

Institution: University of Chichester		
Unit of Assessment: 4 (Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience)		
Title of case study: Dancing Well: Improving Psychological Wellbeing and Creativity in the Performing Arts		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2018-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Lucie Clements	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer in Psychology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: September 2018-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Mental health concerns are common among dancers – a problem compounded by often lacklustre professional support provisions and a lack of psychological understanding in dance pedagogy. Having conducted original research into how supportive dancing environments can bolster dancers' mental health and creativity, Lucie Clements improved understanding of psychological wellbeing in the sector, reshaping teachers' and institutions' approaches to student support, and enhancing dancers' abilities to manage challenging situations – especially COVID-19 lockdowns. This was achieved through a wide-ranging programme of workshops, staff development and innovative consultancy work for 19 dance and performing arts schools and companies, and a series of open sessions for freelance dancers reaching over 500 performers around the world.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Mental health problems are common among dancers – a problem compounded by often lacklustre professional support provisions and a lack of psychological understanding in dance pedagogy. While reliable figures are difficult conclusively to establish, some recent analysis has suggested that 75% of dancers suffered with a mental health problem between 2013 and 2018 (Dance Magazine, 2018). In 2020, the media also highlighted how dance institutions throughout Europe were abusing their power and using punishment and unhealthy practices to regulate dance training (e.g., here and here). Lucie Clements' research explores the relationships between creativity, individuality and wellbeing in professional and training dancers, highlighting the psychological impacts of traditional dance pedagogy, where norms and behaviours have often brought these qualities into unnecessary conflict.</p> <p>It is well known that dancers spend hours honing technical skills. What is perhaps less appreciated, however, is that many dance institutions, including the Royal Ballet School and Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, now cite creativity alongside technical skill as a pedagogical objective. Ever more, professional dancers are expected to work alongside choreographers and to contribute creatively towards the development of new choreographic work. But while some scholarship has considered the application of psychology for technical development in dance, very little has explored the significance of creativity. Clements' research addresses this scholarly lacuna. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, she has demonstrated how dance teachers identify and develop creativity, as well as how a narrow pedagogical focus on training refined finite technical dance skills appears to be starkly at odds with the psychological skills needed for creativity.</p>		

A key finding is that dance teachers perceive creativity in dancers who are confident and open to new experiences (**R1**), which creates a discord with evidence that many dancers report low levels of self-esteem. While in contemporary dance training dance teachers heavily emphasise the creative process – understanding how to generate and explore ideas, focussing on developing individual artistic voices and promoting a sense of self (**R1**; **R4**) – in ballet, by contrast, there has been little effort intentionally to train these skills, leading dancers to perceive that their individuality, and therefore their creativity, is thwarted. As Clements has shown, world class ballet dancers reported a hierarchical and rigid training environment which challenged their wellbeing and stifled their creativity (**R2**). Another key finding is that females in the research, in particular, reported acts of verbal punishment, critique and loss of individual identity, which stemmed from the traditional and hierarchical norms that exist in dance pedagogy (**R2**).

These starkly distinct pedagogical approaches to creativity nurture arise out of deeply ingrained and complex historical and contextual factors. Ballet training is steeped in tradition and the honing of finite skills, which may explain the high prevalence of perfectionistic tendencies among its community (**R3**). As Clements' research has shown, this emphasis is at odds with the cognitive processes of flexible thinking and the generation, exploration and selection of ideas which underlies creative thought. However, ballet dancers' individual intrinsic motivation, coupled with rare moments of autonomy support and opportunities, as well as exposure to a variety of creative arts, enabled them to thrive creatively in an otherwise hierarchical, authoritarian dance environment (**R2**). In addition, Clements' research has shown that this same supportive teaching style can prevent burnout in perfectionistic dancers (**R3**), thus indicating the important role of the teacher in promoting creativity and wellbeing in dancers (**R2**; **R3**).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1: Clements, L & Redding. (2019). Creativity in Higher Education Contemporary Dance, *Journal of Dance Education*. DOI: 10.1080/15290824.2019.1572155.

