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Application of biographical interviews in research on the quality of life of people with disabilities

Zastosowanie wywiadów biograficznych w badaniach nad jakością życia osób z niepełnosprawnościami

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present the application of the biographical interview method in research on the life quality of people with disabilities. In the article, the author addresses the problem of whether this method is appropriate in the research and evaluation of public policy in this field. The research assumption adopted by the author takes into account the fact that the method of biographical interview in the research correctly allows for the synthesis of conclusions drawn from the study of individual cases and observations, as well as for generalizing and searching for a broader context from the statements of the citizens. Firstly, the author will assess to what extent the assumptions of the analyzed method correspond to the topic of quality of life research, especially in the context of disability. then, an assessment of the extent to which the method of biographical interview is used to study the issue of disability, especially in terms of quality of life. The operationalization of the study was based on a review of the literature on the subject in Polish and English from 2006–2021.

Keywords: disability, biographical interview methods, public policy, quality of life research

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie zastosowania metody wywiadu biograficznego w badaniach nad jakością życia osób z niepełnosprawnościami. Autor rozważa, czy metoda ta jest właściwa do oceny polityki publicznej w tym zakresie. Przyjęte przez autora założenie uwzględnia fakt, że metoda wywiadu biograficznego w prawidłowy sposób pozwala na syntezę wniosków wyciąganych z badania pojedynczych przypadków i obserwacji oraz generalizowanie i poszukiwanie szerszego kontekstu na podstawie udzielonych wypowiedzi badanych osób. Autor ocenia, w jakim stopniu założenia analizowanej metody odpowiadają tematowi badań jakości życia, szczególnie w kontekście niepełnosprawności. Następnie na podstawie krytycznej analizy stanu badań szuka odpowiedzi na to, jak często w literaturze przedmiotu autorzy stosują metodę wywiadu biograficznego do oceny zagadnienia niepełnosprawności, zwłaszcza pod kątem jakości życia oraz innych zjawisk z obszaru polityki publicznej. W operacjonalizacji badania oparto się na przeglądzie literatury przedmiotu w języku polskim i angielskim z lat 2006–2021.

Słowa kluczowe: niepełnosprawność, metody wywiadu biograficznego, polityka publiczna, badania jakości życia

Entry

The aim of the article is to present the application of the biographical interview method in research on the quality of life of people with disabilities. The author considers whether this method is appropriate for evaluating public policy in this area. The adopted assumption takes into account the fact that the biographical interview method correctly allows for the synthesis of conclusions drawn from the study of individual cases and observations, as well as for generalizing and seeking a broader context from the statements given by the respondents. First, an assessment was made to what extent the assumptions of the analyzed method correspond to the subject of research on the quality of life, especially in the context of disability. Subsequently, a critical analysis of the state of research was used to demonstrate how often in the literature on the subject the authors use the biographical interview method to assess the issue of disability, especially in terms of quality of life and other phenomena in the field of public policy. The operationalization of the study was based on a literature review in Polish and English from 2006–2021. Selected items representing different approaches to the use of the biographical interview method were analyzed. The literature in this field is rich and new items are constantly being added, but the biographical interview method is rarely named directly. The nature of this method means that many analyzes take the form of press articles, blog entries or monographs. For this reason, such sources often do not have the characteristics of a formalized scientific article, they are rather closer to popular science texts. These types of texts are mentioned and were not subject to direct analysis within the framework of this study.

Ways of examining disability in the social context

Disability as a social phenomenon is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “a limitation or lack of ability to perform activities in a manner or within the range considered normal for a human being, resulting from damage and impairment of bodily functions”¹. What distinguishes it from other phenomena is the multitude of types and degrees of disability, which can vary greatly in terms of effects on a given person and their environment. Such heterogeneity causes disability research to often focus on small samples or even individual cases in order to get to the heart of the problem (at least specific to this study group, with the potential to generalize to the entire population or to larger subgroups). At the same time, it is a delicate, personal topic that is often taboo for both people with disabilities and people who come into contact with them. Such circumstances create additional challenges when conducting research on people with disabilities, especially if it is related to the level of satisfaction with life of these people. This consists of factors that describe a person’s social status and their health, which can be embarrassing and highly subjective.

