

REVIEWS MORE

PICTURING DISABILITY: BEGGAR, FREAK, CITIZEN, AND OTHER PHOTOGRAPHIC RHETORIC. By R. BOGDAN WITH M. ELKS AND J.A. KNOLL. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 198 pages, 2012. **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ www.srvip.org**

Reviewed by Thomas Malcomson

ROBERT BOGDAN, DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR EMERITUS of Social Science and Disability Studies at Syracuse University, has written a fascinating overview of the history of the photographing of people with disabilities in the United States, between 1870 and 1980 (with separate chapters from Martin Elks and James A. Knoll). The major focus of the book though is from 1900 to 1960. It is a generalist's book as it will appeal to those interested in photography in general and as an art form, the history of postcards, clinical representation of the disabled, institutions for the disabled, circus freak shows, and the histories of advertising, begging and charity. Each of these topics assumes the core of a separate chapter.

Bogdan declares his purpose to be the examination of photographs of disabled people (and in one chapter asylums for the disabled) to uncover what the "makers" of the photographic images "were up to" (p. 3). All three authors do this by exploring the "visual rhetorical techniques in photographs" (p. 2). He breaks the photographs into separate genres, searching within each for similarities in staging, subject portrayal, intended audience and use. This analysis creates categories within each genre. He attempts to grasp the photographer's intention for the photograph. The pictures add an emotional and aesthetic element to the collection of facts we have about past social orientations towards people with disabilities. Bogdan's method soundly accomplishes his goal within the following nine chapters.

Chapter two addresses the images produced for freak shows. These images were created to sell for the profit of the person depicted and/or their promoter, to advertise the show's attractions and to provide the audience with a souvenir of their experience. There are three categories discussed within the chapter. The first are people missing their arms who use their feet to perform tasks usually left to the hands, such as drinking tea from a fancy cup, tating and drawing. Second are the dwarfs and giants whose unique size is photographically exaggerated by juxtaposition, if not with each other, then with people of average height. The third group is composed of those whose abnormal body is created, or embellished for the camera. Both of these are engaged in the effort to dupe the audience. One form of this category is an able person using people with a disability in a false context. Bogdan uses the example where people with microcephaly were dressed in supposed garments of ancient Aztecs, or African tribes, and presented as primitives. As Bogdan notes, this depiction left "... people with developmental disabilities ... cast as comic fools" (p. 18). Missing from these presentations was any sign of charity or destitution; indeed, the author tells us the subjects of the photographs were at times financially better off than the people who bought the pictures.

Financial need is at the heart of the next chapter which explores the use of begging cards to earn money for the person depicted on the card. These cards were very common in the first three decades of the 20th century. Distributed by hand, by the person they depicted, or through the mail, these postcards were meant to elicit donation to the "beggar." Some cards contained Christian messages of charity to encourage a donation, some used pity, while others offered some item (such as a magazine subscription) or a performance of music by the person depicted. Another genre with-

in this category was the travelling person, who roamed America in search of money in some form of transport, be it a specially modified motorbike with a sidecar, or a cart pulled by goats or dogs. All these photo cards revealed the person's disability (most show a person without legs). Those selling an item or giving a performance were engaging the would be donator in an exchange of some form whereas the first groups were simply asking for money, depending on the donator's good will or guilt. Some of these beggars developed local personal notoriety. Bogdan indicates that the social service agencies and social workers ultimately undermined "the beggar," with their claim to be the only legitimate points of distributing money to the disabled.

This last point segues nicely into the following chapter which explores the photographs generated for the charity movement, especially from the 1940s through the 1970s. The first photo-cards/postcards used by charities (including those operated by fraternal orders) were much like the begging cards. By mid-century the idea of poster child had dominated the fundraising activity of most charities. The use of photogenic young children was meant to strike at the adult heart, provoking a donation. Many of the images depicted children being freed of their disability through the money that was donated for research, treatment and cure. Some, like those of the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy telethon photos, emphasize the despair in the child's condition to elicit pity (possibly guilt) in the would-be donator.

Another group of images has celebrities (movie stars and politicians) interacting with the disabled person, raising public awareness, and campaigning for donations. The splash back for the celebrity was the positive image created in the public mind of their 'being compassionate' towards those viewed as less fortunate than themselves. Photographs include a young Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and Richard Nixon, each supporting a March of Dimes campaign. Presidents apparently created photo-opportunities where they shook

hands with disabled war veterans on the White House lawn. One interesting photograph in the book is of F.D. Roosevelt doing this in 1936. He is standing next to a naval officer as the line of disabled veterans in wheelchairs and their attendants pass by (Fig. 4.14, p. 52). Looking carefully you can see Roosevelt is holding on to the naval officer's arm: the President's cane hooked over the officer's forearm. F.D.R.'s own disability is partially submerged in this photo of disabled veterans meeting their President. Charity images were meant to raise funds, not to accurately represent the disability, or the people who experienced it the most. Bogdan states they may have been demeaning but they were ultimately effective.