R2: Clements, L. & Nordin-Bates. (2020). Inspired or Inhibited? Choreographers' views on how classical ballet training shaped their creativity. *Journal of Dance Education*. ISSN 1529-0824.

R3: Jowett, G. E., Hill, A. P., Curran, T., Hall, H. K., & Clements, L. (2020). Perfectionism, burnout, and engagement in dance: The moderating role of autonomy support. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*. ISSN 2157-3905.

R4: May, J., Redding, E., Whatley, S., Łuczniak, K., Clements, L., Weber, R., ... & Reed, S. (2020). Enhancing creativity by training metacognitive skills in mental imagery. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 38. ISSN 1871-1871.

All outputs available on request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Between 2018 and 2020, Clements delivered knowledge exchange and staff development workshops to 57 teachers across Vocational Ballet, Musical Theatre and Performing Arts Schools in the UK, Sweden, and India (**C1**, **C2**, **C3**). The workshops drew on findings from **R1**, **R2** and, in particular, **R3** to deliver positive changes to dance environments that reinforced the autonomy and wellbeing of performers. These included refinements to verbal interactions (e.g., understanding the consequences of terminology such as 'practice makes perfect'), eliminating shaming behaviours, and encouraging dancers actively to question and reflect on learning processes.

The workshops transformed pedagogical understanding of the importance of psychology in dance training among these participants (e.g., **C9**) – particularly concerning the role of the teacher in supporting student autonomy. One workshop at Momentum Performing Arts Academy lead to (1) ongoing staff consultancy, (2) changes in the institutions' approach to audition

processes, (3) changes to the curriculum, including an embedded performance psychology module and daily mindfulness journaling (C4). In addition to this work, Clements has raised the profile of dance psychology internationally, having been approached by a journalist from the *Daily Mail* (C5), contributed to 5 dancing podcasts from the UK, US and Canada (C6), and catalysed discussions of dance psychology in various dance media outlets (C7).

Working with 'Far from the Norm', an Olivier Award-winning Hip-Hop Theatre Collective, Clements used her findings on dancer autonomy and creativity (R2) to transform the group's approach to mental wellbeing, responding to a concern that the work was 'very demanding on the dancers psychologically'. The dancers had only previously had support from a psychologist once. Following the first workshop, the Creative Producer stated that 'The dancers were all in agreement that we need to keep the psychological discussion a consistent throughline during the process'. While the group's 2020 (March-August) tour was cancelled due to COVID-19, its professional practice was enhanced through ongoing psychological consultancy with Clements over that period. One artist from the group stated that this helped them to 'optimise my mental wellbeing and understand situations better [...] which then allows me to optimally perform' (C2).

Between 2018 and 2021, Clements delivered research-driven workshops to 840 dancers in the UK and USA (C2). A wealth of qualitative feedback from these events attested to profound improvements in participants' wellbeing and confidence as a result of the specific approaches taken in these sessions. Participants in a 6-week workshop series noted that their self-esteem had benefitted as a result (e.g.): 'I learnt that even though being a dancer is a huge part of my identity, it is not all that I am'; '[Clements]' support and guidance has made me stronger psychologically.' Other comments attested to improvements in participants' performance anxiety levels, noting that (e.g.) 'I turned a day I was dreading into a day I thoroughly enjoyed and its all thanks to you' (C2).

A large proportion of Clements' workshops were designed specifically to support out-of-work dancers during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. They included sessions on 'Managing Being Away from Dance' (Elmhurst Ballet Company), 'Using Mindfulness to Manage COVID-19 Anxiety' (One Dance UK) and 'Returning to Dance After Lockdown' (for freelance dancers in the UK and Montclair State University, USA). They also included workshop series at the Central School of Ballet and London Contemporary Dance School. One of the workshops, delivered to Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, contributed towards a change in the institution's Ballet and Contemporary Dance BA curriculum, alongside the introduction of psychological wellbeing into its lecturing provisions (C8).

