

Intellectual Disability, Art and Identity: A qualitative exploration of the experiences of professional artists with intellectual disabilities

Abstract

Previous research suggests that participation in the arts and/or disability arts can positively influence individuals' affirmation, or a positive embracement, of a disability identity; however, until more recently, persons with intellectual disabilities have not been included in this research to the same extent as their peers with physical or sensory disabilities. This article contributes to the increasing empirical consideration of intellectual disability identity among professional artists. Data were collected via two focus groups, one with five performing artists and the second with five visual artists, as well as follow-up, individual interviews with 8 of the artists. Key findings were identified via thematic analysis. Findings show affirmation of an intellectual disability identity emerged as a stronger theme among performing artists than visual artists. Additional themes related to confidence development, peer relationships and demonstrations of capability supported the notion that professional art practice can foster the affirmation of an intellectual disability identity.

Keywords: intellectual disability, art, disability art, affirmative model, identity, disability identity

Points of Interest:

- This research is about artists with intellectual disabilities and the “affirmative model” of disability. This model means thinking that disability is a good part of someone’s identity.
- Other research about how disability can be a good part of someone’s identity has focused on different types of disability. All participants in this research had intellectual disabilities.
- This paper describes the words and ideas that artists shared in two group discussions and individual interviews. Nobody else spoke for them.
- All performing artists said that intellectual disability was a good part of their identity. Some of the visual artists did not think it was a good part of their identity.
- Making art helped artists feel confident, make friends, and show what they could do.
- Making art helped some participants feel good about themselves and their intellectual disability. This means art can be connected to a positive identity for people with intellectual disabilities.

Introduction

The present paper details exploratory research concerning the identities of professional artists with intellectual disabilities. This research was conducted to further our understanding of the intersections of the arts and identity affirmation within the intellectual disability community. Specific attention is paid to the voices of individuals with intellectual disabilities and the words they used to describe their own experiences.

Framing Intersections of Disability and Art

The relationship between disability and art has been framed in distinct ways depending on the way art space is accessed and the intention of the artists (Yoon, Ellison, and Essl 2021; Solvang 2018). Historically, the relationship between the intellectual disability community and the art world has been underpinned by the medical model of disability, particularly in relation to art therapy or recreational art in day centres and institutions (Ineland 2005; Solvang 2012, 2018). These points of access to art continue to be commonly used and researched, while the work and experiences of professional artists with intellectual disabilities have received less, albeit growing, attention (Yoon, Ellison, and Essl 2021).

Art therapy stands in direct contrast with disability art, a distinct framework for arts participation characterized by disability rights activism, celebration of disability culture, and rejection of mainstream oppression (Kuppers 2014; Solvang 2018; Sandahl 2018). The production of disability art simultaneously creates and represents a disability culture based on shared experiences of oppression and corresponding social cohesion, and therefore can contribute to collective disability identity (Solvang 2012; Hargrave 2015). Due to the specific and intentional parameters of disability art, not all disabled artists who produce art are disability artists (Solvang 2018). In fact, there are many nuanced ways that disabled artists may engage

with the art world, from outsider art to mainstream representation; these frameworks for engagement may influence art reception, considerations of professionalism, as well as the identity of the artists themselves (Knutes Nyqvist and Stjerna 2017; Solvang 2018).

Disability Identity and the Affirmative Model

The practice of disability art is closely aligned with the affirmative model of disability (Stöckl 2014; Boeltzig, Sulewski, and Hasnain 2009; Solvang 2012; Ineland 2005); both emerged from within the disability community to challenge the dominant, personal tragedy framework which paints disability as a misfortune (McCormack and Collins 2012; Swain and French 2000). The affirmative model contradicts this supposed tragedy, by simultaneously presenting disability as a source of pride and impairment as a typical part of the life experience (Martin 2012; Cameron and Tossell 2012; Inglis 2013).

Unlike both the medical and social model of disability, the affirmative model does not align disability with problems, either within the individual or social structures (Stöckl 2014; Swain and French 2000). Kuppers (2014) illustrates the draw of the affirmative model, explaining “while some of us wish to be integrated into a more just society, others see great value in affirmation of difference, and in particular nuances of the challenge disability offers to capitalist systems that try to produce sameness” (Kuppers 2014, p. 32).

Advocacy and Identity Affirmation

Evidence for the application of the affirmative model in the general disability community has widely come from groups of people with physical or sensory disabilities. For instance, some members of the Deaf community replace the phrase “hearing loss” with “deaf gain,” and some people with physical disabilities have framed disability as an escape of societal expectations and

an impetus to try new things (Leigh, Morere, and Pezzarossi 2014; Bauman and Joseph 2014; Brandon and Elliot 2008; Swain and French 2008; Kavanagh 2012).

For individuals with intellectual disabilities, self-advocacy spaces have provided pathways to affirmation of a positive disability identity as well. The very concept of self-advocacy rests on a collective disability identity, which has been theorized to protect individuals from stigma and ableism (Bogart, Lund, and Rottenstein 2018). Self-advocacy groups are “self-authored spaces” (Anderson and Bigby 2017), and participants can build their own identities through friendships and collective action. Self-advocates who participated in leadership training reported feeling celebratory about their intellectual disability identity after engagement with the group (Caldwell 2010). Participation in self-advocacy groups has also been shown to benefit self-esteem and confidence among people with intellectual disabilities (Tilley et al. 2020).

However, the development of self-esteem and confidence is not always accompanied by affirmation of an intellectual disability identity, specifically. Anderson and Bigby (2017) found that participants in self-advocacy groups developed positive identities like being an expert or independent person; yet, these new identities were presented as countering stigmatizing labels associated with intellectual disability, as opposed to fostering the celebration of an intellectual disability identity itself.

Identity Consideration among Artists with Intellectual Disabilities

The ever-growing catalogue of professional artists with intellectual disabilities in the art world has been accompanied by an increasing body of research regarding their general experiences. In some cases, the subject matter of art guides identity consideration for the artists. This was the case in Tilley et al.’s (2021) described Madhouse Project, a disability art museum exhibition/ immersive theatre performance that highlighted historical abuses of people with

disabilities in institutions. The artists with learning disabilities who took part reportedly felt called to use this art to educate the public, and in doing so reclaimed a collective disability identity (Tilley et al. 2021).

