

## PRACTICE-RELATED RESEARCH IN CONTEMPORARY CHOREOGRAPHY: A REVIEW OF METHODS

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### Abstract

Practice-related research, such as practice-led research, practice-based research, and Practice as Research, has become increasingly significant in the academic study of creative practices, including contemporary choreography. Six doctoral research projects presented during 2013–2022 are studied to demonstrate the implication of practice-related research in contemporary choreography. This textual review analyses the definitions of practice-led research, practice-based research, and practice as research from the perspectives of their fundamental aims and frameworks. Reviewing such doctoral research in contemporary choreography, the research problems, questions, methods, and products are analysed. This paper foregrounds the research in contemporary choreography, focusing on practice-related research as a methodology in dance study.

**Keywords:** practice-related research, practice-led research, practice-based research, Practice as Research, contemporary choreography.

### Introduction

In academic research, practice-related research can be found in medicine, design, engineering, and, to some extent, the arts and humanities (Skains, 2018). This mode of practice-related research was introduced to the academic study of creative practices, such as the visual and performing arts, in the 1980s (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Nelson, 2022). Despite facing much resistance when they were first introduced, these newly formed methodologies and frameworks of researching creative practices have gradually gained recognition with the extensive publication of scholarly literature (Nelson, 2022; Webb, 2012), diverse practice-related research methodologies in the arts (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Murphy, 2022; Nelson, 2022; Skains, 2018), and the establishment of practice-related postgraduate programs in universities (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Gardner, 2012; Murphy, 2022). Indeed, practice-related research in creative practices has developed into a “major focus of research activity, both as [methodological] process and [creative]

product” (Skains, 2018, p. 83). Skains stressed that the “discourse in various disciplines have made a strong case for its validity as a method of studying art and the practice of art” (p. 83).

In the 1980s, pioneering university departments in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom began introducing this non-traditional mode of academic research in researching creative practices. In Asia, some postgraduate programs have also introduced this relatively new mode of practice-related research. For example, in the late 2010s, the three major institutions that offer performing arts programs in Malaysia—Universiti Malaya, Sultan Idris Education University, and the National Academy of Arts Culture and Heritage—began to embrace practice-related research methods. However, the research model and methodology are not yet grounded in the program structures and assessment criteria when it comes to this evolving research methodology. As Murphy (2022) observed, practice-related research is still “nascent in Asian contexts” (p. 135), and there are more discourses on the visual arts compared to the performing arts. Thus far, there is no published doctoral thesis on practice-related research, specifically in the study of contemporary dance choreography in Asia.

Many innovative methods of researching creative practices, including contemporary choreography, have been developed in the West. Some of these methods include practice-based research (Candy & Edmonds, 2018), practice-led research (Bacon, 2015; Smith & Dean, 2009), research-led practice (Smith & Dean, 2009), performative research (Haseman, 2006), Practice as Research (Dunbar, 2014; Kramer, 2015; Mead, 2014; Nelson, 2022), and artistic research (Borgdorff, 2011). The definitions of these methods vary, depending on their usage within a specific field of study and the research inquiry, which makes it challenging to differentiate them. As such, all methods of studying creative practice have raised overarching concerns such as their unfixed definitions (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Skains, 2018), the difficulty of unearthing knowledge (Bacon, 2015; Nelson, 2022), and their qualitative and non-quantifiable nature (Bacon, 2015; Gardner, 2012; Nelson, 2022). Whilst the significance of practice-related research in academic study has been recognised, the positionality and definition of its research methodologies remain unclear. In addition, little is known about the implications of practice-related research in studying contemporary choreography due to the challenges in determining what kind of choreographic practice constitutes research and knowledge in an academic setting. These challenges highlight the importance of making inquiries on the appropriateness of research problems, questions, methods, and products in the study of contemporary choreography.

This article reviews six doctoral practice-related research studies presented between 2013 and 2022 by selected practitioner-researchers from pioneering regions. This review aims to demonstrate the practice-related research methodologies employed in the study of contemporary choreography to contribute to the discourse of practice-related research in Asia, a region that has only recently adopted this mode of academic research. This article will first review the definitions of practice-led research, practice-based research, and Practice as Research. This is followed by a review of six choreographic research projects by Nerida Kate Matthaei, Rowena Gander, Naomi Lefebvre Sell, Eleanor Bauer, Paula Kramer, and Kaustavi Sarkar. These practitioner-researchers come from Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.

