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Developing professional equality: an analysis of a social movement in the Scottish dance industry

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This article analyses the growth of professional equality in the Scottish dance industry. It defines the growth of professional equality as a social movement driven by a group of core and peripheral individuals and organisations bound together by a shared cause. Through defining professional equality as a social movement, the article analyses the challenges, strategies and contextual factors that enabled the emergence of Scotland as a 'hotspot' for disabled dancers. The data used in this article is an autoethnographic account of professional equality co-produced by the first author (as interrogator) and the second author (as autoethnographer). Using the autoethnographic method allows us to address the development of professional equality 'from within' the movement and to highlight three key factors that drive the movement forward: the genesis of the professional equality movement within the dance industry (rather than outside it); informal networks, which secure information sharing and collective advocacy across the sector; and the institutional characteristics of the industry, in particular the lack of a national disability arts organisation.

Keywords: dance industry, professional equality, social movements, autoethnography

Introduction

In July 2013 the British Council conducted a 'study visit' to Scotland to learn more about how and why Scotland is leading the way in the development of equality in the performing arts. The visit was part of the British Council's Unlimited Access programme that looks at how countries throughout Europe can be working with, and presenting more work created by, disabled and deaf artists. Twenty-five representatives from twelve countries were present in Edinburgh to engage in dialogue with representatives from funding bodies, training institutions, arts organisations and venues, as well as independent artists, based in Scotland. These representatives had one thing in common: they were in some way involved in the promotion of a 'professional equality' agenda across the dance profession. Their agenda has been boosted in the past five years as different groups and individuals from across the industry have united to lobby for equal educational and employment opportunities for dancers with disabilities. The British Council visit represents the most recent milestone of a series of connected efforts by a group of protagonists to achieve commitments to professional equality from organisations across the sector. A change of focus to an equalities agenda by Scotland's main arts funding body (Creative Scotland), several determined leaders within well-respected arts organisations, and a few driven individuals has led to a change in Scotland's artistic landscape in relation to the work of, by, and with disabled artists. The British Council visit may be seen to consecrate the status of the Scottish professional dance sector as a pioneer in ensuring equality for dancers of all (dis)abilities.

Well-developed bodies of literature exist in the areas of dance performance and disability, and dance education and disability. These literatures focus on issues which are central to the need for, and growth of, professional equality. As Albright (1997, p.56) argues, 'as an expressive discourse comprised of physical movement, dance has traditionally

privileged the able bodied'. Studies in these areas have dealt with issues such as how disability is performed (Kuppers, 2001; 2003), how viewers and screen media construct disability in dance (Whatley, 2007; 2010), how perceptions related to disability and dance emerge at early stages of dance education (Zitomer and Reid, 2011), and how change might be achieved (Elin and Boswell, 2004; Schwyzer, 2005). In contrast, our article adopts an organisational perspective on the issue of professional equality by considering it to be a social movement. In so doing we seek to advance understanding of which organisational characteristics of the professional equality movement have contributed to its success.

This article charts and analyses the professional equality movement, which seeks to achieve equality between disabled and able-bodied dancers in Scotland, through analysing an 'insider's' account of the movement. We firstly introduce the context of professional equality in the Scottish dance industry, before outlining our research methods and presenting our autoethnographic account of the growth of the movement, which forms the basis of our discussion concerning the key factors driving professional equality as a social movement. We expect this paper may be of interest to scholars concerned with social movements in the performing arts, as a reflective piece for those involved in the movement, and as an example to those looking to drive forward equality in other performing arts or geographical areas.

