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The major goal of SRV is to create or support socially valued roles for people in their society, because if a person holds valued social roles, that person is highly likely to receive from society those good things in life that are available to that society

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WE BELIEVE THAT SOCIAL ROLE VALORIZATION (SRV), when well applied, has potential to help societally devalued people to gain greater access to the good things of life & to be spared at least some negative effects of social devaluation.

Toward this end, the purposes of this periodical include the following: 1) analyzing phenomena that have SRV relevance; & 2) fostering, extending & deepening study of, dialogue about, & understanding of, SRV theory, training, research & implementation.

We intend the information provided in this publication to be of use to: family, friends, advocates, direct care workers, managers, trainers, educators, students, researchers & others in relationship with or serving formally or informally upon devalued people in order to provide more valued life conditions as well as more relevant & coherent service.

SRV News & Reviews is published under the auspices of The SRV Implementation Project (SRVIP). The mission of the SRVIP is to: confront social devaluation in all its forms, including the deathmaking of vulnerable people; support positive action consistent with SRV; & promote the work of the formulator of SRV, Prof. Wolf Wolfensberger.[†]

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TYPEFACE

Main text is set in Adobe Garamond Pro & headlines in Myriad Pro, both designed by Robert Slimbach.

A Brief Description of Social Role Valorization

From the Editor

IN EVERY NUMBER we print a few brief descriptions of Social Role Valorization (SRV). This by no means replaces more thorough explanations of SRV, but does set a helpful framework for the content of this publication.

The following is from: Wolfensberger, W. (2013). *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 ed.). Plantagenet, ON: Valor Press, p. 81.

... in order for people to be treated well by others, it is very important that they be seen as occupying valued roles, because otherwise, things are apt to go ill with them. Further, the greater the number of valued roles a person, group or class occupies, or the more valued the roles that such a party occupies, the more likely it is that the party will be accorded those good things of life that others are in a position to accord, or to withhold.

The following is from: SRV Council [North American Social Role Valorization Development, Training & Safeguarding Council] (2004). A proposed definition of Social Role Valorization, with various background materials and elaborations. *SRV-VRS: The International Social Role Valorization*

Journal/La Revue Internationale de la Valorisation des Rôles Sociaux, 5(1&2), p. 85.

SRV is a systematic way of dealing with the facts of social perception and evaluation, so as to enhance the roles of people who are apt to be devalued, by upgrading their competencies and social image in the eyes of others.

The following is from: Wolfensberger, W. (2000). A brief overview of Social Role Valorization. *Mental Retardation*, 38(2), p. 105.

The key premise of SRV is that people's welfare depends extensively on the social roles they occupy: People who fill roles that are positively valued by others will generally be afforded by the latter the good things of life, but people who fill roles that are devalued by others will typically get badly treated by them. This implies that in the case of people whose life situations are very bad, and whose bad situations are bound up with occupancy of devalued roles, then if the social roles they are seen as occupying can somehow be upgraded in the eyes of perceivers, their life conditions will usually improve, and often dramatically so.

If you know someone who would be interested in reading
SRV News & Reviews, send us their name & email
& we'll send them a complimentary issue.

A Brief Introduction to Social Role Valorization:

A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, & 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 & supports, rather than the service provider. Time & 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 & understand their world. Many describe the realization that *they* first had to change in order for them to address the issues & 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 & how to effectively address these needs” (from the foreword by Zana Marie Lutfiyya, PhD & Thomas Neville, PhD).



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

Wolf Wolfensberger

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Resources to Learn about Social Role Valorization

- **A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization**, 4th expanded ed. Wolf Wolfensberger. (2013). (Available from Valor Press)
- **Advanced issues in Social Role Valorization theory**. Wolf Wolfensberger. (2012). (Available from Valor Press)
- **PASSING: A tool for analyzing service quality according to Social Role Valorization criteria. Ratings manual**, 3rd (rev.) ed. Wolf Wolfensberger & Susan Thomas. (2007). (Available from Valor Press)
- **A quarter-century of normalization & Social Role Valorization: Evolution and impact**. Ed. by R. Flynn & R. Lemay. (1999). Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press. (Available on socialrolevalorization.com)
- **A brief overview of Social Role Valorization**. Wolf Wolfensberger. (2000). *Mental Retardation*, 38(2), 105-123.
- **An overview of Social Role Valorization theory**. Joe Osburn. (2006). *The SRV Journal*, 1(1), 4-13. (Available at <https://srvip.org/articles/>)
- **Some of the universal 'good things of life' which the implementation of Social Role Valorization can be expected to make more accessible to devalued people**. Wolf Wolfensberger, Susan Thomas & Guy Caruso. (1996). *SRV/VRS: The International Social Role Valorization Journal/La Revue Internationale de la Valorisation des Rôles Sociaux*, 2(2), 12-14. (Available at <https://srvip.org/articles/>)
- **Social Role Valorization & the English experience**. David Race. (1999). London: Whiting & Birch.
- **The SRV Implementation Project website, including a training calendar** www.srvip.org
- **SRVIP events calendar** <https://srvip.org/srvip-events/>
- **The Model Coherency construct** <https://modelcoherency.com>
- **International Social Role Valorization Association** <http://www.socialrolevalorization.com/>
- **Southern Ontario Training Group (Canada)** <http://www.srv-sotg.ca/>
- **A 'History of Human Services' course taught by W. Wolfensberger & S. Thomas (DVD set)** purchase online at <http://wolfwolfensberger.com/>

FROM THE EDITOR

OUR FOCUS

WE ARE PLEASED TO OFFER this publication of *SRV News & Reviews*. The core focus of this periodical is to publish material that analyzes phenomena with SRV relevance. This may take the form of brief items, book & movie reviews, book notices, & occasional longer articles & columns.

OUR ADVISORY BOARD

I EXTEND MY GRATITUDE to the members of our advisory board (listed on page 2).

INFORMATION FOR SUBMISSIONS

WE WELCOME WELL-REASONED, CLEARLY-WRITTEN submissions. Topics may include analyses of contemporary human service developments & items in the media, as well as book or movie reviews, or briefer notices of books & movies, from an SRV perspective. We will occasionally publish longer articles on SRV theory & PASSING, training & implementation.

Language used should be clear & descriptive, & be accessible to a broad readership.

We encourage the use of ordinary grammar and vocabulary that a typical reader would understand. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* is one easily available general style guide. Academic authors should follow the standards of their field. We will not accept items simultaneously submitted elsewhere for publication or previously electronically posted or distributed.

Submissions are reviewed by the Editor or external referees.

WELCOME TO THIS ONGOING SERIES, & we hope that you find the material relevant, instructive & thought-provoking.

Regards,
Marc Tumeinski, Editor

A Conceptual Metaphor Analysis of Unintelligence

Martin Elks

Introduction

ONE OF THE MANY CONTRIBUTIONS of Normalization and Social Role Valorization (Wolfensberger, 1972/2013) is an emphasis on the analysis of language and terminology used with respect to people seen to be of low intelligence. For example, Wolfensberger (2012) writes:

Language can powerfully communicate about people in a number of ways. About people of low intelligence specifically, many languages have hundreds of words or phrases, almost all of which evoke negative images and role ideas: eternal child, dumb ox, blockhead, village idiot, vegetable, low-grade, and so on. (p. 38)

It is interesting that all of the terms listed above are metaphors. Blatt (1987) goes so far as to say that “Metaphors seem to have been ‘made’ for the field of mental retardation. Or was it vice versa” (p. 82). In this paper I explore the use of these and other metaphors of unintelligence through the use of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 2008; Kovecses, 2010/2020; Semino & Demjen, 2017). I use the term “unintelligence” as a stand-in for terminology such as idiocy, feeble-mindedness, mental retardation, intellectual disability and any other related concepts.

Metaphors are ways of “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). The term that is abstract or more difficult to understand is referred to as the Target (in this case “unintelligence”). The term that is more concrete and understandable is referred to as the Source (in this case, for example, “blockhead”). Metaphor works by “projecting upon” the primary subject (unintelligence) a set of “associated implications” (Black, 1979, p. 28) such as the unintelligent mind is a block of wood. These implications or similarities are referred to as “conceptual correspondences” or mappings (Kovecses, 2010, p. 7).

Metaphor analyses have been made related to autism, ADHD, and emotional behavior disorder (Danforth, 2007; Danforth & Kim, 2008; Broderick & Ne’eman, 2008), but as yet no systematic examination of metaphors of unintelligence have been published even though “conceptual metaphor analysis offers a useful way to access the cultural meanings of disability” (Danforth, 2008, p. 397).

Metaphors may be simple linguistic statements as in “time flies,” or they may be more complicated collections (referred to as conceptual metaphors) of multiple individual linguistic metaphors. A conceptual metaphor is defined as “understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete)” (Kovecses, 2020, p. 1). The convention in

cognitive linguistics is to use SMALL CAPS to refer to conceptual metaphors and *italics* to refer to individual linguistic metaphors.

