**Describe a project that you worked on with multiple collaborators that left you feeling proud and fulfilled. Discuss your role in the project and explain why this collaboration was successful. Then, describe another collaborative project that left you unsatisfied. Discuss your role in the project and explain why this collaboration frustrated you. Finally, summarize what you learned from each of these experiences and describe the lessons you learned that inspire your future collaborations. (Max 2 pages)**

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Blood dripped down her chin while she grabbed her crewmate’s neck, laughing maliciously. “Cut! That’s a wrap!” yelled our coach and director. Immediately, all 7 performers, myself included, burst into a huge cheer. It was nearing midnight, but our spirits were as high as ever. As we cleaned up and changed out of our costumes, I couldn’t help but think about the laborious process that it took to get there. Over 6 months’ worth of practice went into the final product: a short, 5 minute dance cover video that I had done with my sub collective, Ribelles, of a rising K-pop idol group named Dreamcatcher, but with a few unexpected twists.

We knew in the beginning that we wanted to do better and unlike anything we’ve done before. After listening to Dreamcatcher’s songs, we settled on two that allowed us to showcase our duality - one exuded darkness and the other, poise. Inspired by the eerie aura of their music videos, we were determined to elevate our performance. One of our coaches proposed to infuse an element of storytelling; while playing her song mix, she immersed us in the backstory: “Gaby would enter and spot a doll on the ground. As she played with it, the dark spirits that possessed it, that's you guys, would awaken. She’d sense that something was wrong, but it was too late. The spirits would lunge at her and she'd scream for help, but no one could hear. In the end, we’d see that the spirits have claimed her, signified by her last laugh, blood trickling down her mouth.” We shrieked with excitement. We had never incorporated storytelling in our performances, and this was the perfect opportunity to do so. To add yet another layer of complexity to the choreography, our coaches, who both had roots in waacking, challenged us further through an original dance break that involved said dance genre.

Stepping into uncharted territory was one thing, but I was also blocked in the center of the dance break and was trusted with a stunt I had never tried. I wasn’t the best with facial expressions and was a newbie to waacking, but I was determined to make it work, and the fact that this project was a massive team effort was all the more reason to push myself to put in my hundred hours. One crucial lesson I learnt that was especially important here was to take a step back, listen, and absorb what my crewmates and coaches were saying because it was easy to fall into my own little bubble and overlook details. Without everyone seeing eye to eye and locking in together, we would not be able to deliver a powerful performance.

For 6 months, we learnt to grab the choreography by its reins and master it with the help of our coaches, who constantly reminded us to lock and flow our bodies accordingly, make sharp movements, and effectively communicate through facial expressions. A mere 1x8 could be repeated again and again to ensure that we were synchronized. It would be foolish, in my opinion, to disregard the fact that one of the reasons this project produced satisfactory results was our chemistry. In our 4 years together, we’ve won and lost competitions, seen each other improve, and most importantly, grown together as a team. The long hours spent working on this project brought us closer and strengthened the desire to deliver our best.

After watching the final cut, I realized that I didn’t care if this video didn’t get a significant number of views or if the audience wasn’t fond of it. With this project, we all left our comfort zones and challenged ourselves artistically in ways we hadn’t done before. I myself struggled with facial expressions a lot as they weren’t my forté, but by the time we shot this I truly felt that I had delivered on that end. I had never seen me, personally, and us as a group, perform that way. I went in there, poured my heart and soul into it to truly deliver Ribelles’ crème de la crème of performances, and left feeling absolutely content. The same could not be said for this next project.

**Then, describe another collaborative project that left you unsatisfied. Discuss your role in the project and explain why this collaboration frustrated you.**

Similar to the previous project, this was a K-pop dance cover video, this time of a group called Twice, and I was a performer; however, unlike the previous project, this felt like making art for clout, not for the sake of making art. Twice had released their song “Fancy” and my main collective, Kindo Project, wanted to ride on its wave of popularity, so a short-term project was established. Its time-sensitive nature meant that we had only 4 practice sessions to get things right. Tackling a complex choreography that involved 9 dancers within that short time span was challenging, and we wanted to knock it out of the park, so I took the initiative to learn some parts ahead of time so as not to burden the team. We could not afford to waste time.

A few days prior to the shoot, we had published a dance cover video of Blackpink, performed in front of one of Jakarta’s major landmarks. To our surprise, the video garnered 300k views in a week and viewers commented that they loved that we performed in public. With this knowledge, we decided to follow in pursuit.

The heat was relentless on the day of the shoot and I just wanted to get it over and done with as soon as possible. The lack of preparation and undesirable shooting conditions made it more difficult to bring my A game to this. Energy was drained at a much faster rate and details were forgotten. I cringed watching the final cut; we looked weak and minor mistakes even made it into the video. Technically speaking, we could have done so much better; spend more time polishing the details and the blocking. Given the poor footage, we had to rely on editing to salvage it, utilizing zooms to cut out awkward bits. At the end of the day, we did incur over 100k views and received positive comments. However, in a way, we were sacrificing integrity for a better response; performing for the sake of higher views rather than to maximize quality.

Frankly, I think I felt demotivated after I realized that the project was born out of the desire for higher views. My intentions didn’t align with that of the project’s and as a result, I didn’t bring my 100% into it, and that’s on me. I did practice on my own outside of the set practice hours but I did that to not disappoint my friends. Don’t get me wrong, I’m really glad the video helped us gain more exposure, but doing it for popularity didn’t sit right with me. Only then did I realize how important it was to assess and reassess my own goals in relation to that of the production’s in order to truly be present and bring my entire heart into it. Artistic integrity is important but sometimes compromise must be made in order to grow.

**Finally, summarize what you learned from each of these experiences and describe the lessons you learned that inspire your future collaborations.**

These two experiences were major eye openers in terms of how I would approach subsequent collaborations and continued my artistic career. The latter project planted the lesson that it was important to always bring 120% to every project no matter how big or small in order to produce successful and satisfactory results. The former drove this message home and reminded me that a crucial aspect in this process is to meet in the middle and see eye to eye with other collaborators to achieve said goal.

The significance of communication was not lost on me either; as a team member, it became apparent that taking initiative and being the first to voice any concerns or issues is invaluable. A substantial final product cannot come about without an environment that prioritizes listening and cultivates clear lines of communication amongst collaborators. One instance since those two projects was a visual concept video I’d done with my friends, wherein our coach-director choreographed an original piece and integrated visual elements into the video. These aforementioned lessons have been reminders that ring constantly in the back of my head with each project I take on.