Basic disability is based on a medical diagnosis. There are specific scales and classifications that allow people with disabilities to be grouped according to the type and degree of disability. It is in common use *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)*² developed by WHO, which on over three hundred pages describes with great precision specific biological impairments and activity limitations that may affect a person with a disability. Therefore, both purely medical (biological) and social factors, related to, for example, functioning in everyday life, are taken into account. In the literature on the subject, we can find many studies using this type of standardized scales, most often based on large and well-known cross-sectional studies, such as the European Social Survey or the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). These are large and multidimensional data sets that allow for the analysis of differences between individual countries, demographic groups, including in the context of disability and its impact on the quality of life of respondents³. There are also analogous data sets prepared by national statistical centres, including the Polish Central Statistical Office. Such studies, however, are not able to present the specific situations of individual individuals, because when analyzing raw numerical data, the human, empathic and oriented dimension disappears to understand what the life of a person with a disability is really like, for example in terms of social exclusion. Meanwhile, understanding this issue would allow for more effective planning of social policy activities so that they actually respond to the needs of people with disabilities.

¹ Niepełnosprawność, [in:] *Encyklopedia PWN* <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/niepelnospraw-nosc:3947453.html> [access: 10.08.2019].

² *Międzynarodowa Klasyfikacja Funkcjonowania, Niepełnosprawności i Zdrowia (ICF)*, WHO, Genewa 2001.

³ Comprehensive overview of available sources on the subject in: W. van Oorschot, M. Balvers, M. Schols, I. Lodewijks, *European Comparative Data on the Situation of Disabled People: an annotated review*, University of Leeds, 2009.

Possible applications of biographical interviews to analyze the quality of life of people with disabilities

The biographical interview was developed on the basis of the interpretative paradigm, i.e. in opposition to the positivist and neo-positivist currents. As a rule, it is a conversation conducted in this way, in which biographical threads are an important part – concerning the entire life of the interlocutor or possibly a specific part of it. The method comes from the tradition of American sociology, but is also widely used in Europe⁴. In the literature one can distinguish, among others, the method of autobiographical and narrative interview by Fritz Schütze⁵ and the analyzes made in relation to it by Gabriele Rosenthal⁶ based on a clear division into life history (eng. *life history*) and the story of life (eng. *life story*). This distinction shows well that a biographical interview will not be only a story of a given person composed of facts and specific events concerning them. It seems more interesting from the point of view of researching the quality of life, *life story* a story about a person's life from their subjective perspective. Such a story may contain specific descriptions showing what the life of the examined person looked like at a given moment. Moreover, on the basis of the emotions expressed by this person and the form of the description, further inferences can be made. For example, even if the surveyed person does not directly say that disability is a nuisance and an obstacle in everyday life for him, it may be due to the way he talks about his life. The opportunity to present their own story from a personal perspective is also important because people with disabilities rarely have the opportunity to speak out, and their stories are usually reported from the point of view of others – family, friends, therapists, historians⁷.

Typology of source materials

In the literature, you can find many different biographical interviews conducted with people with disabilities. So it is needed to systematize them by dividing them into specific groups of studies. One of the determinants can be the form of an interview. There are many books and publications that are so-called river interviews. Their authors usually do not define their work as a sociological study, but in fact it is a very specific source material. One can also distinguish autobiographies written by people with disabilities. Although they do not meet the criteria of a biographical interview (i.e. a form of dialogue), they can carry a very similar information load. Separating them as a separate category therefore seems

⁴ K. Kaźmierska, *Badania biograficzne w naukach społecznych*, „Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej” 2013, Vol. IX, No. 4.

⁵ F. Schütze, *Analiza biograficzna ugruntowana empirycznie w autobiograficznym wywiadzie narracyjnym. Jak analizować autobiograficzne wywiady narracyjne*, [in:] K. Kaźmierska (ed.), *Metoda biograficzna w socjologii. Antologia tekstów*, Nomos, Kraków 2012, pp. 141–278.

⁶ G. Rosenthal, *Badania biograficzne*, [in:] K. Kaźmierska (ed.), *Metoda biograficzna w socjologii. Antologia tekstów*, Nomos, Kraków 2012, pp. 279–307.

⁷ S. Ledger, N. McCormack, J. Walmsley, E. Tilley, I. Davies, „Everyone has a story to tell”: *A review of life stories in learning disability research and practice*, Wiley, 2021, p. 3.

a bit artificial. It should be noted, however, that the interviewer can direct the conversation in such a way as to reach the most interesting and important aspects. In the case of autobiographies, due to the absence of an interviewer, difficult topics or those involving a high emotional load may be omitted or described in a perfunctory manner.