In general, the arts offer a fertile environment for identity affirmation (Stöckl 2014) because arts participation has been linked to increased confidence, self-esteem, and reflection on self (French and Jones 2019; Knutes Nyqvist and Stjerna 2017). This was the foundation for Jones' project Positive You, in which she, a self-advocate and artist with Down syndrome, facilitated arts workshops for participants with intellectual disabilities (French and Jones 2019). Participants were guided to build confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness – traits associated with positive self-identity. Jones herself has reflected on previously wanting to feel “normal,” but she now celebrates her intellectual disability identity, explaining “without Down syndrome I would not be me” (French and Jones 2021, pg. 319).

Salman's (2020) collection of stories by people with learning disabilities, a more common label for intellectual disabilities in the United Kingdom, features accomplished professionals who consider identity in relation to their art journeys. In the collection, recording artist Lizzie Emeh (2020) writes about her use of music to educate people about learning disabilities and dispel myths; she explained, “I called my debut album *Loud and Proud* because I wanted to be celebratory about learning disability” (pg. 101). Visual artist Laura Broughton also acknowledges identity in her essay, but explains that she prefers not “to be put into a box” with the label learning disability (Broughton 2020). However, like Emeh, she uses her drawings to guide others into her world as a disabled woman. Sarah Gordy, a prominent actress with Down syndrome, uses her chapter to reflect on her identity as a woman and actor, which she rates as more important to her than her identity as a person with Down syndrome (Gordy 2020).

These are individual cases, and while they provide examples of variation in intellectual disability identity celebration, they were not collected and compiled with the goal of understanding identity affirmation. These cases were reported in the form of life stories, and therefore highlight the voices of people with intellectual disabilities themselves. This is important because the production of knowledge about and on persons with intellectual disabilities, rather than for and with them, can contribute to the marginalization of the community (Mietola, Miettinen, and Vehmas 2017; McDonald et al. 2017). For example, Yoon et al. (2021) collected information from an art program staff because some artists had limitations in their verbal communication. In acknowledging the limitations of this data, Yoon et al. (2021) call for complementary research from the perspectives of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Barriers to an Intellectual Disability Identity Affirmation

Despite evidence of identity affirmation in art and advocacy spaces, some members of the disability community may not affirm a disability identity for a variety of reasons including experiences with discrimination, feelings of stigma, and/or internalized ableism (Kohli and Atencio 2021). Individuals with intellectual disabilities may experience these same barriers in addition to unique challenges.

One unique challenge can be a lack of awareness or understanding about intellectual disabilities. Although the proposed rates of awareness differ considerably, evidence suggests a large proportion of people with intellectual disabilities lack awareness or a full understanding of this prescribed identity (Finlay and Lyons 2005; Jones 2012; Monteleone and Forrester-Jones 2016). In addition, people's understanding of such labels may not correspond to their own

experiences, particularly if their understanding is informed by social stigma, which could deter self-identification (McVittie, Goodall, and McKinlay 2008).

Furthermore, people with intellectual disabilities have not historically been included in disability art and advocacy spaces to the same extent as their peers with physical or sensory disabilities (Goodley and Moore 2002). While the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities has improved considerably, a hierarchal consideration of disability, in which individuals with physical or sensory disabilities are held in higher esteem than their peers with intellectual disabilities, may still be felt. This has been called out by self-advocates with intellectual disabilities in the past, who have described themselves as the “doormat” of the disability community (Docherty et al. 2005). This sense of isolation, even within the general disability community may impact the likelihood of disability identity affirmation. This study aims to build upon existing literature by exploring the experiences of professional visual and performing artists with intellectual disabilities in Ireland, and by specifically investigating their consideration or affirmation of a disability identity in relation to their interaction with the art world and their creation of art.

Research process

The research study was founded in a qualitative framework due to its explorative nature, emphasis on the personal experiences of people with intellectual disabilities (Devers and Frankel 2000), and the goal of understanding the perspectives of people with intellectual disabilities from their own words (Kaehne and O'Connell 2010; Mactavish, Mahon, and Lutfiyya 2000; Gates and Waight 2007). Input from two colleagues with intellectual disabilities, who were invited to participate as project advisors (Bigby, Frawley, and Ramcharan 2014), was included at the project development and data collection stages. Specifically, these colleagues helped review

informational and consent materials, focus group and interview protocols, and helped facilitate the first of two focus groups.

Researchers' Personal Positions

The personal positions of researchers influence their work by affecting their access to the field, impacting the researcher-participant relationship, and by shaping the interpretation and representation of information provided by participants (Berger 2015). The first author has an academic background in the fine arts and painting, as well as a brother with Down syndrome who participates in theatre (who provided consent for this to be disclosed). This background was shared with all participants during data collection, and this information was referenced by participants in focus group conversations. The second author was the thesis supervisor, an academic in the field of Disability Studies with experience in conducting research along people with intellectual disabilities (Nind and Vinha 2014; Walmsley, Strnadová, and Johnson 2018).

Sampling and Recruitment

This research project utilized purposive sampling because eligible participants were required to be from a small, specific population: Irish artists with intellectual disabilities who produce professional work. There was no intent to recruit a representative population of participants (Devers and Frankel 2000). Upon receiving ethical approval from Trinity College Dublin in 2017, two directors of arts organizations were contacted by the first author and asked to act as gatekeepers and assist with recruitment. These directors were e-mailed what the research project was about and what a gatekeeping role would involve. In addition, this e-mail included an accessible information booklet about the study, an electronic link to the information video, participant consent forms, and a gatekeeper agreement form. The advertisement materials distributed, as well as participant consent forms, used plain English, large font, adequate spacing, and each written statement had an accompanying image (NDA 2009). The information video

included audio so people could listen to the information without reading.

This initial contact letter to potential gatekeepers also re-iterated the following eligibility requirements: participants were required to be over the age of 18, live in Ireland, and be a professional artist who self-identified as having an intellectual disability. People were not considered eligible for participation if their artistic engagement was leisurely or therapeutic in nature. Furthermore, the information booklet explained that people could participate with or without a support person, and that they were still eligible to participate if they had a legal guardian.