Finally, a conclusion will be drawn based on the choreographic research reviewed, addressing the extent to which practice-related research methodology should be employed in researching contemporary choreography. Due to the limited number of theses and dissertations published, this review will only examine selected practitioner-researchers who have significantly used practice-led, practice-based, and Practice as Research in researching their contemporary choreography over the past ten years (2013–2022).

## **Practice-Related Research in Creative Practice**

Candy and Edmonds (2018) defined creative practice as both the *process* of creating using necessary techniques belonging to a given field and the innovative *product* born out of a conceived inquiry. According to them, creative practice is

the act of creating something novel with the necessary processes and techniques belonging to a given field, whether art, music, design, engineering or science. In the life of an individual person, it involves conceiving ideas and realizing them in some form as artefacts, musical compositions, designs or performances. Practice that is creative is characterized not only by a focus on creating something new but also by the way that the making process itself leads to a transformation in the ideas—which in turn leads to new works. (p. 64)

The practice-related creative processes and products have been defined as the scientific methodology and the knowledge-containing research output, equivalent to the assessment criteria of a traditional thesis for degree-awarding purposes. There are many rich and innovative methods by which creative practice can constitute or contribute to academic research. These methods can be differentiated, firstly, by their research insights (the construction of new knowledge), such as those that arise in the (a) practice, (b) contextualisation of the practice, (c) contextualisation of the research, or (d) the practice in addition to the contextualisation of the practice. Secondly, the research outcome can be presented and submitted in the form of (a) practice (also known as the creative product, production, artefact, or output), (b) writing (also known as exegesis, complementary writing, thesis, dissertation, report, or dossier), or (c) the combination of the creative practice and writing. Whether the knowledge arises during or after the practice, Nelson (2013) stressed that all methods fall under a category in which “knowing-doing [the practical knowledge of know-how] is inherent in the practice and practice is at the heart of the inquiry and evidences it, whatever term is used” (p. 8).

Among the many innovative methods in researching creative practices are practice-led research, practice-based research, and Practice as Research, which are three practice-related methods utilised in the study of contemporary choreography. However, like all other practice-related methods, there is no consensus on the definitions of these three methods due to the variations in fields, disciplines, academic levels, and viewpoints. This ambiguity has increased the challenges faced by emerging practitioner-researchers who embark on practice-related research—something authors have observed in the undergraduate and postgraduate students who were and are undergoing practice-related research in dance performance and choreography at Universiti Malaya. Therefore, in this

article, authors attempt to define the fundamental features of the different methods in order to offer a more precise methodological direction and implementational potentiality, in addition to fostering the development of practice-related research (by introducing this non-traditional research paradigm) in developing countries such as Malaysia, among others.

### *Practice-led Research*

Practice-led research is a mode of research where creative practice can generate new knowledge for that creative practice. Smith and Dean (2009) defined creative practice as “the training and specialized knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art” (p. 5). Practice-led research aims to advance the know-how about and within the creative practice (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Skains, 2018) by contextualising its principles, models, frameworks, and guidelines (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). Regarding methodology, Skains emphasised that the creative process is an integral part of the research; however, the research outcome can be presented and submitted in writing without the creative practice. Compared to other forms of practice-related research, the primary feature of practice-led research is that creating and submitting a final creative work as a substantial research outcome is not a prerequisite. Having said that, the creative processes constitute the essential process of establishing new knowledge, and the research insights are revealed through the contextualisation of the practice. Although the submission of a creative work is not mandatory, Candy and Edmonds added that documentation of the practice could be included to support the post-textual analysis when necessary.

### *Practice-based Research*

In contrast, creative practice is mandatory and forms the basis of the contribution to knowledge in practice-based research (Candy & Edmonds, 2018; Skains, 2018). Unlike practice-led research, the research outcomes of practice-based research must be presented as a combination of creative practice and writing. Although research originality may be demonstrated through the creative practice, “a full understanding [of the research] can only be achieved through the cohesive presentation of the creative artefact [creative practice] and the critical exegesis [writing]” (Skains, 2018, p. 86). Candy and Edmonds elaborated that, as the research insights cannot be self-evident in the creative practice, incorporating a critical reflection significantly fulfils the academic research criteria of knowledge dissemination through textual analysis, besides evidencing the research insights. In practice-based research, the creative process is where the research questions arise and are answered. Like practice-led research, the aim of practice-based research is to shed light on and enhance the creative practice.

