

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

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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”?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting representatives to government or running for office 	(Held, 2006)	(Liberal democracy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining an interest groups & competing to influence representatives 	(Held, 2006)	(Plural democracy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice & consumption - the market regulates society [But is this thin democracy?] 	(Held, 2006; Meagher & Goodwin, 2015) (van Toorn & Soldatic, 2015)	(Neoliberal democracy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direct participation & consultation • Deliberation - impartial debate & consensus seeking • Often by a representative sample of individuals 	(Held, 2016; Young, 2001)	(Deliberative democracy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct participation through deliberation • But presence, empathy & collaborative communication legitimised 	(Clifford, 2012; Rasio, Valkama & Peltola, 2014)	(Critical deliberative democracy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direct, grassroots participation (i.e. social movements, activism). • Privileges lived experience knowledge • Learn democracy through participation 	(Held, 2006; Powell, 2008; Pateman, 1970). (Pateman, 1970).	(Participatory democracy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct participation that legitimises conflict & inevitable difference over consensus 	(Clifford Simplican & Leader, 2015; Mouffe, 2000).	(Radical democracy)

Where & how people exercise political citizenship?

Individual acts	People vote in elections at local, state and federal elections.
	Run for election to a political office
	Contact acts (i.e. phoning your local MPs office)
In the Market [?]	Political consumption?
In Government	Sitting on govt advisory boards or committees
	Participating in community consultations
	Sitting on international governance committees
Civil society (In directly political)	Sitting on a board of governance for an NGO
	Volunteering for a social cause
Civil society (Formal)	Joining a political organisations (i.e. political party, a member based organisation or union)
	Volunteering or attending meetings of a political organisation
Civil society ("Extra-parliamentary" or informal)	Activism or grass-roots community action
	Involvement in social movements
[Other forms of political behaviour]	Having an interest or paying attention to social & political issues

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(Adapted from Edwards, 2014; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Laine, 2014)

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Why do people exercise their political citizenship?

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

- ***Because the personal is political...***

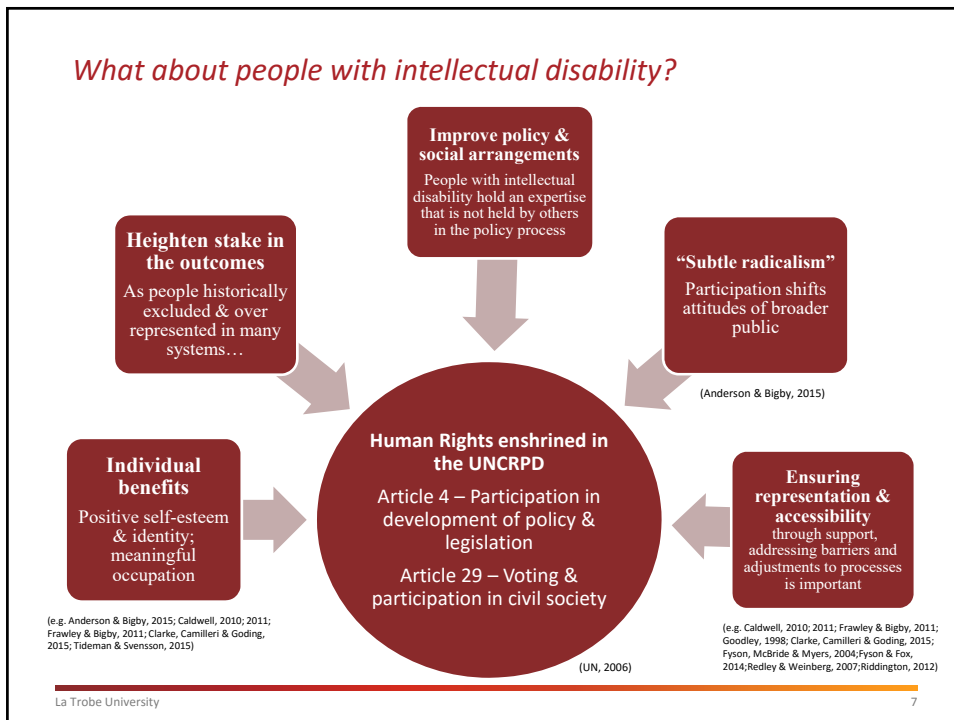
...Politics happens in the domestic sphere – at home.

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

...but it is deeply intertwined with personal politics (Lister, 2003)

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Voting – What does the research tells us?

People with intellectual disability vote often less than the general public or people with other impairments
(Keeley, Redley, Holland & Clare, 2008; Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014)

Yet...

Many people with intellectual disability have an **interest, sense of duty & desire** to vote & be heard
(Agran, MacLean & Kitchen, 2016; Bell & Horsler, 2003)

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What influences voting by people with intellectual disability?

- ✓ Knowledge, interest or valuing voting
(Agran & Hughes, 2013; Agran, MacLean & Andren, 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 & Andren, 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 & Andren, 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**



Thank you

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