



The Story of My Life at Present: Video CVs as a Showcase for Persons with Intellectual Disability

ANNE-MARIE CALLUS 

SANDRA BORG

CRISTINA GRECH

ISABEL PORTELLI

*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

RESEARCH



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ABSTRACT

This article presents an inclusive research project through which 17 video CVs of persons with intellectual disability were created. The main aim was to show how the video CV format can highlight the achievements of persons with intellectual disability more effectively than the traditional written CVs. The article discusses the themes elicited from the content of the 17 videos. The positive qualities of the 17 persons with intellectual disability were highlighted by those who work with them. Furthermore, the discussion shows how they have developed their capabilities and skills through the opportunities they have enjoyed and how they are valid contributors to their respective teams. The videos also challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about the lives of persons with intellectual disability and show how they can continue developing their capabilities and gain new experiences in the future.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Anne-Marie Callus

University of Malta, MT

anne-marie.callus@um.edu.mt

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INTRODUCTION

Many persons with intellectual disability encounter difficulties to actively participate in their communities (Scior & Werner 2016). As defined by the AAIDD, persons with intellectual disability experience limitations in ‘conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills’. While this definition focuses on impairment, the 12th edition of the manual also emphasizes the importance of support and affirms that ‘[w]ithin an individual, limitations often coexist with strengths’ (2021: 1). The analysis and discussion in this article are underpinned by a focus on a person’s strengths and the importance of meeting support needs. Furthermore, the article adopts the affirmation model of disability which highlights how disabled persons have positive identities and intrinsically valuable lives (Cameron 2014; Swain & French 2000).

This article discusses the results of an inclusive research project which aimed to use video curriculum vitae (CVs) to showcase aspects of the lives of persons with intellectual disability, living in Malta, who are actively engaged in employment and leisure and culture activities or wish to do so. The project was carried out by an inclusive research team comprising Cristina and Isabel, two co-researchers with intellectual disability, Sandra, communications manager at the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability and parent of a child with intellectual disability, and Anne-Marie, who is a disability studies academic at the University of Malta. The project’s aim was to show the potential and achievements of persons with intellectual disability, by producing an online resource for employers and those working with or learning about persons with intellectual disability, and for these persons themselves and their families.

Projects which use videos to highlight examples of good practice and successful inclusion for persons with intellectual disability include Inclusion Europe’s (2021) *My Talents for Diversity*, which presents success stories of employment of persons with intellectual disability, and the videos on the Attitude (2007) YouTube channel, which has stories of successful community inclusion of persons with intellectual disability. Using videos is also a means of creating accessible information for persons with intellectual disability (Goodwin et al. 2015).

THE USE OF CURRICULUM VITAE BY PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Yates (2015) describes having well crafted CVs as the most important factor in being recruited for a job, especially when there is keen competition. Beshara (2011) notes that most CVs never get read by employers, arguing that it is all the more important to make sure that one’s CV stands out, a point also made by Bennett (2014). Sending in one’s CV is the first, and all-important, part towards recruitment, although of course not the only aspect of this procedure, which includes shortlisting and interviewing among other steps (Goldstein et al. 2017).

Most CVs are a written document. Video CVs are a more recent development. According to a report by LinkedIn Corporate Communications (2021), sending prospective employers a video CV is becoming increasingly more common and that ‘[a]lmost 80% (79%) of hiring managers believe that video has become more important when it comes to interacting with or vetting job candidates’.

CVs are obviously also very important for persons with intellectual disability, especially when one considers the low employment rate amongst this population group. The exclusion of persons with intellectual disability from employment is evidenced in studies from different countries, including Australia (Moore et al. 2018), Canada (Lysaght et al. 2012), India (Suresh & Dyaram 2022), Italy (Zappella 2015), Malta (CRPD 2020), Norway (Wendelborg et al. 2022), and the USA (Wehman et al. 2018). This exclusion is also reported by the European Disability Forum (2023) and Inclusion Europe (2020). Many of these studies note that persons with intellectual disability encounter disabling barriers at the job-seeking stage, such as: standard recruitment procedures which do not cater for the support needs of persons with disability, lack of provision of support for employers to recruit persons with intellectual disability and employers’ attitudes. Another issue is the disclosure of having a disability when applying for a job, as discussed by Suresh and Dyaram (2022) and Zappella (2015), among others. There are, however, also persons with intellectual disability who have opportunities to be included in the community and to participate actively in various aspects of life, including employment, like other adults – see, for example Cuskelly, Jobling and Buckley, (2001), Hall (2010) and Voermans et al. (2021).