Chapter five addresses the use of postcards and photographs for either support or criticism of asylums. Most of the chapter deals with the generation of postcards depicting the institution as tourist attraction, major local employer or as site of 'modern' scientific/medical intervention. They were sold for profit to the public and were to be collected or used to send missives to others. These images were most often devoid of the institutional inmates or workers, as they and cars (also missing in most images) dated the image and thus shortened the shelf-life of the postcard. They depicted the size and architecture of the institution, favouring distant photos of the massive buildings and photographs of front gates, administration buildings or the two and three storey 'cottage' residences. When images with people did appear in this category, they showed them sitting in hallways or in ward views. Images of the institutions were also used to promote and advertise the asylum. They appeared in annual reports to government and/or the board of directors and funding organizations. These images represented the good work being carried on at the asylum. Inmates were depicted engaged in activities that were deemed most suitable for their abilities and future. They were intended to demonstrate the positive conditions existing within the institution. The third category of image covered in

this chapter are the images revealing the horror of life within the asylum. Bodgan calls these the muckraking photographs, obtained by journalists doing exposés on asylum life and other critics of the institutional model. The third group were intended to do the opposite of the first two types. All three were produced to demonstrate the perspective of the person taking the picture and they could all be of the same institution.

Martin Elks (the author of chapter six) explores photographs taken as a clinical piece of data illustrating some physical aspect of disability, or defect, for the professional to study, or the general public to realize the physicality of the condition being discussed. They are not taken for aesthetics, nor as souvenir or to entertain, but to inform. They show twisted, deformed and unstable bodies, upper torso and head profiles (front and side like a mug shot) or 'deformed' body parts. The texts with which these pictures were intertwined explained intellectual disability, mental disorder, poverty and immorality as being biologically rooted. They served the biological medical model and the eugenicist, convincing the public that these 'physical' problems required a physical solution. Elks notes that eugenicists "created an imaginary disease, feeble-mindedness" in part with photography (p. 98). The sense that a photograph was a truthful depiction of reality lent false validity to their claims.

In chapter seven, Bogdan examines the use of people with disabilities in advertising. There were two very different types of photographs in this genre. The first group uses people with disabilities to sell products. In one variation they are used within a mythic tale of the origin of the product for sale. Perhaps the best example was the use of a dwarf to play Buster Brown, the perpetually five-year-old cartoon character, to help sell shoes for the Brown Shoe Company (pp. 100-101). Dwarfs were also employed to get the reader's attention by using their 'different' appearance to catch the reader's eye (these were print ads in popular magazines). The second group was quite different, in

that it used disabled people to sell appliances (i.e., artificial limbs, wheelchairs) to other disabled individuals. The man with two artificial legs in the ad was similar to the potential buyer. Where the first type in this genre appeared to preserve and play on the stereotyped perception of the disabled, the second used their legitimate experience to help sell a product.

Hollywood's image of people with disabilities is the focus of chapter eight. Bogdan examines films from the 1920s and 30s mainly (*Dr. Strangelove*, 1964, is the most recent film mentioned). He highlights the career of Lon Chaney, who played many disabled characters, almost always monster like. The movie world seems to cast disabled people into roles of fool, murderer, angry and hateful person, or a warped creation of a mad scientist. He concludes that Hollywood has placed in the public mind many of its perceptions of disability. This "hidden curriculum ... informs people of all ages that people with disabilities are to be feared or pitied or laughed at" (p. 128).

James Knoll penned chapter nine, dealing with the representation of disability and the disabled within photographic art. Due to copyright issues, few images appear in the chapter, but Knoll's written descriptions of the works are vivid, and wherever possible he provides URLs to view the image online. This chapter holds the most recent photographs (1965-1980) discussed in the book. The use of the person with a disability as part of the aesthetic captured by the photographer is extremely different from any other genre discussed in the book. Composition, line, shadow and symbolism (among other elements) become the dominant features in creating the images. Perhaps to offset this, Knoll does provide information on some of the people depicted, information that would not be present in the art installation. The chapter is organized around seven photographers and their work. Knoll concludes that the disabled have been placed in the role of provocateur, to disturb and alarm the viewer. He also finds that the images often show the person with a disability

to be an “outsider,” someone set apart from the rest and unable to enter equally into society. This, he notes, is in contrast to the “efforts by many people with disability” to be seen as equal, capable and connected into the rest of society.

Chapter 10 concerns photographs “as personal keepsakes” and is titled “Citizen Portraits.” The chapter examines photographs taken for work, community and family, in which one of the individuals (in some cases the only individual) happens to have a disability. Contrary to the other genres, we see here an effort by the photographer at inclusion and creating ‘normality’ in the scene. Here all people are equal, even if in some instances efforts are made to hide or distract from the disability. Personally, I found this chapter to be the most encouraging, in that it covered the same time period as some of the most devaluing photographs analysed in the book, and yet revealed people’s efforts throughout the era to have images that captured the valued roles (worker, friend, child, sibling, grandparent, etc.) in which the photographed people were engaged. Examples include: The three employees standing next to a press (the centre man on a crutch has one leg) are simply workers being photographed (10.8, p. 149). A grandmother holding a newborn is the central figure in another picture, her wheelchair present but not dominant (10.26, p. 157). And the young boy with Down’s syndrome seated on a window seat, well dressed and groomed, with proper posture, the drapes behind him and the potted plant off to the side indicate the home and family of which he is a member (10.2, p. 146). He appears to be a young man with potential.

