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SCHOOL OF SPORT
HOW SOCIETY CONDITIONS OUR

PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY DANCE
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Abstract

The “traditional individualistic medically-influenced definitions of disability” (Barnes, 1991, p23) have grown throughout society, enforcing the experiences of disabled people to be perceived as pitiful (Morris, 1991). Due to the socially influenced perception of disability, impairment has become the primary focus in disability dance (Barnes, 1991) resulting in a lack of interest and value with regards to its aesthetic appeal (Redfern, 1983). This demonstrates how “aesthetic perception might be thought to relate to normal perception” (Redfern, 1983, p52). In order to gain a clearer insight with regards to societies influence on the judgement of disability dance aesthetics, a qualitative study has been carried out. Two able-bodied Artistic Directors and two Performers with learning disabilities participated in semi-structured interviews. Relevant data was extracted in relation to their working progress, experiences, performance skills and views on dance aesthetics. It was discovered that societies sympathetic response hinders the aesthetic appreciation of disability dance and its opportunity to reach the mainstream culture. Dance aesthetics will always carry historical overtones (Redfern, 1983) such as the traditional perception of the idealistic dancing body (Brown, 1999), but there is always room and time to educate the audience about disability dance. If the aesthetic experience of disability dance is enlarged throughout mainstream and community culture, then less prominence will be given to beauty (Redfern, 1983) and the recognition of movement invention will be enhanced (Brown, 1999). We must enrich the understanding of aesthetic appreciation in order to inform the audiences experience and mode of understanding (Redfern, 1983)
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
1.0 Introduction

“Increasingly in recent years disabled people have come to recognise that the term ‘disability’ represents a complex system of social restrictions imposed on people with impairments by a highly discriminatory society”

(Barnes, 1991, p1)

The human body is “viewed as a microcosm of society, upon which order and symbolic values are imposed” (Thomas, 2003, p19). This is specifically highlighted in dance where the body is anatomically and culturally inscribed with the codes of the profession (Brown, 1999) embracing the dancer as white, thin, long-limbed, flexible and able-bodied (Cooper Albright, 1997). This socially constructed perception demonstrates the generalisation of how “to be a dancer is to be all-body or no-body at all” (Brown, 1999, p14), with a classical inheritance of idealism that can be modelled from matter into form (Brown, 1999). This stereotype instantly creates distinctions and barriers between disabled dancers and the rest of society (Barnes, 1991), seeing that predetermined expectations of the dancing body are formed, limiting awareness of other body types and movement styles in the dance sector.

The socially dominant able-bodied members of the community have modified the physical experience of the body by the social categories through which it is known (Douglas cited in Thomas, 2003). This categorisation has resulted in people with disabilities being perceived as “a small, clearly defined section of society, quite distinct from the public at large……immediately recognisable as physically different from normal people” (Sutherland, 1981, p13).
This difference between disabled and non-disabled people (Barnes, 1991) has made the experience of many disabled dancers effectively invisible to much of society (Thomson-Stewart, 2000). It is the social perception of the stereotypical dancing body that has reinforced certain bodily ideals (Brown, 1999), resulting in the disabled dancing body being viewed as ‘grotesque’ (Cooper Albright, 1997). This socially influenced view has created a hindrance in the acceptance of disability dance aesthetics.

In order to gain a clearer insight of how society has conditioned these perceptions of disability dance, a short qualitative study has been carried out. To explore a variety of avenues in relation to perceptions and aesthetics, a hypothesis was set to inform the structure of research throughout the study. This involved the following questions:

- Can disability dance be viewed purely for its aesthetic value?

- Can performance analysis be affected by the emotional and sympathetic responses that society relates to disability?

This is an important area of research as it could potentially increase awareness of disability dance by providing an insight of how and why society (members of the community) perceive disability and dance the way they do. It also considers and questions such potential influences.
To gain a contextual understanding of disability dance a variety of literature has been gathered, analysed and compared. The found knowledge provided a framework for societies views of disability, perception of the dancing body, and awareness of dance aesthetics.

However, to achieve a deeper, personal understanding on the subject, four participants within the performance field were interviewed. This involved two able-bodied Artistic Directors and two Performers with learning disabilities. The Artistic Directors and Performers were part of two community based dance companies set in the South of Wales. Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview involving questions that related to their working progress, experiences, performance skills and views on aesthetics. This method of data collection gave variation for personal response (Robson, 1993) and offered a clear insight with regards to the subjects experiences and views in relation to disability dance.