### *Practice as Research (PaR)*

The fundamental concepts of practice-based research and Practice as Research are similar in their submitting of creative practice and writing. As Nelson (2013) defined, Practice as Research “involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice . . . is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry” (pp. 8-9). Nelson emphasised creative practice as the centre of the

research inquiry and the substantial evidence demonstrating practical knowledge because this cannot be achieved through thesis writing alone. In addition, Practice as Research is the only method that possibly permits the submission of creative practice as the sole research outcome. However, Nelson pointed out that this type of submission is rare. He shared the same concerns with Candy and Edmonds on the issues of self-evidence, knowledge dissemination of the practice, and meeting the standard requirement of having a written analysis. Nelson recognised the significance of the practice as a mode of research but maintained that complementary writing is still required to evidence new insights with the support of a conventional research introduction, literature review, and conceptual framework. More precisely, Nelson's PaR model emphasises the requirement of having three modes of evidence to reflect the multimodal nature of research inquiries in creative practices: a product (the creative output of the practice), documentation of the process, and the complementary writing (a written account with the support of a theoretical and conceptual framework). Therefore, Nelson's Practice as Research combines the strengths of having creative practice as the research outcome, documentation as the supporting data, and critical writing as the contextualisation of the practice.

As the literature on these methodological definitions has demonstrated, creative practice plays a significant role in practice-related research by generating research insights and evidence as the research outcome. Therefore, from a research perspective, the research questions of practice-related research must and can only be answered through creative practice for it to constitute practice-related research. Table 1 offers an overview of the three practice-related research methods reviewed: practice-led, practice-based, and Practice as Research. The research insights of these three methods can be demonstrated through the creative practice or be generated by contextualising the practice. The critical features of practice-led research include the submission of writing but not necessarily the submission of performative practice as the research outcome. Incidentally, practice-based research and Practice as Research have similar insights and outcomes; therefore, the distinction between the two methods is subtle. The only distinct feature of Practice as Research is that it is possible to submit a product of the creative practice without any writing or with minimum writing. As Nelson proposed, the practice should play a substantial role as the evidence in Practice as Research, constituting a minimum of fifty per cent (another fifty may go to writing). Otherwise, extensive writing that overshadows the practice would indicate that the research is practice-based.

Practice-related Research	Research Insights	Research Outcome
Practice-led Research	Contextualisation of the practice	Writing *Optional: documentation of the practice
Practice-based Research	Creative practice and the contextualisation of the practice	Practice and Writing
Practice as Research	Creative practice and the contextualisation of the practice	Practice and Writing *Optional: submit only the practice

Table 1. Research insights and outcomes of three practice-related research methods (Table by author)

When practice-related research is situated in the conventions of academic research, the definitions of practice-led research, practice-based research, and Practice as Research reflect the fundamental research criteria of practice-related research: (a) the research inquiry concerns the practice, (b) the research problem and the generation of new knowledge necessitate practical processes, (c) there is contribution to the knowledge of know-how regarding the creative practice, and (d) the established knowledge can be shared with a broader community through formalised procedures and formats. To evidence the various modes of knowledge within practice-related research, a combination of methods derived from its capability to observe and analyse practice are utilised (Jones, 2003; Kershaw et al., 2009; Nelson, 2013; Skains, 2018). By incorporating practice-related research from pioneering university departments, the following review analyses how the chosen research employs practice-led research, practice-based research, and Practice as Research in contemporary choreography. The definitions, research insights, methods, and outcomes serve as a framework for reviewing the six practitioner-researchers. The doctoral research in contemporary choreography reviewed here covers the fields and practices of rerouting strategies in choreography, meditation, somatic practices, dancing-writing, contemporary pole dance, outdoor dance, and Odissi.