Sample Demographics

The final sample of participants included ten individuals: five performing artists and five visual artists. Artists participated in two focus groups, one for visual artists and a second for performing artists. Every performing artist participated in a follow-up, individual interview while only three visual artists did. There were six men and four women in the overall sample; however, there was an equal number of men and women interview participants (four each). All interviews were held exactly one week after the focus group with the exception of one participant who partook in a focus group and interview on the same day because of scheduling conflicts. Performing artists were all members of the same theatre company while all visual artists worked in the same art studio.

Participants' ages ranged from 30 to 71. The performing artists were younger with a mean age of 43, while the mean age of visual artists was 64. Where participants lived varied, although six lived in suburban area and four lived in smaller towns. Three performing artists lived in group homes and two lived in their family home. Two visual artists lived in independent flats, with support from a disability service organization, and one lived in a group home. The

accommodation type of the remaining visual artists was not disclosed. Demographic details are provided in Table 1.

(Insert Table 1)

Data Collection

Data were collected through focus groups and follow up individual interviews conducted by the first author. Focus groups enable active participation and input of people with intellectual disability in research concerning them, which is important because the inclusion of participants with intellectual disability in research has been historically limited, and research has predominantly relied on the voices of family members, caseworkers and clinicians (Mactavish, Mahon, and Lutfiyya 2000; McDonald, Conroy, and Olick 2017; Hillier, Johnson, and Traustadottir 2007).

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted, each at the art organization grounds so participants were in familiar environments and had familiar colleagues participating alongside them (Gates and Waight 2007). An experienced colleague with an intellectual disability supported the key researcher as an assistant during one focus group with performing artists (Gates and Waight 2007). Due to schedule conflicts, the researcher facilitated the focus group with visual artists independently. The focus groups commenced with a preference game that aimed to establish rapport and instill confidence among participants (Kaehne and O'Connell 2010). For instance, participants were asked to choose between two options like pizza or ice cream, drama or comedy plays, and so forth. Participants practised explaining why they chose what they did and providing details in response to questions, such as choosing comedy over drama because they like to make people laugh.

During the focus group conversation, participants were asked to consider things that are good or hard about: being an artist, making art, and being an artist with intellectual disability. Given these open-ended prompts, the focus groups allowed participants to direct the conversation and respond to each other. The researcher interjected sparingly with follow-up questions. Open-ended prompts were used because they are more reliable than dichotomous questioning, which may inspire acquiescence, and because they allowed participants to direct the topics addressed. Participants occasionally went on tangents, so directive questioning was used sparingly to keep conversation focused (Mactavish, Mahon, and Lutfiyya 2000). The researcher also supplied pictures related to the focus group prompts because the use of visual aids is an established practice for supporting participation of people with intellectual disabilities (García Iriarte et al. 2014; Gates and Waight 2007).

Interviews

For the second phase of data collection, eight artists participated in a follow-up individual interview, which took place at least one week after the focus group. The researcher utilized this two-phase approach to build rapport with participants and to learn about topics they deemed important during the focus group. This allowed the researcher to prompt more in-depth conversations about each participant's personal experiences and feelings during the interviews. Unlike the focus groups, the interviews included questions surrounding personal feelings toward identity.

Full respondent validation, in the sense that participants checked focus group and interview transcripts, was also not utilized due to time restraints. However, the researcher asked clarifying, follow-up questions during both the focus group and interview processes to ensure as accurate of an interpretation of the conversation as possible. Throughout the focus group and

interview, the researcher repeated back her understanding of what the participants said to garner confirmation or alterations of substantial statements (Maxwell, Bickman, and Rog 2009).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was framed by an inductive approach because the codes and themes emerged from the data (Grbich 2013). Anonymized transcripts were uploaded to the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 11, and every transcription was first read through without coding. Then, the researcher did a preliminary coding of each transcript, making a codebook along the way. Codes were created from the words and phrases expressed by participants. After coding every focus group and interview transcript, the codebook was revised and refined (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays 2000). Discussions between both authors during data analysis enabled the review of themes and the consideration of bias to keep the process rigorous.

The researcher noted recurring themes as well as deviant cases, using Nvivo to determine how many participants referenced a particular theme and how many times the theme was referenced. Participants were also classified by type of artist, performing or visual, so disparities could be noted. The researcher mapped out the themes in relation to the overarching research questions. The researcher tracked the quotations used to ensure the entire sample was represented, and not just a few participants. Included quotations are labeled with pseudonyms assigned to each participant.

Results

Findings illuminated variances in whether participants thought of intellectual disability as part of their identity and if so, whether they affirmed it as a positive aspect of their identity. Notable differences between performing artists and visual artists emerged, with performing artists claiming an intellectual disability identity more readily. Themes connected to identity and

art practice also arose, suggesting art practices can promote disability identity affirmation. Among participants, professional art practice was discussed in relation to strong friendships, opportunities to educate others and/or demonstrate capabilities, as well as a facilitator of confidence and independence.

Framing Disability within the Study

Language norms regarding disability can vary based on context and culture. For instance, person-first language (person with a disability) is more common in the United States than identity-first language (disabled person), which is more popular in certain European countries and represents the social model of disability by suggesting individuals are disabled by their environments. This research used the term “intellectual disability,” and all participants demonstrated an understanding of this term. However, some participants had different preferences for how they described themselves or intellectual disability in general. For example, some participants used “learning disability,” which is often used interchangeably with intellectual disability in Ireland, and one participant discussed having a “learning condition” when talking about intellectual disability. In addition, many artists used the word “disability” instead of intellectual disability during interviews and focus group discussions. Since interview and focus group discussions focused on intellectual disability, the authors feel confident that participants were referring to intellectual disability specifically unless otherwise noted. The authors adhere to a social model of disability in the framing of this research but use person-first language in alignment with the participants’ preference for doing so.

Consideration of an Intellectual Disability Identity

All participants demonstrated awareness and understanding of intellectual disability, but the ways they showed and expressed a positive association with intellectual disability varied. To

prompt consideration of identity during the individual interviews, participants were asked “do you think that having an intellectual disability is part of who you are?” In response to this prompt, six of the eight interview participants responded affirmatively (Table 2). Not every participant, however, agreed that intellectual disability was part of who they were. For example, one person did not think about it while for another, a physical impairment was more prominent.