The gathered data has been reviewed and discussed to determine whether disability dance truly “has the potential to disrupt or transgress the dominant social order” (Thomas, 2003, p173).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Hypothesis

- Can disability dance be viewed purely for its aesthetic value?
- Can performance analysis be affected by the emotional and sympathetic responses that society relates to disability?

3.2 Research Design

In order to carry out a successful investigation, a clearer understanding of different research methods and the components involved was essential. When carrying out a study, there are two forms of research tools that can be used depending on the context of the investigation; quantitative and qualitative (Robson, 1993). The quantitative method focuses on statistics, surveys, and experimental designs, dealing with more scientific aspects of research (Denzin&Lincoln, 1994). In contrast, the qualitative approach examine’s, analyses and interprets set observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships amongst participants (Robson, 1993). It is concerned with the why and how of problem solving, in comparison to the quantitative approach which questions the what, where, and when (Denzin&Lincoln, 1994)). In order to discover an in depth understanding of how the perceptions of society affect the
judgement of Performance aesthetics in disability dance, a detailed qualitative study was conducted (Creswell, 1998).

Qualitative research “is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p2). The process involves specific methods, applied to provide the required data in order to produce a complete piece of research (Bell, 1987). These methods include observation, case studies, interviews, questionnaires and visual text (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To gain a detailed insight of the chosen area of study, it was decided the most appropriate method of data collection would be the semi-structured interview (Creswell, 1998). In contrast to the corresponding methods, interviews have “the potential of providing rich and highly illuminating material” (Robson, 1993, p229) from the respondents perspective. Interviews act as “an interpretive enterprise seeking to capture the understandings and orientations displayed by the participants themselves (Bryman & Hardy, 2004, p590). Thus “face-to-face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one’s line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot” (Robson, 1993, p229). The opportunity to observe behaviour through body language, tone of voice, and facial expression can make the interviewing experience more personal, enhancing the interaction with, and the understanding of, the interviewee’s perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).
The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to produce a structure of questions which can be modified in relation to the participant’s response (Robson, 1993). This method is “a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out” (Robson, 1993, p229). The option to use fully structured interviews was disregarded, due to the method being overly formal and limiting with regards to receiving in depth responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The unstructured approach was also set aside, because as an inexperienced interviewer, it would be difficult to control the focus of the material without a structure and the risk of invalid data collection could take place (Bell, 1987).

To secure an extensive insight into how the perceptions of society affect the judgement of performance aesthetics in disability dance, two semi-structured interviews were prepared (see appendix A). Interview one was designed for two able-bodied Artistic Directors who run their own disability dance groups. Interview two was produced for two Performers who have learning disabilities and are members of the Artistic Directors dance groups.

Prior to performing these interviews, pilot copies were carried out in order to test the validity of the questions (see appendix A). As a result, it was discovered a few of the questions were leading, therefore influencing the participants answer (Robson, 1993). To avoid researcher bias, some questions were altered. One example being: *Do you think the audience’s response is one of sympathy?* By using the term *do you*, the interviewee was influenced to answer with the desired response (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This may encourage demand characteristics, enforcing a yes or no answer that
may not be true to the participant’s beliefs. To reduce the chances of researcher bias and expectations, the question was changed to: *Have you ever had a sympathetic response?* (see appendix A). This approach increased the opportunity to receive an honest, personal, in depth response.

The interviews were shorter than anticipated initiating concern that substantial evidence would be received. Therefore probing was linked to relevant questions, acting as a device to get the interviewee to expand on responses where more information could be received (Robson, 1993). It was discovered that respondents with learning disabilities may not present particularly detailed answers and may struggle translating how they feel. To assist such responses, prompts were prepared suggesting a “range or set of possible answers” (Robson, 1993, p234). The adjusted interviews (see appendix A) were designed to last for around thirty minutes seeing that “anything under half an hour is unlikely to be valuable; anything going much over an hour may be making unreasonable demands on busy interviewee’s” (Robson, 1993, p229). This time period provided room to create a comfortable rapport with the respondents and gain plenty of information on the subject (Robson, 1993). By performing pilot interviews arising problems could be found and adjusted, increasing the opportunity to gain valid and detailed results.