Beyond academia, Clements has used social media to disseminate her research worldwide to over 7,000 individuals, with 500 international attendees joining lectures she delivered online during the COVID-19 pandemic (in March and April 2020). These focussed on developing 'intrinsic motivation' while unable physically to perform (R2). Feedback was sent from USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Chile, Norway, Costa Rica, Mexico and India from vocational dance students, furloughed professional dancers, freelance dancers and dance teachers (C2). Many deplored the lack of open discussion about dancers' mental health, especially during COVID-19, while attesting to the new knowledge they had gained. The lectures helped attendees 'to navigate dance in a healthy way', with some also noting that they had changed their dance pedagogy (e.g., 'I gained valuable knowledge about motivation which I am now using when I teach') – including in online settings (e.g., 'I've used this to inform my teaching methods for my ballet classes online in a way that supports my students'). Others commented on the value of this international access to Clements' expertise: 'It's even more insightful for me, because in Costa Rica material about dance psychology is non-existent.' Similar feedback was given by Pia Sutaria, a well-known ballet and dance teacher in India (C9).

Clements was nominated at the 2019 One Dance UK Awards for their annual Inspirational Lecturer and Applied Dance Scientist award. In 2020, in recognition of her support of dancers in lockdown, she reached the 3-person shortlist for the Applied Dance Scientist Award.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

C1: Testimonial statements from 5 workshop participants in India (30 May 2020).

C2: Testimonial statements from workshop participants, internationally (including Elizabeth Weldon, ballerina, retired from Ballet West, Salt Lake City, USA).

C3: Testimonial statement from Madelaine Daneberg, Dance Lecturer at Dans och Cirkushögskolan, Sweden (June 2018).

C4: Testimonial statement from Ben Darmanin, Artistic Director, Momentum Performing Arts Academy (12 April 2020).

C5: Libby Galvin, 'You really should be dancing', *Daily Mail* (9 August 2020):
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-8567773/Stuck-rut-Love-life-stagnating-Need-health-boost-really-dancing.html>.

C6: Links to various podcasts:

- The Dance Podcast – Episode 154: 'Lucie Clements. The Dance Psychologist' (September 2020):
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4u900eYtL8RdY2hwQi4lvz?si=SDLPVsUJRbKBErbo3f3IQ>.
- SciDance Podcast – Season 1, Episode 15: 'Creativity in Dance with Dr Lucie Clements' (September 2020):
https://open.spotify.com/episode/0lZeJO9OAXmhHCn70bbvPy?si=hYMBcqrQLqO0mPrCw_M4w.
- Performer Talks – Episode 14: 'An Interview with Dr Lucie Clements' (September 2020):
https://open.spotify.com/episode/0lZeJO9OAXmhHCn70bbvPy?si=hYMBcqrQLqO0mPrCw_M4w.
- Red Lips & High Kicks – Season 2, Episode 17: 'A Deep Dive into Dance & Mental Health with Dr Lucie Clements' (November 2020):
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7ztmbGtLu5M4OPWtrT1sxA?si=YDhvNp7zSY2X62MeaMs8jA>.
- SciDance Podcast – Season 1, Episode 23: 'Performance Anxiety in Dance with Dr Lucie Clements' (November 2020):
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7ztmbGtLu5M4OPWtrT1sxA?si=YDhvNp7zSY2X62MeaMs8jA>.

C7: Various Dance Media Outlets – Pointe Magazine Spring 2020 issue

- Kathleen McGuire, 'It's OK to Grieve: Coping with the Emotional Toll of Canceled Dance Events' *Dance Spirit* (6 April 2020 – 5 mentions),
<https://www.dancespirit.com/coronavirus-mental-health-2645647585.html>.
- Haley Hilton, 'How Journaling Can Improve Your Dancing—and Help You Cope With Life Right Now', *Dance Magazine* (21 July 2020 – 6 mentions),
<https://www.dancemagazine.com/benefits-of-journaling-2646445580.html>.

C8: Testimonial statement from from Phaedra Petsilas, Head of Studies at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance (25 March 2020).

C9: Testimonial statement from from Pia Sutaria, Ballerina and Dance Teacher, India (10 April 2020).