COMPONENTS AND PROCESS OF IDENTITY FORMATION IN MODEL OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF OWN LIVES IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Abstract: The subject of this article consistently develops the authorship of own lives in people with disabilities concept. With reference to the strategic framework (contextualism and systemness in particular), it constructs an AOL-PwD model. The model presents identity as a constitutive area in understanding the authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities. The AOL-PwD model is composed of three interrelated elements: (1) authorship aspects, (2) identity components, and (3) process links. The article proposes important theses that chart direction for research. It suggests that identity is a fundamental category in exploring the AOL-PwD. The authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities is a dynamic category. As a result of AOL-PwD formation, the individual achieves a given authorship status: achieved, foreclosed, diffused, or moratorium status. The identity status achieved determines the way people with disabilities perceive their authorship life aspects. Developmental dynamics and specific identity and life authorship statuses being acquired suggest that it is necessary to redefine these areas of people's functioning on a regular basis. We believe that a consistent implementation of the concept will provide an inspiring theoretical and empirical space for multidimensional explorations of the phenomenon of disability in light of normalization, humanities, and affirmation. The article also charts direction for further research, which will include, among others, qualitative research to verify the AOL-PwD model, then measurement tools will be developed, and a comprehensive assessment of people with different disabilities identifying AOL-PwD determinants will be conducted.

Keywords: authorship of own lives in people with disabilities, personal identity, social identity, normalization, social belonging, integration

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IDENTITY AT THE ROOTS OF THE CONTEXTS OF THE MEANING OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF OWN LIVES IN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND ITS ASPECTS

The *life authorship* concept penetrates into these areas that form the mental resources of people with disabilities, at the same time becoming an important condition for their empowerment in the process of life normalization. Normalization is a set of principles based on a fundamental value, namely: all human beings are special and precious, each person constantly changes and develops (Bronston, 1976, 465). Normalization emphasizes the value of integrating people with disabilities into society, supporting their development from birth through late adulthood, and providing conditions that enable them to perform social roles as well as appropriate quality of their lives that leads to life satisfaction. It could be said that normalization is an objective and a process in which people with disabilities exercise their right to create their own fate - to author their own lives within their abilities (Głodkowska 2014a). This thesis gave rise to the development of the *authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept (AOL−PwD). So far, it has been conceptualized: a theoretical construct was developed, contexts of meaning were identified, a definition was formulated, research procedures were designed, and a strategic framework for research on the AOL−PwD was established (Głodkowska, 2015; Głodkowska and Gosk 2018; Głodkowska, Gosk and Pągowska 2018).

To start with, we will briefly outline selected findings made so far. The *authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept results from the merging of various ideas and theories in psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and philosophy. The AOL−PwD is described with five aspects: eudaimonistic, personalistic, functional, temporal, and aid. Each aspect can be interpreted with reference to relevant theories. Preliminary exemplifications proved it was reasonable to present these aspects in light of the following theories: wellbeing, personalism, optimal functioning, developmental tasks, and social support (Głodkowska 2015). The *authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept was defined as a multidimensional construct that identifies: (1) subjective experiences, (2) personal resources/wellbeing, (3) independence/autonomy,

(4) satisfactory performance of developmental tasks, and (5) effective use of social support (Głodkowska and Gosk 2018).

The previous papers emphasized that the AOL−PwD concept forms part of a trend that creates a positive and agentic image of people with disabilities in society. In view of further studies, the need to operationalize the concept, design measurement tools, and conduct extensive surveys and comparative research was indicated (Głodkowska and Gosk 2018). This idea gave direction to establishing a strategic framework for research on the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* (Głodkowska, Gosk and Pągowska 2018). The framework stresses that the AOL−PwD concept corresponds to the humanistic approach to the exploration of the phenomenon of disability, which emphasizes human subjectivity, agency, wellbeing, independence, and developmental satisfaction. The strategic framework for AOL−PwD research points to: (1) universalism, (2) affirmation, (3) interdisciplinarity, (4) comprehensiveness, (5) adaptation, (6) subjectivism, (7) objectivism, (8) participation, (9) individualism, (10) pragmatism, (11) contextuality, and (12) systemness. The authors assumed that a consistent implementation of the *authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept would create an inspiring theoretical and empirical space and foster valuable dialogue between various fields and theories, and also between assessment and rehabilitation theory and practice.