## **Practice-Related Research in Contemporary Choreography**

### *Practice-led Research: Nerida Kate Matthaei and Rowena Gander*

As an independent dance practitioner, Matthaei (2018) embarked on her practice-led doctoral research as she observed a gap in identifying and documenting processual strategies in terms of developing personal choreographic inventions. Matthaei is a mid-career choreographer who aimed to transcend the unstable, self-supporting nature of working in the independent arts field and her comfort zone in dance creation. She reached a point where she was compelled to generate methods to shift habitual practices and develop a new set of principles in her choreographic practice through this doctoral research. Her primary research inquiry focused on how she could “transform [her] creative processes and drive choreographic innovation” (p. 15). Instead of immediately embarking on the process of creating her choreography, Matthaei initiated the practice-led research with reflexive practices and two creative case studies of renowned choreographers Akram Khan and Raewyn Hill by studying their choreographic approaches and principles. After distilling the choreographic principles drawn from the creative case studies, Matthaei created two solos and two contemporary dance theatre installations, which resulted from experimenting with and testing the new processual strategies for rerouting practice. This research discovered six choreographic strategies to recontextualise a choreographic self: (a) Embodied Reflexivity, (b) Imagined Heritage, (c) Choreographic Cinematic Structures, (d) Choreographic Recontextualization, (e) Choreographing Active Installations, and (f) Instinctual Structures and Micro Experiments. A hybrid methodological framework known as Hybrid Scaffold in Practice, in combination with practice-led research, creative case study, embodied processes, and

reflexive practices, was utilised in this research. Matthaei conducted three reflexive practice methods to facilitate a critical analysis of the creative processes: cyclic states of reflexivity, mirroring states of reflexivity, and embodied reflexivity. The cyclic states of reflexivity involved multiple cycles of concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualisations, and active experimentations. In the mirroring states of reflexivity, Matthaei used a mind map to detail the choreographic developments and examine the contradiction between her vision and actual practice. Improvisation was the embodied practice employed to “reflect upon and access the researched knowledge inside physical manifestations of dance language” (p. 100). Visual and video documentation of the creative process and unlisted video documentation links of the four contemporary choreographies were included to support the written thesis.

In Gander’s (2022) doctoral research, she aimed to redefine objectification, empowerment, and agency in erotic dance through three contemporary performance projects. This research focused on autoethnographic solo choreographies using either the pole or thigh-high heels as the choreographic object. By choreographing with these objects, she questioned the stereotyped associations of erotic dance with eroticism and the male gaze. This practice-led research placed equal emphasis on both creative practice and writing with a ratio of fifty-fifty (50:50). Drawing upon Gander’s past profession as an erotic dancer, the three performance projects constituted her critical reflection on female dancing with the pole and heels while feeling empowered rather than objectified. In this research, she asked, “in what ways have I [Gander] used stigmatised objects, including high heels and the pole, in my solo choreographic process” and “what steps have I taken to curate and maintain a sense of agency in my movement process” (p. 16). This research contributes to contemporary choreography by proposing a Creative and Reflective Model for navigating autobiographical objects in solo performance to achieve agency. This model comprises five frameworks: (a) autobiography of the performer and choice to work with the object, (b) object biography via literature search, (c) object (auto) biography and creative use of the object, (d) audience gaze, and (e) achieving agency. As Gander argued, this model,

demonstrates specifically how I have blended elements of my autobiography with that of the biography of the objects to find creative ways of working with the objects that resulted in a heightened sense of knowledge and agency for me as the performer. (p. 7).

In the methodology, Gander combined practice-led research with an autoethnography study. Data was collected through visual and video documentation, journal entries, peer review, and audience review. The choreographic approaches utilised in this solo creation are autobiographical narrative and reflective practice. At the end of the thesis, unlisted video documentation links, survey questions, audience feedback, and journal entries are attached as supporting documentation.

After reflecting on their past creative practice, Matthaei and Gander conducted their practice-led doctoral research to generate new knowledge in contemporary choreography. They advanced their know-how in contemporary choreography by contextualising the choreographic models and strategies in their creative practices.

Matthaei discovered six choreographic processes that shift habitual practices and stimulate choreographic innovation, while Gander distilled five frameworks to navigate autobiographical objects and achieve agency. In their research, the written accounts reflect the primary characteristic of practice-led research, where creative practice can be contextualised, and the research insights can be articulated in the written form to evidence new knowledge. Matthaei and Gander utilised a hybrid methodology in their research designs: Gander incorporated autoethnography, while Matthaei included creative case studies besides embodied processes and reflexive practices. Matthaei demonstrated the use of creative case studies as a form of performance review (as opposed to a literature review in a conventional study) to study existing choreographic strategies that catalysed her research. In accordance with the general characteristics of practice-led research, the creation and submission of creative products are not mandatory components. However, Matthaei and Gander created a series of choreographies and submitted them to evidence new insights derived from their creative practices. Matthaei's and Gander's practice-led research reflects the positionality of the creative process as an integral part of practice-led research, as Skains (2018) stated.