To avoid any researcher bias it was crucial to set aside any predetermined opinions or views about disability dance when performing the interviews (Robson, 1993). By presenting a standard set of moderately relaxed open
ended questions, there was room to explore the participants experiences and responses. Throughout the interviews this method turned into a conversational strategy, making the interviewee feel comfortable, gradually creating a rapport (Creswell, 1998). The overall aim of each interview was to get the respondent to talk freely and openly in relation to the questions asked (Robson, 1993). This occurred when there was less speaking and more listening (Creswell, 1998). The researcher “needs to have the skill to ask questions and, if necessary, to probe at the right time” (Bell, 1987, p72). When interviewing the Performers with learning disabilities, a lot of prompting and probing was needed as many of the answers were a standard yes or no. Sometimes they found it hard to understand the concept of the questions with regards to their own feelings. For example when asked how do you feel when you perform in front of an audience? both participants were confused and had difficulty in responding to the question. Therefore prompting was used to inform their understanding, such as: do you perhaps feel confident, nervous, maybe happy? By feeding examples, the respondents could grasp the context of the question. Without prompting such questions, the interviewee’s could have responded with dishonest, irrelevant answers, which would have led to the production of invalid data. In another context, prompting may be considered as an invalid procedure if used regularly throughout the interview (Bell, 1987), but in this case it was necessary seeing that the participants found it slightly harder to process the questions and produce in depth answers. Throughout the transcription process it was noticed that there were times when unnecessary prompting took place, demonstrating the worry that the respondent might feel uncomfortable or
confused with the question. It was sometimes assumed that the interviewee’s with learning disabilities needed help responding, when all they needed was more time to think. This happened more so with Performer one. When it came to Performer two’s interview, the previous mistakes were noted and prompting only took place when necessary.

At times the respondents veered off the subject matter, making it difficult to draw them back on track. The “freedom to allow the respondent to talk about what is of central significance to him or her rather than the interviewer is clearly important” (Bell, 1987, p72), but there must be a balance with regards to the answers relating to the questions in order to avoid unnecessary data collection (Robson, 1993). This problem occurred a few times in the Artistic Director interviews, but the focus was drawn back by introducing the next question. A lot of data was collected from the Director interviews, seeing that both participants had worked in disability dance for a total of thirty nine years and had many experiences to relate to the questions. Although the interviews were very detailed the time was controlled through the balance of questions and the order they were presented (Robson, 1993). This resulted in Artistic Director one’s interview lasting thirty two minutes and Artistic Director two’s interview lasting thirty three minutes.

To make the interviews as relaxed and comfortable as possible, the order of the questions were often changed to suit the flow of dialogue. Some questions were left out and additional ones included, depending on the interviewee and their response (Robson, 1993). This occurred recurrently
throughout the Performers interviews. When certain areas received minimal response, extra questions were added as soon as the opportunity arose to extract more relevant information. This technique enhanced the depth and length of the interviews, with Performer one’s interview lasting for twenty two minutes and Performer two’s interview lasting for sixteen minutes.

As a qualitative researcher, the focus was to interpret the studied phenomenon, in terms of the meaning and experiences the participants presented (Denzin&Lincoln, 1994). This was done successfully throughout the interviewing process, although very time consuming with regards to the preparation, research, the arrangement to meet the participants, and the transcription of the results. To gather data from the constructed interviews was a very detailed and complex technique, which demonstrated how crucial it was to time plan and budget throughout the study effectively (Robson, 1993). Consequently data collection and analysis was provided, that was uniquely suited to addressing the phenomenon and making use of the opportunities posed by human interaction as an object of inquiry (Bryman&Hardy, 2004).