The subject of this article consistently develops the *authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities* concept. It refers to the AOL−PwD research strategy framework mentioned above - to the systemic and contextual approaches in particular (Głodkowska, Gosk, and Pągowska 2018). The systemic assumption emphasizes that the AOL−PwD areas form a peculiar unique and individual system of inner properties and personal connections as well as external social relationships. This system testifies to the unique and dynamic way a specific person and the environment perceive his or her life in answers to the following questions: (1) How does the person experience subjectivity?, (2) What is the person's sense of his or her own personal resources?, (3) To what degree is the person

independent and can make decisions about his or her life?, (4) Does the person perform developmental tasks with satisfaction?, (5) To what degree can the person use social support efficiently (Głodkowska and Gosk 2018)? It should be pointed out that each of these questions refers directly to the person's sense of self, and thus - to his or her identity. This awareness of self and one's life, abilities, and limitations is determined by both each person's individual uniqueness and by his or her sense of separateness from holding a specific place in the social world. This statement leads to the other strategic assumption for AOL–PwD research mentioned above, that is, contextuality. This assumption points to the multiple connections between various determinants of the person's life that occur in his or her environment. They can strengthen, but also weaken, a sense of subjectivity, agency, independence, or a sense of having personal resources. Shogren (2013) points out that the research perspective - and the social perspective as well - require that the interrelated contextual factors be taken into account in the conceptualization of disability, diagnosis, and classification. As an integrative construct, context constitutes a certain framework for describing, analysing, and interpreting various aspects of human functioning - both personal and environmental ones. Consequently, it allows giving recommendations for planning, implementing, and improving aid programs and social policy oriented at people with disabilities. Also, the contextual exploration of *life authorship* determinants corresponds to the principles of *Disability Studies*, in which researchers clearly stress the diagnostic and rehabilitative value of social, cultural, political, and economic living conditions of people with disabilities (e.g.: Campbell and Oliver, 2013; Swain, French, Barnes, and Thomas 2013).

Citing the arguments given above in this article, we want to emphasize that each of the AOL–PwD aspects is built into the person's psychological foundation, that is, into human identity. Identity is expressed in self-awareness, in being aware of one's resources, independence, and subjectivity, in the feeling that one develops and receives support as well as in being aware of one's place in the social world. It can, therefore, be assumed that human identity is a fundamental

category in interpreting *life authorship* as a general category and its individual aspects (eudaimonistic, functional, personalistic, temporal, and aid).

DEFINITION, IDENTITY FORMATION COMPONENTS AND PROCESS IN SELECTED CONCEPTS

Identity is a theoretical construct determined by a person's sense of personal uniqueness, separateness, and individuality in the social environment. Identity characteristics make it possible to distinguish, recognize, and identify a person, who can answer at least basic questions: Who am I?, What am I like?, What is my place and possibilities of life in the social environment? Psychologists study personal sources of identity formation, sociologists search for determinants in the social environment, and educators focus on methods for shaping identity. Research describes and defines identity, distinguishes its dimensions, creates models, and investigates the identity formation process. Researchers look for answers to the identity question: "Who am I?" (identity contents), probe into psychological and social processes related to the interpretation of these answers (identity processes), and explore connections between personal and social consequences of the contents and processes found. Authors point out that identity is defined with different terms - often with divergent meanings. They mention unitary identity and multiple identities, discovered and constructed identity, stable and fluid identity, and also personal and social identity (Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx 2011).

Many contemporary human identity theories originate from Erik Erikson's concept (1950, 1980, 2002). He was the first to use the term *ego identity*, thus giving identity a kind of subjective sense of self. The researcher suggested that a successfully formed identity is linked to the person's psychological wellbeing. He presented identity as a set of beliefs about oneself and the world around that is characterized by perceiving oneself in terms of sameness, separateness, integrity, and continuity despite the passage of time. Erikson (1997, 257) emphasized the special role of the first stage of the child's life in identity formation. Then "consistency, continuity, and sameness of experience provide a rudimentary sense of ego identity (...)." He also pointed out that the peak of

identity development is during adolescence, when, by successfully resolving identity crisis, teenagers gain a new virtue, that is, fidelity as stable identity, bonds, and relationships. Fidelity enables adolescents to behave coherently in various situations and take up age-appropriate tasks, following a certain consistent lifestyle. At the same time, Erikson did not consider identity to be a closed inner system resistant to changes but rather a psychosocial process that retains certain important personal and social characteristics (Erikson, 1964). The author shows this process of identity development in three stages: an unclear sense of self (*diffusion*), identification with role models (*totality*), and an integrated self-determination (*wholeness*).