Context: equality and the dance industry

The Scottish dance industry is relatively small compared to dance industries in other European nations. Scotland has two full-time, permanently publicly funded, dance performance companies: Scottish Ballet and Scottish Dance

Theatre, which produce work in the ballet and contemporary genres respectively. Scottish Ballet is based in Glasgow and is funded directly by the Scottish Government; Scottish Dance Theatre is based in Dundee and receives long-term funding from the national arts funding body, Creative Scotland. Aside from these permanent companies, there is a vibrant scene of independent companies and choreographers, particularly in Glasgow and, to a lesser extent, Edinburgh. These independent companies and choreographers are supported by a network of publicly funded dance centres (such as Dance Base, Citymoves and Dance House) which provide an education, production, rehearsal and performance infrastructure. There is also a wide range of organisations which use dance as both a performance medium and as a source of social engagement, recreation and education, such as Indepen-Dance. However, the growth of dance as an art form in Scotland is constrained because of the lack of dance in the secondary education curriculum (Creative Scotland Corporate Report, 2011). In response to this, YDance (the dance development agency for young people in Scotland) was given greater support to further develop youth dance education, participation and talent development. The opportunities for the education of professional dancers beyond school-level are limited by the existence of only one vocational performing arts institution in Scotland—the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, which offers courses in Modern Ballet and Musical Theatre—although several further education colleges across the country offer Higher National Diploma (HND), Higher National Certificate (HNC) and BA courses in dance.

There are no exclusively ‘disabled dance’ professional performance companies in Scotland. However some companies, such as plan B, engage with disabled performers across theatre and dance, and other professional companies, such as Scottish Dance Theatre, feature disabled dancers in their repertoires. As part of a

review of disability dance in 2007, Jo Verrent (2007, p.3) wrote that '[w]ithin Scotland, disability dance clearly has significance'. In this report, Verrent highlights the diversity of participatory opportunities for disabled dancers, but also the lack of 'stepping stones' to enable these dancers to progress into vocational (professional) dance. Her report contains twelve recommendations for the development of disabled dance in Scotland, centring on the sharing of information and best practice, creating opportunities for critical debate, strategic use of funding to support opportunities for disabled dancers, and increased audience and performance research. Finally, the report recommends that the national arts funding body should take an active role in advocating for the involvement of disabled dancers in dance training. Many of these recommendations have been put into practice by those in the industry, as is illustrated in the autoethnographic data presented below.

Professional equality is, on the one hand, an ideological notion based on the belief that all dancers should have access to equal professional opportunities regardless of any disabilities. On the other hand, professional equality is a response to the practical consequences of professional *inequality*. While there are many practical consequences of inequality in the dance profession, two main issues can be identified. First, the inequality of access to professional opportunities faced by disabled dancers reinforces the tendency of those in the industry to consider 'disabled' and 'mainstream' dance as mutually exclusive genres. Second, such inequalities reinforce cultural notions of corporeal exclusivity in the audiences of dance productions.

Professional equality challenges the notions of 'functional separateness' which label 'disabled dance' a separate genre from the mainstream (Brueggemann, 2005). 'Functional separateness' refers to the ideas that disabled dance and mainstream dance are performances of different types,

produced for different types of audiences. The tendency to segregate 'disabled dance' places the disability of the performer, rather than the artistic quality of the piece, as the central feature of any performance in disabled dance. This feature of professional inequality is endemic to many areas of the performing arts, as the quote below from Smith (2005, p.76) argues:

The history of the dominant Western theater [*sic*] dance tradition has reflected a particularly pervasive social coding of the body that enforces a corporeal hierarchy serving to invalidate differentiated, heterogenous, and physically impaired bodies.

Professional equality is important in addressing unacknowledged assumptions of appropriateness held by dance audiences. Smith argues that notions of 'corporeal exclusivity', the idea that there is a single correct form of the body and of movement, are common across Western performance art traditions. This is a powerful discourse, which defines notions of appropriateness across performance art, and excludes performers who do not conform to the prescribed form. Sandahl and Auslander (2005, p.69) argue that excluding non-normative bodies from the stage may reinforce the ideological commitments of artists and audiences related to 'what a body should be, what kinds of bodies are appropriate to display in performance, what constitutes performance skill and "good" theatre and dance, and so on'.