The final chapter is titled conclusions but it does not review the various findings across the chapters. It proposes a set of possible future genres for study and sounds the warning to be careful when interpreting or reading the images. The possible genres include town characters, veterans, African-Americans with disabilities, religion, and to explore photography of the disabled in other countries. Bogdan considers his purpose, to examine

the motives for making the pictures he reviewed, accomplished. He notes that he did not examine social forces that shaped the photographers and how they used their images, but suggests that the image makers were a product of their times.

I agree that Bogdan, Elks and Knoll have accomplished the goal they set out to explore. Their analysis of the images examined is compelling. There are, however, tensions that exist within the book between some of the various chapters. The chapters on freaks, beggars, charity and advertising are related, sharing the common features of the semblance of direct involvement of the person with a disability in the activity, and the underlying motive of generating money through the use of images of people with disabilities. A second group contains the chapters on asylums and clinical pictures. Here the commonality is a distance from the person with a disability and the role of an authority using the images to create support for their perspective. The chapters on Hollywood’s representation of disability, photography as art, and citizen portraits, each stand separately, in clear opposition to all the others. The chapter on Hollywood is overwhelmingly about the creation of the image of menace and uses people without disabilities to ‘play’ disabled people. The art photographs are about aesthetics and the chapter on citizenship is about people having a valued place in society. The tension between these dynamically opposed themes needs exploration. Bogdan does draw the reader’s attention to the difference between the asylum images and those with a focus on people. The tension is approached again in the chapter dealing with the art of photography, with a discussion of how photos as ‘art form’ changes the nature of how to look at the images. But the differentiations need to be drawn out much more. The citizen photographs are dominated by images of inclusion, valued roles and competencies, unlike any other within the book. How did these positive images exist within the same time and space as those of the freak, beggar, poster child, and Hollywood

monster? Where did these opposing representations meet and what resulted?

This book was not written from an SRV perspective. Bogdan, a sociologist, employs the same analysis as he would if he were reading “interview transcripts or field notes” (p. 4). SRV is mentioned once in the entire text (p. 145) and is used to explain the creation of positive images of people with disabilities by various social service agencies, community organizations and disability rights advocates to foster positive public perceptions of the disabled. He states it creates contrived pictures, the exact opposite of the ‘natural’ images found in chapter 10, “Citizen Portraits.” This is a limited view of SRV and ignores the potential it holds to assist in understanding the perspectives of the photographers and the impact of the images discussed within this book, including chapter 10.

There are so many examples that illustrate SRV’s image and role communication within the 223 pictures in this book that only a few can be noted. The impact of grouping many disabled people in one picture or several individual photographs on one page of a book (as several examples in the

chapter on clinical photographs demonstrate) clearly serves to heighten the sense of difference and the scale of the disability. The chapter on advertising has several examples that cast adults in the role of perpetual children. Images of people working in freak shows reinforce the negative stereotype of primitive, savage, abnormal, and if not these, then certainly different. Even if they earned more money than their audience, the setting they were viewed in reinforced the divide between them and their audience, who came to view, not to interact. The creation of people as objects of pity in order to extract money from the viewer is present in many of the images in the chapters on begging and charity. Beyond these (and the many other) specific examples of SRV elements, the sheer presence of so many of these images in the public domain between 1870 and 1980 illustrates the role of social imaging and (in most cases) the negative perceptions and expectations planted into the minds of the viewers, much at an unconscious level.

This book by Robert Bogdan (with Martin Elks and James A. Knoll) is highly recommended to

Invitation to Write Book, Film & Article Reviews

From the Editor

I ENCOURAGE OUR READERS to submit reviews to *The SRV Journal* of current films, books and articles. For people who are studying SRV, looking for everyday examples can help deepen one’s understanding. For people who are teaching SRV, learning from and using contemporary examples from the media in one’s teaching can be very instructive for audiences. For people who are implementing SRV, contemporary examples can provide fruitful ideas to learn from. Some books and articles mention SRV specifically; others do not but are still relevant to SRV. Both are good subjects for reviewing. We have written guidelines for writing book and film reviews. If you would like to get a copy of either set of guidelines, please let me know at:

Marc Tumeinski

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anyone interested in the lives of people with disabilities and their representation within society. It is a must read for those involved with SRV, whether in implementation, teaching or learning the theory. Apart from informing on the subject of photographic representation, the material in the book ought to provoke a cascade of SRV connections and much thought about the social power of images.