For example, we understand the common conceptual metaphor of LOVE IS A JOURNEY (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 44f) because it is made up of correspondences or mappings that include the concepts of relationships as a journey such as “we’re at a crossroads,” “we can’t turn back now,” and “I don’t think this relationship is going anywhere” (Kovecses, 2010, p. 6).

Shakespeare was a master of metaphor and coined many metaphors that are still familiar today such as *to be in a pickle*, *going down the primrose path*, *milk of human kindness*, and *cold comfort* (Bryson, 1990, p. 65). However, even our ordinary and everyday conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Not surprisingly then, metaphors may be found in almost every area of life.

For example, metaphors may be found in personal relationships when we talk about *warm and cold people*, *having a meltdown*, *broken marriages* and *women falling pregnant*. Metaphors are also very common in science as when we talk of the *laws of physics*, *the Big Bang*, *neurons as wiring*, *genes that can be switched off* and DNA as “the language God used to create life” (Bubela, 2006, p. 447). Metaphors may also be found in politics such as when we talk about *wars on drugs*, *cancer*, *poverty and terror*, *the Holocaust*, *dogwhistle*, *bamboo diplomacy*, *whistleblower*, *filibuster*, and *lame-duck president*. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note:

In all aspects of life, not just in politics or in love, we define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor (p. 158)

Cultures have unconscious metaphorical thinking patterns that are taken for granted and the analysis of metaphors can provide insights into these thinking patterns (Schmitt, 2005). For example, in the eighteenth century in Europe the brain was thought of as being *like a stringed instrument such as a violin or harpsichord* (Rosen, 2014). These were common instruments at the time and harmonic vibrations of strings were seen as metaphors for the theory of association of ideas. Similar cultural references may be seen in the development of the modern conception of the atom using successive metaphors like *billiard ball*, *plum pudding*, *planetary system*, *complex mathematical formulae*, leading to the current atomic metaphor of a *cloud* (Brown, 2003). Metaphors change as the culture changes.

Metaphors are both powerful and problematic. They are powerful because they are natural cognitive processes that can help us to understand complex issues in nature and society using simple and often concrete concepts (Ungerer & Schmid, 2006). Metaphors can “generate new knowledge and insight by changing relationships between the things designated” (Black, 1979, p. 37) and can enable us to see “novel views” (Black, 1979, p. 40). Similarly, they can provide “new vision” or “new insight” (Khatchadourian, 1968, p. 236) and new metaphors “have the power to create a new reality” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 145).

The power of metaphors can be “benevolent–or dangerous” (Blatt, 1987, p. 82). Defining something metaphorically leads to certain expectations and focuses attention on certain features, thereby indicating certain priorities for action (Danziger, 1990). Different metaphor framings have consequences for how people make sense of their own experience and also for how others interact with them (Demjen & Semino, 2016). These framings may not be good for the people who are the subject of the metaphors.

Another problem with the use of metaphor is misappropriation as when “survival of the fittest” in nature becomes applied to people in the form

of Social Darwinism and eugenics (Chew & Laubichler, 2003). Dennett also cautions that metaphors can often “lead thinkers astray when their imaginations get captured by a treacherous analogy” (Dennett, 2013, p. 4). He gives the example of seeing *the brain as a computer* as one metaphor that some experts argue is “deeply misleading” (Dennett, 2013, p. 110).

Metaphors frame the target domain in different ways by highlighting some aspects and backgrounding others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This can also be problematic. For example, the metaphor of artificial intelligence as a “flying blue brain” (Wallenborn, 2022) highlights the similarities to human brains and human intelligence and backgrounds the non-human nature of machine learning. Advertisements that promise “24-hour protection” imply that their deodorant is an ally in the fight against one’s own body odor (Kovecses, 2020, p. 7).

Perhaps the biggest problem with metaphor is that of “reification” (Leary, 1990, p. 210). For example, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs has been reified with the metaphor of a *pyramid*. Maslow however, never actually used the concept of a pyramid but allowed for targeting multiple needs simultaneously rather than waiting for every need to be in place before one moves to the next level of the pyramid (Kaufman, 2020). *Black holes* are massive objects, not holes and used to be called dark or frozen stars, but the metaphor has proved useful, is now very familiar and has become the actual name of the object and not merely a metaphor. Similarly, *Big Bang* is a metaphor but has now been reified to be the name of the actual event (Rosen, 2014).

Reification in the study of unintelligence is most clearly seen in the concept of IQ (Kliewer, Biklen, & Petersen, 2015). Researchers acknowledge that “Intelligence really is nothing in particular, as it is a construct humans have invented, largely to explain why some people are better at performing some classes of tasks than others” (Sternberg, 2018, p. 308) yet many people assume that intelligence is some “thing” that can actually be measured by one’s “IQ”.

A further problem arises from the unconscious nature of metaphors (Kovecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, metaphors can reflect unconscious ableist mindsets as when physical abilities are associated with moral qualities (Mairs, 1996). Examples of positive moral qualities include “keep your chin up” (courage), “and your eyes open” (alertness); “look straight in the eye” (honesty) and “see eye to eye” (accord) compared to examples of negative moral qualities such as “sit on your ass” (laziness); “take it lying down” (weakness); and “listen with half an ear” (inattention) (Mairs, 1996, p. 57). Similarly, Oliver (2009) strongly criticizes what he calls “ambulist metaphors” such as “standing on your own two feet,” “stay one step ahead,” “walking tall” and “making great strides” (p. 31f).

Metaphors can also be extremely negative and harmful. Kanner’s metaphors of the *refrigerator mother*, *toxic parenting* and *frosted children* “was a source of shame and stigma for families worldwide while sending autism research off in the wrong direction for decades” (Silberman, 2015, p. 188). While we no longer talk of refrigerator mothers, autism itself is still the subject of dangerous metaphors such as *autism is a foreign space (a wall, hell, fortress, shell)*, *autism is alien*, and *autism is a disease* (Broderick & Ne’eman, 2008). Other negative metaphors include describing *autism as an error of nature*, *a puzzle* and as “a strange gift from our deep past, passed down through millions of years of evolution” (Silberman, 2015, p. 470).

Historically, pejorative metaphors have been prevalent in the field of deafness as when not speaking is referred to as “silent exile,” having a “blank mind” and being in a “prison” and describing sign-language as “a set of monkey-like grimaces and antics” (Baynton, 1997, pp. 135, 133, 141).

Method

A SIX-STAGE ANALYSIS WAS IMPLEMENTED following Schmitt (2005). First, the Target of this analysis was identified as the con-

cept of “unintelligence.” Since it is impossible to refer to unintelligence without at least inferring the existence of “intelligence,” metaphors of intelligence were included in contradistinction to the metaphors of the Target.

Second, a baseline sample was established comprising Merriam-Webster’s 83 synonyms for “idiot” (idiot, 2001). Words of unknown or very obscure origin (e.g., mome, schnook) and words with multiple meanings (e.g., boor, ignoramus, yokel, dolt, addled, fool, moron) were excluded.

Third, this initial sample was expanded using broad-based collections from various sources of metaphors such as Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (Oxford, 1970); Roget’s Thesaurus (Chapman 1992); and metaphor corpora such as Co-build English Guides 7: Metaphor (Deignan, 2005), Metaphors Dictionary (Sommer & Weiss, 2001), Geary’s (2007) compilation of aphorisms; and mental metaphor databanks (Barden, n.d.; Lakoff, Espenson & Schwartz, 1991).

Metaphors were identified in the fourth stage using Pragglejaz (2007). Words with more basic meanings (more concrete, related to bodily action, more precise or historically older) are identified to see how these more basic meanings contrast with and adds to the understanding of the identified word. For example, sub- means under or beneath hence mental subnormality metaphorically places the person’s mentality under or beneath the mentality of others.

Fifth, these identified metaphors were then grouped using basic or conventional content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This method involves identifying and describing themes using as much as possible the exact words used in the textual data and also the etymology of the metaphoric words. For example, metaphors that refer to small objects (e.g., nit wit) were grouped together.

The final stage was to match these thematic metaphor groupings with standard conceptual metaphors documented in basic metaphor texts such as Lakoff & Johnson (1980); Kovecses (2010), and the metaphor lists mentioned above. For example,

linguistic metaphors such as *airhead* and *bubble-head* can be seen as an example of the conceptual metaphor MIND AS CONTAINER with the unintelligent mind represented by the conceptual metaphor THE CONTAINER IS EMPTY. Only one grouping of linguistic metaphors, SPEAKING IS THINKING, could not be subsumed under existing documented conceptual metaphors and may represent a new disability specific conceptual metaphor. The findings of this analysis are presented below.

Findings

CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS of intelligence and unintelligence are presented below. There are seven broad and more abstract conceptual metaphors relating to the mind, body and progress (for example, THE MIND IS A CONTAINER). Each of these broader conceptual metaphors include six conceptual metaphors for intelligence (for example, THE CONTAINER IS FULL) and 12 conceptual metaphors for unintelligence (for example, THE CONTAINER IS EMPTY/NEAR EMPTY).