[insert table 2]

Following this prompt, interview participants who confirmed that having an intellectual disability was part of their identity were then asked if this was a “good part” of who they were. Having an intellectual disability was mostly a good part of who participants were. Nevertheless, the stigma associated with the label was rejected. Jack explained that the term “intellectual disability” painted people with intellectual disability as not being capable:

Yea, and I’m not too keen on the label intellectual disability, remember...And I just feel that it makes it sound that whoever has it, is, is not intelligent. When in fact, we’re all intelligent and—at many different, many different, um things. (Jack, interview)

James elaborated that the label “intellectual disability” suggested there was something wrong with a person. This did not correspond with his lived experience, as he himself and others with intellectual disabilities had created artwork to the same standard as professional artists without intellectual disability. When asked about his experience creating art as a person with intellectual disability, he adamantly replied there was no difference between his artistic experience and process than that of a non-disabled artist:

No difference to an ordinary person... No difference at all! Absolutely none! And you can say that to all your teachers! There’s nothing. And I guarantee they come down, and they say “what! They do acting, they do drama, they do art, they do this they do that (sighs). There’s nothing wrong with them at all. They’re just humans. So yeah. (James, interview)

By claiming people with intellectual disabilities are “just humans,” it could be interpreted that this participant is suggesting the intellectual disability label, and perhaps the lesser expectations associated with this label, is dehumanizing.

The overarching commonality, that everyone is human, was also brought up in the focus group of performing artists. However, this sense of sameness did not inspire a rejection of the label “intellectual disability.” Rather, performing artists who affirmed intellectual disability as part of their identity expressed self-pride in themselves and the disability labels attached to them. When the researcher asked at the focus group with performing artists what was good about being actors with intellectual disabilities, the conversation led two actresses to agree about being proud of who they were:

Molly: For me, I’m very proud of who I am—

Grace: Oh yea, and I am proud of myself! (Performing artists focus group)

Among these performing artists who did affirm an intellectual disability identity, most did so in a moderate capacity. Grace explained that being an actor made her “feel happy in [herself]”.

Connor expressed his pride, by pronouncing himself “famous” due to his role in a film.

However, Molly was an outlier in her enthusiastic affirmation because she professed a high level of passion and pride regarding intellectual disability. When asked how being an actress with intellectual disability made her feel about herself, she laughed and exclaimed “pretty damn good!” She also explained she doesn’t “mind” having a disability:

I know what I have, I don’t need anyone to tell me what I have, I just say look guys I know what I have, I don’t mind. I’m the same person- I’m the same person as I’ve always been. (Molly, interview)

Molly expanded on this concept that having a disability was a part of her, and didn’t change anything by referencing a popular song:

Yea, I'm very proud of who I am! No matter what, who I am, I'm still... what do they call it from that song? I'm still Jenny from the block! I'm Molly, and that [is] who I am. And I want to be that. (Molly, interview)

This enthusiasm was in sharp contrast to James, a visual artist, who identified with disability, but did not assert whether it was a positive thing or not. He simply stated, "I think it is part of me, so whatever" (James, interview). This contrast mirrors a clear divide between the participating performing artists and visual artists in their approach to intellectual disability identity affirmation.

It is plausible that the division in participant reactions to the label "intellectual disability" is related both to the type of art created and the environment in which this art was made. The artists talked about things they learned from directors or mentors at their art organizations. It is possible that the different groups of artists were exposed to different opinions on intellectual disability that they adopted into their personal perspective. For instance, Connor talked about how their theatre company director taught him about laws in Ireland which banned people with intellectual disabilities from getting married. It is worth noting that this study was conducted in 2017, when Irish legislation was being reformed in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to enable its ratification. Therefore, much public debate and awareness raising about issues covered by the legislation (e.g., unlawful relationships of people with intellectual disabilities) occurred at that time. Connor reflected on how this was unfair, and part of why he did the show was because "we have to help them, how to do that" (Connor, focus group). In this case, the performing artists were taught that it is the unfair laws that need changing, not them.

The visual artists were exposed to different perspectives during their time at the studio. Jack described how a visiting artist came and worked on an exhibition with him and other studio artists with intellectual disabilities. The theme of the exhibition was 'We are artists, no other

labels please.’ He explained that the exhibition coordinator did not like to tell viewers the contributing artists were artists with “special needs,” because she would prefer to just say they were artists:

She told all of us when she organized it, all of us who were part of it, or witnessed it, that if we call some artists special needs and artists with special needs, and we, we make it sound as if the fact we have special needs signals that is more important than the fact that we are artists (Jack, interview).

It is no surprise, that Jack explained “I prefer just to be called an artist” when talking about having an intellectual disability. It is also possible that the performing artists were happy to accept the label of intellectual disability because they acted in plays and movies on the topic of intellectual disability rights and experiences. Although some visual artists participated in art exhibitions for disabled people, the thematic content of their work was not related to disability. However, some visual artists also affirmed their intellectual disability identity and even those who did not accept the label, still felt a sense of pride in themselves and did not want to change who they were.

Friendships and Affirmation

It is important to note that the experience of being an artist cannot be separated from the experience of making friends for some participants of this study. It is likely that the formation of strong friendships, which is not unique to theatre companies or art studios, also contributes to identity affirmation. The conflation between being an artist, making friends, and affirming one’s identity was reflected on by Molly:

For me that is seriously, like, wow! I also get to be with my friends, who I really love the most... guys seriously, I am really, really serious, part of what I’m saying I really love you, a lot ...and now I realize who I am (Molly, performing artists focus group).

Her expressed love for her friends seemed so entangled with her experience as an actress, that they cannot be divided as separate, contributing factors to her realization of who she is. When

another actress was asked about why she believed intellectual disability was a positive part of her identity, she reasoned “Because I’m.. because they’re my friends- and we all have a disability in life. Like Grace and [other actor]” (Riley, interview). Her positive affirmation was related to identifying with her friends that she admired and cared for.

Challenging Assumptions about ID

Art as a Facilitator of Identity Affirmation

Despite differences in whether artists formally adopted intellectual disability as a part of their identity or not, art practices and art communities were described as fertile grounds for positive self-regard. In particular, the visual artists described artmaking as being conducive to the celebration of disability and difference. James explained that the studio mantra was ‘art is for everyone,’ and that the studio offered space and classes for artists with and without intellectual disabilities. This inclusiveness of art is related to the belief that everyone has different styles, and one style is not better than another:

I think the best is also talking to other artists and seeing different things, and really not just saying ‘I’m the best’- you know, no you’re not. No one is the best. Everyone is equal in art (James, interview).

