
Artistry and Disability – Doing Art for Real? Affordances at a Daily Activity Centre with an artistic profile

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Abstract

People with neuropsychiatric disabilities are a growing group that sometimes have their work-placement in Daily Activity Centres. These new groups of young people have grown up with a political agenda that emphasizes participation and independence. Thus, they have different expectations on their future than earlier generations. Taking our point of departure in critical disability studies this study explores affordances of a Daily Activity Centre with an artistic profile according to its' participants; people with neuropsychiatric disabilities. The analysis reveals that this Centre, 'Studio X', has two fundamental meanings to the participants; it is a place to create art and a 'safe haven'. These two key meanings can be related to two different logics. The logic of art focuses on the cultural and creative dimensions of Studio X. The therapeutic logic builds on the organisational belonging of the Centre and a rationale of welfare state responsibility. The participants position themselves as artists contributing to society, not as social clients. Moreover, the therapeutic logic at Studio X can be described as a 'celebration of difference' and not as a 'normalisation project'. This institutional setting does not seem to be governed by a desire to 'normalise' or 'alter' their participants, but rather to see them as competent members of an artistic community. However, with organisational changes there has been a shift towards the therapeutic logic and participants experience less influence, participation and self-determination. By applying an 'ableism lens' onto this shift, participants at Studio X, are positioned as less able to take responsibility. Their voices are not as valued, and they are put in a more subordinated position than before. Thus, when the therapeutic logic is more pronounced and the logic of art in the background, there is a risk of top-down perspective that reproduces the norms of ableism.

Keywords: Neuropsychiatric disabilities, art, Daily Activity Centre, disability studies, ableism

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