#### *Practice-based Research: Naomi Lefebvre Sell and Eleanor Bauer*

The effectiveness of meditation and somatic approaches in enhancing the choreographers' creativity and the dancers' performing body was the central inquiry of Sell's (2013) doctoral research. Sell argued that meditation principles and practices supported "the dancer and choreographer in a dialogue with self: to engage with the phenomenal body and the lived experience itself" (Sell, 2013, p. 39). Sell's research was initiated by the research questions: "how the integration of a meditative practice can influence and enhance a dance-making process?", "what does embodiment mean in this [integration] context?", "can [a] creative environment be established by incorporating the principles and practices gained from meditation?", and "can a method of analysis then be developed to allow the results of the practice-based research to be sympathetically transformed into written form?" The research findings demonstrated that a process of "letting go" stimulated innovative ideas from the dancers and choreographers in generating choreographic materials. Instead of submitting the creative work for examination, the making of the contemporary choreography was designed to be a creative process whereby data was generated for critical analysis. The choreography documentation is attached to the thesis in DVD form. Post-positivist perspectives and action research principles directed the practice-based research methodological framework of Sell's research. The rehearsal of the new creation, the meditation sessions conducted by a yoga and meditation teacher, the observation and video documentation of the rehearsal processes, the interviews with the dancers, and the journal writing of the dancers and practitioner-researcher were all methods constructed for this research. Based on Ely's analytical model, the data analysis process was supported by the triangulation of interviews, observation, and the contextualisation of the creative practice. Fundamentally, Sell concluded that although her research was practice-based, it was also combined with practice-led research: the creation of choreography was the practice-based dimension, and the application of meditation practice to the creation process, which led to new insights, was the practice-led dimension.

Bauer (2022) was interested in investigating the relationship between dancing-thinking (thinking through dance) and writing-thinking (thinking through writing) by exploring the different thought processes, notions, and perceptions relating to the media-specificity of thought in dancing and writing. Questioning the conventional hierarchies of the kinaesthetic sensoriality of the dancing body and the intellectuality of the written word, Bauer asked three fundamental questions in her doctoral research: (a) “how does dance thinks?”, (b) “how dance writes?” and (c) “how a (re)considered relationship between dancing and writing might inform choreographic practice?” (p. 1). Positioning her research as practice-based artistic research, Bauer defined dancing thinking and contextualised procedures for dancing writing and invited audiences to examine the intertwined relations between dancing thinking critically and writing thinking through her multifaceted explorations. In the preliminary fieldwork, she produced a video of a harmonica vocoder which interpreted a lecture and presented a devised group choreography with a performance score. Submitted as part of the creative practice, the outcomes of the pre-fieldwork fed back into the creation of three solos and three group choreographies, an edited video consisting of research notes, and a film based on the last group choreography. In addition, Bauer engaged dance practitioners and professionals in her research as collaborators for the group choreographies, as interviewees who shared their thinking through dance, and as instructors who led theoretical and practical sessions of an open course that examined dance as a medium of thought. The complexity of the research is publicly presented through two web-based databases. The written components of the study are published under the Stockholm University of the Arts website, which comprises a guide to submission materials, a doctoral project summary, two books of research notes, a book of quotes, and two collective dancing-writing pods. The complete submission is publicly available on the Research Catalogue website, which includes video documentation of all pre-fieldwork and live performances, links to podcasts, edited films, performance scores, and scripts. Thus, Bauer’s research on “choreo|graphy” combines two modes of practice-related research (practice-based and artistic research) as the main methodology.

Both Sell and Bauer demonstrated the possibility of combining two modes of practice-related research in their research, thus sophisticating the identification of the practice-related research methods involved. With both centred on practice-based research, Bauer also employed artistic research, whereas Sell also employed practice-led research. In keeping with the distinctive feature of practice-based research, Bauer’s research submitted choreographies for examination in which the research originality is demonstrated. In contrast, Sell’s submission inclines towards practice-led research as she only submitted the choreography as attached documentation, while the contribution of knowledge is revealed in the thesis. As Sell explained, “the making of the dance work . . . is a necessary result of the rehearsal process . . . [and] is acknowledged as a terminal point of the rehearsal process which ‘is’ the data I [Sell] am generating and reflecting on” (p. 9).