The visual artists described having ownership over their work, with Amelia asserting “it’s your art.” Painters talked about representing objects in different colors and lights. They used their imagination to create things that might not appear that way in real life. Since art is personal and not bound to realistic representation, many visual artists agreed that there are no mistakes in art. It is possible this could be contrasted with other pursuits, like school, because every artistic mark is right in its own sense. James took pride in calling his mistakes, “happy accidents,” like popular painter Bob Ross.

Demonstrating Capabilities and Educating Others

In addition, being an artist seemingly influenced participants' identities because it provided them opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities and dispel myths that people with intellectual disabilities are incapable. The education of outsiders and audience members took two forms. Firstly, artists felt they were showing others "what they could do," as Molly stated, and thus demonstrating that people with intellectual disabilities are capable beings. The second form of education was exclusive to performing artists, and directly related to producing performances with content that related to the experiences and rights of people with disabilities.

Molly summarized the first form of education, claiming, "Being who I am is the biggest [most important thing for her]... And show them what I can do" (Molly, interview). Art was presented as a vehicle for the acceptance and affirmation of intellectual disability because it allowed the artists to show other people what they were capable of. This theme emerged in both focus groups and in a number of individual interviews. James talked about how artists without disabilities visited the art studio and were impressed by the quality artwork:

And mainstream artists come here now and they say 'What? You do this!— people with learning difficulties?'. I said yea. We don't, don't talk about it. We just do and that's it. And a person who has none can come, and they learn from us for themselves (James, focus group).

Other visual artists reiterated how it felt nice to prove their capabilities to outsiders. For some people, they felt successful if people were impressed by their work. Amelia claimed it "feels great when you get to see people see your artwork and be impressed", and Jack echoed this saying he felt special when people admired his work at exhibitions. Similarly, Sean, a performing artist, described how enjoyable it was to hear people congratulate him after a show. In this sense, it seems that an affirmation of one's identity, including an intellectual disability identity, is linked to the production of proof that one is capable of being an accomplished artist.

Unlike the visual artist participants, the performing artists participated in plays and films about disability. This provided an opportunity to not only present themselves as capable

performers, but to educate audience members on a topic on which they had experiential expertise. Teaching people about wider issues relating to the rights of people with intellectual disabilities may have influenced affirmation of participants. By pointing out the problems in society, the actors are simultaneously pointing out that the problems are not individuals with disabilities.

Every performing artist in the study believed that the film that they acted in taught people about the rights of people with ID to have privacy and romantic relationships. Sean explained in reference to himself and fellow acting troupe members (all with intellectual disabilities):

It was good to do it. And to show people like, what we can do. And it's to show people about that, that even with people with disabilities, that they want to do their own thing and they want to go to, go to a hotel room and be alone together... And I can, um that they love each other and they, they want to do their own thing (Sean, interview).

Other actors noted that this film illustrated topics like drinking or using drugs, which were considered sensitive by the group. Some of the participants also acted in a play that was written around the actual dreams and goals of the actors. When reflecting on this play, Molly explained that their play was first and foremost teaching the audience to “imagine people like us” (Molly, focus group). This simple statement could be interpreted as having layers of significance. Firstly, she distinguishes herself and her fellow actors with intellectual disabilities from the nondisabled audience members. Secondly, she suggests that people on the outside do not know what it is like and need help from a person with intellectual disabilities to understand their lived experiences. This statement preceded a passionate conversation among focus group members about teaching people how they have the right to different opportunities, like independent living, and the right to make their own choices:

Molly: we taught the audience that... people like us, they want to have opportunities ... live in our own homes... people with disabilities never had that chance actually. To us, people say don't do that, don't do this. Why?... We want to do things, what we want to do....
Grace: they can't stop us from doing what we want to do

Connor: yea

Grace: it's our choices

Molly: yea

Connor: it's the way we feel, right Sean?

Sean: Yea it's our choice and it's the way we feel (Performing artists focus group)

The same actress, Molly, who was very passionate about affirming her intellectual disability identity, was also enthusiastic about expressing her dreams and the challenges she faces in achieving them. She explained that she enjoyed performing in the play because it was an artistic demonstration of what she wants and why she deserves it:

Because it shows people what I want, and makes people to realize I'm the same... We're the same as anyone else. And say, oh ... people with disabilities can't get married- we want too! Because that's part of our lives. Look at my family, all of them are blooming, frickin married. And I'm not married... Yea. And I want to be part of what they have! (Molly, interview)

The above excerpt from Molly highlights complex, and sometimes seemingly contradictory layers of intellectual disability identity affirmation as well. On one hand, Molly showed nondisabled audience members the differences between their life and hers, and as noted earlier, she claimed these differences and was proud of who she was as a woman with intellectual disabilities. On the other hand, Molly demonstrated similarities between this audience and herself, noting how "we're the same as anyone else," and that she wanted to be married too.

Confidence and Independence

Becoming confident and accomplished artists itself can be perceived as a rejection of traditional, societal assumptions about intellectual disability. Many artists discussed their experiences gaining confidence in their artwork and who they were as a person. Grace explained "I was a bit shy before I went in front of camera. I'm not so [now]." Amelia noted her increase in confidence by saying "I think it brought me out of my inner self I suppose." Part of this confidence was attributed to their feelings of growth as an artist. Participants discussed being more confident in the creation of their work. Sean explained that although he did some acting

before, his work on professional projects with his current theatre company was different. He attributed his increased skills and confidence to the work done as a professional, explaining “now I know more about acting since I started here.”

Themes of independence also emerged in interviews with some performing and visual artists. Grace explained that being an artist at the theatre company had facilitated her independence:

Because I feel more independent in myself, and it helps me a lot- being independent helps me a lot to get around, by myself. Even though I have a disability (Grace, interview)

In the art studio and at the theatre company space, artists explained that they got to make choices. James explained that “everyone who’s here is choosing to be here,” and that they could create whatever vision they had (James, visual artists focus group). Molly similarly described why this opportunity to make choices was important to her, explaining, “yea you make choices, and when you make choices you make a chance for yourself to show what you can do” (Molly, interview). In this sense, being supported to be independent and make choices may have strengthened participant’s abilities to prove their capabilities.