Addressing these notions of corporeal exclusivity is important because these presuppositions do not emerge only in the performance environment but are carried into other areas of the social world. Shakespeare (2004) argues that portrayals of disability in cultural products (particularly, in his case, literature) inform and shape people's perceptions of disabilities and disabled people in

everyday life. He draws particular attention to not only the tendency to the 'other' in historical literature (defining the character by their disability, rather than by their attributes) but also the tendency for villains to possess some form of impairment; even the Bible extensively uses disability as a symbolic identifier. This position is supported by authors such as Barnes (1992), who argues that stereotypes of disability across popular culture contribute to broader discrimination. He argues that these stereotypes 'form the bedrock on which the attitudes towards, assumptions about and expectations of disabled people are based' (Barnes, 1992, p.39).

The importance of professional equality is therefore grounded in the basic ideology of equality, in the erosion of the distinction between 'disabled' and 'mainstream' dance, and also in the necessity of presenting positive (and representative) cultural representations of the public at large in dance. However, despite these factors, the protagonists of the movement struggle to have professional equality recognised as an institutional value. As Stephen Philip's (2001) comment piece from *The Guardian* indicates, there was a historical perception that many arts institutions were reticent to adopt a substantive approach to dealing with issues of disability and equal opportunities:

[M]any arts institutions seem to place more resources into presenting a shiny smiley package of equal opportunity proposals and monitoring forms than they do in actually implementing radical new practices.

The struggle for professional equality is partly resource-based (as some venues cannot afford the upgrades necessary to make their performance spaces accessible), but it is also largely a fight to change normative assumptions. The ability of arts organisations to make a proactive approach to professional equality can be

complicated by the role of critics, who exert considerable normative authority in the arts. Smith (2005) provides an account of critics' reviews of performances by Candoco, one of the first dance organisations in the United Kingdom to actively push disabled performers into mainstream repertoires. These 'conservative pronouncements from within the outmoded citadels of "high" art' (Smith, 2005, p.75) embody, for Smith, the urge of the establishment to reinforce the segregation between 'disabled' and 'mainstream' dance. Even more concerning, reviews of these performances, as shown by the 1999 review of a performance by Candoco by Michael Scott of *The Vancouver Sun*, reproduced below (from Smith, 2005, p.80), can embrace and project an image of the non-normative body which is exceedingly counter to the aims of the movement.

There is a horrific, Satyricon quality to CandoCo that heaves up in the chest—nausea at the moral rudderlessness of a world where we would pay money to watch a man whose body terminates at his ribcage, moving about on the stage on his hands.

Methodology

This research has been produced using the guidelines of 'emancipatory' research (Bowles and Klein, 1983) which aims to overcome patterns of bias in social science to generate 'awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings' and, in so doing, to direct 'attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes' (Lather, 1989, p.259, quoted in Baker *et al.*, 2004, p.179). This methodological choice relates both to our reasons for undertaking this research, and to the specific choices we have made in data gathering and analysis. Recognising that no piece of social-scientific research can be considered

'value-free', we embrace a political purpose in writing this article. By discussing the evolution of the equality agenda in the Scottish dance sector, we aim to both strengthen this movement and to provide guidance to those attempting to incite a similar movement in a different industrial or geographic context. Similarly, in our research design, we have sought to emancipate our research from any 'othering' of disability or 'disabled people'. We utilise the terminology adopted by practitioners, 'professional equality', to stress not the differences between groups of people based on their physical abilities, but rather the basic equality of access to professional opportunities to which all are entitled. This is not to suggest that the material instances of discrimination which are faced by professional dancers are unimportant to this piece of research, but simply relates to the terminology we use to discuss the social movement.

The central source of data for this research is an autoethnographic account; produced by the second author of this article, a dance professional involved in the professional equality movement, and interrogated by the first author, an academic operating outside the movement. Autoethnography refers to a method which blends autobiography as a research technique with the practice of writing culture referred to as ethnography. In producing an autoethnography, a researcher already embedded in a particular culture adopts an ethnographic approach to interrogating their own experiences 'in the field'. Autoethnography is considered to be a highly fruitful research method because it enables linkages between the 'everyday, mundane aspects of organizational life with that of broader political and strategic organizational agendas and practice' (Boyle and Parry, 2007, p.186). By basing our paper on an autoethnographic account of the professional equality movement, we seek to expose the features of this movement which would be less clearly understood by studying the movement from an external perspective.