It is typical in common usage that conceptual metaphors may be arranged from the more concrete to more abstract domains (Kovecses, 2020). Thus, people may use the metaphor “empty-headed” without consciously realizing that this is part of a more general conceptual metaphor that sees the mind as a container. These conceptual metaphors with their linguistic examples are presented below.

I. THE MIND IS A CONTAINER

Linguistic examples: I didn’t get anything out of it; Her mind is a sponge; That thought really sunk in; Have a head like a sieve; I can’t get this out of my mind; What did you have in mind?

Intelligence Corollary

THE CONTAINER IS FULL

Linguistic examples: She is very brainy; “He contained within him a reservoir of learning of such

depth as to be practically bottomless” (Leacock, 1922, n.p.)

Unintelligence Corollaries

1. THE CONTAINER IS EMPTY/NEAR EMPTY

Linguistic examples: Empty-headed; Airhead; Bubblehead; Featherhead; Not all there; Idiot (half-wit, half-innocent); “Like a blank idiot” (Keats, n.d.); He’s lacking in the brain department; Not all there; Amentia

2. THE CONTAINER IS WEAK

Linguistic examples: Feeble-mindedness: Feeble = lacking physical strength; Faint, from *flebilis*: lamentable; Imbecile (*imbecillus* = weak, feeble in body or mind)

3. THE CONTAINER IS FULL OF A (NON-HUMAN) SOLID/NEAR SOLID SUBSTANCE

Linguistic examples: Blockhead; Bonehead; Clod pole; Hardhead; Lofferhead; Loggerhead (from German: stock); Thickhead; Thick as a brick; Woodenhead; Saphead; Meathead; Muttonhead; Fathead; Dope (as in sauce); Lumber

Seguin (1866/1907) referred to his physiological method for the treatment of “idiocy” as elevating feeble minds “not by direct ascension, but by the side-liftings and propagation of forces, as levers act on apparently immovable masses” (p. 183) and Davenport, founder of the Eugenics Record Office and a leader in US eugenics, considered feeble-mindedness to be a “lumber room” of different mental defects, all inherited separately (Cited in Cohen, 2016, p. 198)

4. THE CONTAINER IS SMALL/A SMALL ANIMAL OR OBJECT

Linguistic examples: Birdbrain; Nit wit; Pinhead; Cuddy (small room); Dip; Loon; Half-wits

are fleas, so little and so light/We scarce could know they live, but that they bite” (Dryden, 1913); Woodrow Wilson: “He [President Warren Harding] had a bungalow mind” (Bradford, 1931, p. 161)

5. THE CONTAINER IS INACTIVE

Linguistic examples: Numbskull; Deadhead; Hammerhead; Knucklehead; Vegetable/vegetative state

6. THE CONTAINER HAS FEW PARTS

Linguistic examples: Simpleton (one ingredient only); Goof (OE: *goff* or simpleton); Gooney (see above); Oligophrenia: Diminished mind (From Greek: *oligo* = few, little, scant; *phrenia* = mind); Not playing with a full deck

II. THE MIND IS THE BODY

Linguistic examples: His mind is strong and supple; They practice drills all day long; In the summer the mind tends to go flabby; Algebra is beyond my grasp; Pull the wool over someone’s eyes

A DEFECTIVE BODY IS A DEFECTIVE MIND

Linguistic examples: Oaf; Mug; Prat (buttocks); Lamebrain; Numbskull; Jolt head; Feeble-minded; Imbecile; Blithering; Slobbering; Drooling

III. (NOT) KNOWING IS (NOT) SEEING

Linguistic examples: Can you shed more light on this issue? I don’t quite see what you are talking about; He spotlighted the issues that were important; She finally opened her eyes to what was going on around her; I was in the dark for a long time; My early training had put blinders on me; I’m just in a fog today, I don’t know what is going on; He saw through her lies; He’s deliberately clouding the issues; She blinded me with claims of innocence

This conceptual metaphor has three associated conceptual metaphors described below.

1. IDEAS ARE LIGHT SOURCES

Linguistic examples: What a bright idea! That idea really illuminates the problem

2. INTELLIGENCE IS A LIGHT SOURCE

Linguistic examples: She is very bright; He can always shed light on the problem; A brilliant mind

3. UNINTELLIGENCE IS A LACK OF ILLUMINATION THAT PREVENTS SEEING AND THEREFORE KNOWING

Linguistic examples: Dimbulb; Dullard (from dull: lacking brightness, vividness, or sheen as in dull lamplight); Dim wit; I always thought he was a little dim

IV. INTELLIGENCE IS A CUTTING INSTRUMENT

Linguistic examples: Steel-trap; He is very incisive; He always cuts to the heart of the problem; She's really sharp; sharp-witted; He used extensive reading to hone his intellect; He was also by nature an intellectual bully with a cutting tongue; "The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things" (Thoreau, 1854/1997, p. 93)

UNINTELLIGENCE IS A BLUNT INSTRUMENT

Linguistic examples: Dullard (from dull: blunt, opposite of sharp; a lot more people are cut with dull knives than with sharp ones)

V. SPEAKING IS THINKING

This conceptual metaphor has been particularly pernicious. Shevin (2002) has observed a "fluency privilege" that automatically accrues "to people who are competent, fluent speakers of the standard dialect or dominant language of a given so-

ciety" (p. 199). This privilege has significant negative consequences for people who lack this fluency.

1. INTELLIGENT PEOPLE SPEAK WELL

Linguistic examples: Witty; Sharp; Sharp-witted; Quick witted; Fast; Alert; Nimble; Keen; Smart (from to cause pain, related to sharp); "A fine volley of words, gentlemen, and quickly shot off" (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act 2, Scene 4)

2. NOT SPEAKING WELL IS NOT THINKING WELL

Linguistic examples: Babbling idiot; Cluck (sound made by chicken); Dumbbell; Dummy; Dunce (from Duns Scotus); Dunderhead (German: thunder); Nimrod (Builder of Tower of Babel); Clunck; Fool (*OED*: lit. "bellows," "windbag," empty-headed person); Nincompoop (from the biblical Nicodemus); Dum dum; Burbbling; Maundering (to speak indistinctly or disconnectedly); [Life] "is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5)

VI. PROGRESS IS MOTION FORWARD

Linguistic examples: We stagger from crisis to crisis; The company stumbled in the late 1980s

1. INTELLIGENCE IS FAST MOTION FORWARD

Linguistic examples: She's a quick study; He's a fast learner

2. UNINTELLIGENCE IS SLOW MOVEMENT FORWARD

Linguistic examples: Mental retardation: (mental delay or holding back in terms of progress, development or accomplishment); Arrested; Backward; Slow learner; Slow witted; "Idleness is the stupidity of the body, and stupidity the idleness of the mind" (Seume, n.d.)

Dolmage (2005) suggests that retardation comes from the conceptual metaphors of THOUGHTS AS OBJECTS and THOUGHTS AS MOVEMENT of these objects through space, hence “retarded” movement is abnormal thought (p. 113).

VII. MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN

Linguistic examples: He thinks he is above us; He has an edge over us; We’re not at his level; He’s up there with the best of them; Speak up, please; Keep your voice down

1. INTELLIGENCE IS UP

Linguistic examples: Higher education; Joe is above Bill in intelligence; A high-level intellectual discussion; High functioning; “One-story intellects, two-storey intellects, three-storey intellects with skylights” (Holmes, 1883). The use of skylights is also an example of the conceptual metaphor INTELLIGENCE IS A LIGHT SOURCE)

2. UNINTELLIGENCE IS DOWN

Linguistic examples: Mental subnormality (sub=under, beneath, below normal); Low functioning; Low-brow; His elevator doesn’t go all the way up

Conclusion: New But Carefully Crafted Metaphors Are Needed

OVER TIME, AND UNLESS INTERROGATED, metaphors can come to serve as “metaphoric entrapments” (Prendergast, 2017, p. 237).

The conceptual structure of unintelligence is complex and much more extensive than individual metaphors such as “mental retardation” suggest. Thus, metaphors of unintelligence do not reflect a coherent, underlying or essential concept except as the devalued conceptual opposite of intelligence (however that is defined). What is the underlying essential element reflected in an

empty, near-empty, weak, non-human, solid container other than that they are the polar opposites of metaphors of intelligence? When intelligence is conceptualized as fast, large, human and “up” then its opposite must be slow, small, non-human and “down.” As such, unintelligence should not be considered to be “a thing” in itself as, for example, when we see DNA or a neuron, but as a highly contestable concept.

The conceptual metaphors of unintelligence identified in this analysis are also objectively false. No mind is empty or with few parts and lack of speech does not mean lack of thought. These metaphors are also extremely pejorative and ableist yet are still part of the cultural background for people called unintelligent. Furthermore, these metaphors make sense only in comparison to the concept of intelligence, which itself is only understandable metaphorically (Sternberg, 1990). Metaphors of unintelligence are therefore metaphors resting on metaphors.