Most publications of this kind have one thing in common – the interview author does not undertake an analysis of the answers received and does not present his own interpretation to the reader. From this perspective, therefore, it is difficult to call such sources scientific research. They should be treated rather as materials for the reader's own analysis, possibly for conducting actual sociological research. This kind of research, that is, articles written based on existing and previously published interviews with people with disabilities, can be classified as the second group. The researcher does not personally conduct an interview, but interprets existing source materials. He can also conduct a comparative analysis of several biographical interviews either in their entirety or only in terms of selected aspects. This is interesting in that one primary source material can serve many researchers, and according to the interpretivist paradigm, each of them can draw their own conclusions and present their observations.

The third group consists of scientific research in which the authors themselves undertake to conduct a biographical interview and then analyze the answers obtained. This group can be divided into two subgroups. The first will include those works in which the author interviews one specific person. Then, most often, he will try to comprehensively analyze the perception of the quality of life of this person, for example, at different stages of his life. The second subgroup includes studies in which the author interviews more than one person in order to compare the results later. In this case, the researcher focuses rather on certain specific aspects of life in order to point out the similarities and differences between the examined people. The selection of the study group can be approached in two ways – either try to select people with a similar type and degree of disability, or different from each other. In the first case, the test result may show whether the perception of similar physical limitations differs between the respondents, or what causes these differences (for example, material status, family situation, country of residence). If the researcher selects different people for the study, the research is rather focused on showing whether all types of disabilities affect human life in a similar way. In specific situations, of course, this will not always be true, but perhaps the overall assessment of the quality of life will turn out to be similar. If the researcher selects different people for the study, the research is rather focused on showing whether all types of disabilities affect human life in a similar way. In specific situations, of course, this will not always be true, but perhaps the overall assessment of the quality of life will turn out to be similar.

Application of the biographical interview to study people with disabilities in the literature of the subject

In this part, selected research on people with disabilities will be presented, in which the biographical interview method was used. According to the previously presented

categorization, the analyzed studies belong to the third group, i.e. they are based on interviews with one or many people, conducted specifically for the purpose of a given study. This group is of a scientific nature and is the most numerous in the literature, and on its basis it is possible to analyze various approaches to conducting a biographical interview (for example, combining this method with other research methods). This type of research is carried out by individual researchers or at the request of institutions dealing with the assistance of people with disabilities in order to better understand their needs and adjust the actions taken.

An example of an individual publication is an article by Iwona Lindyberg entitled *(Nie)pełnosprawność w doświadczeniach dorosłych osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*⁸. The author presents the methodological assumptions of the study, emphasizing that the biographical approach in the study of disability can be a great challenge for the researcher. This is a departure from the previously dominant clinical or socio-clinical approach, which minimized the importance of the subject's narrative. There is a strong temptation to "objectify" a person with a disability, especially an intellectual one, because they are not able to conduct an interview on the same level as a non-disabled person. The described study attempts to analyze the meanings attributed to disability by the surveyed people with more severe intellectual disabilities. The aim is to get to know the perspective of the surveyed people on their own disability. The researcher used an interpretivist paradigm, which allows for an individualized approach to the answers given by the respondents and to give these answers meanings – such as those individuals actually perceive and try to express.

The research consisted in conducting group interviews and in-depth interviews with six people with intellectual disabilities, who were characterized by quite high communication skills, i.e. spoke freely, willingly and in a way that was understandable to the listener. They were all participants of the same occupational therapy workshops held in Gdańsk, so they constituted a natural study group and felt good in each other's company. The interviewer was also involved in these activities, so she already had a certain relationship with the respondents, thanks to which the barriers related to mutual contact, getting to know each other and trust were leveled.

The study began with a concept analysis *disability* and its perception by the respondents. The first part of the conversation was conducted in a group, the participants jointly came to observations and their own definitions of disability. Such initiation of the research allowed to build an atmosphere of openness and free discussion, which is more better if it starts right away with a face-to-face conversation. The respondents complemented each other's statements and asked each other auxiliary questions (a fragment of such a conversation is quoted in the article). This process is not only the observation and analysis of the individual positions of individual respondents. During the conversation, attempts were made to convince others of their approach – in some cases successful. This means that the fact of conducting this type of research influenced, at least temporarily, the awareness of

⁸ I. Lindyberg, *(Nie)pełnosprawność w doświadczeniach dorosłych osób z głębszą niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, „Niepełnosprawność” 2014, No. 15.

the respondents and their perception of reality, perhaps it opened their eyes to new topics and aspects previously overlooked.