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Malcomson, T. (2014). Review of the book *Picturing Disability: Beggar, Freak, Citizen, and Other Photographic Rhetoric* by R. Bogdan with M. Elks and J.A. Knoll. *The SRV Journal*, 8(2), 55–60.

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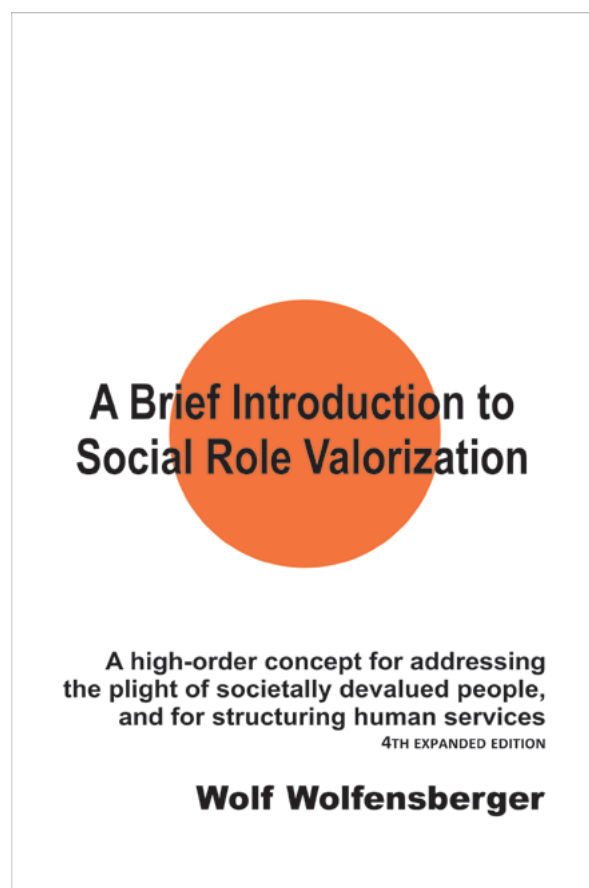
Announcing the publication of

A Brief Introduction to Social Role Valorization:

A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services (*4th expanded edition*)

by Wolf Wolfensberger, PhD

“A long-held rationale of those of us who teach SRV Theory is that the material helps students to see the world from the perspectives of those who receive services and supports, rather than the service provider. Time and again, we hear students describe this as the single most important aspect of taking an SRV Theory course. They talk about how they now have new, or different, eyes with which to see and understand their world. Many describe the realization that *they* first had to change in order for them to address the issues and problems of the people they were assigned to teach or help. When they changed their perceptions of another person, they then changed their expectations of this person, along with their ideas of what the person actually needs and how to effectively address these needs” (from the foreword by Zana Marie Lutfiyya, PhD and Thomas Neville, PhD).



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CRAZY LIKE US: THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHE. By E. WATTERS. NY: Free Press, 2010. **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ www.srvip.org**

Reviewed by Susan Thomas

THIS REVIEW IS BASED ON a presentation given about the book by the author, a San Francisco-based journalist. For this book, he examined four different types of supposed mental disorders, each one in four different parts of the world: anorexia in Hong Kong in the mid-1990s, depression in Japan, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Sri Lanka after the Boxing Day tsunami there (December 26, 2004), and schizophrenia in Zanzibar. He contrasted the ideas about these conditions that prevailed in these different cultures with the prevalent ideas in the US, and compared as well their treatments for these conditions with the treatments used for them in the US.

Not surprisingly, what is recognized as mental disorder varies around the world, such disorders take different forms at different times and places, and conditions that were at one time and place widely prevalent may at another hardly exist. For instance, during the Victorian era in England, a large number of women were diagnosed with hysteria, and a similarly large number of young men exhibited anomie by wandering the countryside (they were called “mad travelers”). Now, we hear hardly anything about either of these two conditions.

The historian of psychiatry Edward Shorter has noted that cultures at different times and places make different “symptom pools” available to members of their culture to express their mental distresses, “symptoms” being how people communicate their distress so that it will be recognized by their society in their time. (Without using the language, Watters noted that much expectancy and conformity to expectancy is at work here.) Who defines the “symptom pool?” It is (a) experts and quasi-experts, e.g., priests, doctors; (b)

the suppliers of treatments, e.g., shamans, drug companies; (c) journalists and fiction-writers; and (d) celebrities. Whenever something is recognized as being in the symptom pool for indicating mental distress or disorder, a large number of people will manifest that symptom; but once the symptom declines in social acceptability, then the number of people who display their mental distress in that way also declines. For instance, when Princess Diana was alive and reported to be bulimic, the number of people who also reported being bulimic was very high—but after Princess Diana died, the incidence of reported bulimia drastically declined.