Overall, the interviews were successful in relation to collecting relevant and useful data and increasing knowledge and awareness of how society conditions the perceptions of disability dance.
3.3 Ethical Considerations

When organising the interviews, the main priority was to fit around the participant’s schedules and to carry out the interviews in a setting of their choice. Prior to the interviews taking place, the Performers and Artistic Directors were informed about the purpose of the interview and how long it would be (twenty to thirty minutes). Letters were dispatched informing the respondents that all information would be kept confidential and that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any point (Bell, 1987). To make sure that all interviewee’s understood the context of the letter, the information was read in simpler terms before the interview started. Once all terms and conditions were cleared, consent forms were read and signed. It was agreed that either the Artistic Director or parent of the Performer would sit in on their interview, so that answers could be assisted if needed.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA
4.0 Presentation of the Data

4.1 The Artistic Directors Interview Questions

- Question one: How long have you worked with people with learning disabilities?
- Question two: What led you to this opportunity?
- Question three: What have you learnt from working with people with learning disabilities?
- Question four: Has your work with the company been influenced by any previous or existing practice in dance?
- Question five: Do you have any aims or objectives that inform the way you work?
- Question six: Do you involve the company in the choreographic process?
- Question seven: What aesthetics do you link with your group when you watch them perform?
- Question eight: What was your first response when watching people with learning disabilities in performance?
- Question nine: What criteria do you follow when judging a performance by people with learning disabilities?
- Question ten: What do you think the first impression of the audience is when watching your group in performance?
- Question eleven: In what way are you influenced by the audiences response when you are making your work?
- Question Twelve: Do you think it is possible for an audience to change their response the more they watch the groups work?
- Question thirteen: How do you see the company developing in the future?
4.2 Presentation of the Artistic Directors Responses

**Personal/Professional Background** (refers to questions 1 - 2)

- Between the two Artistic Directors a total of thirty nine years has been dedicated to the field of disability dance
- Both Directors have performed in professional and community based dance companies.
- Other companies and performers have inspired their work
- Disabled classes were formed in the South of Wales to open more opportunity for dancers who have learning disabilities

**Philosophy & Approach** (refers to questions 3 - 7)

- The Performers in the Artistic Directors companies, present emotion and honesty through the passion and enthusiasm they hold towards dance.
- To work with stereotypical themes throughout class is demeaning towards the disability. A professional approach can be taken into the teaching process (Artistic Director one)
- Drama based dance and powerful music has been an influence of other choreographers. (Artistic Director two)
- Repetition, narrative and stimuli are used to inform the structure of a class (Artistic Director one)
- Both Directors use a guided approach in class, in order to give the dancers independence throughout the creative process
The aesthetics linked with learning disabled Performers involve the ability to project emotion and enjoyment, the use of creativity and improvisation and the strength of individual presence (both Artistic Directors)

Perceptions of Dance & Disability (refers to questions 8 - 10)

- Some performances have been patronising towards disability (Artistic Director one)

- Both Directors have seen learning disabled dancers in performance who have presented movement with extortionate ability and technique

- The audience will often react with an emotional and sympathetic response when watching disability dance (both Directors)

- It is possible to use the same criteria to analyse disabled and non-disabled dance (Artistic Director one)

- Too much focus on technique can lead to dissatisfaction due to lack of emotional involvement (both Artistic Directors)

- The more people watch disability dance, the more they can understand the aesthetics and watch it with a professional eye (both Artistic Directors)

Audience Response & Future Development (refers to questions 11-13)

- By educating the audience about disability dance, the professional perspective of the genre can be developed, moving away from a sympathetic response (both Artistic Directors)

- More performance opportunities, rehearsal space and support is needed (both Artistic Directors)
### 4.3 Presentation of the Performers Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question one: What made you want to join this dance group?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer one</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Enjoys doing a variety of performances about different themes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Has had the opportunity to take part in many performances since being in the company</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Can dance at important events</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer two</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Enjoys dancing and performing</td>
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<th>Question two: How many classes do you go to each week? And how long are they?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer one</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ One class a week for the duration of two hours</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer two</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ One class a week for the duration of one and a half hours</td>
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<th>Question three: How long have you been part of the company?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer one</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ten years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer two</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Six years</td>
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<th>Question four: Had you taken part in any other dance classes before joining this group?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performer one</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ No, the only experience in dance has been with Good Company</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Performer two</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Yes, participated in ballet classes at their old centre in Hertfordshire from the age of five. Has also practised in line dancing, barn dance and contemporary.</td>
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<th>Question five: Have you been to dance classes that you haven’t enjoyed?</th>
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<td><strong>Performer one</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ In relation to the company rehearsals, has enjoyed them all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performer two</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Has enjoyed all dance experiences</td>
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<th>Question six: When in your dance classes, do you put forward your own ideas to help with the making of the dance?</th>
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<td><strong>Performer one</strong></td>
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<td>▪ Yes, the group create movement individually using different shapes and then put the movement together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performer two</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Yes, ideas and movement would be suggested individually and then they would be formed into dances</td>
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Question seven: Do you work in groups throughout class?