The specific use of CVs – much less video CVs – by persons with disability is not discussed in the research literature. For persons with intellectual disability, presenting a CV in a traditional format only may be a disadvantage because they might not possess as many educational certificates and hard skills as their non-disabled peers. Video CVs allow for a more rounded and vivid presentation of a person's soft skills and personality.

METHODOLOGY

Ethical approval from the University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee was obtained for all phases of the project. Participants were recruited through an easy-to-read information letter that was sent to different disability organisations which agreed to act as gatekeepers. Participants were informed that, due to the nature of the project, they would be identifiable, that their video CV would be available on social media and that we would write an article about them. Each participant was directly involved in the development of their respective video CV from planning it through to the editing. A set of questions was used to help them develop the narrative on which their respective CVs are based. These questions were then used in the guide on how to make a video CV (see link to the project webpage below). They also identified the persons they wanted to provide testimonials for them. Informed consent was obtained from these persons prior to filming them. In the case of employers and service-providers, consent was also obtained to film in their workplaces. Additional footage was also used in some video CVs, with the consent of the respective owners of that footage. All participants viewed an early version of the video CV in which they appeared and could ask for changes which were made prior to the finalised version being uploaded on YouTube.

Funding sources for the project are listed at the end of this article. This funding was used to hire professional videographers to produce the videos and for the two co-researchers with intellectual disability – who already have part-time jobs – to be paid for their work on the project. The other two researchers carried out their work as part of their full-time job. We have already published an article reflecting on our individual experiences of carrying out this project as an inclusive team (Bonello et al. 2022).

Each video CV includes subtitles and Maltese Sign Language interpreting. Subtitles are in English when the speaker uses Maltese and vice versa. At the end of the project, we held a seminar to launch the results and discuss the video CVs, with the aim of gaining an understanding of how the videos would be received by those who viewed them. Participants were representatives of a self-advocacy organisation, organisations working with persons with intellectual disability, a post-secondary institution and an employers' association. Invitees were asked to view at least some of the video CVs prior to the seminar so that they could actively participate in the discussion. With their consent, notes from their feedback were taken during the seminar to be used in the analysis, without identifying who said what.

Apart from the 17 video CVs which are the focus of this article, the resource pack produced through our project includes a disability equality training video on the employment of persons with intellectual disability and an easy-to-read guide, in Maltese and in English, about how to create a video CV using a smartphone. Links to these resources and the video CVs can be found on the project webpage, the link for which is provided at the end of the article. The protagonist in each video CV spoke about their life and their achievements. The video CVs also include video clips and photos of the protagonists carrying out various activities and testimonials from employers, colleagues tutors, coaches and other persons directly involved in the protagonists' lives.

The next section presents the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022) and discussion of the content of the video CVs and of the feedback seminar. The aim of this analysis was to understand how the lives of persons with intellectual disability are depicted in the video CVs. The analysis was based on the transcripts created for the subtitles of the videos and the feedback from the seminar discussion. While this feedback remains unattributed to particular speakers, in one instance below, it is stated that some feedback was given by a self-advocate as this is relevant to what was said. The persons with intellectual disability are identified by name since their videos are available online and they consented to being identifiable, as noted above. Those who provided testimonials for the protagonists of the video CVs also consented to be identifiable in the videos. However, in this article only the protagonists with intellectual

disability are referred to by their name so that the focus of the analysis and discussion remains on them.