As regards PTSD, this condition as we now know it first started out in 1972 when it was called post-Vietnam syndrome. In the five years between 1999-2004, the number of Vietnam war veterans in the US applying for help with PTSD doubled, even though this was more than 25 years after the end of that war, at least in good part because PTSD is now in the symptom pool. Also, a large number of US veterans now returning from combat in the Middle East are committing, or attempting to commit, suicide, reflecting the fact that suicidal behavior is now firmly entrenched in the symptom pool in this culture. This idea of a “symptom pool” raises the troubling question: now that all four authorities noted above that determine what is in the current symptom pool have apparently concluded that mass rampage murder is one of the ways that mentally disturbed people in our culture express their disturbance, and now that large numbers of the public apparently agree with them, will there be—for that reason alone—an increase in mass rampage murders as more disturbed people communicate thusly their disturbance in this society, not to mention there could be other contributors to an increase in such violence?

When the Training Institute was issuing its publication TIPS (Training Institute Publication Series) from 1980 to 2007, Dr. Wolfensberger used to poke fun at shrink-types from the devel-

oped world, mostly the US, who would swoop in whenever and wherever a disaster occurred, and begin offering shrinkery to the dazed survivors. Such “counseling” of myriad forms was likely to be offered even before (and sometimes instead of) what the suffering people really needed, such as food and shelter. Watters also analyzed this phenomenon, and while he attributed good intentions to these westerners who swarm to disaster zones, he also noted how un-fitting are the options they offer for treatment to these different cultures that are not so materialistic, atomized, and decommunitized as is contemporary western culture. However, with the exception of documenting the higher recovery rates from “schizophrenia” in Zanzibar than in the west, Watters did not remark on the fact that these western treatments are notably unsuccessful even in the west, let alone in other parts of the world.

Watters’ research is a re-confirmation of what has long been known, namely that culturally-embedded practices tend to work in their culture, and culture-alien ones do not. This is the reality underpinning the importance given in SRV to identifying culturally valued practices, and then using these valued practices as the analogues or models for what is done to or for devalued people to address their problems and needs.

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TRANQUIL PRISONS: CHEMICAL INCARCERATION UNDER COMMUNITY TREATMENT ORDERS. By E. FABRIS. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2011. **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ www.srvip.org**

Reviewed by Susan Thomas

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN by a self-described “psychiatric survivor” (meaning someone who has been a recipient of mental services, including “hospitalization”), but who also has other roles, including university lecturer, advocate and social activist, and former human service worker. The book’s thrust can be summarized as follows:

Community Treatment Orders, or CTOs, are legal orders in Canada that allow a person deemed to have a mental disorder to be treated “in the community” (i.e., not in a psychiatric institution) on the condition that such a person voluntarily agree to stipulated treatment. Similar arrangements exist in Britain, New Zealand and the US; in the US, they are called Involuntary Outpatient Commitments. However, in the vast majority of cases, the “treatment” ordered by a CTO consists of the administration of mind-affecting and mind-controlling drugs, and possibly also visits to a psychiatrist. Further, while the person is supposed to agree voluntarily, the system is so arranged that a person’s refusal to agree to a CTO is taken as de facto evidence that the person “lacks insight” or is “in denial” about “having” a “mental illness,” and that the person is not/will not be compliant with “treatment.” This refusal usually means the person will either get sent back to a mental institution, or not be released from one if that is where he or she is. In other words, the supposed voluntariness of the CTO is a sham (at least in the US, the parallel order is explicitly called involuntary). Thus, the CTO constitutes an arrangement that the author calls involuntary chemical incarceration, in which the drugs (the chemicals) are just as restrictive of movement as being physically incarcerated in a prison or mental institution, and are

additionally restrictive of a person’s intellect, will, and consciousness. In other words, a provision that is touted as a service reform or improvement (over institutionalization) is actually the opposite. Indeed, CTOs are based on the unspoken premise that coercion is treatment. This is similar to a conclusion we have come to from the observation of many human service practices, namely that the conveyance of death to recipients is often seen to constitute “treatment.” The author himself, on pp. 188-197, provides a concise, but longer, summary of the book that is very similar to the one I have just given.

The book contains much documentation of the author’s thesis, and of the fact that the vast majority of people with mental disorders experience their mind-drugging as harmful—and not only that they experience it that way, but that it is in fact very harmful. The book also gives numerous examples of the many wounds inflicted on people with mental disorders specifically: physical and functional impairments (inflicted largely by mind drugs); devaluation, and multiple jeopardy; rejection and distantiation; being negatively imaged; being cast into the roles of object, non-human, menace, sick patient, and burden; physical and social discontinuities; lack and/or loss of natural and freely-given relationships; deindividualization; deprivation of autonomy and control—in fact, this is the wound that the author focuses most prominently on; and deathmaking. So extensive is the evidence that the book could serve as a resource for a presentation on the common “wounds” of people with mental disorders. Unfortunately, the thesis and the evidence for it are embedded in the peculiar and sometimes (actually, often) virtually undecipherable language of social constructionism, contemporary “mad” discourse of the psychiatric survivor movement, and the social model of disability. (See the article by S. Tiffany on the social model of disability in the December 2011 issue of this *Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2.) Also included in this confusing and even impenetrable language

are the author's numerous efforts to explain his method of inquiry and the sources he drew upon for it. In fact, his aforementioned summary on pp. 188-197 is the clearest part of the book, and would suffice for at least those readers who are already somewhat familiar with the bankruptcy of contemporary mental services, and especially the harmful effects of mind drugging.