Intelligence itself is therefore not a friendly concept in this field. As long as we have metaphors for intelligence there will be metaphors for its opposite. For example, even the new metaphor of “successful intelligence” or “one’s ability to choose, reevaluate, and, to the extent possible, attain one’s goals in life, within one’s sociocultural context” (Sternberg, 2018, p. 308) immediately implies the existence of “unsuccessful intelligence.” Blatt was right in observing that “Possibly, ‘intelligence’ is the most controversial, the most problematic, the most seriously argued, and the most essential concept in the field” (Blatt, 1987, p. 316).

It is important that we interrogate our metaphors (Rosen, 2014). Is the heart really a *pump*? Is the brain really a *computer*? Can genes really be *switched off*? Vidali (2010) emphasizes the need to reinterpret, challenge, resist, articulate, create and perhaps even reclaim disability metaphors. I would argue that we need to do the same with respect to metaphors of “unintelligence.” There is a need for new metaphors to be more inclusive, non-stigmatizing and show connectedness and

the presumption of competence rather than the deficit mindset prevalent in most of the current metaphors (Kliewer, Biklen & Petersen, 2015).

New metaphors in turn may lead to cultural change. For example, the introduction of the TIME IS MONEY metaphor is at least partly responsible for the “Westernization of cultures throughout the world” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 145). Novel metaphors that create different understandings of experience “could be used to create shifts or revolutions in the dominant paradigms” (Dolmage, 2005, p. 116).

New metaphors are also a sign of vitality in a field of study. Ideally, we need to strive for “highly productive and fruitful metaphors loaded with fecund entailments and promising research opportunities” (Danforth, 2007, p. 11). New metaphors can be seen as a form of social action that can potentially release new meanings and understandings (Titchkosky, 2017). For example, Elks (2018) has described how metaphors may be used to promote or diminish identification with people with disabilities.

Burton Blatt believed that mental retardation can be understood in terms of the metaphors we use, as well as those the larger society employs (Blatt, 1987). In making this observation, Blatt is suggesting that mental retardation itself may not be an actual “thing” and that as these metaphors change and evolve with progress in our understanding, whatever mental retardation actually is will also change and evolve.

We have several examples of metaphors evolving and even disappearing altogether. We no longer use the metaphor of *hysteria*, which originally referred to the Greek word for womb. In ancient times hysteria was thought to be caused by a wandering uterus and became a metaphor for unwanted behavior in women. It has now been replaced by the metaphor of “conversion reaction” (Sarbin, 1990, p. 310). Similarly, terms such as idiot and imbecile are no longer used clinically even though they may still be used as terms of abuse.

Some metaphors change to more objective terms but keep an underlying theme as seen in the change from *shell shock* and *battle fatigue* to “post-traumatic stress disorder.” The same may be said of the metaphor *punch drunk* which was replaced by the term “chronic traumatic encephalitis.”

Some examples of new metaphors that are designed to alter perceptions and actions may be seen in the field of climate science. Climate activists have realized that old metaphors like *greenhouse effect* are not achieving their desired goals and are beginning to substitute new metaphors such as *climate crisis*, *rampant* (vs. regular) *warming*, *carbon dioxide as a heat-trapping blanket* and *climate’s heart* to better reflect the reality of climate change (Bales, Sweetland & Volmert, 2015; Rosen, 2020).

Similarly, cancer as war metaphors such as *battling cancer* and *losing the fight against cancer* treatment are being replaced with metaphors that emphasize living well with cancer such as in *seeing cancer as a journey*, rather than imposing metaphors on patients that contribute to patients feeling responsible for their inability to defeat their cancer (Cooper, 2014).

New metaphors need to come from the lived experiences of labeled persons and their families (Danforth 2007). For example, the metaphor *parability* as in Paralympics has been suggested as an alternative to “disability” (Mousavi, Lecic-Tosevski, Khalili, & Mousavi, 2020). This term replaces dis- (denoting negation, reversal, absence, or removal) with the less stigmatizing metaphor of para- (beside, adjacent to). In this way:

People with para-abilities can see their situation in a new light—a change in paradigm from ‘lack’ to an ‘alteration.’ They experience ‘abilities’ that exist alongside with ‘disabilities’, either in their personal life or social situations. (Mousavi et al. 2020, p. 5)

Vygotsky (1978) uses metaphors in explaining his theory of learning and development that are

non-stigmatizing, for example, his metaphor of the *zone of proximal development* as the distance between the actual developmental level of a child and the potential developmental level. This zone defines functions that have not yet matured, are in an embryonic state that he terms the *bud* or *flowers* and not the fruits of development.

It should be noted that just because a concept is expressed in metaphor does not mean the underlying sources of the metaphor do not exist. We have had many changing metaphors for the atom based on new research but very few scientists deny the existence of atoms. Similarly, it is obvious that some people learn faster than others or speak more eloquently than others. What is at issue is not the behaviors that have led to metaphorical interpretations of these sources but rather the lack of coherency between the metaphors, their inherent devaluations and their outright inaccuracies.

Many would agree that “a new culture, a new discourse, a new paradigm of thought” (Kliwer *et al.*, 2015, p. 22) is urgently needed and that new metaphors may be necessary for this to occur. With the new ideas of the social model (Oliver, 2013), affirmative model (Swain & French, 2000), and neurodiversity (Jaarsma & Welin, 2012) it is time to develop new metaphors that more accurately reflect where we are now as a field (whatever field that might be).

In pursuing this, however, it may be a good idea to follow Wolfensberger’s (2011) admonitions with respect to the development of new language and terminology such that any new language and terminology be (a) “image protective and enhancing,” (b) avoid mere “term-hopping,” (c) only accept language that is “unequivocally better,” and (d) that living with the “least-worst” option is “usually the best one can hope for” (p. 466, 467). ☺

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Valued Roles and the “Real Me”

Jack Yates

IN THE SHORT STORY by Andre Dubus, “A Father’s Story,” the narrator draws a distinction between “what people would call my life” and his “real life.” The former description included his marriage, his children, his profession, his home, his reputation, his church, and his other memberships. In contrast, according to him, his “real life” included the things he liked to do when he was alone, his feelings, his spiritual longings and consolations, his beliefs.

Of course, both are real. The publicly known and relational life, “what people call my life,” might also be called his “role life.” But I am uncomfortable with that being contrasted to his “real life.” How is his role as a husband or as a father any less “real,” despite his having failed at both? How is his attendance at daily Mass, visible to the world, any less “real” than his interior thoughts and feelings of devotion? How is his role as a teacher of horseback riding less “real” than his private love for sitting alone and listening to tragic opera on the radio?

Our interior life certainly is real. Ideas, feelings, beliefs, all are real. But the stance of the protagonist of the Dubus story is dismissive of what is also real, our relations and interactions with others, both private and public: the roles we fill in our lives.

I fear there is a huge temptation to self-indulgence in elevating our inner thoughts and feelings to a higher “reality” than our engagements

in life. Wendell Berry comments on how people sometimes ask others to honor “the real me, as if that real person inside is somehow better and finer than the one to which all the evidence thus far has pointed.” Such wishful thinking is understandable and amusing, but it is also a cover for self-centeredness, even narcissism. Is the “real me,” the one who would spend hours, decades ago, in tearful contemplation of Jackson Browne songs? Is he really more “real” than the me who has seen modest success and abject failure in living the roles of my life?

In SRV workshops we stress that valued roles are not just something we “put on” or play at or perform superficially or artificially, as in play-acting. The word “role” is used for theatrical performing, but as we point out in connection with SRV, that is a different usage of the word. When I explain this, I always say that the major roles in our lives become part of our very identity. In other words, the “me” in our public relational roles is just as real as the thoughts and feelings, which feel so real only to ourselves. One does not merely play at being a parent; it changes how one looks at oneself, as well as how others perceive one, and it changes the interior person as well, as virtually every parent would attest. It yields different priorities, different perspectives, and different interests. One does not merely play at one’s life’s work, nor is it only how one answers the question, “What do you do?” It changes a great deal about one’s self-image, as well

as one's time and focus and priorities. Our identity—who we are—include interior categories like personality, intelligence, abilities and inabilities. But it also includes exterior, visible roles in life and in community and in action. Those, too, are “the real me.” ☺

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The original story by Dubus is available online at NarrativeMagazine.com.*

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REVIEWS

FLYWHEEL: MEMORIES OF THE OPEN ROAD. BY TOM SWALLOW, ARTHUR H. PILL AND THE MEMBERS OF THE MUHLBERG MOTOR CLUB, STALAG IVB GERMANY 1944–1945. Hong Kong: Fraser Stewart Publishing, 1987.

Reviewed by Bill Forman

THE ‘GOOD THINGS OF LIFE’ that SRV identifies (Thomas, Caruso & Wolfensberger, 1996) are made possible through (among other things) a person’s occupying valued social roles, meaningful engagement in activities connected to those roles and positive associations with others, again in a context of shared roles.