The notion of ‘making a living’ can also be related to independence. However, the requisite that participants be ‘professional artists’ was not determined by whether their art generated income, but by the environment in which it was created, the presence of extensive training, and the production of high-quality work. Therefore, artists were not directly asked whether they ‘made a living’ off their artwork. All visual art participants did discuss selling artwork, however. For instance, Jack mentioned being coached by mentors at his art studio to not give his art away for free, elaborating that “if someone likes your artwork at an exhibition and they want to buy it, it makes you feel special.” Other participants in the visual artists focus group agreed with this sentiment.

Discussion

This paper explored the consideration of an intellectual disability identity among 10 professional artists in Ireland. While all participants had awareness and demonstrated insight about their intellectual disability, the extent to which they affirmed or celebrated an intellectual disability identity within their own self-concept varied. Factors relating to both the art-making process and the art space impacted participants' identity considerations. Specifically, the creation of artwork allowed participants to demonstrate their capabilities and position themselves as educators, while the space in which it was created influenced friendships and confidence. Implications of these findings are discussed below.

Identity and Art-Making

Like other artists' accounts (see Salman 2020), actors and visual artists in this study reported having multi-faceted identities. For instance, many identified strongly with their role as an artist and did not seem to perceive intellectual disability as a master status. The balancing act of multiple identities does not align with Hargrave's (2015) interpretation of the affirmative model of disability, but it is consistent with Solvang's observation that identity amongst disability artists can be fluid (2012). Overall, there was variation in the extent to which an intellectual disability was affirmed or celebrated. Some performing artist participants were on a level like Emeh's (2020) "Loud and Proud;" however, some visual artists did not claim that intellectual disability was a good part of their identity and associated the term 'intellectual disability' with negative stigma.

The art-making process and subject matter may have impacted differences in identity affirmation. The performing artists in this research study performed in dramas and a film that

addressed the discrimination people with intellectual disabilities face on a regular basis, a project that clearly fell within the parameters of disability art (Solvang 2018). The production of disability art on intellectual disability-specific themes like autonomy or abuse is a form of advocacy which has influenced feelings around a collective disability identity amongst other artist groups as well (Tilley et al. 2020; Tilley et al. 2021).

However, artists in this study did not exclusively produce disability art; their work was not always about disability nor was it solely for an audience of people with disabilities. This is reminiscent of Gordy's body of acting work, which has featured disability-specific roles and those where her disability is irrelevant to the plot (Gordy 2020). The art produced by actors with intellectual disabilities is inseparable from their bodies, though— they are the artwork, and visible disabilities like Down syndrome are apparent.

Meanwhile, none of the visual artists in this study produced artwork with overt, visual references to disability. The sense that art provides opportunities to be 'equal' to or the 'same' as people without disabilities (Boeltzig, Sulewski, and Hasnain 2009; Stöckl 2014) was expressed by both visual and performing artists in this project. This theme was more dominant among visual artists who explained that everyone can do art, and that one style is not better than another. It is plausible that the visual artists felt a stronger affinity with the notion of equality in art spaces because their work offered no discerning evidence of disability and could be consumed by an audience who do not know about the artist's disability.

Identity and Art Space

Different reactions to the label "intellectual disability" can also be related to the environment in which art was made, which can be influenced by the studio or theatre company's culture. Openness about intellectual disability is often not a feature in family or living spaces that

people with intellectual disabilities occupy (Monteleone and Forrester-Jones 2016). Therefore, it is significant that both performing and visual artists described their art organizations as spaces where disability was discussed by directors, mentors, and among the resident artists. Different groups of artists may have been exposed to different opinions on intellectual disability that they adopted into their personal perspective. For example, one visual artist attributed his disdain for the intellectual disability label to a talk he had with a visiting, nondisabled artist. Hargrave (2015) found significant variation in organization culture, and contrasted the language used by theatre companies Mind the Gap (UK), Back to Back (Australia), and the Dark Horse (UK) to refer to actors with learning disabilities, though the corresponding actors' opinions on these labels were not provided.

Participants also talked about art organizations as safe spaces that respected artists' dignity and cultivated independence. Such spaces can be rare for people with intellectual disabilities. Knutes Nvquist and Stjerna (2017) reported that an art centre that previously was considered a safe space for artists with intellectual disabilities had a change in leadership that resulted in a shift to paternalistic governing and limited autonomy for artists. Therefore, it is important to note that not all art spaces, studios or troupes are created equal. While art-making can be a fertile environment for positive disability identity development, the culture and space where the art is made is an important factor that at times is inseparable from the art making process.

The described art spaces in this study could be considered "self-authored" spaces, like self-advocacy group spaces (Anderson and Bigby 2017), because participants had control and autonomy over their day and the art made. In fact, many of the positive factors for disability identity affirmation discussed in this study have also been identified as key elements in self-

advocacy spaces. For instance, Tilley et al. (2020) reported on how self-advocacy group membership provides opportunity for individuals to build personal resources like knowledge and confidence. One way the artists in this study built personal resources was by showcasing their capabilities through their artwork and building self-confidence. This was an emancipatory process (Ineland 2005) that had positive implications for various facets of identity, not just an intellectual disability identity. This finding parallels self-advocacy group research where results suggest participants also developed multiple, positive identities and facets of self (Anderson and Bigby 2017).

Personal resources were also built through relationships with other artists. Friendships were an important factor to identity affirmation for some participants in this study. Artists described having admiration for their friends with intellectual disabilities and transferring that positive association into their own intellectual disability identities. This findings supports Bogart et al.'s (2018) rejection-identification model, which illustrates how identifying with others within a marginalized group can protect individuals from negative stigma and self-identity.

This has implications far beyond the art and advocacy world, as friendship opportunities are not exclusive to art and self-advocacy settings. However, the thematic findings of this study relating to positive factors for identity affirmation did overlap with factors commonly found in advocacy spaces. Further consideration of how art-making and art spaces relate to disability advocacy, independent of disability art content, would be fruitful and shed light on factors that can be cultivated in a variety of settings and spaces to encourage positive association with an intellectual disability identity.