The application of the biographical interview method to people with intellectual disabilities may, contrary to appearances, give very interesting results, which the researcher noticed at the beginning of the study. Such people simplify the perception of the world and invent simple rules to understand the surrounding reality. This is similar to interviews with children, who often present a way of looking at the world of their own invention, characterized by original observations, comparisons and rules. To put it simply, an interview with five adults will yield five similar results when it comes to the general framework of perceiving the world, while in the case of children and people with intellectual disabilities, these will more often be self-developed observations, not imposed by society. As an example from the discussed study, one can cite the observation that a person with a disability “always goes wrong”. The author of these words notes that the common feature of people with disabilities he has met in his life are the problems that affect them. These problems can be very different, so in this definition their nature is omitted altogether – someone may not be able to hear, not see, use a wheelchair, etc. All this falls under the category of “not so”, which cannot be said about able-bodied people.

The above example shows that the use of the biographical interview method allows the reader to empathize with the world seen through the eyes of a person with disabilities. This, in turn, makes it possible to understand the problems that such a person struggles with in everyday life, and then assess what the quality of this life is like. It is worth noting that the researcher, with the appropriate selection of the group for the study and the creation of appropriate conditions, may not significantly interfere in the conversation, but only observe and prepare for interviews with individual participants, based on their statements during the group interview. It should not be forgotten that talking about disability is an intimate and very sensitive topic. It is also often influenced by the cultural context in a given country – there are countries where it is impossible to conduct a survey on disability, because respondents do not want to answer this topic at all. The author has such experience from trying to conduct research in Spain.

This is also visible in the study described here – attempts to deepen the answers ended, for example, with the following reaction of one of the respondents: “I don’t like talking about the disabled”, and then leaving the group part of the study. Some people deal with their disability in such a way that they try not to think about it and focus on other aspects of their lives. A disability-focused interview is therefore likely to elicit a defensive reaction. In this study, no one felt disabled or felt that others perceived them as such, which is confirmed by the following example answer: “I am able-bodied because I have legs”. Certainly, it is easier to talk about other people’s disabilities than about their own, which is also facilitated by a group interview. It is also a good preparation of the interlocutor for an individual conversation, in which you can try to smoothly switch from the topic of other people to the experience of the interviewed person.

The further part of the research work is also structured in a similar way – fragments of the conversation are interspersed with the author’s comments, which indicates the most interesting statements and briefly interprets them. These are excerpts from both group and

individual conversations, divided thematically and arranged in a kind of narrative. It begins with attempts to define the concept of disability, and then moves on to the analysis of the impact of disability on everyday life. The more the conversation tends towards personal experiences, the more emotionally charged the respondents' statements are. In general, they do not perceive disability as an abstract phenomenon in itself, but always as a certain feature of a specific person, so it is also always described in the context of a given person.

The analyzed study ends with a summary of the author's observations, which presents common elements of the answers obtained as part of the study. In this study, only the biographical interview method was used (first in the form of a group interview, and then individual in-depth interviews). The author emphasizes that the use of this method made it possible to get to know the perspective of the surveyed people on the world around them, on their own disability and the disability of people from their circle. The study conducted with people with intellectual disabilities allowed them to obtain simple and honest answers, which is very valuable for the researcher. It is easy to understand the intention of a person, and if you create the right conditions for conversation and an atmosphere of trust, then the answers will be sincere. The selection of a small group, i.e. only six people, made it possible to hold longer conversations and deepen interesting statements and topics. Also for the recipient, this type of research is interesting because the interlocutors were introduced by name and then their actual statements were quoted. Therefore, you can combine several statements of one of the people into a whole and on this basis formulate your own opinion about that person, their situation and the way they perceive their disability.

The second of the studies analyzed is *Funkcjonowanie osoby stopniowo tracącej wzrok w przestrzeni edukacyjno-rehabilitacyjnej* by Kornelia Czerwińska⁹. The article devoted to this study consists of two main parts. The first is a theoretical analysis of the impact of disability on the quality of life (especially on education and social functioning), based on the available literature on the subject. Then the author presents the results of a biographical interview conducted with a forty-five-year-old person with progressive low vision. In addition to the main respondent, the interlocutors were also people from her environment (brother, teachers, friend, daughter). As emphasized at the beginning of the article, the purpose of the interview is not only to learn about the interlocutor's personal experiences, but also placing them in the context of political and social changes that have taken place in Poland in recent decades.