There are circumstances, such as institutionalization and imprisonment, where these elements are stripped from parties. One such instance is the capture and confinement of prisoners of war. In the Second World War, Allied prisoners were held by German forces in prison camps called ‘Stalags’ (an abbreviation of ‘Stammlager’, meaning ‘base-camp’). There were hundreds of these camps in Germany, one of which was Stalag IVB.

Stalag IVB was built to hold 15,000 prisoners but often contained up to 30,000. Tom Swallow, the principal author of this book, describes the buildings that held them (one hesitates to call it ‘housing’) as “filthy, cold wooden huts which were infested with all kinds of vermin.” Though conditions did not necessarily sink to those of the more widely known concentration/death camps, they were, nonetheless, brutal and harsh. Swallow goes on to say, “Living under such conditions, with nothing to do and nowhere to go, men died quite easily—often of a strange lethargy that seemed to take away their zest for life.”

Many, however, did survive, through many means. Popular media, like movies and books, tell

the stories of elaborate escape plans (some successful) and efforts to undermine and sabotage the captors. Somewhat less known is the fact that prisoners established organizations among themselves that had various purposes. One such organization was the “Muhlberg Motor Club.”

The Muhlberg Motor Club was established by, and for, British prisoners who were car and motorcycle fanciers. Swallow recalls that its purpose was to “bring motoring enthusiasts together, to find work for idle hands and minds and to educate the ‘new motorists’.” The Club had officers, including a chair, editor, and runner, who delivered new issues to the various barracks. The first meeting was attended by six members, but attendance grew to about 200.

The club produced a newsletter, and the book reviewed here is a facsimile of pages from those newsletters. Of course, the prisoners had no proper equipment or materials, so they “begged, borrowed and stole” what they needed to produce the newsletter; quinine stolen from the camp hospital was an ingredient in ink, and fermented millet soup served as glue to secure pages into a school scribbler.

All of the text and illustrations in the newsletter were done by hand. The illustrations are quite professional, and exquisite. The content ranged from memoirs of the open road, to reviews of certain (mostly British) cars and motorcycles, to quizzes and letters to the editor. There were several issues, but only one copy of each. That singular copy was lent to various barracks for one half day at a time. Many of the editorial staff, readers, etc., were car owners in their lives at home, with substantial expertise. Younger soldiers, and those with fewer means, may never have owned a private car, though they may have been drivers in their military roles.

At one point, the editorial members of the committee discovered an empty barrack, and thought they might take it over as a headquarters, to include a production office, library and archive. On opening the door, they noticed the floor moving; on closer inspection, it was populated by millions of fleas.

I found this to be an inspiring story, of a little known (at least to me) chapter of history. For me, the light it sheds on SRV, and vice versa, is that, without a rich social context, meaningful relationships based on shared identity and some structure and purpose to one's life, people do not thrive. Indeed, they may die of "a strange lethargy" as the author states.

The newsletter producers, readers and Muhlberg Motor Club members undoubtedly drew strength from recalling the good life from which they had been extricated by war, reminiscing together about motoring and freedom of movement as one part of their previous lifestyle, engaging with each other in a shared purpose, and,

it's fair to assume, kindling a sense of hope that the war would end and they might return to that good life. As Nietzsche said, and Viktor Frankl echoed, "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." ❧

REFERENCE

Wolfensberger, W., Thomas, S. & Caruso, G. (1996). Some of the universal 'good things of life' which the implementation of Social Role Valorization can be expected to make more accessible to devalued people. *SRV/VRS: The International Social Role Valorization Journal/La Revue Internationale de la Valorisation des Rôles Sociaux*, 2(2), 12–14.

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Social Role Valorization News & Reviews

Susan Thomas

WE CONTINUE THE “News & Reviews” column on-line under the auspices of *The SRV Journal*. This column is not sequential, so it is not necessary to have read earlier columns, either on-line or print, but they are all available at <https://srvip.org/srv-journal-past-issues/>.

As always, I remind readers at the start of the column of its multiple intents:

(a) To present brief sketches of media items that illustrate an SRV issue.

(b) To present vignettes from public life that illustrate or teach something about SRV.

(c) Especially, to point to and analyze items that relate specifically to SRV implementation.

(d) To document certain SRV-related events or publications for the historical record.

(e) Hopefully, by all the above, to illustrate and teach the art and craft of spotting, analyzing, and interpreting phenomena that have SRV relevance.

And, aside from being instructive to readers, it is hoped that people who teach SRV will find many of the items in this column useful in their teaching, and that people who try to implement SRV may also find something helpful, perhaps to imitate or avoid (see “c” above).

To Begin ...

*One of the common “wounds” of social devaluation with the most tragic consequences is the absence or loss of natural relationships—such as family and friends—one reason being that these

often are the source of advocacy and protection when a person needs them. So many devalued people end up alone and abandoned, which are not among the good things of life that role-valorization and hope to secure. These next three items speak to this.

* Within just one week (early November 2023), our local newspaper reported on the death of a 56-year old woman who was struck by a hit-and-run driver while crossing a city street, and died two days later. It was reported that she had attended special education programs but only as far as the sixth grade, that she had been “born with developmental delays” and later had mental problems as well. She had been married, though her husband was dead—and most likely he too was from among the devalued classes of society. A few years before her death she was living under a bridge “with an emotional support dog,” though at the time of her death she was in “a better housing situation,” though we were not told what that was.

A couple of days later, the paper ran a brief three-sentence obituary on a woman who had died at age 45 and was to be buried at the local paupers’ cemetery (virtually every locale has one). The second and third sentences of the obituary were “She has no known next of kin. Please contact the ... funeral home if there are any known next of kin.”

May both these women, and all those many, many like them, rest in peace.

*A man judged to be “intellectually disabled” has been on death row for over 20 years for a horrific crime (the kidnapping, rape, and killing of a 16-year old girl). He is described as both having been a former drug dealer and as testing in the range of severe retardation, and frankly it is hard to imagine how he could be both. His death sentence was vacated and he was ordered transferred to another prison, but he remained in solitary confinement for four years after the judge’s ruling, reportedly due to bureaucratic and jurisdictional obstacles (*SPS*, 2 May 2023). At least he had lawyers on his side.

*On the other hand, another obituary for a man with Down’s syndrome ran a flattering picture of him, and reported that his “dedicated and loving parents . . . ensured that he lived his life to the fullest,” and that he would “be sadly missed by his sisters, cousins and friends, near and far.” He traveled abroad many times over a period of decades, went on cruises, and had jobs at several local businesses, as well as participated in the Special Olympics where he won medals in two sports (*SPS*, 25 July 2023).

Developmental Expectancies, and Competency Enhancement

*A 92-year old great-grandmother in India went to school for the first time and six months later had learned to read and write (*NOR*, November 2023). As the developmental model posits, the human capacity to grow and develop does not end at a certain age, though of course the circumstances to elicit it have to be there. In this instance, the woman had to be permitted to attend school and exposed to sound pedagogy. Once she had begun school, 25 other women from her village did the same—the power of imitation and modeling demonstrated once again. By the way, in recent years, Social Role Valorization has been

introduced into India by the Keystone Institute of Pennsylvania. As readers might imagine, the challenges to implementation are great in such a huge country, with so many different languages and religious sub-cultures, and until very recently a great deal of severe poverty—which, though this situation has been improving, is still a tremendous problem. This vignette was not, as far as we know, due to the efforts of SRV-trained people in India, but shows the themes of SRV in practice nonetheless.

*Some of the most helpful devices for people with impairments have been invented not by designers and researchers but by their family members. For instance, the shunt to relieve cerebrospinal fluid pressure in hydrocephaly was invented by the father of a child with the condition. And we knew a woman with a severe form of arthritis whose father jury-rigged a number of gadgets to enable her to hold a pen or pencil, and use eating utensils. Now, another father has done something similar. Here is how *Time* magazine (6 November 2023, p. 62) reported it: “Frustrated by the mobility support options offered to his daughter Sophia, who has cerebral palsy, Jeremiah Robison, founder and CEO of Clonic, set out to make a garment to power ‘a more normative gait.’ Clonic’s Neural Sleeve, which began shipping in January following FDA approval last year, analyzes real-time data from sensors in the fabric, then sends electrical signals to elicit targeted muscle contractions in the leg.” In this instance, unlike those mentioned above, the father seems to have had experience in the design of assistive devices.

This falls in the SRV category of competency-enhancement measures that reduce obstacles in the body to learning and performance, and into the category of image-enhancement measures for personal appearance (appearing more like other people when one walks and moves about).

