**THE RIGHT TO BE AN ARTIST: OPERATIONALIZING STUDIO ART PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

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**Objectives:**This dissertation, *The Right to be an Artist* examines the practical, philosophical, fiscal and social policy realities of people for people over the age 21 years with IDDs who want to live as artists in the community as a means of citizenship and life enhancement. This examination of everyday subjective conscious experience from individuals’ perspectives strives to understand the importance of art practice in their lives and uncover how positive studio experiences can be achieved.

**Method:**This multi-methods qualitative study involving artists at Creative Village Studio/(CVS) an urban art studio supported by Community Living Toronto, weaves narrative inquiry and arts-Informed methodologies into an intricate tapestry employing methods such as review of literature, face-to-face interviews, observation, collaborative artwork, art creation, and the researcher’s personal experiences as an artist, researcher and educator. It examines the art practices of 16 artists with IDDs to learn what they require to achieve their artistic goals. To operationalize the processes required in the art studio, the study includes interviews with three volunteers, three parents, three instructors and the site’s facilitator who support the participants’ art practices.

**Results:**The conditions that make the studio a success for the participants are: an accessible location near transit, a safe environment fashioned as a beacon of social activity where the facilitator emphasizes “comfort before skills”; a predictable, organized routine, and accommodations that encourage participants to explore art without judgement.

Knowledgeable personnel are necessary to create a vibrant environment including: a facilitator with both practical knowledge of Visual Arts and experience in the social services domain; positive staff who believe that people with IDDs have the potential to independently create art and who can impart artistic knowledge by scaffolding instructions, making accommodations; volunteers who have patience, sociable personalities, and respect artists’ goals. The facilitation of artmaking without undue influence or intervention of the artistic process by studio staff is imperative if artists are to develop to their full potential.

Offering instruction ranging from basic skills to semi-professional art coaching on a one-to-one basis is required. The time spent creating art in the studio is directly related to individual style development which is easily recognize by media handling, colour usage and choice of subject matter, enhancing artists’ confidence levels and giving artists a sense of empowerment. When artwork is displayed in public exhibitions, the public views artists with IDDs as skilled individuals.

Due to limited knowledge of financial matters, artists with IDDs require intensive support with ODSP and access to Passport Initiative to pay for studio time.

**Discussion/Conclusions:**  There are precious few studies available regarding the social policies and supports for artists with IDDs over age 21 years. This study is instructive in operationalizing how a community art studio supporting artists with IDD functions so that other programs like it can be opened regionally. The study demonstrates that this studio is not simply a social services day program, it is more. It serves as an example of how the art practices and knowledge of artists with IDDs can be commended and credited in the community.