The part of the work containing the biographical interview begins with a medical description of the beginnings of the subject's disability and the first symptoms of his vision problems. primary school, through the next stages of education, to adult life. It is worth noting that in this work the biographical interview is presented differently than in Lindyberg's¹⁰. In that study, the cited fragments consisted of a dialogue between the researcher and the researched person, in which the answers were relatively short, and the subsequent

⁹ K. Czerwińska, *Funkcjonowanie osoby stopniowo tracącej wzrok w przestrzeni edukacyjno-rehabilitacyjnej*, „Forum Pedagogiczne” 2016, No. 1, p. 167

¹⁰ I. Lindyberg, op. cit.

questions led to topics of interest to the author. In the case of the second of the discussed articles, this is not the case, because the fragments look like parts of the answer to one basic question: "Please tell me about your life in the context of disability." It should be noted that this is a more model approach to the application of the biographical interview method. The narrator directs his own narrative and chooses the most important or most interesting experiences in his opinion – perhaps omitting the most sensitive or evoking the most emotions. Nevertheless, such a story should not be interrupted while it continues, because it presents the most complete picture of the situation from the storyteller's perspective. It would be difficult to achieve the same effect with Lindyberg, because the subjects were intellectually disabled, so their ability to carry out a long and coherent narrative is very limited. Therefore, the specificity of the group of respondents forced a greater intervention of the interviewer in the course of the interview.

The article ends with a summary that contains the most important observations from the interview. The author does not include her subjective observations or comments, she limits herself to indicating the most important factors influencing the course of life of the examined person in the way she presents them. The interpretivist paradigm used in this work provides for the author to present a commentary on the heard story from his own perspective. However, the very selection of threads listed in the summary already indicates those elements that subjectively seemed to be the most important for the author, which, in her opinion, defined the key moments in the respondent's life. Thus, the opinion is not expressed directly, but the answers given in the interview are selected and commented on in a subjective way.

The third study analyzed is different from the previous two – it is a work *Badanie potrzeb i satysfakcji z wybranych usług skierowanych do rodzin z dziećmi z orzeczoną niepełnosprawnością w wieku 8–16 lat*¹¹, carried out by the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Łódź on behalf of the Regional Center for Social Policy in Łódź. The study differs from the previously discussed ones in terms of its scale, as 97 interviews with parents of children with disabilities and 67 interviews with children with disabilities were conducted, and a questionnaire survey involving over 300 parents and 300 children. The volume of the results report is also larger – over 200 pages compared to around 20 pages in previous studies. This work is therefore an interesting case for analyzing the issue of whether the method of biographical interviews can be effectively used on a larger scale, and if so, what is the difference between such interviews and interviews conducted with one or more people.

The work begins with a discussion of the theoretical foundations and a brief analysis of the literature on the subject of disability in children. Then, the methodological assumptions of the work were indicated – both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Children (primary and junior high school students aged 8–16) and their parents were examined. The work briefly presents the most important demographic characteristics of the study

¹¹ J. Pyżalski, D. Podgórska-Jachnik (eds.), *Badanie potrzeb i satysfakcji z wybranych usług skierowanych do rodzin z dziećmi z orzeczoną niepełnosprawnością w wieku 8–16 lat*, Instytut Medycyny Pracy w Łodzi na zlecenie Regionalnego Centrum Polityki Społecznej w Łodzi, Łódź 2015.

group, including the type of disability of individual people. The quantitative study, carried out on the basis of a standardized questionnaire, was extended by in-depth biographical interviews, conducted with a total of over 150 people with an intellectual disability.

The results of the research are presented jointly, i.e. in each of the thematic areas, the results of quantitative research and their summary are presented first, and then fragments of in-depth interviews corresponding to a given topic. Each quoted fragment contains information about the ordinal number of the examined person, the type of school (SP – primary school, G – junior high school) and the type and degree of disability (e.g. intellectual, visual, hearing, autistic spectrum). Statements are given in groups summarizing their content. For example: “School as the only place of support and help”, followed by several fragments confirming this position. For the reader, this convention is a great help in getting to know the main threads in each area. At the same time, classification into any of the summarizing groups in advance gives the person’s statement a certain interpretation.

In order to achieve such structure of the report, in-depth interviews were conducted in accordance with one common scenario, prepared separately for children and separately for parents. Topics for discussion were listed in the analyzed paper. These are both precise questions (e.g. “What are your responsibilities at home / at the boarding school?”) and more open-ended questions, encouraging the respondent to tell a broader story (e.g. “What difficulties do you experience in life?”). The description of the interview results includes first the parents’ answers and their analysis, and then the children’s answers on the same (or similar) topic. This creates an interesting opportunity to observe the same phenomenon and its individual aspects from two perspectives. The reader can compare for himself whether the descriptions of parents and children are substantially consistent, but also whether they are uttered in a similar language – which indicates what emotions accompanied the utterances. At the end of each thematic section, the authors also present their interpretation of the children’s and parents’ answers. They also compare these statements with each other and compare them with the results of quantitative research.