**Performer one**
- Yes, when working in a group ideas are shared and put together.
- The group is close net and help each other if at all stuck in class

**Performer two**
- The class was set into three different groups on a weekly basis
- The performers group included another dancer and a member of staff to assist in the creative process
- Feels more comfortable working in groups because you can help each other throughout the creative process.

Question eight: Do you work on your own in class?

**Performer one**
- Prefers creating movement on their own and then share work with group members

**Performer two**
- Doesn’t feel comfortable working individually, enjoys working with other group members

Question nine: What is the most recent dance the group has done?

**Performer one**
- A piece called ‘The Queue’.
- Favourite part of the dance was when they performed a duet with another company member, using a book as a prop.

**Performer two**
- The last performance was used as the opening of a badminton sports event at the Welsh Institute of Sport.

Question ten: How do you feel when you perform in front of an audience?

**Performer one**
- Feels nervous before performing, but once on stage is excited

**Performer two**
- Feels happy and good
- Gets very nervous prior to the performance

Question eleven: How do you want the audience to react?

**Performer one**
- Thinks the audience feels happy when watching the group perform
- Wants the audience to laugh throughout the comical parts

**Performer two**
- To clap. Has been told that the groups performance was the best out of many others when taking part in previous shows. This was an ideal reaction from the audience.

Question twelve: Do your family and friends come and watch you in performance? What was their response?

**Performer one**
- The family come and watch a lot of the performances
- In response to a performance that was learnt and performed in the space of four hours, the family said it was professional and well done considering the short notice.
Performer two
- The family watch many of the performances and have said how proud and happy they feel.
- They noticed her ability to self express and be lost in another world when performing

Question thirteen: Have you seen other companies perform? What did you like about the performance?

Performer one
- Has seen other companies perform throughout dance events
- Felt they were good and entertaining

Performer two
- Has seen Diversions and Stomp, really enjoyed the performances.

Question fourteen: Have you performed with another company? What did you enjoy?

Performer one
- Spent a week in Swansea with other dance companies, creating and performing dance
- Has taken part in lots of professional development workshops. One was with Candoco

Performer two
- Has taken part in a workshop with Diversions Dance Company, enjoyed the creativity and physical contact.
- Performed with two other dance companies
- Best experience was partnering up with a member from another company and creating/performing a duet

Question fifteen: What do you think makes a good dancer?

Performer one
- Someone who performs well and tries different things

Performer two
- Someone who can perform and who is dedicated to practice

Question sixteen: Do you feel you dance differently now compared to before you were in the group?

Performer one
- Yes, more confident and creativity has improved

Performer two
- Yes, more confident and enjoys dancing even more

Question seventeen: Where do you see yourself going in the future?

Performer one
- Working in more areas and with more companies

Performer two
- Has not performed with the company in a while, wishes to do more classes and perform again in the future

Table 1: Table 1 shows the Performers responses to the interview questions
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

AND

CONCLUSIONS
6.0 Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

- The perception of disability has been moulded through “the organisation of society, its material construction and the attitudes of individuals within it” (Brisenden, 1998, p35). These views have been influenced through the traditional labels attached to ‘difference’, which has resulted in “certain people being dis-abled” (Brisenden, 1998, p35).

- The conventional aesthetics of professional dance involve ‘ideal’ bodies that perform with extreme athleticism (Gosling, 2002), resulting in audiences automatically perceiving disability dance as unpleasing to the eye (Philips, 2004).

