

Laidlaw Scholarship Research Project Report

A reflective report is required after each period of research (by 20th September).

This should be supplied as a Word document. Interesting photographs directly related to your research project or scholarship are welcomed and should be inserted into the body of the word document, not supplied separately.

There are six questions for you to complete. You are expected to write a detailed and thorough report; each section should be around 200-300 words.

Please note: This is NOT a technical research report. Scientific reports with a covering note cannot be accepted.

This report will need to be signed off by both you and your supervisor before submission.

If you have any problems or queries please contact the Laidlaw Scholarship Administrator, laidlaw@leeds.ac.uk.

Name:	Hugo Knowles
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Title of Scholarship Project:	Parkour, Performance and Play

Please describe the research you have conducted this period

The research I have conducted this period can be broken down into three categories. The first, the beginning of a 'Parkour, Performance and Play' annotated bibliography; the second, the completion of an ethical approval application form to be submitted to Faculty Research Ethics Committee to enable me to conduct face-to-face interviews with parkour practitioners; the third, engagement with key research topics through personal parkour practice and media consumption of both parkour videos and live performance.

I firstly began the creation of an annotated bibliography by searching the university's library catalogue for example annotated bibliographies. I then created a template and began inserting several key academic sources, mostly on the topic of parkour. However, I was advised by my supervisor to instead make several reading lists around four key topics: parkour, performer training, play and urbanism. This was because my research would not just cover parkour as a single topic but would draw data from multiple topics. These topics were chosen specifically because they form the bridge between parkour and performance; both parkour and performance use play as a method of devising, and both can seek to re-appropriate urban spaces. Also, parkour is all about playing in urban spaces and can become a performance in and of itself through this.

I then selected key texts from each list and included them in my bibliography. I read each text in full, digested the material, and summarised my findings in the annotated bibliography. I then made notes on the connections between texts.

I then moved my focus to completing an application for ethical approval to interview parkour practitioners throughout the next year. I discussed research ethics and their importance with my supervisor, before making a start on my application form. I also used the templates available on the university website to create an information sheet and a consent form for participants. At the time of writing (6/9/20) I have not yet submitted the application as I have several edits to make following feedback from my supervisor.

Finally, I have continued to engage with the research topics throughout the research period, paying particular attention to the practice-based elements of the project. I have kept up with my regular parkour practice, have consumed

parkour-related video content (Sole Destroyer by the Motus Projects is an especially stand-out piece), and have watched live theatre (Lungs, livestreamed from the Old Vic). This is important as practice-based research forms the majority of my research enquiry and keeping up to date with what is happening in both the parkour community and the arts world is a key part of that. Watching both parkour and performance content is important as the parkour element of my project will potentially impact performance, specifically performer training.

How is the research work you have been undertaking impactful or important?

The research work I have been undertaking is important as no research currently exists in this field. Whilst planning my project I identified a clear gap in current research around parkour and performance, and plan to fill it.

Secondly, as some of my research touches upon the topic of the repurposing of urban spaces it may be valuable post-coronavirus. Many people have transitioned from working in traditional urban workspaces (eg. an office block) to working from home, and it is my understanding that working from home is expected to continue beyond the duration of the pandemic. This will leave many urban spaces disused, and my research suggests some alternative uses for these spaces.

My research is also impactful as it will affect multiple disciplines; these include sport, performance, subcultural studies, urbanism, and play theory. Specifically, the training methodologies parkour utilises will likely have use within performer training, and the appropriation urban of space for play impacts both urbanism and play theory as it will open new avenues for the understanding of play within urban spaces.

What impact has conducting research had on your degree course and university experience?

I have not yet been able to see the impact conducting research has had on my degree course and university experience due to the coronavirus pandemic.

However, I expect that the academic sources I have collected for my reading lists will be useful in future assessments & my dissertation. I hope to continue to explore the relationship between parkour and performance disciplines in my dissertation and expect to build on the work I have done as part of this scholarship.

Learning how to approach a research project (eg. creating reading lists, identifying key themes, filling in ethical approval applications) will help me in the future too. I now have a better understanding of what practice-based

research looks like in my discipline and know how to conduct a study independently. I expect this will also help with my dissertation.

What leadership skills do you believe you have gained from the research period? (Please refer to the university's Leadership Excellence Behaviours for guidance if necessary)

I believe I have gained several leadership skills from the research period, though there are five that particularly stand out.

The first, time management – keeping to deadlines, fitting the project into the 6-week window, and working part-time challenged my time management skills but I was able to quickly adapt. After a discussion with my supervisor we decided to extend the duration of the six-week period, whilst still doing the same amount of work. This made it easier to manage my time.

Second, organisational skills – I had to be organised with my time, as mentioned above, but also with the research data I was collecting. Following advice from my supervisor I created four reading lists to categorise sources relevant to my research. This helped me later as I was able to identify links between sources from different topics.

Next, the ability to work independently – all the work I did during the research period was conducted independently. This ties into the previous two skills as I had to manage my time and organise my work independently too.

Penultimately, critical thinking – after creating my reading lists, I had to find links between different academic sources that would form the backbone of my research project's literature. For example, I would find links between a text about the skills an actor requires and the skills that parkour can help to develop.

Finally, adaptability – I had to adapt my project due to the coronavirus pandemic. I had expected to travel to Denmark this summer to observe parkour, dance and yoga workshops but was unable to. I instead spent this time collecting sources for my reading lists; as this was something that would need doing at some point anyway, it was nice to get it out of the way so that I can focus on more practice-based research next summer.

Please talk about activities you've been involved in to disseminate your research, including but not limited to attending conferences, producing research posters, and promotion of the scholarship

I have been unable to disseminate my research in any of the ways mentioned above due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, I am currently completing two case studies/student profiles for the Access to Leeds scheme and the school of PCI that mention the Laidlaw scholarship. I have also talked about the scholarship with friends & family.

What are your future career or educational plans?

I genuinely don't know. I would consider the idea of postgraduate study but beyond that I am unsure.

If I were to study at postgraduate level, I would be interested in continuing my studies at Leeds and would like to continue to build upon this project.

As for a career, I am unsure – I plan to use the next two years to find out!

Signature of Scholar: *Hugo Knowles* Date: 12/9/2020

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice O'Grady". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'A'.

Signature of Project Leader:

Date: 15/09/20