The first step in Braun and Clarke’s (2022) method is familiarisation with the data. For this step, Anne-Marie grouped together pieces from the transcripts and seminar that referred to the following topics: personal characteristics; work; sport and cultural activities; and personal development. The project team then met to work on steps two to five together. We discussed what was said in the video CVs about these topics. For the second step, coding, we pointed out those aspects that each of us found most striking, with Anne-Marie taking notes. From this process, we moved to the third step, generating themes, which were further refined according to the fourth step. Five major themes emerged and were agreed upon: personal qualities; development of capabilities and skills; contributing to a team; challenging stereotypes; and looking towards the future. In the fifth step, refining, defining and naming themes, the specific data relevant to each theme was identified so that each theme tells ‘a story’ which fits into the ‘overall story of the data’ (Braun and Clarke 2022: 35). For the sixth step, writing up, Anne-Marie drafted the section summarising the content of the video CVs and the Results and Discussion and the Limitations sections. This draft was discussed and revised with the other team members. Necessary changes were made to the discussion, including ensuring that the language used as accessible as possible. In a final meeting, the team discussed the points to be raised in the Conclusion section, which is written in plain English. This section was then written up by Anne-Marie and checked with the other team members.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 provides a summary of the 17 video CVs.

Table 1 Summary of protagonists.

*Learning support educator.

NAME	EDUCATION	EMPLOYMENT	OTHER ACTIVITIES
Alison	Mainstream school with LSE*	Part-time sheltered factory work with regular job coach support	Sport and dance
Ben	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Full-time office work	Social group for young persons with intellectual disability
Christabelle	Mainstream school with LSE*	Developing employability skills at a day centre, aspires to work in an old people’s home	Sport
Clint	Mainstream school	Full-time cleaning work	Drama
Cristina	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time office work	Painting
Daniel	Mainstream school with LSE*	Doing short courses and training placements	None
Denise	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time office work (lost job in a hotel during the pandemic)	Drama and pottery
Gaby	Special school	Helps out in institution where she lives	Drama
Gareth	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time factory work with regular job coach support	Sport and music
Isabel	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time work with an advocacy organisation	Drama
John Paul	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time manual work	Sport
Lourdes	Mainstream school	Part-time office work	Self-advocacy organisation
Maria	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time kitchen work	Dance and sport
Maris	Special school	Lost job during the pandemic, attends day centre	Knitting
Mary Lou	Mainstream school	Part-time cleaning work	Needlework
Omar	Mainstream school	Full-time office work	None
Rosie	Mainstream school with LSE* and post-secondary vocational college	Part-time laundry work	Making cards

Through different activities and through their interaction with other persons, the qualities of the persons with intellectual disability who are the protagonists of the 17 video CVs emerge clearly. In fact, the participants in the videos comment about their character. For example, Maris lost her job in a primary school during the pandemic and attends a day centre. This experience is similar to that of many other persons with intellectual disability (Inclusion Europe 2020). But she was described by her support worker as follows:

She doesn't give up, she's very determined. If she doesn't know something, she asks.
She keeps herself active and busy.

The support worker also highlighted Maris' ability to integrate well with the persons at the day centre and her interest in all the activities she does. These characteristics also emerged from what Maris' former job coach says about her. Sociability was also identified in many of the other video CV protagonists, including Denise and Isabel. Maria's Zumba tutor said that 'When you get to know her and she accepts you too, that's it. You have a friend for life'. Furthermore, Cristina and John Paul have kept social contact with people who had worked with them previously and Alison regularly organised a van to go out with a group of friends. These findings complement those from other studies that highlight how the sociability of persons with intellectual disability emerges through employment (Sampaio Bezerra 2020) and involvement in the arts (Stober & García Iriarte 2023).

Other positive qualities are also highlighted in the video CVs. Rosie and Gaby, both of whom lived in a residence for disabled persons, were respectively described as 'a very cheerful person' and as having 'a really lovely character' by staff. Similarly, Mary Lou was described as 'kind' and Denise as having a 'really lovely character' by their managers.