- The aesthetics linked to disability dance include emotion and self expression (Artistic Director two, transcript three)

- The lack of exposure and understanding of disability dance results in the viewers finding it difficult to accept the related aesthetics (Cooper Albright, 1997).
6.2 The Perception of the Dancing Body and Aesthetic Analysis

The appreciation of disability dance is affected by the social view of disability, which immediately restricts professional analysis in dance performance (Thomson, 2003). Aesthetic awareness should demand reference to the felt response and experiences of the dancer (Redfern, 1983), although this is often not the case when audiences refuse to accept the aesthetics of disability dance and replace them with a sympathetic response. In order to minimise such a reaction, we must “overcome the limitations of viewing the body as subject or object” (Thomson, 2003, p56). If people purely perceive dance “as a source of erotic pleasure, an exhibition of highly skilled movement, a means of keeping fit” (Redfern, 1983, p46), then creative movement and emotion may be neglected as a means expression resulting in aesthetic discrimination (Redfern, 1983). In order to grasp the value of disability aesthetics, the viewer should consider using Adshead’s (1988) structure of analysis to enhance understanding and awareness of the components presented throughout a performance. By isolating a dance work and valuing it in its own right (Redfern, 1983) interpretations and evaluations can be formed (Adshead, 1988). This structure can assist the viewer in acknowledging and appreciating disability dance aesthetics without reference to the associated aesthetic qualities. If viewers continue to disregard new and unfamiliar aesthetics, then “to identify artistic qualities with aesthetic qualities is therefore to place unjustifiable limits on the meaning(s) of a work; and to ignore its non-aesthetic aspects is often to ignore that work’s chief values” (Redfern, 1983, p53).
6.3 The Sympathetic Response and Related Aesthetics

As a result of sympathetic responses “there is a marked imbalance in much dance criticism, and it seems necessary to insist of the importance of giving due consideration, wherever appropriate, to the structural aspects of a work” (Redfern, 1983, p18). This is crucial seeing that the viewer has the power to enable others to understand the aesthetics of disability dance (Redfern, 1983). Audience members allow their “experience to be filtered and distorted through unexamined beliefs, critical assumptions and emotions” (Lavender, 1996, p62). This informs the sympathetic response, which at large, could never be entirely ruled out. The social perception of disability will often influence the viewers response, particularly if watching disability dance for the first time. This was highlighted through the research of two community based dance companies who have performed in a variety of areas in front of uninformed audiences (Artistic Director one, transcript two). Although the responses were often ones of sympathy, the audiences were still emotionally affected by the performers ability to self express (Artistic Director two, transcript three). Seeing that emotion is a key aesthetic presented through disability dance, the sympathetic response may be more likely to arise, especially from an uninformed viewer. It would seem that sympathy will always have a place alongside the viewing of disability dance. Although this response may be considered as a hindrance when searching for critical feedback, it could also work to the performers advantage by informing and enhancing the emotional aesthetic. In order to appreciate and embrace a performances dance aesthetics, the viewer must learn “to value a work of art
in its own right” (Redfern, 1983, p47). The practice of aesthetic analysis could potentially introduce the understanding of disability dance aesthetics, enforcing how new varieties can be brought to dance performance (Deleuze&Guattari cited in Brown, 1999). The “staging of bodily identities with different stories to tell from the ones which have traditionally occupied the stage can incorporate difference and open the performing frame to multiple spectator positions” (Brown, 1999, p15). We must strive to “register the quality as well as the value in order that equality remains paramount—equality of access, of entitlement and of judgement” (Philips, 2004, p33). Ensuring “that quality and equality are not mutually exclusive concepts” (Verrent, 2004, p28).

6.4 Opportunity

It is due to the lack of disability dance in mainstream culture that people with learning disabilities are unaware of the experiences and opportunities that dance could potentially offer. Therefore to enhance awareness and participation in dance, training courses for learning disabled dancers need to be set up in schools and colleges, enabling the development of skills in technique and creativity (Thomson-Stewart, 2000). If there is to be a development in professional learning disabled dance companies “then we need to be able to identify and recruit those who possess the potential to dance at a professional standard; to nurture their development; and finally, if they wish, to provide opportunities for them to join a professional company” (Thomson-Stewart, 2000, p11). However, this will only be possible if more
professional learning disabled dance companies are developed. The current problem is pay, to keep these companies running there needs to be “a change in the UK legislation to enable us to pay learning disabled dancers for the work that they do” (Thomson, Stewart, 2000) and not let it interfere with the benefit system. If learning disabled dancers are not paid, then they are refused dance as a professional career. This obstacle must be overcome as society needs more disabled role models in order to attract disabled dance artists. This could inform the development of dance companies who could then educate more audiences about disability dance (Scott, 2002), hitting a wider spectrum of people within society (Reavill, 2000). By increasing opportunities more performances and companies can be developed, which could potentially lead to a wider established understanding of the aesthetics that may be linked to the dance genre.