Similarly, a mother of a boy with muscular dystrophy had to invent pants that he could wear over his braces, and that were easy to get on and

off. She had a background in fashion design, but she also wanted to make clothes that would appeal to people who had no impairment, no “need” to wear the specially adapted clothes but simply liked the way they look—what is called either universal design or, now, inclusive design. Interestingly, her first designs were for “something other than sweatpants,” which of course is one of the most common—and least flattering—clothing options that one sees on so many impaired people all the way through old age. There is now a great deal of interest by mainstream fashion companies, and especially for clothing for people beyond the age of childhood (*SPS*, 10 August 2023).

The Importance and Power of Interpersonal Identification

*In an article about the behavior of people at online meetings, such as Zoom and Skype, it was reported that “multiple social-psychological studies show that we’re more likely to be empathetic and cooperative toward people that we’ve synchronized movements with” (*SPS*, 30 October 2023). We are thankful for yet more continuing research support for what SRV teaches, namely that interpersonal identification between people is a powerful means to make it easier for them to be and do good to each other. Of course, this has implementation implications, among which are engaging devalued and valued parties in shared activities that involve them doing synchronized movements with each other. Examples of such are exercise and yoga classes, dance classes and performances, band, orchestra, and choir rehearsals and performances, synchronized swimming, etc., etc. And of course, participating in any of these activities is an avenue to the social role of member and to proficiency at any of the activities.

*One of the ways to help non-impaired people better identify with physically impaired ones is for them to experience at least some of what it is like to live with a particular impairment, such as not being able to walk or to hear. Young Scouts (there

are no longer Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, just Scouts) were given a chance to confront and then problem-solve speech and communication difficulties using programs on an iPad, to race down a hall in wheelchairs, and to experiment with a breath-controlled stick for playing video games and directing a wheelchair (*Accessibility*, spring 2023). Some people object to the artificialness of such exercises, but they can contribute to improved interpersonal identification and empathy.

The Conservatism Corollary, and Bending Over Backwards

*Orchestra conductor Gustavo Dudamel grew up in Venezuela, where was invented (by Dudamel’s mentor José Antonio Abreu) and pioneered the now famous El Sistema music education program for children. Dudamel and others after him have implemented a version of El Sistema (The System) in numerous locales to teach music, and especially the playing of instruments, to poor children. In Los Angeles, the performance hall (Disney Hall) of the symphony there has practice studios, choir rooms, a parents’ lounge, and light-drenched performance spaces with high ceilings that were designed by the same acoustical engineer who designed the symphony hall, all for the students of the Sistema program in Los Angeles. Upon seeing these, Dudamel said, “In the end, the worst thing about being poor is to be no one.” “It’s knowing that you are separate from the rest,” and he said that Abreu had taught him that the poor students of El Sistema should have the best instruments, the best teachers, and the best spaces for performing, and not just have to make do with what is adequate (Leibowitz, in *Time*, 7-14 November 2022). We couldn’t have capsulized the conservatism corollary better ourselves.

The History of Settings

*In the early days of SRV training, we used to show a slide of a news article reporting that Hitler’s birthplace in Braunau, Austria was to be turned into a residence for mentally retarded peo-

ple, while retaining its then identity as a funeral home—a triple-whammy and exceedingly negative image juxtaposition. Now, the house is being converted into a police station. The news article reporting this said—we imagine the writer has a strong sense of irony—“Plans call for police officers to get human rights training,” and that making it a police station is “meant to make it unattractive as a site of pilgrimage for people who glorify the Nazi dictator” (*SPS*, 4 October 2023).

*In Greenville, South Carolina, a 60-acre park is now open that is “equipped with every bell and whistle imaginable” in terms of recreation facilities, green spaces, and wetlands. Now called Unity Park, it is on the site of two former parks that were once the only places in that city where black children were permitted to play. Those parks were also used as a police shooting range, a landfill (for garbage) and a trash incinerator, as well as a parking lot for garbage trucks (we assume that was in case the devaluing message was not clear enough already!). People described it as “the community’s junkyard.” The city also took half of the land of these two parks to build a baseball stadium, from which black residents were also barred. For nearly a century, residents had petitioned and protested against these developments, to no avail until now. However, wise residents also realize that with this new attractive community asset, there is now a danger of gentrification of the area around the new park that could displace out of the neighborhood the people who were forced to use it when it was a trash site (*RD*, October 2023).

*Earlier *News & Reviews* columns have reported on a number of proposed fates for the now-empty buildings of a former New York State institution for the mentally retarded last called the Syracuse Developmental Center (begun in 1854, and closed in 1998), which sits next to the zoo. Dr. Wolfensberger’s Training Institute once had its offices there. Earlier (defeated) proposals were to convert it into a hospital for wounded military

veterans, and to a “vacation site” for handicapped people. Now it is to be the site of a 500-unit apartment complex, what the newspaper called an entire new neighborhood, with additional light industrial and manufacturing on the site. There is what is called a critical “shortage” of affordable housing in the area (*SPS*, 23 July 2023).

Some Miscellaneous Image Issues

*The Lighthouse for the Blind has had that name since its founding in 1902, by a woman whose brother was blind and who set up a “reading room” for the blind in the San Francisco public library. And where was that reading room? In the basement.

Its name has come under SRV scrutiny—for instance, in at least one past PASS evaluation—as being deviancy-imaging, but the name is retained, and its logo is a drawing of a big lighthouse, the kind that send out powerful searchlights to guide ships safely into harbor. It is now running print ads, for example, in news magazines, that state its mission and give statistics on the lack of employment of blind people: seven out of every 10 of them in the US are unemployed. (And by the way, the mission statement, similar to virtually every other mission statement of virtually every other human service, includes the contemporary code words “empower” and “diverse and sustainable.”) A major part of the ad is a photograph of a presumed blind man, nicely dressed, holding the leash of a big guide dog. The Lighthouse for the Blind, whatever good it does for blind and visually impaired people, could benefit from some SRV learning and application.

*A long pattern of “deviant staff juxtaposition,” as explained in both the PASS and PASSING service assessment instruments (Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1973, 1975; Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, 2007), has been employing unqualified or marginally competent physicians in services to devalued people. Sometimes their only lack of competency was being foreign-born and not

proficient in the new language, but things could have been much worse, for instance, chronic alcoholism or working under the influence of drugs. Such persons were commonly the staff physicians—if there were any staff physicians—at institutions for handicapped people. The message conveyed by this practice was that the residents did not deserve quality medical care, even that it was okay to experiment on them and that they were in a sense “expendable.”

In a March 16, 2023 newspaper article (*SPS*), we learn that even today, doctors from abroad—even if they graduated from prestigious medical schools—who are not fully fluent in English are sometimes only able to find jobs in rural clinics that have difficulty attracting physicians who get many offers from bigger and more prestigious hospitals. One working in such a clinic said that he served mostly handicapped people and prisoners there.

*Two more peculiar negatively-imaging staffing practices: now that marijuana use and sales have been legalized in a number of US states, many of the people applying for licenses to sell it were once convicted for doing so when it was illegal.

And, in Syracuse, the winner of the first license in central New York State to sell “recreational” marijuana is ... the operator of the largest nursing home and of other services for elderly people in the area (*SPS*, 29 January 2023), thereby associating not only elderly people with drug use, but also its many employees, many of whom come from the lower strata of society and might already be at risk of such a perception.

The Theme of (Un)consciousness

*SRV teaching explains that many practices found in contemporary human services are unconscious inheritances of things that were once done with a conscious purpose, yet the practice now may have no connection to its origins. For instance, a setting for people who cannot get out of bed, let alone hurt someone else, may have

bars on the windows because in an earlier time, the setting held people who were dangerous. If that origin carried negative messages, as bars on windows do, those negative messages will likely continue to be conveyed by the continuation of the practice.

Sometimes, the origin of something had positive associations, yet over time the association can change dramatically, even become its polar opposite. For instance, the phrase “goody two-shoes” today is generally used as a derogatory term, to mean someone who is a prig, ostentatiously virtuous. But it originated as the title character in a mid-18th century children’s book of a heroic little orphan girl who became a model for many young readers, and writers too. At the time of the book’s publication, “goody” was a short form of “good-wife,” the then-common term of address and reference to married women. The character also gave much importance to education, including for girls, and among other pedagogies, told her pupils to put on their “considering cap” to meditate on a problem—the ancestor of the “thinking cap” that teachers today might tell their students to put on (*Smithsonian*, September/October 2023).

*As required by the United States Constitution, at the beginning of each calendar year, the president reports on the “state of the union” to the combined Congress. In connection with the 2023 state of the union speech, the Washington Post newspaper explained where all the “strange traditions” of the speech come from: why it is a speech and not a written document, why it is given at night, why there is a rebuttal from the party that does not hold the presidential office, why the sergeant-at-arms shouts the president’s entry into the chamber where the speech will be given, and why there are ordinary citizens as specially invited presidential guests. The answers: after the first two US presidents each gave such a speech, the third, Thomas Jefferson, wrote a document instead because he thought a speech smacked of monarchy, and Jefferson’s practice continued until Woodrow

Wilson, who had been a university professor of government before his election, spoke because he saw it as an opportunity to increase presidential power vis-à-vis the other two branches of government (legislative and judicial). Almost all the presidents since then have speechified too. It is now given at night because Lyndon Johnson in the late 1960s wanted to speak not only to the legislators and judges but also to the general population who would be home watching TV at night. Since then, all presidents have done the same. There is a rebuttal because the Republican political party demanded one after the Democrat Johnson's speech was so effective at persuading the electorate. The sergeant-at-arms shouts because one in the 1980s started doing so, and others who followed him in the role imitated him. And there are guests because Ronald Reagan in the 1980s invited a federal government worker who had helped save passengers of a downed plane just a few days before, and Reagan wanted to point him out as an exemplar of the American spirit—and then the other presidents after him wanted to do the same.