The autoethnographic account formed the basis of a series of discussions between the two authors concerning the growth of professional equality in the dance industry. As these discussions developed to consider professional equality as a 'social movement' the data pool was expanded to consider industry reports (such as Verrent, 2007 and Creative Scotland's Corporate Plan, 2011), and we began to critique our data in the light of the literature on social movements. As such, the data presented below is an autoethnographic account of the time during which professional equality was identified as a social movement (to the present day), rather than a complete account of our data.

Together, the emancipatory methodology and autoethnographic method mobilised in this study allow us to understand the development of the professional equality movement from 'within', rather than outside, the process (Shotter, 1996). The autoethnographic account produced in this article was refined during iterative periods of reflection and 'writing culture' (on the part of the second author) and interrogation based on emergent theory (by the first author). As such, the account presented below is not a raw presentation of 'field notes' but an account of the professional equality movement in Scotland co-produced through discussion (Kempster and Stewart, 2010).

What is so special about Scotland?

This section presents the autoethnographic account produced by the practitioner co-author, Caroline Bowditch, in which she voices her reflections on the development of the professional equality movement.

█ In 2004, Janet Smith, then Artistic Director of Scottish

Dance Theatre (SDT), attended a seminar for arts organisations, led by Jo Verrent, that highlighted the introduction of Public Duty Legislation—legislation that requires services provided by public bodies to be accessible. Whilst many organisations saw this legislation as a huge inconvenience, Janet saw it as a major opportunity; she saw it as a chance to ask herself questions, go on new artistic adventures, and challenge the aesthetic that had been most familiar to her. In 2005 she invited Adam Benjamin, co-founder of Candoco Dance Company, and four disabled dancers to participate in a week-long research and development programme with SDT in Edinburgh. After putting out a call for disabled dancers, it soon became evident that there were none in Scotland with the level of performance experience or training that Janet was seeking, requiring her to cast her net wider. She then attracted Dan Daw from Australia, Cornelia Kip Lee from the USA, Michael King from Yorkshire, UK, and me, Caroline Bowditch, originally from Australia but then based in Newcastle, UK.

Following possibly the most challenging creative week I'd ever had, Janet asked me: 'If we were able to secure the funding would you come and dance and tour with us for a season?' This was something I'd only dreamt of. I started to question myself; 'would I?', or more like, 'could I?'. I was thirty-two—wasn't I a bit late to be starting my dance career? Most dancers are retiring by now aren't they? Could my body—which has had only the sporadic dance opportunities available to most disabled dancers, and the absence of a technique that works for me—actually do this? Professional class everyday, up to six shows a week, touring... could I do it? Of course I said 'yes' and have never regretted it for a moment, but it did prompt lots of internal questions.

Late in 2006 I got the call from SDT inviting me to join the

company for Spring 2007 when we worked with Adam Benjamin to make *Angels of Incidence* which toured throughout the UK and Ireland. As the tour was progressing, I began to realise the significance of what Janet had done. SDT were a mainstream dance company that, for a season, just happened to include disabled dancers. Audiences, who may not necessarily have come to a performance labelled as 'inclusive' dance, came to see the work. Janet was completely challenging the usual SDT aesthetic by including us in the mix and this felt significant.

The tour concluded and I returned to Newcastle unsure of what to do next. This had been a life-altering experience for me and I didn't feel I could go back to just sporadic opportunities—I wanted more. I started to approach other mainstream companies that were auditioning only to discover they weren't ready for either me or this conversation. I also felt SDT somehow needed to document its learning from this time: What happened? What did we learn? What would we do different next time? Somehow I wanted to gather up all the strands from this adventure in a way that they could be passed to other dance companies which might be brave enough to dip their toe in the water.