Artist Voices

Lastly, this research project contributes to the growing base of literature around art, intellectual disability, and identity by highlighting the voices of artists with intellectual

disabilities themselves. There has been a history of over-relying on researcher observation and proxy respondents in the field of intellectual disability (Mietola, Miettinen, and Vehmas 2017; McDonald et al. 2017). These methods are one way in which experiences of people with disabilities, particularly those with limitations in verbal communication, continue to be researched; however, as is the case in Yoon et al.'s (2021) work on artists with cognitive disabilities, this is accompanied by a call for complementary work that includes the words and voices of people with disabilities. The work of Salman (2020) and French and Jones (2019, 2021) answer this call, relying on life-story approaches for self-advocate authorship. This paper aimed to similarly contribute. The authors prioritized including participants' own words accompanied by the surrounding interview or focus group context so the audience could read and learn about these experiences themselves. However, this study did have limitations.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

This project reported findings for a small sample of artists from two different art organizations at one point in time and during significant changes in national legislation concerning disability (Ireland's ratification of the CRPD was pending). As stated above, identity can be considered a fluid process. A longitudinal study would enable the exploration of identity over time, whether and how it changes as artists' careers progress, they accumulate new experiences and the political context shifts.

Further involvement of the two colleagues with intellectual disabilities as project advisors was not pursued because of the time limitations of the study, which was conducted for the first author's master's dissertation. Within a longer timeframe, they would have been invited to participate in data analysis, interpretation and write up or other forms of dissemination of findings.

This study was exploratory in nature and could provide footing for future research concerning intellectual disability identity, inclusive art spaces, and advocacy. Since the visual artists in this study did not produce disability art specifically, it would be constructive to learn more from intellectual disability artists who do use visual mediums. In addition, research that purposefully explores art organization culture in relation to disability identity affirmation would be beneficial. Understanding perspectives from artists associated with a greater variety of organizations, as well as artists who operate independently, could shed light on differentiating elements. Finally, due to similar findings on elements that make art spaces and self-advocacy spaces conducive to positive identity development, it would be worth exploring and comparing settings beyond the art world

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to extend their appreciation to their colleagues Margaret Turley and Mei Lin Yap who provided guidance and expertise as self-advocates.

Declaration of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

References

- Anderson, Sian, and Christine Bigby. 2017. "Self-advocacy as a means to positive identities for people with intellectual disability: 'We just help them, be them really'." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 30 (1):109-20.
- Bauman, H. Dirksen L., and J. Murray Joseph. 2014. "Deaf Gain: An Introduction." In, xv. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Berger, Roni. 2015. "Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research." *Qualitative research* 15 (2):219-34.
- Bigby, Christine, Patsie Frawley, and Paul Ramcharan. 2014. "Conceptualizing inclusive research with people with intellectual disability." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 27 (1):3-12.
- Boeltzig, Heike, Jennifer Sullivan Sulewski, and Rooshey Hasnain. 2009. "Career development among young disabled artists." *Disability & Society* 24 (6):753-69. doi: 10.1080/09687590903160258.
- Bogart, Kathleen R, Emily M Lund, and Adena Rottenstein. 2018. "Disability pride protects self-esteem through the rejection-identification model." *Rehabilitation psychology* 63 (1):155.
- Brandon, Tony, and Alice Elliot. 2008. "The Art of Affirming Identity." In *Disability on Equal Terms*, edited by John Swain and Sally French, 90-103. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Broughton, Laura. 2020. "Laura's World." In *Made Possible: Stories of success by people with learning disabilities — in their own words*, edited by Saba Salman. Unbound.
- Caldwell, Joe. 2010. "Leadership development of individuals with developmental disabilities in the self-advocacy movement." *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 54 (11):1004-14.
- Cameron, Colin, and David Tossell. 2012. "Another way of looking." *Social Work Education* 31 (2):241-5. doi: 10.1080/02615479.2012.644973.
- Devers, Kelly J., and Richard M. Frankel. 2000. "Study Design in Qualitative Research—2: Sampling and Data Collection Strategies." *Education for Health: Change in Learning & Practice (Taylor & Francis Ltd)* 13 (2):263-71. doi: 10.1080/13576280050074543.
- Docherty, D., R. Hughes, P. Phillips, D. Corbett, and B. Regan. 2005. "This is what we think." In *Another Disability Studies Reader? People with Learning Difficulties and a Disabling World.*, edited by D. Goodley and G Van Hove, 27-51. London: Garant.
- Emeh, Lizzie 2020. "Loud and Proud." In *Made Possible: Stories of success by people with learning disabilities — in their own words*, edited by Saba Salman, 97-116. Unbound.
- Finlay, W. M. L., and E. Lyons. 2005. "Rejecting the Label: A Social Constructionist Analysis." *Mental Retardation: A Journal of Practices, Policy and Perspectives* 43 (2):120-34.
- French, Jade, and Leah Jones. 2019. "Positive You: a self-advocate's arts-based approach for building self-esteem." *Disability & Society* 34 (2):189-203.
- . 2021. "Recipe for a Good Life: A Self-Advocate's Perspective on Curating the " Good Life" to Explore Happiness and Living Well." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 15 (3):307-27.
- García Iriarte, Edurne, Patricia O'Brien, Roy McConkey, Marie Wolfe, and Siobhain O'Doherty. 2014. "Identifying the Key Concerns of Irish Persons with Intellectual Disability."

- Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 27 (6):564-75. doi: 10.1111/jar.12099.
- Gates, Bob, and Mary Waight. 2007. "Reflections on conducting focus groups with people with learning disabilities: Theoretical and practical issues." *Journal of Research in Nursing* 12 (2):111-26. doi: 10.1177/1744987106075617.
- Goodley, Dan, and Michael Moore. 2002. *Disability Arts Against Exclusion: People with Learning Difficulties and their Performing Arts*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: BILD Publications.
- Gordy, Sarah 2020. "Champagne, Snakes and Stealing Chips." In *Made Possible: Stories of success by people with learning disabilities — in their own words*, edited by Saba Salman, 55-74. Unbound.
- Grbich, Carol. 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*. 2 ed. London: SAGE Publications.
- Hargrave, Matt. 2015. *Theatres of Learning Disability: Good, Bad or Plain Ugly?* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hillier, Lynne, Kelley Johnson, and Rannveig Traustadottir. 2007. "Research with People with Intellectual Disabilities." In *Researching the Margins: Strategies for Ethical and Rigorous Research with Marginalised Communities*, edited by Marian Pitts and Anthony Smith. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ineland, J. 2005. "Logics and discourses in disability arts in Sweden: A neo-institutional perspective." *Disability & Society* 20 (7):749-62.
- Inglis, Pamela Anne. 2013. "Reinterpreting learning difficulty: A professional and personal challenge?" *Disability & Society* 28 (3):423-6. doi: 10.1080/09687599.2013.776817.
- Jones, Jennifer L. 2012. "Factors associated with self-concept: Adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities share their perspectives." *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 50 (1):31-40. doi: 10.1352/1934-9556-50.1.31.
- Kaehne, Axel, and Clare O'Connell. 2010. "Focus groups with people with learning disabilities." *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities* 14 (2):133.
- Kavanagh, E. 2012. "Affirmation through disability: one athlete's personal journey to the London Paralympic Games." *Perspectives in Public Health* 132 (2):68-74.
- Knutes Nyqvist, Helen, and Marie-Louise Stjerna. 2017. "Artistry and disability—Doing art for real? Affordances at a day activity centre with an artistic profile." *Disability & Society* 32 (7):966-85.
- Kohli, Jaskirat, and Matthew Atencio. 2021. "'The person with a disability gets to define their disability': exploring identity formation through the voices of university students." *Disability & Society*:1-23.
- Kuppers, Petra. 2014. *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction*: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Leigh, Irene W., Donna A. Morere, and Caroline Kobek Pezzarossi. 2014. "Deaf gain: Beyond deaf culture." In *Deaf gain: Raising the stakes for human diversity.*, edited by H. Dirksen L. Bauman and Joseph J. Murray, 356-71. Minneapolis, MN, US: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mactavish, J. B., M. J. Mahon, and Z. M. Lutfiyya. 2000. "'I can speak for myself': Involving individuals with intellectual disabilities as research participants." *MENTAL RETARDATION* 38 (3):216-27.

- Martin, Nicola. 2012. "Disability Identity--Disability Pride." *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 16 (1):14-8.
- Maxwell, J, L Bickman, and DJ Rog. 2009. "The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods." *SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks.* doi 10:9781483348858.
- McCormack, C., and B. Collins. 2012. "The affirmative model of disability: A means to include disability orientation in occupational therapy?" *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 75 (3):156.
- McDonald, Katherine E, Nicole E Conroy, Robert S Olick, and The Project ETHICS Expert Panel. 2017. "What's the harm? Harms in research with adults with intellectual disability." *American journal on intellectual and developmental disabilities* 122 (1):78-92.
- McDonald, Katherine E. kemcdona syr edu, Nicole E. Conroy, and Robert S. Olick. 2017. "What's the Harm? Harms in Research With Adults With Intellectual Disability." *¿Cual es el daño? Daños en la Investigación con Adultos con Discapacidad Intelectual.* 122 (1):78-92. doi: 10.1352/1944-7558-122.1.78.
- McVittie, Chris, Karen E. Goodall, and Andy McKinlay. 2008. "Resisting having learning disabilities by managing relative abilities." *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 36 (4):256-62. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-3156.2008.00507.x.
- Mietola, Reetta, Sonja Miettinen, and Simo Vehmas. 2017. "Voiceless subjects? Research ethics and persons with profound intellectual disabilities." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20 (3):263-74.
- Monteleone, Rebecca, and Rachel Forrester-Jones. 2016. "'disability means, um, dysfunctioning people': A qualitative analysis of the meaning and experience of disability among adults with intellectual disabilities." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities.* doi: 10.1111/jar.12240.
- NDA. 2009. "Ethical Guidance for Research with People with Disabilities. ." In. Disability Research Series. Ireland.
- Nind, Melanie, and Hilra Vinha. 2014. "Doing research inclusively: bridges to multiple possibilities in inclusive research." *British Journal of Learning Disabilities* 42 (2):102-9.
- Pope, Catherine, Sue Ziebland, and Nicholas Mays. 2000. "Qualitative Research in Health Care: Analysing Qualitative Data." In, 114. British Medical Association.
- Salman, Saba 2020. *Made Possible: Stories of success by people with learning disabilities — in their own words.* Edited by Saba Salman: Unbound.
- Sandahl, Carrie. 2018. "Disability art and culture: A model for imaginative ways to integrate the community." *Alter* 12 (2):79-93.
- Solvang, Per Koren. 2012. "Research paper: From identity politics to dismodernism? Changes in the social meaning of disability art." *De la politique identitaire à un nouveau modernisme? Les changements de signification sociale du Disability Art (French)* 6:178-87. doi: 10.1016/j.alter.2012.05.002.
- . 2018. "Between art therapy and disability aesthetics: a sociological approach for understanding the intersection between art practice and disability discourse." *Disability & Society* 33 (2):238-53.
- Stöckl, Andrea. 2014. "Common Humanity and Shared Destinies: Looking at the Disability Arts Movement from an Anthropological Perspective." *Anthropology in Action* 21 (1):36-43. doi: 10.3167/aia.2014.210107.

- Swain, John, and Sally French. 2000. "Towards an Affirmation Model of Disability." *Disability & Society* 15 (4):569.
- . 2008. "Affirming Identity." In *Disability on Equal Terms*, edited by John Swain and Sally French, 65-78. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Tilley, Elizabeth, Paul Christian, Susan Ledger, and Jan Walmsley. 2021. "Madhouse: Reclaiming the History of Learning Difficulties through Acting and Activism." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 15 (3):347-63.
- Tilley, Elizabeth, Iva Strnadová, Joanne Danker, Jan Walmsley, and Julie Loblinzk. 2020. "The impact of self-advocacy organizations on the subjective well-being of people with intellectual disabilities: A systematic review of the literature." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 33 (6):1151-65.
- Walmsley, Jan, Iva Strnadová, and Kelley Johnson. 2018. "The added value of inclusive research." *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 31 (5):751-9.
- Yoon, Jung Hyoun, Caroline Ellison, and Peggy Essl. 2021. "Shifting the perspective from 'incapable' to 'capable' for artists with cognitive disability; case studies in Australia and South Korea." *Disability & Society* 36 (3):443-67.