Another aspect that emerges from the video CVs is the protagonists' strong character, in line with observations from other studies (see for example Clarke, Camilleri & Goding 2015; Scheffers, van Vugt & Moonen 2020). The manager of the residence where Rosie lives emphasised her sense of responsibility, as does Alison's manager at the factory. The mayor of the local council where Mary Lou works said that she 'does her best at work'. Additionally, Alison was described as 'highly motivated' by her job coach and as 'very industrious' by her Special Olympics coach. Denise was described by her manager as someone who does not give up and as being 'bold in her work' by her pottery tutor. Strength of character was even noted at a very early age by Ben's childhood tutor who has known him from early infancy:

from day one I can recall just how tenacious he was. His ability to persevere really came through.

It can be seen that similar qualities for each person with intellectual disability are identified in their respective video CVs by those interacting with them at their place of work, in day centres, or when they engage in sport, in the creative arts or in disability service-providing organisations. These qualities also emerge from what the protagonists say about their own lives. For those who work, employment is very important. Having money is obviously considered important and for various reasons. For Clint, it meant being able to pay the mortgage and to go out with his fiancée; for John Paul, that he could go out with his friends. Work also provided an opportunity to do something meaningful with one's life, as observed by Clint and Lourdes. Going to work also added value in terms of socialisation, as highlighted by Isabel, and of being enjoyable, as stated by Denise.

Similar observations emerged from the discussion during the seminar. Those present spoke about how the video CVs enable the viewer to get to know each person through a holistic picture. Their motivation and sense of independence was also observed. One of the seminar participants remarked on the way that the protagonists of the video CVs who are in employment appreciate work as part of life, rather than something opposed to it as is implied in the term work-life balance. Similar attitudes to work are noted by Fripp and Day (2009). Another commented on how these persons' love of life emerges in their video CVs. Christabel, who attended a day centre, was described by her support worker as having 'energy, charisma and zest for life'. Alison's dance tutor remarked how she 'smiles at life in general'. Ben's childhood tutor who remarked that 'he just simply loves life'.

These remarks are very much in line with the affirmation model of disability, mentioned above. This discussion shows how the ways in which the 17 protagonists of the video CVs are described focus on them as persons with their individual character and as adults who have a varied range of capabilities and skills, just like other adults.

DEVELOPMENT OF CAPABILITIES AND SKILLS

The skills and capabilities presented in the video CVs were developed through various opportunities that the protagonists had access to, which catered for their impairment-related support needs, in line with the findings from Inclusion Europe (2021). These opportunities include attending a mainstream school with a learning support educator, secondary vocational courses and employment training courses, and work placement schemes. These opportunities led to employment for many of the persons with intellectual disability and/or for them to continue to develop their capabilities and skills in other ways, especially through sport, artistic activities and crafts. Information about work-related opportunities are provided in the Disability Equality Training video (see link to project webpage below).

Very importantly, engaging in work and other activities enabled these persons with intellectual disability to continue developing their skills and capabilities, with support where necessary. Those in employment did not start their job already fully trained for the tasks carved out for them. They were supported through various means to learn how to do their work. In fact, progress at the place of work is often mentioned in the video CVs. Maris' former job coach remarked on how she 'used to apply herself to learn all the skills she needed to do her job well' and Gareth's manager described his work at the factory and which, he says, 'Gareth has now learnt to do more independently'. Alison too said 'I have got used to the work and know it inside out'. In fact, both job coaches noted that they had reduced their support, while John Paul said that his job coach did not have to visit him anymore at his workplace at the University of Malta (although they still meet socially).

Employment helps enhance the quality of life of persons with intellectual disability (Barczak & Cannella-Malone 2022). One aspect of this enhancement is learning new skills and how to carry out new tasks, which is one way in which the video CV protagonists experienced continuous development. One of Omar's managers remarked on how the challenges to help him learn the work he had to do were turned into an opportunity for him to develop not only as a staff member but also as a person. Through being given different tasks, Omar – who works in the office of a cooperative – developed new skills and the ability to decide for himself what task to do next. Others, like Cristina, are the ones who ask for more work once they have finished a set task. This development sometimes led to an increase in working hours, as in the case of Isabel. For some, having an indefinite work contract was a milestone achieved after going through several steps. Ben's manager explained how he first did a work placement at the human resources office of their company as part of his post-secondary vocational course. The company then benefitted from a wage subsidy scheme to continue employing Ben. At the end, they offered him the indefinite contract which the manager says 'was not a major decision', because by then Ben had already learnt his work really well and had formed good relations with the staff.