On the other hand, Bauer’s research is a classic example of how creative practice can be the basis of a contribution to knowledge, therefore becoming one of the main components of degree-awarding assessment. Bauer established her multimodal inquiries by expanding the submitted documentation with different modes of creative practice (live

performances, podcasts, films, performance scores, and scripts) and various types of written accounts (rather than a single thesis). Bauer's and Sell's practice-based research projects enhance the art of contemporary choreography through a critical investigation of dancing-writing (as a choreographic method) and the impact of meditation practice (as an intervention practice), respectively.

*Practice as Research: Paula Kramer and Kaustavi Sarkar*

According to Kramer (2015), her doctoral research on the agency and confederations of outdoor dance practices was initiated due to the general lack of awareness regarding the potentiality of contemporary outdoor dance practices in affecting practitioners' perceptions of choreography and lived experiences. Dancing in nature has a traditional association with becoming one with nature, reflecting the separation of humans and nature that needs to be overcome. Nevertheless, Kramer considered humans and nature to be "manifold materials situated on the same plane and always already engaged in a variety of confederations" (p. 3). This perception is closely related to the notion of the Amerta Movement, developed by Indonesian movement artist Suprapto Suryodarmo, which served as a practical and theoretical basis for understanding nature as "undivided from everything else" from a "multi-faith orientation of its spiritual undercurrent" (p. 77). Kramer's primary research inquiry attended to materiality in dance. She asked in her research, "how do materials [the interdependency between the dancing bodies and nature] confederate in the work of contemporary outdoor dancers and what are the effects [in the choreographic processes and the ways of living]?" (p. 1). Kramer's findings argued that the attention to the material in outdoor dance practices enhances the dancers' embodied emplacement and permits choreographic exploration. This embodiment examines the materiality of humans and nature without separating them. The choreographic exploration embraces the distinction of all beings and allows the interdependences of humans and nature to build outdoor dance practices. Moreover, the dancers' resonance with the materiality within their corporeality contributes to the embracement of humans and nature in this inter-independence mode. A written thesis, a performance, and documentation of the creative production and processes, such as reflexive booklets alongside visual and audio resources, were submitted to evidence these research findings. This research was framed as practice-as-research (Kramer's preferred term for Practice as Research). Kramer derived research questions and arguments from her choreographic practices, supported by ethnographic and qualitative research methods such as participant observation, fieldnote writing, and interviews. Additionally, two new practice-related research methods were specially designed to capture and present her academic research in contemporary choreographies: movement-based writing and research installations.

Kaustavi Sarkar's (2017) doctoral research aimed to deconstruct Odissi, a form of eastern Indian classical dance, due to the marginalisation of Maharis, or temple dancers, in this dance style. The Mahari—who is married to Jagannath, the Hindu male God who predominates in Odissi—is believed to be side-lined (because of her sexual life with other elites besides Jagannath) despite the appropriation of her ritualistic dancing in the early development of Odissi. As an Odissi dancer, Sarkar inquired about the "unacknowledged status of the Mahari as a dancer by establishing embodied linkages between my [Sarkar's] practice and that of my ancestral practitioners" (p. 8). In Sarkar's

research, the reimagination of Mahari ritual performance served as an intervention exercise that embodies contemporary Odissi practice. Sarkar used this intervention exercise to uncover the potentiality of the Mahari. Her attempt to reimagine Mahari was a way to contest the hierarchical prioritisation of Jagannath, which has marginalised the contribution of Mahari in Odissi. Hence, she imagined the appropriation of Mahari's practice and sexuality in contemporary Odissi. As Sarkar claimed, her research enlivens "ever-elusive Mahari in her aesthetic, social, sexual, and historical complexity, and reorienting Odissi's patriarchal centre occupied by Jagannath" (p. iii). To summon the vitality of Mahari, Sarkar created two choreographies and a series of three-dimensional animation sequences: (a) the solo choreography reimagines Mahari ritualistic performance, (b) the group choreography constructs the dance movements from sculptures of Alasa-Kanya (a female sculptural figure mythically deemed to be the ancestor of the historical Mahari) on the temple walls, and (c) the animation presents a virtual Mahari using motion capture and 3D technology in collaboration with an animator. She incorporated the Creative Articulations Process (a dance improvisation method devised by dance practitioner-researcher Vida Midgelow) to deconstruct her traditional practice in Odissi and stimulate the shaping of the reimagined Mahari through her dancing body. These creative practices are submitted and presented in an online compendium under the Ohio State University website to accompany the dissertation chapters. Visual and audio documentation of the creative processes, outcomes, and journal entries, including reflections and rehearsal notes, are attached to support the written dissertation and choreographic practices. Centred on Nelson's notion of Practice as Research, Sarkar's research comprises the submission of a product, documentation of the process, and complementary writing.