Once again, all sorts of practices taken for granted had a first time, but the reasons for it may be lost to people witnessing the practice at present.

Casting Into Devalued Roles

*New York City was long the major port of entry to the United States for immigrants coming from Europe and other destinations east of the US. Now, it is experiencing a crisis of trying to find housing for them, though now many of them are entering from the southern border, and many other US states have been sending by bus their unwanted immigrants to New York City because it has a “right-to-shelter” law which forbids it to turn away anyone looking for shelter there. The city's mayor says he sees no end to this problem and that it “will destroy New York City” because of the financial and other resource demands it makes. Much of the current populace of the United States is descended from immigrants, but now

that they consider themselves Americans (no longer immigrant refugees), they may place today's immigrants into devalued roles such as menace and burden of charity. Many of these immigrants say they are frightened for themselves and their families, and that the people supposed to guard and protect them at the places where they are put for supposed temporary stays talk with them as if they were animals (*Time*, 25 September 2023).

*Migrant farmworkers are another devalued class in US society. They are usually poorly-paid, their housing is usually crowded and otherwise of low quality, and the work of planting and reaping crops is difficult and dangerous. For instance, they may have to work in open fields without shelter in sweltering heat. They have a high rate of injuries and deaths from these conditions, but these are not taken very seriously. As a California state senator said, “In some ways they are seen as implements of the harvest, not human beings” (Baker, in *Time*, 14 August 2023). In other words, they are cast into the role of objects.

*We (meaning I, but I like the way “we” sounds) plan to take up sometime soon the issue of what is called “artificial intelligence” and robotics, and its connection to social devaluation of impaired people. But for now, we will just note that a champion Australian swimmer—highly valued role—who was born without a left arm wrote that her “bionic hand” intrigues young students when she visits schools in a way that her more prosaic previous prosthetics did not. One shouted at her, “She is half human, half robot,” and thought the combination was cool (Smith, in *Time*, 14 August 2023). It may be “cool” to young people, but being half-human and half-something else is not fully human.

*Being overweight, especially to the point of obesity, is at present a devalued condition in western societies. It is associated with multiple health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and some

cancers. Some parties, especially drug firms and much of the field of medicine, medicalizes and interprets it as a “chronic disease” and even “an epidemic,” the latter because between 66 and 75 percent of adults in the US (estimates vary) qualify as being overweight or obese. Obviously, these medicalizations cast overweight people into the sick role. In response, a so-called “body positivity” movement has arisen to combat negative attitudes towards overweight people (called “weight stigma”), and to press for models in advertising who are heavier, for furnishings (for example, in theater, bus, and airplane seating) that accommodate bigger bodies, and for more role-valORIZING shopping options for large-sized clothing.

In the past five years, a number of new drugs have been introduced for Type 2 diabetes that also help people lose weight—the drug firms originally called this a “side effect” of the drugs, though the drugs are now being marketed with this as their main or intended effect. But interestingly, a number of physicians and researchers argue that there is no connection between obesity and health problems, and that therefore overweight people need not slim down.

All this has a number of intriguing elements from an SRV perspective: who gets devalued and why, how that can change over time, whether a condition is seen as a problem at all and how the interpretation of the problem (for instance, the problem is a disease that needs treatment or the problem is bad attitudes that need correcting) affects how people will address it. Of course, meanwhile, many people want to lose weight, and their reasons may have little to do with health or image concerns, but with such things as greater energy and being able to move more quickly.

*Another condition, or rather range of conditions, that is highly medicalized today are all sorts of mental and behavioral problems. For instance, high levels of energy and short attention span are not seen as behaviors that social influences

and pedagogies can address, but as a “mental illness”: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. As a recent newspaper opinion piece headlined, “ADHD is an illness, don’t punish people for it” (*Washington Post*, 7 May 2023). It further claimed that ADHD “is often hereditary,” even though it could as easily be said that children either learn it from their parents and other elders, and/or that distracted and scattered parents model the same to their children, and fail to teach them to behave otherwise.

Some Other Role-Related Items

*Many people who attend SRV training remark that once they are alerted to—once their consciousness is raised to—the ubiquity of social roles, they do begin to see roles and the power of social roles everywhere. A report on the US national spelling bee (AP in *SPS*, 31 May 2023), held each year in Washington, DC, contained the following role tidbits.

There are people in the role of word selection panelists—16 of them, plus five full-time “bee staff—who make the final decision as to which words will be used in the bee. (The semi-final and final rounds use 440 words.) These positions are filled by word of mouth or recommendation from other panelists.

There are both lead pronouncer and associate pronouncer roles, and that require the competencies of measured pacing and meticulous enunciation.

The *Wall Street Journal* newspaper has a language columnist, who contributes many words for the vocabulary rounds.

At one time, the spelling bee was a one-man operation overseen by a newspaper editor, and eventually assisted by a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The children of first-generation immigrants from India have come to dominate the competition over recent years. We suspect “champion speller” is a valued role in the Indian immigrant community, and “national champion speller” even more so.

*Father William Atkinson (1946-2006) is the first quadriplegic to be ordained as a Catholic priest. He was a star athlete and seminarian when a sledding accident in 1965 broke his neck and hurt his spinal cord, rendering him paralyzed from the neck down. After rehabilitation, he returned to seminary even though there were not then the accommodations, of physical space and otherwise, that we take for granted today. At this time, canon law of the Church required a special dispensation to ordain such an impaired person, so he wrote directly to the pope and was granted the dispensation. After ordination, he taught at a Catholic high school, and performed the sacraments of the church—a real priest, in other words.

*The executive chef of one of Philadelphia's most popular pizza restaurants worked at and perfected his trade in one of Pennsylvania's most notorious prisons, where he had to be creative because the typical pizza ingredients—pepperoni, mozzarella cheese, tomato sauce—were not available, and he had to make do with what he could purchase at the prison commissary. He had some brief experience working for a catering company before he went to prison, also learned non-pizza recipes at home, and then worked a few restaurant jobs upon his first release before ending up back in prison and then returning to the culinary field when he got out for good. His pizzas and restaurants have won prestigious “pizza awards.” Not only does he now have a valued chef role that demands much competency, but he also has the role of teacher because he conducts culinary and gardening classes at a juvenile detention center. Unfortunately, at least from an SRV perspective, his restaurant also employs only former prisoners, and also provides housing to a few of them above the restaurant—unfortunate because of the degree of congregation and segregation these practices entail (*SPS*, 15 October 2023).

*A homelessness prevention initiative surveyed currently homeless people about what led to their

being homeless, and the reported conditions included jobs that didn't pay enough to cover expenses, relationship troubles of many kinds that led to their being kicked out or fleeing an abode, and landlord troubles. Of course, many of the respondents had been in prison or a “mental” service, and when they left had nowhere to go. An overwhelming majority—64 percent—had not sought any help before they actually lost a place to stay. New prevention programs are trying to identify people in these risky situations before they become homeless, and supply whatever is needed to prevent it: cash, mediation services, and resources to deal with drug use and mental problems (*Time*, 24 July 2023).

These measures would fall into the SRV implementation category of preventing entry into devalued roles, though of course it remains to be seen whether any of these measures work.

*And speaking of homelessness, a man who painted as a hobby decided on the spur of the moment to do a portrait of a homeless man he struck up an acquaintance with—and then did so with more and homeless people. Eventually he gave up his day job and took up portrait-painting, and specifically of homeless people, full-time, and set up an artists' collective to do the same. Both subject and artist sign the works, and they split the proceeds from their sale. During the time it takes to complete the painting, the artist and subject get to know each other, and those who buy the works also come to see the homeless in a more positive light: they are now the model for a work of art and a person with a story, instead of the person one crosses the street to avoid (Chassé, in *RD*, July/August 2023).

*A so-called “inclusive education” program at the post-secondary school level prepares and supports students with mental impairments to attend college. At the start of the semester, the mentoring/tutoring program for the students engages them in orientation exercises including

an ice-breaker exercise called “Superlatives” that gave the instruction to “pick a friend and write it on the line that you think fits. Use everyone’s name once.” Here are the options the exercise sheet provided: best buddies (two), class clown, class joker, most likely to be on World Wrestling Entertainment tour, most talkative, school spirit cheerleader to all, most artistic, most athletic, best problem-solver, computer whizz (sic), world gaming champion, future Olympic swimmer, dance king, dance queen, most polite, big brother, big sister, actor/musician. Note that many, but not all, of these are roles—and note how many of them are problematic, certainly not the most enhancing and at the same time realistic for impaired students who are entering college to perceive each other as, to aspire to, and to be perceived as. This does not inspire confidence that the supposed “college” program is for real.