Employers' willingness to give these persons with intellectual disability a chance and tailor-made support, for the persons to learn how to do their work and for them to integrate with their co-workers, were key factors in providing opportunities for growth and development. Opportunities and support to engage in sport, dance, drama, making crafts and other activities also help personal growth, as noted by Ryan (2021) among others. Rosie made greeting cards to sell and raise funds for an animal sanctuary, which is 'very impressive', as her residence manager remarks. This gradual development was also highlighted during the seminar, with the proverb 'the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'.

In the seminar, the participants also pointed out aspects that reflect the points that emerge from our discussion of the video CVs. These videos were seen as examples of good practice for employers and as evidence that employment of persons with intellectual disability is achievable. It was also remarked that the videos provide visual evidence of the person in their workplace, thanks to the clips showing the protagonists going about their work. The importance of a wide range of support services, including post-secondary and vocational training opportunities, was

also noted. Furthermore, the diversity of experiences presented in the set of video CVs was seen as an indicator of the importance of services that suit the various needs and aptitudes of different persons. The need for reasonable accommodation, for flexible work practices and for the possibility of development and change within one's job were also noted.

While some of the video CV protagonists lead very active lives, as seen above, others have more slow-paced lives. Daniel carried out various training courses and work placements but has not yet found a job that he likes. His potential had yet to be developed fully. Although institutionalisation greatly limits opportunities for community inclusion (Hamilton 2019), Gaby did various meaningful and useful tasks in the institution where she lived. Having lost her job, Maris attended a day centre. Importantly, these persons too are also spoken of positively, they too have a life they were proud to present in their video CVs and they too enjoy good relationships and interactions with those around them. Their video CVs echo the comment about one of the persons who feature in the short film 'Freebird': 'Accomplished nothing fancy, but/A life well-lived' (L'Arche Canada 2021).

CONTRIBUTING TO A TEAM

Interacting and developing relationships with others enabled the 17 video CV protagonists to become valued team members: at work, in sport clubs and performing arts groups, and in service-provision and other settings.

Various positive characteristics of the persons with intellectual disability emerge as contributing to team membership. For example, Maris' former job coach said that she 'cheers other people up with her character', while Rosie was described by her residence manager as someone you enjoy being with. Rosie, Alison and Gaby are described as always being ready to help. These personal traits can make it easy for one to integrate well with others. Many are specifically spoken of as integral members of various teams. In their respective factories, Alison's manager said that 'She is an essential part of our team' and Gareth's manager remarked 'Today Gareth is an integral part of our team'. The secretary of the school where Cristina works stated that 'She integrated with everyone from the start'. Isabel, who works with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, was described by the Commissioner as someone who can 'network during conferences and interact with the persons there'. The Commissioner observed that Isabel could also engage in policy discussions. The benefits for persons with intellectual disability of being part of team are often discussed in the research (Clarke et al. 2015; Olvhøj et al. 2022). The comments in the video CVs show how they also contribute to teamwork.

Team membership is also evident from observations by other video contributors who interact with the protagonists in various settings. Alison was spoken of as integral member of the dance group she attends; Christabel – according to her table tennis coach – 'integrates well' in the mainstream club in which she plays; Ben, who attends a group for youth with intellectual disability, was described by the group facilitator as 'a very active member'; Maris' support worker stated that 'she has no problem integrating with others' at the day centre. In the seminar, the fact that the video CV protagonists are an integral part of different teams was also noticed. One of the seminar participants commented that such a situation benefits the team as a whole, while the person with intellectual disability benefits by being given the opportunity to develop further, thus becoming even more part of the team.