Research results from the beginning of the 21st century that refer to Erikson's findings concerning identity development during adolescence suggest there exists a phenomenon of delayed adulthood. The phenomenon is connected with approval for taking up various activities without any commitments (without integrated self-determination) or the need to make choices typical of adulthood. As a result of intense sociocultural changes and the multitude of offers and information, young people prolong their transition to adulthood and postpone taking on adult roles (Fadjukoff, 2007; Fadjukoff, Kokko, and Pulkkinen, 2007; Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, and Kokko, 2016). Research findings also show that identity formation in adolescents is linked to changes taking place in coping with commitments and not to changes in commitments themselves (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, and Meeus, 2010). These changes in the ways adolescents cope with their commitments relate to the intensive development during adolescence, which is promoted by an increasing sense of agency in young people. Also, the range of their practical skills expands and the following properties occur: pride in their abilities, ambition, motivation for achievements, striving for a favourable status in their peer group, comparing themselves with others increasingly, and competition.

Brzezińska (2006, 7) demonstrates, at each stage of our lives, our identity develops and so does our awareness that we are distinct individuals, that we are different from other people despite all similarities, that we are ourselves regardless of circumstances, that the passage of time does not efface the things in us thanks to which we recognize ourselves. It is human identity that determines the person's place in the social world, among other people, and on the other hand - gives him or her a sense of personal uniqueness and specialness (Brzezińska 2006, 8). The person's identity from his or her personal perspective can be described by pointing out four concepts: a sense of separateness, a sense of sameness, a sense of continuity, and a sense of integrity (Brzezińska 2006). It is examined within three areas: personal identity, social identity, and cultural identity. Identity develops throughout the lifespan, but childhood and adolescence are the most important stages. All experiences collected in childhood are resources that provide the basis for identity formation. In adolescence, identity formation is a fundamental developmental task (Brzezińska, 2006, 16). From the beginning of the person's life, identity development proceeds simultaneously in a specific temporal context (past, presence, and future) and in a sociocultural context (relationships and interactions, groups, organizations, and communities in which the individual participates at a given time of life).

Meeus and colleagues (2010) point to the concept of identity statuses developed by Marcia (1966, 1980) as one of the most important concepts - analysed in depth theoretically and used in empirical studies. It is worth stressing that the author significantly specified the concept, operationalized important aspects of identity, and thus showed research opportunities. Marcia (1966) developed the theory of identity statuses in the 1960s and 1970s. He distinguished two stages in the identity formation process: (1) exploration and (2) commitment. This way he ascribed an important characteristic to understanding identity, that is, developmental dynamics. The first stage refers mainly to early adolescence (10/12 - 15/16 years of age). In the second developmental phase (16/17-18/20), young people take on commitments.

At the exploration stage, young people experiment with various roles, get involved in different activities, and participate in various social groups. This is a way to define oneself, build knowledge of oneself, of one's abilities and limitations. Exploration is an orienting and cognitive activity which focuses on investigating, or learning about the environment and its

properties as well as experimenting in and with it, taking on various social roles, and getting to know new ways of thinking and lifestyles. These activities consist in actively testing, assessing, searching, making decisions, and changing them. During childhood, children learn about their reality with all their senses - they explore physical space, the world of objects and people. In adolescence, it is not the world of objects that is the main area of exploration any longer but the person himself or herself and the people around the person. These are mainly significant others the person has close emotional relationships with, who meet his or her security needs, consent to/accept the person's sometimes risky (exploratory) activities, and are an authority for the person, that is, parents, teachers, and peers (Brzezińska 2006). The developmental effect of exploration oriented at physical objects, people, and oneself consists in gaining knowledge that serves to expand and modify the image of the world and the self-formed earlier in life and in transforming the I-others relationship from "child dependence" to "adult interdependence" (Brzezińska 2006, 18). It is worth noting, which Brzezińska (2006) emphasizes, that limited exploration results in a small store of individual experiences. On the other hand, excessively extensive exploration may provoke chaos and confusion.

At the next stage of identity formation, young people take on commitments, including, among others, making choices according to their needs and aspirations in life - guided by their preferred values. A sense of continuity, purpose, cohesion, and agency are expressed in commitments. It is a time when young people need to cope with significant others' expectations and accept responsibility for their behaviours and decisions. As long as they have engaged in exploratory behaviours before, adolescents make choices following their needs, aspirations, and plans, they shape their world views. Commitments give a sense of continuity, build life goals, and what is most important - develop the ability to remain faithful to choices made (Marcia, 1966).

Marcia (1966, 551-558) pondered on "individual styles of coping" with identity formation tasks. He thus distinguished four identity statuses: (1) *identity achievement* - when the person has successfully gone through the exploration and commitment stages, (2) *identity*

diffusion - when the person has not gone through the two stages of identity formation successfully, (3) *foreclosure* - when the person experiences significantly limited opportunities to explore the environment (e.g., due to parents' excessive control and directiveness) and at the same time is under strong pressure related to making commitments and decisions important for the future, and (4) *moratorium* - when the person has had opportunity for excessive exploration in the environment (parents, teachers, peers) and at the same time making commitments and decisions has not been stressed enough. As a result of his empirical analyses, Marcia (1966, 558) defined the identity statuses as "individual styles of coping with the psychosocial task of forming an ego identity".