In Autumn 2007, I met with Janet and Amanda Chinn, SDT's General Manager, to discuss the possibility of doing some sort of evaluation of the *Angels* project. They both acknowledged that there was something more significant that SDT could do, and the industry more broadly; the idea of the Dance Agent for Change role was born.

From 2008 to 2010, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC)—which has since been superseded as Scotland's national arts funding body by Creative Scotland—employed an Equalities Officer, Robert Softley Gale, who had a focus on arts and disability. His role allowed equality, particularly in relation to arts and disability, to become central to the

organisation and the planning, development and delivery of programmes and funding streams at the Scottish Arts Council.

Between 2008 and 2010 several projects significant to the embedding of professional equality took place across the industry. Firstly, Claire Cunningham, a disabled performance artist and choreographer, was offered a significant bursary from SAC's Equalities budget to carry out professional development over several years. Claire was able to explore dance techniques that worked for her body and developed significant professional work that has toured extensively throughout the UK, Europe, Brazil and the Middle East, mostly as part of mainstream dance festivals. Secondly, Scottish Dance Theatre created, and appointed me to, the post of Dance Agent for Change (DAFC) which had five main aims:

1. To increase the number of disabled people involved in dance in Scotland.
2. To increase confidence of people delivering dance in Scotland to everyone, making dance more accessible.
3. To explore the possibility of breaking new artistic ground in dance with integration at the forefront.
4. To offer an integrated creative learning programme which educates, inspires, informs and expands horizons.
5. To map out a path for the future of integrated dance in Scotland.

Throughout the four years as the DAFC, I had contact with over 25,000 people including audiences, workshop participants and those present at presentations or training sessions. Many of these interactions were with people who had never had any contact with integrated or inclusive

dance before. The role also instigated the establishing of the Creative Thinking Network (CTN). The purpose of the CTN was, and still is, to bring together arts practitioners and organisations from all over Scotland four times a year to network, exchange information and potentially develop new collaborations. The CTN continues to be successful in this role, with over 60 members, and is the one element of my DAFC role that Creative Scotland continues to fund.

When Creative Scotland was launched in 2010 it made the following commitment:

We will adopt a mainstreaming approach by embedding equality throughout all our programmes, considering the potential impacts on equality of our policies and our relations with cultural organisations (Creative Scotland Corporate Report, 2011).

Commitment to equality in such a blanket way at such a high level is unique to Scotland. Scotland is also one of the few countries that doesn't have a disability arts organisation and therefore equality is centralised rather than being palmed off to a 'specialised' organisation. So, equality is valued, central and seen as important. There is a long-term and on-going investment in, and commitment to, developing and retaining disabled artists in Scotland. There is also an expectation from funders like Creative Scotland that equality is on the agendas of arts organisations where it would usually be absent.

I believe this commitment has generally increased the awareness of work by disabled artists and organisations working with disabled people in Scotland. Work with disabled artists is now seen as a new development opportunity; professional disabled artists are now sought-after in Scotland as collaborators, makers and performers.

Innovative creative projects have been generated and new artistic ground has been explored as a result. What remains an ongoing challenge is finding the next generation of disabled artists and locating disabled people with whom to engage in projects and develop their talent. Disabled people have been absent from the stage for so long that convincing them that they belong on a stage or in a dance studio is still difficult. The cultural change still needed is significant but progress has been made in the last few years. The embedding of equality throughout the Scottish arts scene makes it unique and attractive, and gives Scotland the reputation of being a 'hotspot' for disabled artists.

Discussion: *professional equality as a social movement*

A social movement can be defined as a 'sustained series of challenges by groups of people against those who have power over them, using a wide range of conventional and unconventional actions and of formal and informal organisations' (Baker *et al.*, 2004, p.193). In analysing professional equality as a social movement, we might then ask the following questions: Who are those with and without power? What are the series of challenges that characterise the movement? And finally, what are the formal and informal organisations involved?