When Kramer's and Sarkar's doctoral research is aligned with the Practice as Research framework, they can demonstrate their choreographies' substantial role as significant evidence of their research inquiry into dance practices. The primary public presentation of Kramer's research was outdoor performances, while Sarkar created two live performances and a series of animated choreographies in video format. Besides these creative products, documentation and writing are also critical components of submitting a Practice as Research study in both cases. In addition, Sarkar included documentation in the form of an online presentation on a webpage, supported by her university's web design. The exact mode of online presentation and documentation of research can be seen in Bauer's practice-based research. This online presentation mode makes practice-related research more visible and contributes to the knowledge dissemination of academic research with the support of information technology. In Kramer's research, she developed two new practice-related research methods and highlighted the need to design research-specific methods to present multimodal research inquiries in creative practice. These multimodal research inquiries are also reflected in Sarkar's research, where each choreography attends to an investigation: reimagining and bringing the Mahari to life through live performance and virtual adaptations, plus constructing movements by studying temple sculptures. In the end, the various choreographic outcomes support Sarkar's primary research inquiry as a complete whole.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This textual review aims to analyse the implications of practice-related research in contemporary choreography in six doctoral research projects between 2013 and 2022, focusing on practice-led research, practice-based research, and Practice as Research. These research projects are supported by the established methodological frameworks of the three practice-related research methods. The review of six practitioner-researchers from the four selected pioneering regions (the universities of the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, and Sweden) revealed the primary features of the methods and demonstrated the potentiality for multimodal inquiry. In practice-related research, researchers are the practitioners of the field of study, being practitioner-researchers equipped with the necessary techniques for a given field before advancing its know-how through academic investigation. The six practitioner-researchers—Nerida Kate Matthaei, Rowena Gander, Naomi Lefebvre Sell, Eleanor Bauer, Paula Kramer, and Kaustavi Sarkar—discovered their research problems through their dance practices while their choreographic inquiries necessitated going through the dancemaking process in order to generate data and insights. Research questions asked in practice-related research generally start with “how to”, “what strategies”, and “in what ways” to attend the knowledge of know-how. In practice-led research, Matthaei and Gander demonstrated its primary features, which comprised (a) the research findings, such as the choreographic principles, models, frameworks, or guidelines developed from the choreographic practices, and (b) the submission of the documentation of the choreographic practice to support the written thesis. In practice-based research, the choreographic practice must be submitted for examination, such as how Bauer advanced the know-how in dancing-writing and writing-dancing by including live performances. Sell offered an alternative approach to practice-based research by allowing the submission of choreographic practices as a form of documentation because of the integration of practice-led research under the practice-based framework. Finally, in Practice as Research, Kramer and Sarkar presented live performances of their contemporary choreographies as substantial evidence of their doctoral research.

In conclusion, this review examines the academic research on contemporary choreography that utilises practice-led, practice-based, and Practice as Research methods by reviewing six doctoral research conducted by six practitioner-researchers. The potentiality of practice-related research was explored and expanded by the practitioner-researchers through (a) the application of shared practical and qualitative research methods such as embodied processes, reflexive practices, rehearsals, participation, observation, journals, fieldnote writing, interviews, and visual and audio documentation; (b) the integration of a few practice-related methods into one research, such as combining practice-based research with artistic research and practice-led research; (c) the hybridity of methodology where established research methods such as autoethnography and creative case studies were incorporated; (d) the development of research-specific methods such as movement-based writing and research installations; (e) the diversification of documentation modes besides video documentation of the live performances, such as animation, film adaptations, podcasts, performance scores, and scripts; (f) the fragmentation of the written accounts rather than a single thesis; and (g) the broader range

of submission mediums, including theses in hard and soft copies, live and recorded performance viewing, hyperlinks to online resources, and webpage presentation. However, the scope of this review is limited to the six selected practitioner-researchers; therefore, it cannot reflect the expanded field of contemporary choreography and practice-related research. Future research could further examine the implications of practice-related research methods in contemporary choreography by researching practitioner-researchers with diverse styles, choreographic theories, and compositional methods. It could also contribute to a deeper understanding of which methodological frameworks are feasible to determine whether a choreographic practice constitutes research and knowledge in the academic setting.

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