

## **Assigned and self civic identity of people with intellectual disabilities.**

### Summary

In my dissertation I present the results of my participatory research regarding self and assigned civic identity of people with intellectual disabilities. The aim of the research was to learn how adult people with intellectual disabilities perceive themselves as citizens, and how they feel they are perceived by others. The research project was embedded in the trend of symbolic interactionism which is a theoretical and methodological perspective analyzing social interactions and the meanings assigned to them by individuals (cf. Hałas, 2006).

In chapter one I derive the concept of identity from the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. Identity is constructed and reconstructed during the social situations in which the individual participates. Individual identity and social roles are closely related. I interpret social roles as actions undertaken by an individual that result from how the individual perceives himself and how is perceived by others in a particular social situation (Stryker, 1968). The process of developing identity and taking roles is related to the process of upbringing. Analyzing identity formation processes in context of disability, I use Goffman's (2005) concept of stigma, developed by Mankoff (1971).

In chapter two, I analyze the republican and liberal conceptions of citizenship, I show that both do not include people with intellectual disabilities as full, active citizens. In my dissertation, I adopt the relational concept of citizenship, which refers to relationships within the local community (Duffy, 2017; Chalachanová et al. 2021b).

The third chapter presents the methodology of own research. I designed and conducted the research according to a participatory approach. Thirteen adult students with moderate intellectual disability, from three Polish cities took part in the study carried out in spring 2021. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, I conducted online interviews. I had at least ten meetings with each person. To ensure the accessibility of the research process, I used standards for conducting participatory research with people with intellectual disabilities (Nind, 2008). I used non-verbal methods: photography and drawing as an auxiliary tool during the interviews.

Chapter four presents the process of reducing and representing data (Rubacha, 2008). The collected qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis.

In the fifth chapter, which is the conclusion, I present the areas of the relationship between one's self and assigned civic identity, which appear in the identity images recreated during the data analysis. Disability did not have a dominant position in the obtained images. The participants created images of themselves, pointing out positive features, diverse interests and emphasizing that they led ordinary lives. The desire to be helpful was a common trait among all. The presented concept of citizenship was based on the right, but also the

obligation, to take roles typical of adulthood: working, earning and spending money, starting a family, and spending free time outside the home. However, none of the participants had taken up these roles yet, and some believed that they were unattainable for them. The participants saw the areas of their civic activity primarily as being a patriot, respecting Polish history and national symbols, feeling pride, and supporting the Polish football team. No one saw themselves as having an influence on the life of the local community. They all saw themselves as people who should obey their parents and teachers. The participants did not pose any demands related to the possibility of changing the situation in which they find themselves.

Apart from the research goal, the project also had an educational goal: to raise the participants' awareness by familiarizing them with civil rights and searching for areas in which they can strive to realize these rights. Participation in the study allowed people with intellectual disabilities to express their views, speak up for themselves. It allowed for the identification of important elements of the citizen's role and the identification of barriers encountered in its implementation. Participants also had the opportunity to develop their social skills and sense of empowerment. The analysis of the collected data showed a strong impact of the identity assigned with the label of intellectual disability. This identity seemed to be adopted by the project participants. The research results encourage reflection on the social changes necessary for the true implementation of social inclusion and outline the next stages of research.