The division of the identity formation stages into exploration and commitment is not so clearcut today as research - by Luyckx et al. (2006) among others - shows that both exploration and commitment are present not only in early and late adolescence but also in adulthood. It is difficult to set normative age ranges for each of the identity development cycles. That is why Luyckx and colleagues proposed a *dual-cycle model of identity formation* (Luyckx, Goossens, and Soenens 2006; Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, and Berzonsky 2007; Luyckx, Teppers, Klimstra, and Rassart 2014). According to this complex model, identity is a construction composed of five dimensions: (1) *exploration in breadth*, or looking for alternatives with reference to one's values, goals, and beliefs before making a choice; (2) *commitment making*, or making choices and commitments that are important for identity development; (3) *exploration in depth*, or evaluating current choices in detail; (4) *identification with commitment*, or identifying oneself with those choices with a feeling of certainty that they are good for the person; and (5) *ruminative exploration*, which relates to fears, anxieties, and doubts and to reflecting on negative experiences (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, and Meeus, 2008; Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, and Vollebergh 1999; Meeus, Iedema, and Maassen, 2002; Crocetti, Rubini, and Meeus 2008; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, and Beyers 2006). Each of these dimensions is composed of two cycles: a commitment formation cycle and a commitment evaluation cycle. The dynamic interaction between

the two cycles stimulates the identity formation process and thus defines six identity statuses: achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, carefree diffusion, diffused diffusion, and undifferentiated cluster (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje and Meeus 2010). The concept by Luyckx and colleagues (2006) significantly extends the classical theory by Marcia, making identity more complex and dynamic.

Approaching identity from a developmental point of view, researchers noticed that the personal identity formation process does not end in adolescence but can last as long as until 30 years of age. Following this trend, Stephen, Fraser, and Marcia (1992) proposed modification to the classical model of identity formation and distinguished repeated *MAMA cycles: Moratorium – Achievement – Moratorium - Achievement*. Research showed that identity status in adulthood can change in response to changes in the external environment (Marcia 2002). Kroger (2015) takes a similar position and stresses that identity is not a static property as the individual's life circumstances and changes in his or her biological and psychological needs become a spur for changes in the person's identification and separateness. At the same time, a developed human identity needs to be plastic and open as initial identity commitments change with time and the person experiences the need to manage new and changing tasks in life (Côté and Levine 2015; Schwartz, Côté and Arnett 2005; Côté 2006; das Dores Guerreiro and Abrantes 2004).

It should also be noted that numerous researchers clearly perceive two types of identity: personal identity and social identity (among others: Albarello, Crocetti and Rubini 2018; Vignoles 2017; Turner and Onorato 1999). Personal identity (also called individual identity) relates to the formation of the self and is expressed in perceiving and experiencing oneself as a unique individual and in identifying oneself with one's personal goals, aspirations, and values. Social identity relates to the formation of the "we" category and is expressed in identifying oneself with the social environment and adopting collective goals, values, and conduct as one's own. Researchers note that conflict and balance between these types of identity become an important basis for human identity development processes. Interesting conclusions were reached by Albarello, Crocetti,

and Rubini (2018), who analyzed personal and social identity in adolescents in a longitudinal study. The authors found, among others, that personal and social identity processes are interrelated and most cross-lagged effects show that young people's social identity significantly influences personal identity formation. Gidden's (1991, 53) words can be a valuable summary of deliberations on identity: "Self-identity is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography." The theories presented above focus on and analyse the categories of processes important for human identity formation. At the same time, they provide valuable inspirations for examining the issue of identity in people with disabilities.

IDENTITY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT WITH DISABILITY

Since the 1990s, there has been extensive research on identity among people with disabilities (among others: Gill 1997; Hahn and Belt 2004; Darling 2003; Putnam 2005; Whitney 2006; Valeras 2010; Shakespeare 1996; Watson 2002; Hughes, Russel and Paterson 2005; Murugami 2009; Galvin 2003; Galvin 2005). Murugami (2006) presented a few conclusions based on those studies. The author pointed out that (1) identity in people with disabilities is structured on social experience shared with nondisabled people; (2) it is possible to distinguish and define specific identities of people with disabilities; and (3) the self as awareness of one's existence and oneself plays an important role in identity formation. She emphasized that to free people with disabilities from fixed, frequently stereotypical identities, their life realities - when they experience cultural and social prejudices - need to be understood.