In an exceedingly brief section at the end (p. 198), the author proposes six measures to improve mental services: "(a) create self-sustaining refuges to meet 'basic needs'; (b) give people at least one person who they can count on in any circumstance; (c) create non-judgmental support strategies, not given or governed by those who are charged with imposing restrictions; (d) have negotiations regarding social restrictions overseen by advocates to ensure compliance with basic standards ...; (e) encourage the use of non-destructive therapies (e.g., natural remedies) even for chemical restraint ...; (f) use non-destructive methods to intercede in violence." Thankfully, suggestions (b) and (d) recognize the need for independent advocacy, and would support volunteer individual advocates, such as Citizen Advocacy programs find and arrange for. Unfortunately, while earlier

in the book the author cites many instances in which mentally disordered people do better when they are working, enrolled in school, painting and writing, etc., the relevance of this fact to the power of social roles is never taken up, nor is there any recommendation that such valued roles be sought for people with mental disorders.

Also, the few mentions of normalization in the book are negative references, consistent with the social model of disability's perspective that the "normal" is oppressive and what this author (and contemporary "mad" rhetoric) describes as "sanist," meaning that the upholding of sanity is devaluing of the mental states of mentally disordered people themselves, particularly when a version of sanity is held or even enforced as a norm.

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Announcing
**Advanced Issues in
Social Role Valorization Theory**



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About Social Role Valorization (SRV)

Social Role Valorization (SRV), a human service theory based on the principle of normalization, proposes that positively valued social roles are needed for people to attain what Wolfensberger has described as the good things of life (well-being). This is of particular importance for individuals with impairments or otherwise at risk of being socially devalued by others, and therefore of great importance for human services to them.

About the book

The first two chapters explain SRV, and give depth and background to SRV as an empirical theory that is applicable to human services of all kinds, to all sorts of people. The remaining chapters are all revised and expanded versions of presentations that Dr. Wolfensberger had given at previous international SRV conferences. The topics treated in the chapters move from the general (chapters 2, 3 and 4) to the more specific (chapters 5, 6 and 7).

The contents of the book are especially useful for people who do, or want to, teach SRV; for SRV researchers; and for those interested in implementing SRV in a systematic way, especially in service fields where SRV is new, not yet known, and not widely—if at all—embraced.

About Wolf Wolfensberger, Ph.D. (1934-2011)

World renowned human service reformer, Professor Wolfensberger (Syracuse University) was involved in the development and dissemination of the principle of normalization and the originator of the program evaluation tools PASS and PASSING, and of a number of service approaches that include SRV and Citizen Advocacy.

Book Chapters

- Foreword
- Preface
- Chapter 1: A brief overview of Social Role Valorization
- Chapter 2: The role of theory in science, and criteria for a definition of Social Role Valorization as an empirically-based theory
- Chapter 3: The hierarchy of propositions of Social Role Valorization, and their empiricity
- Chapter 4: The relationships of Social Role Valorization theory to worldviews and values
- Chapter 5: Values issues and other non-empirical issues that are brought into sharp focus by, or at, occasions where Social Role Valorization is taught or implemented
- Chapter 6: Issues of change agency in the teaching, dissemination and implementation of Social Role Valorization
- Chapter 7: The application of Social Role Valorization principles to criminal and other detentive settings
- Conclusion to the book

GABRIELLE. By L. ARCHAMBAULT (Director). 104 minutes, 2013. French (with English subtitles). **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ www.srvip.org**

Reviewed by Judith Sandys

THE FILM *Gabrielle* had its North American premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in September 2013. First shown at a film festival in Locarno, Switzerland (where it was awarded the Audience Award), and now released internationally, the film has been submitted by Canada as a potential nominee for an Academy Award in the Best Foreign Language Film category.

Gabrielle, a fictional story, stars Gabrielle Marion-Rivard, a woman who both in the film and in real life has an intellectual disability. Gabrielle Marion-Rivard has Williams syndrome, a genetic condition associated with intellectual disability. (According to the Williams Syndrome Association website, people with this condition are also said to have “striking verbal abilities, highly social personalities and an affinity for music.”) Ten other actors are also people with intellectual disabilities, and they are members of the choir that is featured in this film. They are joined by a number of non-disabled actors, including Alexandre Landry who plays the role of Martin, Gabrielle’s intellectually disabled boyfriend. Gabrielle Marion-Rivard and some of the other members of the choir are members of Les Muses; in English, *The Muses: Centre for the Performing Arts*, which describes itself as “a unique school ... that offers professional training in theatre, dance and singing to artists living with a handicap.”