In the discussion so far, it has been seen how the appreciation of positive personal characteristics has enabled these persons with intellectual disability to engage in various types of meaningful activities. Moreover, finding appropriate support and welcoming attitudes enabled many to develop their capabilities and skills, put them to good use and thus also continuing to develop their potential. Likewise, becoming integral members of various teams is a positive experience in itself and leads to the possibility of other positive experiences.

Ben's manager commented on how he contributed to the human resources team in many ways and to a much greater extent than they had thought possible. Significantly, she pointed out that they gave him attention which he reciprocated. Ben's sociability was also highlighted by the support worker from the youth group he attends, thus experiencing mutual friendship (Garolera, Díaz & Noell 2021), by keeping track of members' birthdays and making sure that these are celebrated. This social aspect emerges in other video CVs as well. For example, among

others, Gareth's manager said that he involved himself in social events while the mayor of the local council where Mary Lou works remarked how 'she lifts the spirits of all those who work here. She raises a smile among all the workers'.

Becoming integral parts of any team did not happen automatically. Team membership was fostered through reciprocal relationships and a willingness from everyone to accept each other and give their contribution. Clint's drama tutor encapsulated this idea really well:

Clint helps me a lot to create a good atmosphere. You go to certain places and there's a certain atmosphere – I don't believe that just happens. I believe that it's the students who create it. And Clint is one of those who creates that vivacity in the place where you're working.

Similar comments were made, among others, about John Paul helping younger athletes in his Special Olympics swimming team by helping them in their training and pushing them to achieve their best; Isabel motivating her drama classmates through her determination to work at a high level; Alison, in her dance group, following instructions well but also giving a creative contribution in the sessions; and Daniel helping other service-users at the day centre.

These video CVs thus set a good example of what the lives of persons with intellectual disability can look like in the right environment. The importance of the environment in the development of persons with intellectual disability is clearly recognised nowadays. For example, it is referred to directly in the definition of intellectual disability used by the AAIDD (2021), used above.

These aspects of the video CVs were also highlighted during the seminar. There was agreement about the contribution that the persons with intellectual disability make not only to their respective teams but also to society in general. As one of the persons with intellectual disability (representing a self-advocacy group) said during the seminar: 'if you give us the chance you can learn a lot from what we can do'.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

The 17 video CVs also make a social contribution by challenging long-held stereotypes about persons with intellectual disability. Stereotypes cast some persons as being all the same, with only one aspect of their identity being focused on (McGarty, Yzerbyt & Spears 2002). In the case of persons with intellectual disability, the focus is mostly on the cognitive impairment which leads them to continuing to experience support needs in their adulthood. Furthermore, stereotypes tend to be based on misconceptions and mistaken assumptions about what certain types of persons are like and what kind of life they lead. Persons with intellectual disability thus tend to be depicted as passive, dependent, leading a life of suffering and being a burden on society (Winterbotham, Knight & du Preez 2023).

The most significant challenge to these stereotypes in the video CVs is the unique characteristics of each and every person with intellectual disability. They lead different lives, have different interests and qualities. There are enough similarities to make comparisons possible, as highlighted in the previous sections. But these comparisons do not hide the diversity of the 17 individuals. Their lives may be similar in certain aspects, but they are not identical. Each of them is a person in their own right.

The stereotype of persons with intellectual disability as being passive is clearly challenged through the depiction of the active life of the 17 protagonists, what they say about their life, what the testimonials say about them, and in the video clips of them engaging in work and other types of activities. Additionally, they are spoken of as taking the initiative in their lives. Their capacity to be proactive emerges from the examples discussed above and also in what Maria's former post-secondary tutor said:

Maria always showed how hardworking and organised she is and how she takes the initiative. She never gave up even when the work was hard and ... she never complained about the amount of work she needed to do.

Determination and tenacity were also identified in Isabel and Ben, as noted above.