It should be pointed out that in the current approaches to disability, the issue of identity becomes a distinct strand undertaken by psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, and educators. The social model of disability, which stresses the equal rights of all people, their right to make decisions, their agency, and full participation in social life, is the main reference. This model's principles clearly specify conditions for identity formation in people with disabilities (Oliver 2013; Degener 2016; Beckett and Campbell 2015). Also the affirmation model, which reveals the positive aspects of disability, should be mentioned. The

authors show that the affirmation of differences creates opportunities for good life for all - nondisabled and disabled people. They argue that people with disabilities not only need confirmation how they are different from nondisabled people, but they also expect recognition of their personal nature, acceptance of their lifestyle and quality of life, and respect for their identity (Swain and French 2000, 577). The affirmative model opposes the tragic model of disability, in which the person's limitations hinder autonomy and full participation in social life, thus disturbing the identity formation process (Swain and French 2000; French and Swain 2004).

The title of Watson's (2002, 519) article: "Well, I Know This Is Going to Sound Very Strange to You, but I Don't See Myself as a Disabled Person" sounds very evocative in the context of identity in people with disabilities. The author argues that the identity of people with disabilities can be achieved not by denying or putting disability aside but by reconstructing what is normal. People with disabilities have the right not to accept the social definition of normal and also have the right to perceive differences resulting from their disabilities as something normal for them. Such mental work on the social construction of disability takes places when the person acts consciously and questions the identity attributed to him or her by society. Watson adds that identity does not have to be defined in terms of differences, celebrating diversity or pride in identity labelled disability, but the point is to define disability in one's own individual terms - according to how one perceives oneself and his or her place in the world (Watson 2002, 521). Kidd and Teagle's (2001) position could be cited here; they argue that identity is both the condition of being a person and the process thanks to which we become a person and are formed as subjects. When a person negates perceiving himself or herself as disabled, the person has grounds to think of himself or herself as a person free from oppression and to build self-awareness as a free subject. As Murugami (2006) argues, people with disabilities are capable of forming a sense of self, or self-identity, instead of constructing it on disability while at the same time accepting their condition.

Worthy of note is the interesting concept by Gill (1997), who examines identity formation in people with disabilities from the point of view of four types of integration. The author delineates them, capturing their essence with their names. She distinguishes the following types of integration: (1) *coming to feel we belong*, that is, integrating into society, (2) *coming home*, that is, integrating with the disability community, (3) *coming together*, that is, internal integration of the person with disability, and (4) *coming out*, that is, integrating our feelings with how we present ourselves in a given environment and circumstances. Gill (1997) points out that these types of integration are very important for the personal empowerment process in people with disabilities and their identity development. The *coming out* integration type, as Gill (1997, 45) argues, is often the last stage to achieving identity by people with disabilities. Everything starts with a desire to find one's place in society, among nondisabled peers, and at the same time - to emphasize oneself as a person with disability. There also exists a different way to develop a sense of identity - one that is determined by a desire to belong to the disability community, thanks to which efforts to respect the rights of people with disabilities can be reinforced. Unfortunately, all too frequently, the social environment poses obstacles to people with disabilities striving for an independent life and aims to fit them into social structures and requirements.

Foucault's (2000, 78) position could be cited here. He argues that for some time now, sociology - and ethnology to an even greater degree - have been turning toward an opposite phenomenon, toward what could be termed a negative structure of society: Who does society reject? What does the game of impossibilities consist in? What is the system of bans? This view clearly emphasizes the position of researchers who focus on showing the lives of people that are relegated to the margins, stigmatized, isolated, or excluded. None of these terms is fully clear-cut, but each points to the negative social status of the person who experiences this state. According to Foucault, disability becomes equivalent to social oppression, where governmental policy, state authorities, and institutions (including educational systems) are key factors in creating structures that oppress people with disabilities. This marginalization and social oppression are directly and, at the same time, negatively related to the process of identity formation in people with disabilities.

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Foucault's (2000) views can also serve as a background for exploring sociological theories of belonging. These concepts show that distance leads to treating people with disabilities as strange, unknown, totally different others who are socially inefficient and whose functional impairments cause the fundamental existential conflict each person with disability is in (Speck 2005, 229). Numerous researchers underline that disability can be a factor that determines the development of identity and also a sense of social belonging (among others: Watson 2002; Riddell and Watson 2014; Forber-Pratt, Lyew, Mueller and Samples 2017; Gilson and DePoy 2015).