After analyzing all the subject areas, the authors move on to the chapter containing recommendations for social policy. This theme did not appear in the two previously analyzed studies. Those works focused on the description of specific cases, carefully analyzing their stories and problems. However, the conclusions contained more psychological analysis and an attempt to show how one can empathize with the situation of the examined person. On the basis of such small samples, however, it is difficult to draw systemic conclusions. So social policy was not the main theme of those studies. The third study is different. It was commissioned by a local government organization, so the main purpose of the study is to search for recommendations regarding actions that can be implemented or improved as part of the social policy pursued. For each of the analyzed areas, separate sets of recommendations were listed in the form of concise points. These recommendations act as a summary of the research work, they are formulated in such a way that decision-makers can directly use them to improve social policy. The study was conducted within the Łódź Voivodeship, but the results seem so general that the recommendations can also be applied to other local government units and as part of social policy at the central level.

Summary

The paper analyzes three different research papers devoted to the phenomenon of disability, each of which used the biographical interview method (either alone or in combination with other methods). Efforts were made to select the analyzed source texts in such a way as to show various ways of using this method. The first factor influencing the differences is the scale of the study. Naturally, in the case of a study conducted with one person, the interview may be completely unstructured. There is no need to compare this person's statements with others, so that they can really present their biography. The researcher then interprets it and indicates the key conclusions. The study of several people enables the combination of a biographical interview with a group interview. Respondents behave slightly differently in the group, or one-on-one with the researcher. They can also support each other and lead to a discussion on interesting topics without the researcher's interference. A study of 150 people looks different. In this case, some structuring is necessary to be able to compare the results later. Naturally, due to the scale of the interviews, these interviews will be rather shorter and narrowed down to specific topics, so that common conclusions can be drawn from them.

The second differentiating factor is the characteristics of the respondents. Research with people with intellectual disabilities is conducted differently, as they are unable to conduct a long narrative on their own and need direction from the interviewer. In the second study, the respondent was an adult and intellectually disabled person, which basically did not require the intervention of the researcher to tell her story. The third work compares the perspective of a parent and a student on the same topics. Different questions are asked to students and different to parents. The complexity of utterances between these groups also differs – children give shorter and more specific answers, often emotionally charged. Parents describe the facts, place the described event in the context of institutions dealing with social policy. These are two completely different descriptions of the same phenomena, which makes it possible to juxtapose, compare and draw common conclusions.

The above features also affect the differences in the adopted research methods and the tools used. Large studies can be supported by quantitative analysis and analyze responses in the context of demographic description. In the case of small study groups (one or several people), quantitative methods are not applicable. As a consequence, the personal interpretation of the researcher plays a greater role in relation to the answers he received. The first two works are very clearly based on the interpretative paradigm. In the work of Lindyberg (2014), personal opinions constitute a large part of the conclusions: the author knows the subjects, conducts workshops with them, and is emotionally involved. Czerwińska's work (2016) – contains less personal conclusions, it is more a presentation and summary of the respondent's statements, the subjective element is their selection.

Reading the analyzed research, one can come to the conclusion that the biographical interview works very well in the case of people with disabilities. Statistics based on anonymous questionnaires are read in a completely different way than the actual statements of respondents. This is clearly seen in the third study, where both approaches were used. Only the analysis of the interviews shows the whole spectrum of problems that affect

people with disabilities and their environment. This is a delicate topic, the answers are often strongly emotional. Therefore, it is hard to imagine a better method that would make it possible to get to know the actual problems that accompany people with disabilities. The narrative nature of the acquired observations and their natural arrangement on the timeline along with building the content of the biographical interview are important¹². This method also allows for the study of identity formation processes, social roles, and places experiences in a specific social context. Interpreting the respondents' experiences allows them to look at them from a certain perspective, which may affect their further experience. In the case of an interview with one person, it is easy for the researcher and the reader to empathize with that person, to try to imagine our reaction to the described events. In a study of 150 people, it's not that simple, because the person is not presented so precisely, we only see fragments of their statements. Despite this, however, even from short fragments emerge specific stories that the reader would not know if the research was carried out using other methods. For this reason, it can be concluded that research using the biographical interview method corresponds very well to the subject of disability.

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