In the case of professional equality, those without power are not only the professional disabled dancers who have personally experienced discrimination, the core protagonists, but also a wider group of protagonists we term 'passionate advocates'. These passionate advocates might be connected to the core protagonists through professional association (for instance, as colleagues) or through a connection to the broader cause of equality (such as the

members of the Creative Thinking Network). The issue of which individuals or organisations possess power over the core protagonists is more complex. It is clear from the autoethnographic data above that inequality in the provision of education and employment opportunities is secured at both the organisational and institutional levels. At the organisational level, individual dance theatres may not provide opportunities to disabled dancers, whether consciously or not. Similarly, individual venues might discriminate against disabled dancers through not providing appropriate facilities.

However, the provision of opportunities by these individual organisations may be considered to be, to some extent, determined by the national arts funding body; that is, at the institutional level. As Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue, organisations are likely to conform to the structures, beliefs and approaches favoured by powerful organisations in their institutional environments. This process is termed 'mimetic isomorphism' and has been widely empirically identified by scholars of organisational studies (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008) and specifically in creative industries such as dance (Alvarez *et al.*, 2005). Not only is the ability of individual organisations to support professional equality determined by the funding made available (or not) to them by the national arts funding body, but processes of mimetic isomorphism are also likely to influence their activities. This is reflected in the autoethnographic account when Caroline reflects on the effects of Creative Scotland's commitment to equality. If a national arts organisation, such as Creative Scotland, espouses professional equality as an organisational priority, then so will those organisations which rely upon its approval. Although Creative Scotland has less direct involvement with the core protagonists, they are arguably the most important organisation in realising the goal of professional equality.

The second key issue in describing professional equality as a social movement is: what are the series of challenges which characterise the movement? For the purposes of simplicity, we regard all pro-equality interventions by our core protagonists as 'challenges' and all pro-equality interventions by those 'in power' (such as the national arts funding body) as 'achievements'. Because the actions of the national arts funding body are likely to have much more direct effect upon the practices of the sector than the actions of an individual protagonist (due to the effects of mimetic isomorphism), it would be confusing to label these as 'challenges'.

The 'achievements' of the social movement tell us something about the efficacy of different types of 'challenges' to the embedding of professional equality in dance. Robert Softley Gale's appointment as Equalities Officer at the Scottish Arts Council was an important achievement for the movement. However, a long string of grassroots activity, which was featured in Verrent's (2007) *Dance and Disability* report, also facilitated this appointment. The growth in artistic activities using disabled dancers, for example the activities of SDT highlighted in the autoethnographic account, is key to understanding how the need for equality arose from practical interventions within the sector, rather than as an externally-imposed ideological imperative (that is, because equality is right). The success of Claire Cunningham's interventions arises from her position as an established professional dancer, not primarily from her being funded by the Scottish Arts Council to expand her repertoire, and the success of Caroline's advocacy in the sector is partly secured through her being a practising member of the professional dance community. These activities represent the challenges which promote professional equality in the sector and, importantly, from the sector. Although the intervention of the national arts funding body (through appointing Softley Gale) might be seen to be strategically-led, the strategic imperative of

equality (which was later embraced by Creative Scotland) originates from within, not outwith, the dance sector.

The success of these challenges is also due to their being couched in artistic practice. The appointment of Caroline as the Dance Agent for Change shows how a challenge based on artistic practice (rather than on other activities, such as advocacy) is the genesis for a large achievement (having the DAFC post funded by the national arts funding body). According to Verrent's report, in 2007 the senior management at Scottish Dance Theatre reported that their engagement with disabled dancers in producing *Angels of Incidence* (choreographed by Candoco's Adam Benjamin) made them 'wish to develop further work utilising disabled dancers in the future' (Verrent, 2007, p.9). This artistic collaboration spawned a series of conversations which resulted in the company and Caroline collaboratively writing a funding application to the Scottish Arts Council, and creating the DAFC post. Furthermore, throughout her time as DAFC, Caroline engaged in a multiplicity of advocacy practices (from workshops to lectures to networking) but continued to develop her artistic practice and opportunities which enabled her to spread further fruitful artistic partnerships (such as that with SDT) whilst also growing her legitimacy as a performing artist. Through this artistic legitimacy, Caroline had the symbolic position to act as a more effective leader in the dance field. This highlights a further characteristic of the professional equality movement; the importance of informal networks in articulating the practical implications of professional inequality and co-ordinating challenges. The Creative Thinking Network, which initially served as a steering group for the DAFC role, developed into a productive forum for information sharing and collective advocacy. Many of the professionals involved in the professional equality movement are, or have been, members of the CTN.