Theories of belonging explain that taking care of its stability, the social system is not interested in accepting people with disabilities but only in adapting them to existing conditions. In such circumstances, the subjectivity, autonomy, independence or self-determination of people with disabilities are not worth considering or are even contrary to the social interest (Speck 2005). Distance, rejection, isolation, or stigmatization are the actual social response. People with disabilities experience humiliation and disrespect from "normals." Describing this often drastic state, Goffman (2005, 41) talks about the formation of "spoiled identity" in people with disabilities and their stigma of embarrassing otherness. Stigmatization makes the person different, dissimilar as stigma management is a general feature of society, a process occurring wherever there are identity norms.

Hughes and colleagues (2005) argue that identity formation in people with disabilities is consistently activated as a result of social stigmatization of these people as strangers. Excluding processes limit opportunities for participation in various areas of social life and are also factors destructive to personal life. Research shows that young people with disabilities in particular are aware of identity changes that are frequently related to social exclusion and stereotypical image of people with disabilities as tragic figures (Murray 2002). Unfortunately, various limitations and determinants make it very difficult for people with disabilities to assume an identity other than that assigned to them because of their disabilities, impairments, or disorders.

It can be noted that there are few theoretical analyses or empirical reports looking at the issue of personal identity formation in people with disabilities. Most frequently, analyses explore social identity and social phenomena relating to stigmatization and marginalization. And thus sociological studies investigate social consequences of being disabled and explain the mechanisms of self-determination and identity formation in people with disabilities in social situations (among others: Ostrowska, Sikorska, and Gąciarz 2001; Wiszejko-Wierzbicka 2008; Sikorska 2002; Gustavsson and Zakrzewska-Manterys 1997). Shakespeare (1996) believes that disability identity is an extremely complex phenomenon and the process of its formation is determined by at least three main aspects: a political aspect (disability activism), a cultural aspect (disability arts), and a personal aspect (self-understanding). The author emphasizes that people with disabilities go through a process during which they try to organize their lives in such a way as to be as ordinary as possible, that is, to retain everything that will let them function relatively normally in various areas of social life.

Putnam (2005) developed a framework for *political disability identity*, taking into account six aspects: (1) *self-worth*, (2) *pride*, (3) *discrimination*, (4) *common cause*, (5) *policy alternatives*, and (6) *engagement in political action*. Putnam expanded on these domains of political disability identity. For example, she defined "pride" as demanding that society perceive people with disabilities as individuals with physical or mental impairments who experience disability; accepting that disability is nothing unusual but rather a common human trait; recognizing that impairment is not inherently negative but can become negative in certain cultural, social, and physical environments; and recognizing these traits as promoting participation in cultural minority groups (Putnam 2005, 195). The author concludes that a sense of identity that reinforces people with disabilities results from their conscious actions in which they sometimes need to question their socially assigned identity.

The analyses that have been made to date show that the authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities forms a special construct that delineates an individual and unique system of inner properties and personal connections as well as sociocultural contexts.

AUTHORSHIP OF OWN LIVES IN PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES: A MODEL DETERMINED BY IDENTITY

Identity appears as a fundamental category of the
AOL-PwD and a central point of reference that
points to individuality and uniqueness. Graphic
presentation of this construct as a model outlines
and specifies the comprehensive and systemic
approach to this conceptual category (Diagram 1).

With reference to previous findings, we expect that
the AOL-PwD model will delineate research
activities. Three elements constitute the structural
origins of the AOL-PwD model: (1) authorship
aspects, (2) identity components, and (3) process
links.