These characteristics challenge the image of passivity and that of dependency. Persons with intellectual disability may need support to learn how to do new tasks but, as seen in the videos,

they can learn how to do these tasks on their own. They may take more time to carry out certain tasks and they may continue to depend on support in certain aspects of their life, but this does not make them completely dependent. Moreover, characteristics which challenge this stereotype are identified not only in those protagonists who work and engage in sport or artistic activities. They are also mentioned for those protagonists whose lives may be seen as more limited and as being restricted to engaging in activities set up by service-providing disability organisations. For example, Daniel is described by his support worker at the day centre as 'someone who is not afraid to take a risk when it comes to being independent as a person'.

People who take the initiative, have a strong sense of determination and are willing to take risks are far from being passive and dependent. At the same time, as noted, these persons also have support needs which are not typical of most adults and which have to be addressed. Many of them had a learning support educator at school, attended post-secondary and training courses tailor-made for persons with intellectual disability, were supported by a job coach or a colleague to learn the tasks they were employed to carry out and have developed their talents through organisations that cater for persons with intellectual disability. The provision of different types of support are woven into the lives of the 17 protagonists and are not seen as an obstacle to their development. In fact, they are an important tool for their development and for them to be part of their community, rather than being isolated especially in institutions. One of Omar's managers observed that, when he was employed, they built on his strengths rather than getting stuck on the weaknesses. In other video CVs, it is support personnel themselves who highlighted the strong character of the persons with intellectual disability they support. Rosie's occupational therapist commented that her work 'gives her her identity' and that she has a strong sense of responsibility, while Alison's job coach described her as 'highly motivated'.

The balance between ability and support needs is captured by Gareth's drum tutor in which his being non-verbal and being able to communicate are merged:

Gareth has autism and is non-verbal and he uses music and instruments to communicate and express what he is feeling.

Leading active lives, taking the initiative and facing challenges with determination is also present in the private lives of these persons: Cristina and John Paul still meet socially persons who used to support them, Lourdes takes care of her and her husband's household and their pet dog, Clint uses his salary to pay the mortgage and go out with his fiancée, Maris is careful what she eats and exercises to keep fit and takes care of the cats at home.

Highlighting the positive is an integral part of CVs and it is also the usual practice in providing referrals and testimonials to back up what someone declares on their CV, as discussed above. These video CVs follow these lines by creating a positive picture of the protagonists, which also challenges the idea of persons with intellectual disability leading a life of suffering. Rather than complaining about having a disability, they present themselves and are spoken of as getting on with life and doing their best. The video CVs also challenge the idea of persons with intellectual disability as being a burden on society. They contribute to the teams they form part of and those with the most significant communication difficulties, Ben and Gareth, are amongst the protagonists with the most active life and who are spoken of as being integral members of various teams.

By including persons with intellectual disability speaking about their own lives, video clips and photographs of them engaging in various activities and testimonials by those actively involved in their lives, these video CVs directly challenge stereotypes by putting forward different examples of how some individuals with intellectual disability actually lead their lives. The self-advocate quoted earlier also used a Maltese proverb which stresses that leading by example is much more powerful than words.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The video CVs focus on what each protagonist was doing at the time that they were created. Some references were made to their past which give viewers an idea of where they have come from. References are also made to aspirations for the future, which are an important part of the lives of persons with intellectual disability (Cooney et al. 2006).

References were made to some of the protagonists' aspirations. Alison stated that she does 'a lot of things to get used to being independent' while Christabel's support worker also referred to the work she is doing to become more independent. Christabel and Daniel both aspire to find a job and have clear targets in mind – in an old people's home and in an office respectively.

Another type of reference to the future is found in comments about protagonists' continuing improvement on current activities. John Paul's Special Olympics swimming coach commented on how he is never satisfied with what he has achieved and is always seeking to do more. Likewise, the artistic director of Opening Doors, the performing arts organisation in which Denise and Maria (among others) are involved ([Opening Doors Association 2023](#)), commented on how their motivation to develop their artistic work (drama and dance respectively). In relation to Denise, the artistic director commented that

her willingness to continue learning and developing ... is a great tool which will allow her to grow not only as a performer but also as an individual.

This comment can be applied to all protagonists of the video CVs in different ways. Denise herself ended her video CV by stating 'I am very proud of what I did so far', a comment that brings together past and present achievements and future aspirations.