The film focuses on Gabrielle’s experiences and struggles. Gabrielle is attractive, well dressed, articulate, and very sociable. She is also a skilled singer and an enthusiastic member of a choir, comprised of people with intellectual disabilities. She has a boyfriend, a lead singer in this same choir, with whom she has a close and loving relationship; a boyfriend with whom she wishes to

have a sexual relationship. But Martin’s mother disapproves of this relationship, takes him out of the choir and forbids him from seeing Gabrielle.

In order to pursue this relationship, Gabrielle wishes to live independently rather than in the group residence where she is currently living. Gabrielle’s sister is supportive of their relationship and invites Gabrielle to stay at her house. But when Gabrielle is left on her own, she makes a mess of the kitchen, burns the toast, and sets off the smoke alarm. Following this, she sets out to find her boyfriend where he is working, rushing out into traffic, narrowly missing getting hit by a car.

Throughout the film, the choir is rehearsing for an upcoming music festival in which they will be participating. In the end Gabrielle and Martin do manage, against all odds, to consummate their relationship. They then return to sing in the choir during the big performance at the music festival.

Reviewers of the film are uniformly generous in their praise of Gabrielle Marion-Rivard, referring to her, for example, as “a delightful newcomer” (*Hollywood Reporter*, 2013), “an utterly enthralling onscreen presence” (Gray, 2013), and “likeable, touching and believable” (Marchen, 2013).

In terms of the film itself, reviews are more mixed. Some see it as “a poignant drama” (Perkins, 2013) or “a respectful, honest and moving story about love, music and personal independence,” that “also happens to be about the developmentally challenged” (Gray, 2013). However, others see the film as highly manipulative and lacking in subtlety. One reviewer contends that “the emotional moments are a direct result of sympathy for Gabrielle’s condition” (*Next Projection*, 2013). Weissberg (2013) writing in *Variety* magazine, comments: “Fitting into the solid market for well-made uplifting stories about individuals with special needs fighting the odds and coming into their own, the picture can also be seen as a manipulative heart-tugger directed at self-satisfied audiences who enjoy rooting for those less fortunate than themselves.”

To what extent, if at all, does a film of this nature affect how viewers perceive people with intellectual disabilities? Does the film challenge existing stereotypes, enabling viewers to see beyond some of the misconceptions that they may have held? To what extent do viewers identify with Gabrielle and see her (and the other intellectually disabled people in the film) as more like themselves than different?

In many respects, the film presents Gabrielle positively. We see a young woman, well dressed and attractive, able to engage in a meaningful relationship, with desires typical of many young women. We see a person who is strong-minded and determined, and someone who is a very competent singer and choir member. Clearly this young woman has a number of valued social roles—singer, choir member, girlfriend, sister, daughter.

The members of the choir are all well dressed and present a pleasant and appropriate appearance. All demonstrate the kind of disciplined attention and perseverance required for the mastery of a skill, and they make beautiful music together. Clearly being a member of this choir is a valued social role. Gabrielle's boyfriend is portrayed as a somewhat shy and awkward individual but he, too, looks and acts appropriately and he has a job. Like Gabrielle, he is member of this choir, and in fact is the lead singer. He is obviously able to reciprocate Gabrielle's feelings for him. Again, he has some valued social roles—as a singer, choir member, boyfriend and employee.

Unfortunately, these positive images and roles are accompanied by many others that are troubling. When Gabrielle burns the toast and sets off the smoke alarm, the sister comments that this show that Gabrielle needs to be in the group residence. Rather than assuming that Gabrielle needs assistance in learning to cook, this is taken as evidence that she cannot live on her own. When she runs into the street without looking out for traffic, this too is seen as a lack of competence rather than a lack of appropriate preparation. Clearly

the message portrayed by the film is that someone like Gabrielle cannot learn new skills nor become more independent. Even the positive work role of Gabrielle's boyfriend is compromised; he works in a pet store, one of those jobs many people see as particularly appropriate for a person with an intellectual disability.

The intellectually disabled people portrayed in this film are seen living in a group residence and attending a segregated "centre" where they participate in a segregated choir. The assumption that these segregated settings are necessary and appropriate for this population is never questioned or challenged. However, while the segregated nature of the center is negative, the activity is positive. This is an example of how, even in the context of a segregated setting, it is possible to provide meaningful activity, and intensive and relevant training that promotes competency enhancement. Ironically, the choir is so skilled that one imagines its members would be an asset to any choir. Why then the assumption that they should be segregated?

Another disturbing aspect of this film is the way families are portrayed. Gabrielle's sister is supportive of Gabrielle's relationship with Martin but not effective in enabling her to be more independent. Her mother is barely visible in the film and it appears that she is very distant from her daughter. Gabrielle's boyfriend's mother is portrayed as the villain who is seeking, albeit unsuccessfully, to prevent Martin from having a relationship with Gabrielle. That many families can and do play an important role in promoting increased independence gets lost in these stereotypical portrayals.

