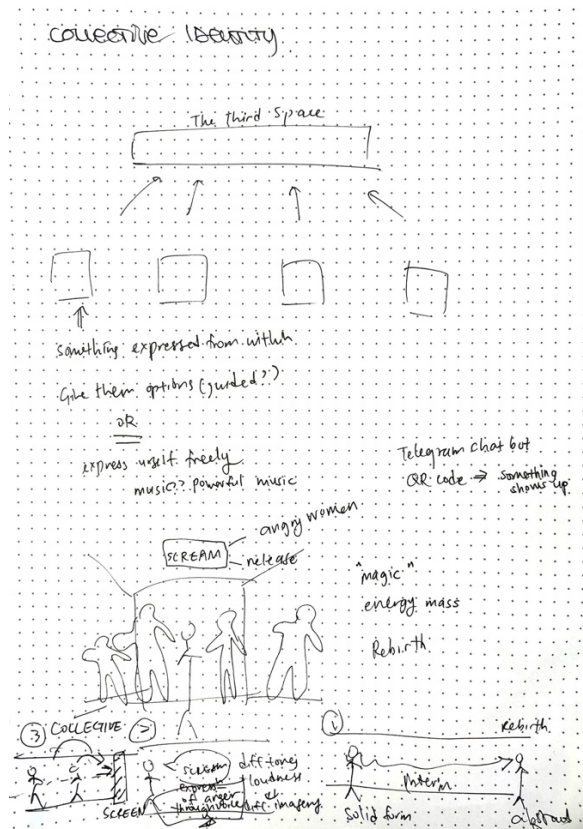
Image of collaborative idea generation: divergent ideas

noted down as ideation progressed

4. Conclusion

John-Steiner's model provides a more macro view of collaborative creativity, with distributive collaboration proving particularly effective for understanding the starting point to how we bounced off one another through the ideation process. Whereas, the SIAM model is more useful in illustrating the thought that went behind ideating collaboratively. It demonstrated how the combination of our ideas forced me to comb through my memory for previously encountered artwork that could transform the idea even further. Therefore, I propose a hybrid model where John-Steiner's model provides an overview of the overall process of collaborative creativity, and the SIAM model fills in the gap of the perspective of the collaborative ideation process, for a more comprehensive analysis of collaborative creativity in projects.

801 words

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