Similar comments focus on the potential perceived in the protagonists by those providing the testimonials. Gareth's autism support professional stated that 'something which motivates me to work with Gareth is his great potential' while Lourdes' manager mentioned how she is 'capable of learning, integrating and improving herself' and John Paul's manager that 'he's always seeking ways of learning and involving himself with our group of employees'. These traits contribute to who each protagonist is as a person. They which are an integral part of each person and set them up well for their future. These traits are summarised by Ben's childhood tutor when she said that he 'takes life in his stride'.

As stated above, the aim of our project was to show what persons with intellectual disability are capable of achieving. The video CVs and other resources created are aimed at empowering persons with intellectual disability, and providing examples of good practice for their families, those who provide them with support and their present and prospective employers and co-workers, as noted also in the seminar discussion. We feel that we have largely achieved the aim of producing the resource pack we have in mind. In the seminar, it was pointed out that these video CVs can raise awareness amongst employers and educators amongst others. However, there are also some limitations.

LIMITATIONS

As noted above, the video CVs create a very positive picture of the lives of the 17 persons with intellectual disability depicted, which risks overshadowing the difficulties that many persons with intellectual disability encounter in their daily lives. Additionally, not all the persons who have provided the protagonists with support could be included in the video CVs, due to restrictions in the length of the video CVs and not to disclose very personal information. For example, the support provided by parents and other close family members is hardly mentioned. Furthermore, these video CVs cannot be assumed to be representative of the lives of other persons with intellectual disability. Not all persons with intellectual disability have access to opportunities and support that enable them to develop their potential. For others, especially those with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, living a fulfilling life may not involve post-secondary vocational education and training, employment and sport, artistic and related activities.

It is therefore important that these video CVs are not used to argue that persons with intellectual disability need to be doing something in their lives that is perceived to be useful by the wider community for their lives to be worth living. And they do not need to have socially valued abilities for their lives to be valued. Holding up the lives depicted in the 17 video CVs as examples of good practice should not devalue the lives of those who might not achieve the same results. Rather, the video CVs should be viewed as evidence that persons with intellectual disability can enjoy life on their own terms, when the right supports and opportunities are in place and when their ability to be active agents in their own lives is acknowledged.

CONCLUSION

We wrote this conclusion in point form and using plain language to make it as accessible as possible:

- In this project, we focused on the positive aspects of the lives of 17 persons with intellectual disability who took part, because CVs are used to show a person's strengths and abilities.
- The video CVs produced show persons with intellectual disability leading valuable lives through developing their potential and different achievements.
- These 17 persons may also experience difficulties in their lives. The video CVs show that when appropriate support is provided, there can be success in a person's life.
- The persons with intellectual disability could speak for themselves and they chose what to include in their own video CVs.
- These persons have different skills and capabilities and they are proud of what they have achieved.
- Employers, colleagues, coaches and support workers were also positive about them.
- Many positive personal qualities were mentioned: being kind, having a sense of responsibility, being determined, being great team members and loving life.
- These 17 persons have continued to develop their potential, through work and other activities.
- Most of them live in the community and use different support services to be part of their community. These support services are very important.
- Those who have difficulties in finding work can enjoy life and develop their skills too.
- The video CVs challenge many stereotypes of persons with intellectual disability.
- Through these video CVs, those who have never met persons with intellectual disability have a positive visual representation of how these persons lead their lives.
- These video CVs show that persons with intellectual disability can have beautiful lives not because they do something extraordinary but because they have the support they need to develop their abilities, be included in the community and enjoy life.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Anne-Marie is the lead author. She wrote the Background and Methodology sections and, as described above, wrote up the Results and Discussion, Limitations and Conclusion sections on the basis of what was discussed in team meetings with Sandra, Cristina and Isabel. The whole article was reviewed by all authors and changes made according to the comments made.

Anne-Marie Callus  orcid.org/0000-0002-3505-3116
University of Malta, MT

Sandra Borg

Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, MT

Cristina Grech

Independent researcher, MT

Isabel Portelli

Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability, MT

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