The Political Citizenship of People with Intellectual Disability: Concepts & Research

Sophia Tipping
PhD Candidate
Living with Disability Research Centre
La Trobe University

Aim of today’s presentation

- What is political citizenship & democracy?
- How & where does it happen?
- Why it is important?
- What this means for people with intellectual disability?
- What does the research says about voting & people with intellectual disability?
What is political citizenship?

*Citizenship...*

The rights and duties of being a citizen of an organised society

*Political citizenship relates to democracy...*

Because it concerns “participation in democratic processes” (Warr & Williams, 2015)

*Democracy...*

“Rule by the people” or...

Citizens have power to influence society or the governance of a society...

(*Held, 2006*)

*But...*

...What counts as “participation in democratic processes”?

- **Voting** representatives to government or running for office
  - (Held, 2006) (Liberal democracy)

- **Joining an interest groups** & competing to influence representatives
  - (Held, 2006) (Plural democracy)

- **Choice & consumption** - the market regulates society
  - (Held, 2006; Meagher & Goodstein, 2015)
  - (van Toorn & Soldatic, 2015) (Neoliberal democracy)

- More direct participation & consultation
- **Deliberation** - impartial debate & consensus seeking
- Often by a representative sample of individuals
  - (Held, 2010; Young, 2001) (Deliberative democracy)

- Direct participation through deliberation
- **But presence, empathy & collaborative communication** legitimised
  - (Clifford, 2012; Ravo, Valkama & Peltola, 2014) (Critical deliberative democracy)

- More direct, grassroots participation (i.e. social movements, activism).
- Privileges lived experience knowledge
- Learn democracy through participation
  - (Held, 2008; Powell, 2008; Pateman, 1970).
  - (Participatory democracy)

- Direct participation that legitimises conflict & inevitable difference over consensus
  - (Clifford/Simplican & Leader, 2012; Mouffe, 2000) (Radical democracy)
Where & how people exercise political citizenship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual acts</th>
<th>People vote in elections at local, state and federal elections.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Run for election to a political office</td>
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<td>Contact acts (i.e. phoning your local MP's office)</td>
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<td>In the Market</td>
<td>Political consumption?</td>
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<td>In Government</td>
<td>Sitting on govt advisory boards or committees</td>
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<td>Participating in community consultations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sitting on international governance committees</td>
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<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Sitting on a board of governance for an NGO</td>
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<td>(In directly political)</td>
<td>Volunteering for a social cause</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Joining a political organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Formal)</td>
<td>(i.e. political party, a member based organisation or union)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Volunteering or attending meetings of a political organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Activism or grass-roots community action</td>
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<td>(&quot;Extra-parliamentary&quot; or informal)</td>
<td>Involvement in social movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Other forms of political behaviour]</td>
<td>Having an interest or paying attention to social &amp; political issues</td>
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(Adapted from Edwards, 2014; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Laine, 2014)

Why do people exercise their political citizenship?

- Because it’s a human right
- For individual benefit – emotional, social reward
- To be heard & represented
- To improve policy & change social arrangements or political processes
- To address injustices...

- Because the personal is political...
  
  ...Politics happens in the domestic sphere – at home.

  However, Political Citizenship is exercised when change impacting a collective is sought (Lister, 2003)

  ...but it is deeply intertwined with personal politics (Lister, 2003)
What about people with intellectual disability?

Individual benefits
Positive self-esteem & identity; meaningful occupation

Human Rights enshrined in the UNCRPD
Article 4 – Participation in development of policy & legislation
Article 29 – Voting & participation in civil society

Heighten stake in the outcomes
As people historically excluded & over represented in many systems...

Ensure representation & accessibility through support, addressing barriers and adjustments to processes is important

"Subtle radicalism"
Participation shifts attitudes of broader public

Improve policy & social arrangements
People with intellectual disability hold an expertise that is not held by others in the policy process

Voting – What does the research tells us?

People with intellectual disability vote often less than the general public or people with other impairments

Yet...

Many people with intellectual disability have an interest, sense of duty & desire to vote & be heard
What influences voting by people with intellectual disability?

- Knowledge, interest or valuing voting
  (Agran & Hughes, 2013; Agran, MacLean & Arden, 2015; Bell & Horsler, 2003; Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2013)
- Orientation to the voting process
  (Kjellberg, 2002)
- Access to education & information on voting
  - on the issues & process
    (Agran, MacLean & Arden, 2015; Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2013)
  - on making voting related decisions
    (Agran, MacLean & Kitchen, 2016)
- Support from family or services
  (Agran, MacLean & Arden, 2015; Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2013)
- Social networks
  (Keeley, Redley, Holland & Clare, 2008; Kjellberg, 2013)
- Attitudes of others
  (Agran & Hughes, 2013; Agran, MacLean & Arden, 2015; Kjellberg & Hemmingsson, 2013)
- Legal barriers
  (Also in Australia)
  (Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014; Redley, 2008)
  (Savery, 2015; Ryan, Henderson & Bonython, 2016)

Conclusion...

Many ways for people with intellectual disability to exercise their political citizenship

Minimal applied research on political participation through voting
  – especially in the Australia context

There is lots of related action & other forms of knowledge:
  – In other disciplines – e.g. law, philosophy
  – In the sector – practice wisdom, non-academic research
  – Held by people with intellectual disability
References


References