Diagram 1. Model of the authorship of own lives in people
with disabilities
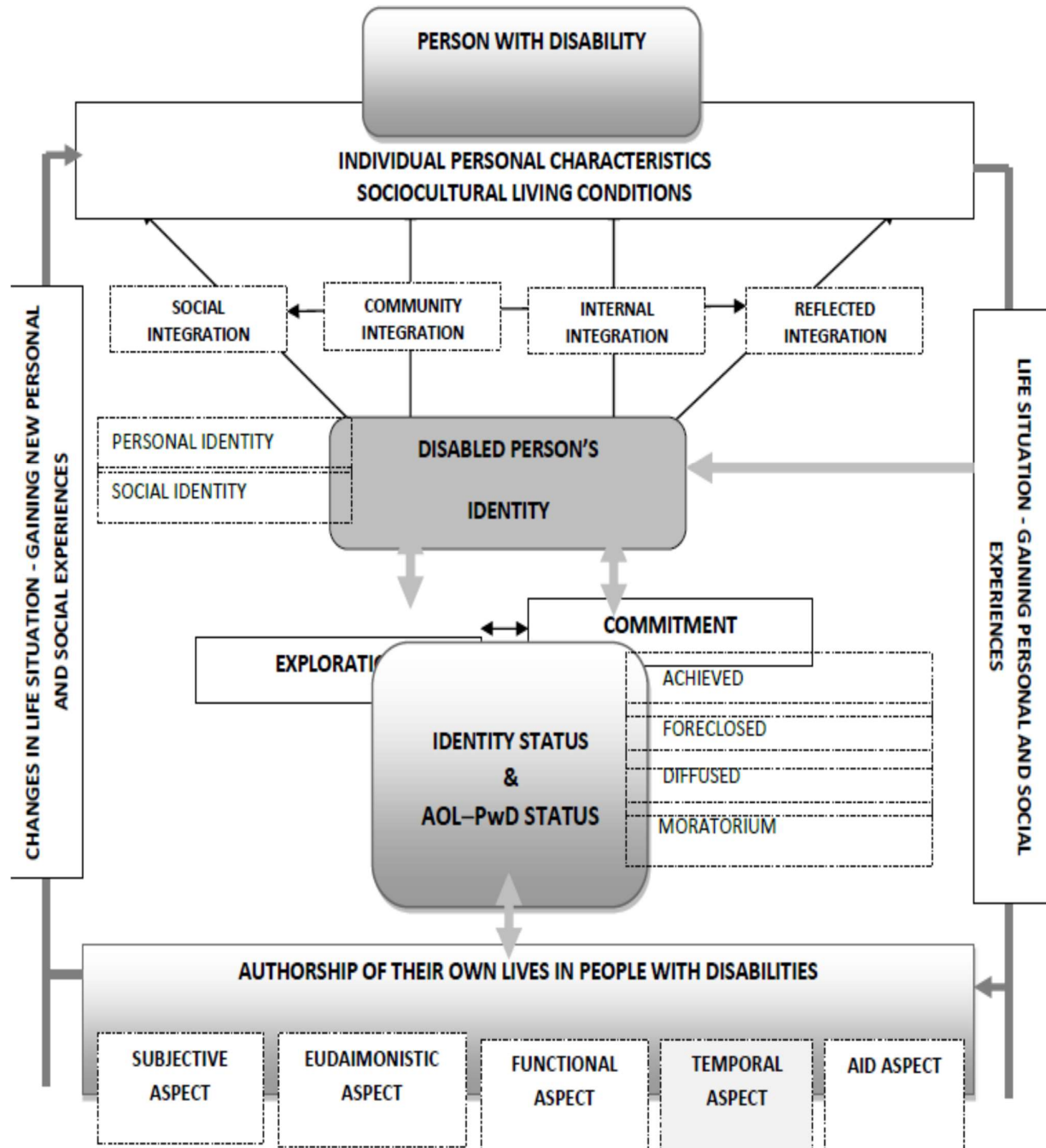
The identity of the person with disability, which is explained with identity components and process links, is a central category in the model presented. The AOL−PwD identity components are examined in two categories: personal (individual) identity and social identity. The personal identity component relates to the formation of the self, while the sociocultural one relates to the formation of the "we" category. The identity process links - in line with Gill's (1997) concept - relate to the different types of integration: social integration, community integration, internal integration, and reflected integration. According to this concept, they form the basis for identity formation in people with disabilities. At the same time, they are linked to the individual's personal characteristics and the sociocultural context of the individual's life situation.

With reference to Marcia's (1966, 1980, 2002) identity concept, we find it reasonable to take into consideration two identity formation processes - exploration and commitment. The course of these processes makes it possible to identify the identity status achieved by an individual (achieved, foreclosed, diffused, or moratorium) and the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* status as well.

We assume that the person's stage in the process of identity formation and his or her identity status determine the way the person defines his or her life authorship and perceives its authorship aspects. The model includes the five aspects of the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities*: the personalistic aspect refers to subjectivity (authorship of one's life enables the person to say: *I know who I am*), the eudaimonistic aspect refers to personal resources (*I have potential*), the functional aspect refers to autonomy (*I am independent and self-reliant*), the temporal aspect - to developmental satisfaction (*I perform important tasks in various periods of my life*), and the aid aspect - to support (*I have a place in the social environment*) (Głodkowska 2015). The authorship aspects, identity components, and process links are interrelated. For example, developmental satisfaction as the AOL−PwD temporal aspect defines developmental task performance and identification with goals, aspirations, and age-specific personal values (personal component) as well as the performance of developmental tasks that are connected with

participation in various social groups and adopting collective goals, values, and conduct as one's own (sociocultural component). These facts reveal the course of exploration and commitment processes, which lead to achieving specific identity statuses (achieved, foreclosed, diffused, or moratorium). At the same time, developmental satisfaction (AOL−PwD aspect) manifests itself in the description of the identity process links (social, community, internal, and reflected integration).