For the typical viewer, this is likely a "feel good" film. Viewers are likely to feel positively towards Gabrielle, to admire her determination and to celebrate her relationship with Martin. Many will not have had much opportunity to know people with intellectual disabilities, and this seemingly intimate portrait and the positive feelings that it engenders will enable them to see themselves as being accepting and tolerant of such people.

However, in fact, the film is a confusing and frustrating amalgam of positive and negative images of disability. While at various points it presents very positive images which challenge existing stereotypes (e.g., it is not often that people with intellectual disabilities are portrayed as participating in a mature relationship involving sexual intimacy), in most respects it simply reinforces traditional and damaging perceptions of people with intellectual disabilities. For many, seeing this film is likely to confirm their belief that people with intellectual disabilities are unable to learn new skills, require segregated programs where they can be taken care of, and are happiest in the company of other disabled people.

Those of us who teach Social Role Valorization in university or college courses may find this a helpful teaching tool. The mostly young students who are often about the same age as Gabrielle will have no difficulty identifying with her desire for independence and for an intimate relationship. The combination of positive and negative images and roles are likely to generate good discussion, and to enable students to make connections between having valued social roles and experiencing the good things in life. Certainly, the valued social roles that Gabrielle has provide her with access to some of the good things in life, including meaningful activity, the opportunity for growth and development as a singer and choir member, the respect of those who hear the choir, and the intimacy that comes from being someone's girlfriend. At the same time, Gabrielle continues to experience the wounds that so often befall someone who is devalued on the basis of an intellectual impairment—segregation, low expectations, having one's living situation and relationship under the control of others.

The film is also likely to promote a discussion of sexuality and disability. Why should Gabrielle and Martin have had to sneak off in order to

have sex? Why is it that people with intellectual disabilities are so often denied the opportunity to engage in sexual activity, and what should or could be done about this? While the issue of people with intellectual disabilities becoming parents is not explored in this film, any discussion of sexuality is sure to raise this complex issue. Surely the fear of parenthood is insufficient reason to prevent all sexual relationships? What should happen if and when a woman with an intellectual disability does give birth to a child?

I saw this film in September at the Toronto International Film Festival. One of the features that draws me back to TIFF year after year is the frequent opportunity it presents to hear from the director and principal actors after the performance, when they stay around for a Q & A. Such was the case at this film. In addition to the director of the film, Gabrielle Marion-Rivard was present, accompanied by her mother and sister. She was poised and articulate, clearly proud of her accomplishments as an actor and pleased to talk about it. Yes, she very much enjoyed being in this film. Yes, this was the first time she had acted. Yes, the director had been very supportive. Was there anything about it that she hadn't liked? No. What was the hardest part? The love scene!

Along with the images and roles presented in the film, the film itself provides an opportunity both for its star, Gabrielle Marion-Rivard, and ten other people with intellectual disabilities to act in a film—certainly a valued social role for all of them.

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LIST OF ITEMS TO BE REVIEWED

IN EACH ISSUE OF *The SRV Journal*, we publish reviews of items relevant to SRV theory, training, research or implementation. These include reviews of books, movies, articles, etc. We encourage our readers to look for and review such items for this journal. We will be happy to send you our guidelines for writing reviews, or they are available on our website (http://www.srvip.org/journal_submissions.php). We are open to reviews of any items you think would be relevant for people interested in SRV. We also have specific items we are seeking reviews of. (We strive to include items which might have relevance to: SRV theory, one or more SRV themes, and/or social devaluation. If, however, a reviewer finds that a particular item is not so relevant, please let us know.) These items include:

SOCIAL INCLUSION AT WORK. (2008). By JANIS CHADSEY. Annapolis, MD: AAIDD, 49 pages.

INCLUSIVE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES. (2008). Washington, DC: NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITY, 84 pages.

BODY & SOUL: DIANA & KATHY. (2006). By ALICE ELLIOTT (Director). 40 minutes.

ACHIEVING COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROVIDER SERVICES: ARE WE THERE YET? (2007). *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities*, 45(3), 149–160.

KLEINERT, H., MIRACLE, S. & SHEPPARD-JONES, K. INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH MODERATE & SEVERE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR & COMMUNITY RECREATION ACTIVITIES. (2007). *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities*, 45(1), 46-55.

HALL, A., BUTTERWORTH, J., WINSOR, J., GILMORE, D. & METZEL, D. PUSHING THE EMPLOYMENT AGENDA: CASE STUDY RESEARCH OF HIGH PERFORMING STATES IN INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT. (2007). *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities*, 45(3), 182-198.

WOLFENSBERGER, W. HOW TO COMPORT OURSELVES IN AN ERA OF SHRINKING RESOURCES. (2010). *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities*, 48(2), 148-162.

ABERNATHY, T. & TAYLOR, S. TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR OWN DISABILITY. (2009). *Teacher Education & Special Education*, 32(2), 121-136.

PATTERSON, I. & PEGG, S. SERIOUS LEISURE & PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES: BENEFITS & OPPORTUNITIES. (2009). *Leisure Studies*, 28(4), 387–402.