The disability dance aesthetic offers “originality, creative imagination, and depth of feeling” (Redfern, 1983, p15). The emotion portrayed throughout this genre is a key aspect of its uniqueness but it must not be played upon as a sympathetic emotion, but one of self expression. It is crucial to educate society about disability dance, so that misunderstood views and expectations of disabled artists can be reconsidered. The genre must be understood in order to reach professional standards and mainstream culture. “Perception is a learned activity, and so we can get better at it if we practice” (Thomson, 1996, p7).
REFERENCE LIST
Book References


Electronic Resources

Journal References


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A
Pilot Interview One (Artistic Director)

- How long have you worked with people with learning disabilities?
- What led you to this opportunity?
- What have you learnt from working with people with learning disabilities?
- Has your work with the company been influenced by any previous or existing practice in dance?
- Do you have any aims or objectives that inform the way you work?
- Do you involve the company in the choreographic process?
- Are you influenced by the audiences response when you are making your work?
- Do you have a criteria you follow when judging a performance by people with learning disabilities?
- What aesthetics do you link with your group when you watch them perform?
- What was your first response when watching people with learning disabilities in performance?
- What do you think the first impression of the audience is when watching your group in performance?.....Do you think it is one of sympathy?
- Do you think it is possible for an audience to change their response the more they watch the groups work?
- How do you see the company developing in the future?
Pilot Interview Two (Performer Interview)

- What made you want to join this dance group?
- How many classes do you go to each week?
- How long is each class?
- How long have you been part of the company?
- Had you taken part in any other dance classes before joining this group?
- Have you been to any dance classes that you haven’t enjoyed?
- When in your dance classes, do you put forward your own ideas to help with the making of the dance? How?
- Do you work in groups throughout class? What do you enjoy the most about group work?
- Do you work on your own in class?
- What is the most recent dance the group has done?
- What do you enjoy most about the dance?
- How do you feel when you perform in front of an audience?
- How do you want the audience to react?
- Do your family and friends come and watch you in performance? What did they say to you about your performance?
- Have you seen other companies perform? Who?
- What do you think makes a good dancer?
- Have you performed with another company? What did you like about it?
- Do you feel you dance differently now compared to before you were in the group?
- Where do you see yourself going in the future?
Artistic Director Interview (completed)

- How long have you worked with people with learning disabilities?
- What led you to this opportunity?
- What have you learnt from working with people with learning disabilities?
- Has your work with the company been influenced by any previous or existing practice in dance?
- Do you have any aims or objectives that inform the way you work? If so, why have you chosen them to follow? Do you apply these aims to all your classes? If not, why? Do they differ?
- Do you involve the company in the choreographic process? How?
- What aesthetics do you link with your group when you watch them perform?
- What was your first response when watching people with learning disabilities in performance? Have you ever had a sympathetic response?
- What criteria do you follow when judging a performance by people with learning disabilities?
- What do you think the first impression of the audience is when watching your group in performance?
- In what way are you influenced by the audience's response when you are making your work?
- Do you think it is possible for an audience to change their response the more they watch the group's work?
- How do you see the company developing in the future?
Performer Interview (completed)

- What made you want to join this dance group?
- How many classes do you go to each week?
- How long is each class?
- How long have you been part of the company?
- Had you taken part in any other dance classes before joining this group? If yes…Did you enjoy them? why?
- Have you been to any dance classes that you haven’t enjoyed? If so, then why?
- When in your dance classes, do you put forward your own ideas to help with the making of the dance? How?
- Do you work in groups throughout class? If so, what do you enjoy the most about group work?
- Do you work on your own in class? If so, how do you feel when dancing on your own? Prompt…confident? Alive? Creative?
- What is the most recent dance the group has done?
  What do you enjoy most about the dance? prompt….the music? Group work? The way it makes you feel?
- How do you feel when you perform in front of an audience?
- How do you want the audience to react?
- Do your family and friends come and watch you in performance? What did they say to you about your performance?
- Have you seen other companies perform? Who?
  What did you like about their performance?
  What did you dislike about their performance?
- What do you think makes a good dancer?
- Have you performed with another company? If so, what did you like about it?
- Do you feel you dance differently now compared to before you were in the group? Prompt…better strength, confidence, balance, creativity.
- Where do you see yourself going in the future?