*With the headline “I’m 24, perfectly healthy, and I live in a nursing home” (Kelly, in *Telegraph*, 23 July 2023), we just had to read the article. A young man in the suburbs of Amsterdam in the Netherlands voluntarily decided to live in the closed “dementia ward” for 14 people in a nursing home to see what it was like (he has written a book about it, a reported bestseller). He had previously worked as a staff member at another nursing home, but here he is a “mere” resident—he describes his fellow residents as “housemates”—and he is very clear that the two roles of paid staff and co-resident come with very different expectations, freedom to interact with and respond naturally to his housemates being one of the benefits of the non-staff role that he most enjoys. He is the only one of the ward’s residents who knows the code to get in and out, and who may come and go as he pleases. He has observed how artificial is the world inside the nursing home, with fake plants and plastic pets, and how everything is brought into the nursing home rather than the residents going out into the world for shopping, beautician

appointments, etc.: “a surreal no-man’s land” he calls it. He says that “what the housemates need is life. And what the nursing homes emphasize is death.” “People with dementia are seen as their disease, leading to social death.”

*SRV teaching and writing explains that social roles can be misunderstood as being equivalent to stage roles, the implication being that social roles are a similar kind of false front. But social roles are much more than something assumed and put off like a costume; roles such as those of parent, and teacher, and spouse are among the best examples, but so are roles such as champion athlete, small business-owner, rabbi—and for that matter devalued roles too, such as cancer patient and life-term prisoner. Some social roles are even life-defining. Social roles thus have to be taken very seriously, whereas stage or theater roles are much more superficial. At the same time, people are more than their social roles, and the concept of social roles does not capture all of a person’s identity.

Very relevant to all this is an excerpt from a sermon of Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople in the late 4th century and famed for his preaching, hence his name “Chrysostom” meaning golden-mouthed. Here is the excerpt.

In a theater of this world at midday, the stage is set and many actors enter, playing parts, wearing masks on their faces, retelling some old story, narrating the events. One becomes a philosopher, though he is not a philosopher. Another becomes a king, though he is not a king, but has the appearance of a king for the story. Another becomes a physician without knowing how to handle even a piece of wood, but wearing the garments of a physician. Another becomes a slave, though he is free; another a teacher, though he does not even know his letters. They appear something other than what they really are, and they do not appear what they really are ...

As long as the audience remain in their seats, the masks are valid; but when evening overtakes them, and the play is ended, and everyone goes out, the masks are cast aside. He who is king inside the theater is found to be a coppersmith outside. The masks are removed, the deceit departs, the truth is revealed. He who is a free man inside the theater is found to be a slave outside ... Evening overtakes them, ... the truth appears.

... The present world is a theater, the conditions of men are roles: wealth and poverty, ruler and ruled, and so forth. When this day is cast aside, and that terrible night comes ... when the play is ended, when the masks are removed, when each person is judged with his works, not each person with his wealth, not each person with his office, not each person with his authority, not each person with his power, but each person with his works, whether he is a ruler or a king, a woman or a man, when He—i.e., God—requires an account of our life and our good deeds, not the weight of our reputation... when the masks are removed, then the truly rich and the truly poor are revealed.

Being Reconciled to Some Hard Realities

*There is so much about human beings and human nature that we must understand in order to implement SRV and improve the chances of devalued people having access to the good things of life—and this, whether we like the facts about human beings and their nature or not. One of these facts there is just no getting around is that humans are “hard-wired,” as the computer people would say, to prefer what is attractive. A recent study found that during the Covid-19 pandemic, people were less likely to wear facemasks if they thought of themselves as good-looking, because they thought the mask diminished their attractiveness which, of course, they wanted to show to others (NOR, May 2023).

*According to an article in *Reader’s Digest* (November 2023), “Studies revealed that knowing a person’s name, job or profession distorts the way that person is judged. A CEO seems wiser than a janitor. A person named Williamson illogically seems more credible than someone named Smith.” We are always glad for more research support for SRV, but rather than say “distorts,” we would say “affects,” or even “unconsciously affects,” the way someone is judged.

Some Language Tidbits

*It has been awhile since we have looked at language and some of the extreme and even absurd uses thereof today. The topic is related to SRV because SRV explains that language can carry and convey role and other messages, and these can be either degrading, enhancing, or somewhat neutral. Unfortunately, some people act as if language that does not deny or hide realities such as impairments, even life-defining ones, is perforce degrading; or as if merely descriptive language is degrading, and that “fluffed-up” terms are preferred. But of course that is a misunderstanding of what SRV teaches. Here are some examples.

The Economist reports that the role of greeting visitors at the front desk, and that used to be named “receptionist,” is now called “lobby ambassador” or “director of first impressions.” (We only wish that many human services would employ a real director of first impressions, to manage the first impressions conveyed by their name, logo, location, appearance of their staff and recipients, etc.!)

A hair salon in Britain was told by a job center that it could not advertise for a “happy” hairstylist because that was discriminatory against unhappy people. The salon’s ad said the salon was a friendly place so only happy, friendly people should apply. A salon customer noted rightly that every descriptive word could be considered discriminatory, if the job center was correct (NOR, November 2020).

And an employment tribunal in Britain ruled that calling a man “bald” constituted a form of

sexual harassment, because it relates to a “protected characteristic of sex,” baldness being much more prevalent among males than females. The tribunal added that using the word “created an intimidating environment” for the man so described (*NOR*, July/August 2022).

The University of Southern California suspended a professor from teaching because he used as an example in his class a Mandarin Chinese word commonly pronounced nay-guh, a “filler” word similar to the words er and um used as fillers in English conversation. Students complained that it sounded like the infamous N-word used as a derogatory for black people and caused them such “great pain” that they could not focus on their studies (*NOR*, November 2020).

Advocates for the sale and promotion of cannabis are arguing that only the word cannabis should be used and that terms such as marijuana, pot, and weed are “negligent and abusive” (*NOR*, June 2021). Of course, these terms and many other more inventive ones were commonly used by those who smoked the product when it was illegal to do so. (Attentive readers will note that the writer of this column violated the proposed rule in an earlier item.)

And speaking of the writer of this column, a new word to her is “income-challenged” instead of poor.

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) has, by presidential order, changed its language from “alien” to “non-citizen,” “illegal” to “undocumented,” and “assimilation” to “integration” (*Washington Post*, 30 April 2021).

A columnist in *Time* magazine (Greenridge, 6-13 April 2020) issued a plea that we be “... concerned less with whether or not someone used strong language, and more with whether the words they used described a future that could work for all,” and that we be more concerned with “language that called in more people, that provided space to listen to their concerns. ... for building new worlds, not paving over uncomfortable

truths.” She is invoking criteria that go beyond SRV, of course, and it is important to recognize that we might still not agree on all sorts of terms and, more importantly, on all sorts of concepts underlying them and meant to be conveyed by them. But an attempt to bring some rationality to the issue.

To Conclude ...

*Long-time readers—indeed, very long-time readers—of *The SRV Journal* may remember a short (two-page) article by this columnist in the first issue (June 2006) of the *Journal* entitled “Jesse James: Poster boy for SRV?” James was a famous outlaw on the western frontier of the US who was killed in 1882 by one of his gang members who wanted the monetary reward offered for doing so. That article noted that different parties cast James in the role of rugged frontiersman and hero, others in the role of bloodthirsty villain. Those who saw him in the positive roles protected him from the authorities, and perpetuated the legend that still survives that interprets him in a positive light despite the havoc and bloodshed he wreaked through most of his life. We were reminded of this upon reading an article by Max Boot in *The Washington Post* about Napoleon. The article was occasioned by the release of a new film about him, and was headlined “Was Napoleon a hero or villain?” (shades of Jesse James!). According to Boot, Napoleon filled all the following roles in his 51-year life: junior artillery officer, brigadier general, first consul, ruler of France, legendary emperor, cipher (meaning a person of no importance and with no personality), lovestruck dolt, cuckold, indefatigable and inventive administrator, one of the most talented generals in history, and greatest conqueror of Europe since Charlemagne (*SPS*, 12 December 2023). An impressive list, and Boot also notes that those who still exalt Napoleon (mostly the French) conveniently ignore his brutal repression of every people that he conquered—and he conquered quite a few all across Europe and into Russia—as well as the fact that

he reinstated slavery in France and French territories, and waged what Boot called “a genocidal war” against the slave revolt in Haiti. The writer and diplomat Chateaubriand described him as a genius and a despot both. Once again, role interpretations are very real, and they matter to how people view and judge a person, not only in life but also in death.☪

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