We assume that personal factors and a broad sociocultural context of the lives of people with disabilities determine the course of their personal and social identity formation process, and in consequence, they also condition the way people perceive themselves as the authors of their lives and the individual life authorship aspects. The AOL−PwD model assumes these processes are dynamic. Thus, all changes in the person's life situation and each new personal or social experience can frame a different perception of oneself as the author of one's life and its individual aspects - also such that is contrary to the previous one.

The analyses presented in this article are systematized from the point of view of the following theses:

(1) The fundamental category to explore the AOL−PwD is identity understood both as a construct of attributes that are assigned to the individual by the social environment and the effect of the work of the subjective aspect of identity, that is a sense of identity.

Also, such an approach to the key concept of the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* provides grounds for presenting the AOL−PwD in both subjective terms (a sense of authorship in people with disabilities) and in objective terms (recognition of a given person's life authorship by the social environment). The consistent understanding of identity and authorship also emphasizes the assumptions presented in previous publications concerning AOL−PwD research procedures and strategies.

(2) The *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* is a dynamic category that develops and changes throughout the lifespan.

Change dynamics is determined, among others, by the identity processes of exploration and commitment, which penetrate into the individual aspects of the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* (subjectivity, personal resources, autonomy, developmental satisfaction, and support), making them a special orienting and cognitive activity in the form of activating the process links, i.e. exploration (experimenting, involvement, participation, searching, testing, evaluating) and commitment (making choices and being faithful to them in line with one's needs, plans, aspirations in life, and preferred values). Also stability, that is, the sameness of oneself despite the passage of time and changes in living conditions and in relationships with the social environment, needs to be taken into account in perceiving changes in both identity and authorship.

(3) As a result of AOL–PwD formation, the individual achieves a given authorship status: achieved, foreclosed, diffused, or moratorium status.

The identification of the AOL–PwD statuses allows operationalization of the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* in identity terms. The systemness and contextuality of the AOL–PwD show that the identity formation process and the way of perceiving (defining) life authorship and its aspects are determined by numerous personal and social factors and thus take place in the specific living conditions of each person. Creating a network, the determinants overlap in interrelationships, which produces both identity statuses and *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* statuses.

(4) The identity status achieved determines the way people with disabilities perceive their authorship life aspects.

Differences in perceiving one's authorship and identity may result, among others, from the status achieved in these two categories. For it can be assumed that the person defines his or her life authorship and perceives its authorship aspects (subjectivity, personal resources, autonomy, developmental satisfaction, and support) in a unique, individual way depending on the person's stage of identity formation and the (personal and social) determinants of this process.

(5) Developmental dynamics and specific identity and life authorship statuses being acquired suggest that it is necessary to redefine these areas of people's functioning on a regular basis.

It should be emphasized that the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* is a conceptual category that shows a distinct dynamic reference to a process that can be given the characteristic of being permanent. Continuity of this process occurs in time and in various circumstances. That is why each new life experience (even one that seems unimportant) can frame a different perception of oneself as the author of one's life and its individual aspects: subjectivity, personal resources, autonomy, developmental satisfaction, and support - also perceptions that are contrary to previous ones. We assume that the *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* construct is holistic, comprehensive, contextual, and systemic.

CONCLUSION

The *authorship of own lives in people with disabilities* is a concept of assessment and rehabilitation. It corresponds to the positive, affirmative approach to the exploration of the phenomenon of disability. The idea of perceiving disability from the point of view of life authorship enables people with disabilities to look at themselves and their lives in a different way: not only from the angle of limitations, disorders, or deficits but through the lens of subjectivity, agency, personal resources, independence, and satisfaction with fulfilling developmental tasks – which are essential aspects of authoring oneself and one's life. The person's identity - as a source category for understanding the AOL–PwD - makes the person unique, individual and at the same time separate, which allows the person, despite all similarities, to differ from other people and to recognize himself or herself and his or her place in the social environment.

The theoretical analyses performed to date substantiate the AOL–PwD concept, develop the construct, show the contexts of the meaning of the AOL–PwD aspects, and announce research stages and procedures. This article shows this concept with reference to identity, which is considered to

be constitutive for understanding the *authorship of their own lives in people with disabilities.* A model was built whose three interrelated elements (authorship aspects, identity components, and process links) are the source to understand the AOL−PwD.

Further extensive investigations in this area will be determined by research tasks, including, among others: verification of the AOL−PwD model with the use of qualitative research, development of measurement tools, and assessment of people with different disabilities identifying AOL−PwD determinants. We hope that the results of analyses will reinforce the belief that despite their disabilities, these people can build and do build their lives as their authors and have something important to offer to the world.

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