This brings us to the final question regarding professional equality as a social movement; what are the formal and informal organisations involved? The CTN can be considered one of the most significant informal organisations in the professional equality movement in Scotland. In terms of formal organisations, Scottish Dance Theatre has clearly played a large role in advocating for professional equality through artistic channels. Being one of the only two professional full-time companies in Scotland, SDT's artistic endeavours with professional disabled dancers, and their DAFC role, can both be considered significant in setting an example and in providing material opportunities for disabled dancers. Finally, the role of the national arts funding body (Scottish Arts Council pre-2010, Creative Scotland post-2010) and the lack of a national disability arts organisation is highlighted as an important factor in driving forward professional equality. The lack of a disability arts organisation is highlighted as a key factor in 'mainstreaming' the issue of disability in the arts, and ensuring that it isn't 'palmed off' to an organisation without significant influence not only on professional dance companies, but on the Scottish arts sector as a whole. The importance of mimetic isomorphism, as previously identified, is key to the ability of Creative Scotland (and previously the Scottish Arts Council) to 'lead by example' in not only espousing professional equality as an institutional value, but actively supporting the development of disabled artists (such as by funding Claire Cunningham).

Conclusion

Baker *et al.* (2004) argue that the key organisational task for any social movement must be to strengthen the network of groups and organizations with broadly egalitarian aims. We have considered in this article how a social movement emerged in the Scottish dance industry, and we have explored the reasons for the success of this movement in

establishing professional equality as an institutional value. Our analysis, drawn from an autoethnographic account authored by a key figure in the movement, highlights three key success factors: first, the genesis of the professional equality movement within the dance industry (rather than outside it) and leadership through artistic practice emerged as a key success factor for the movement. Professional performances including disabled artists enable professionals across the industry to comprehend that professional equality has tangible artistic benefits. Furthermore, when disabled performers are given the role of professional artist (rather than advocate), the inclusion of disabled dancers becomes an artistic choice rather than an ideological one. Second, informal networks, in particular the Creative Thinking Network, have proved an enduring mechanism for securing information sharing and collective advocacy in a sector which is both geographically and artistically diverse. Third, the particular institutional characteristics of the industry are a key factor: the lack of a national disability arts organisation means that the issue of professional equality is embraced by the central arts funding agency. This agency holds significant symbolic power in determining the values of cultural organisations across Scotland. Therefore, having professional equality consecrated as a core value of Creative Scotland was an important achievement for the Scottish dance movement, and may prove to be important for the greater Scottish arts sector.

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Australian-born but now Glasgow-based performance artist and choreographer CAROLINE BOWDITCH describes herself as a performer, maker, teacher, speaker and mosquito buzzing in the ears of the arts industry in the UK and further afield. She is currently Associate Artist at Dance 4 (Nottingham), where she is working on a new project called *Falling in love with Frida*, and Artist in Association with Paragon Music (Glasgow), where she choreographed *Torque*. From February to June 2013, Caroline was Visiting Artist at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where she worked with the 2nd Year Contemporary Performance Practice students. She was commissioned by East London Dance (ELD) to create a new work for dancers from Candoco Dance Company as part of ELD's 25th anniversary celebration. She has just returned from working as a consultant with Skånes Dansteater (Sweden), increasing their thinking and capacity in relation to accessibility and inclusivity.