

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A Golden Thread: Holding Up Identity in a Professional Dancers' Career Transition**

Professional dancers face unique transition challenges, which diverge significantly from professionals in other arts disciplines and other physically demanding fields (Levine, 2004). This paper considered the psychological concept of 'identity' in relation to a professional dancers' career transition. Limitations of the chosen topic are acknowledged from the outset; one of the aims of the paper being to highlight the lack of specific literature on the topic. This serves to justify a philosophical approach, a self-reflective perspective and the inclusion of original research; the latter extrapolating data from a semi-structured interview conducted with a performance psychologist experienced in this field.

Links are made to sports research where deemed appropriate, drawing parallels and identifying conflicts between the existing research and its application to dance. Links to related fields of dance psychology such as 'injury' (Wainwright & Turner, 2003; 2004; 2005) and current research on 'passion' (Walker, 2011) are recognized.

The body of discussion is driven through the construct of 'loss', which is framed through a trilogy structure relating to the body, mind and spirit. An overview of relevant psycho-sociological ideas are introduced including the 'physiology of expression', 'role play', 'physical', 'artistic' and 'symbolic capital' and 'spiritual sequelae', all of which warrant deeper examination as distinct sub-topics.

Initial findings suggest that effective preparation for career transition may be closely aligned with emerging thinking about what constitutes effective preparation for a performing career (Levine, 2004).

As a highly under researched area, career termination models from sports are yet to be addressed through the development of a dance specific model, neither has a specific Identity Measurement Scale been developed for considering precursors to transitional sequelae relative to approaches within current dance training.

Identity is recognized and encouraged as an area for future dance science research.

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