

# The SRV JOURNAL

ISSN 1932 - 6963

December 2009 • Volume 4 • Number 2

www.srvip.org

---

## PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

- |                                 |    |   |
|---------------------------------|----|---|
| W. Wolfensberger<br>& S. Thomas | 12 | Some Thoughts on the Role Valorizing Merits of Valued Paid & Unpaid Activities              |
| J. Osburn                       | 33 | The “Happiness Issue”: A Brief Elaboration on a Common Obstacle to Social Role Valorization |
- 

## ARTICLES

- |           |    |   |
|-----------|----|---|
| J. Sandys | 19 | “It Does My Heart Good”: How Employers Perceive Supported Employees |
| D. Race   | 47 | Valued Siblings   |
- 

## REVIEWS & MORE

- |           |    |   |
|-----------|----|---|
| J. Sandys | 54 | BOOK ‘What Are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World’ by W. Thomas |
| S. Thomas | 55 | BOOK ‘The Plague and I’ by B. MacDonald                                     |
| R. Lemay  | 57 | BOOK ‘The Soloist’ by S. Lopez  |
|           | 65 | List of Items to be Reviewed  |
- 

## TRAINING

- |  |    |                                     |
|--|----|-------------------------------------|
|  | 68 | Calendar of SRV & Related Trainings |
|--|----|-------------------------------------|
- 

## COLUMNS

- |                  |    |  |
|------------------|----|--|
| J. Sherwin       | 6  | Social Role Valorisation Theory as a Resource to ‘Person Centred Planning’       |
| M. Tumeinski     | 42 | The Ring of Words: On Rhetoric, Writing & Social Role Valorization Dissemination |
| W. Wolfensberger | 69 | Social Role Valorization News & Reviews  |
- 

## FEATURES

- |  |    |                      |
|--|----|----------------------|
|  | 4  | SRV Focus Question   |
|  | 66 | Discussion Questions |

# The SRV JOURNAL

---

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Marc Tumeinski                      Joe Osburn  
Jane Barken                         Judith Sandys, PhD  
Jo Massarelli

## EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

John Armstrong                    Peter Millier  
Tom Kohler                         David Race, PhD  
Zana Lutfiyya, PhD                Susan Thomas  
Tom Malcomson, PhD               Wolf Wolfensberger, PhD

## EDITORIAL CONSULTANT/PRODUCTION

Sandra Sasowski

## 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 journal include: 1) disseminating information about SRV; 2) informing readers of the relevance of SRV in addressing the devaluation of people in society generally & in human services particularly; 3) fostering, extending & deepening dialogue about, & understanding of, SRV; & 4) encouraging the application of SRV as well as SRV-related research.

We intend the information provided in this journal to be of use to: family, friends, advocates, direct care workers, managers, trainers, educators, 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.

*The SRV Journal* 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 of the Syracuse University Training Institute.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

INFORMED & OPEN DISCUSSIONS OF SRV, & even constructive debates about it, help to promote its dissemination & application. We encourage people with a range of experience with SRV to submit items for consideration of publication. We hope those with much experience in teaching or implementing SRV, as well as those just beginning to learn about it, will contribute to the *Journal*.

We encourage readers & writers in a variety of roles & from a variety of human service backgrounds to subscribe & to contribute. We expect that writers who submit items will have at least a basic understanding of SRV, gained for example by attendance at a multi-day SRV workshop (see this issue's training calendar), by studying relevant resources (see the next page of this journal), or both.

We are particularly interested in receiving submissions from family members, friends & servers of devalued people who are trying to put the ideas of SRV into practice, even if they do not consider themselves as 'writers.' Members of our editorial boards will be available to help contributors with articles accepted for publication. The journal has a peer review section.

## INFORMATION FOR SUBMISSIONS

WE WELCOME WELL-REASONED, CLEARLY-WRITTEN submissions. Language used should be clear & descriptive. We encourage the use of ordinary grammar & 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 members of the editorial board, the editorial advisory board, or external referees. Our double blind peer review policy is available on request.

Examples of submission topics include but are not limited to: SRV as relevant to a variety of human services; descriptions & analyses of social devaluation & wounding; descriptions & analyses of the impact(s) of valued roles; illustrations of particular SRV themes; research into & development of SRV theory & its themes; critique of SRV; analysis of new developments from an SRV perspective; success stories, as well as struggles & lessons learned, in trying to implement SRV; interviews; reflection & opinion pieces; news analyses from an SRV perspective; book or movie reviews & notices from an SRV perspective.

## SEND CORRESPONDENCE TO

Marc Tumeinski, Editor            Phone: 508.752.3670  
*The SRV Journal*                    Email: journal@srvip.org  
74 Elm Street                        Website: www.srvip.org  
Worcester, MA 01609 US

## TYPEFACE

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

# A Brief Description of Social Role Valorization

## From the Editor

As THIS IS A Social Role Valorization (SRV) journal, we feel it important to print in every issue a few brief descriptions of our understanding of what SRV is. This by no means replaces more thorough explanations of SRV, but does set a helpful framework for the content of this journal.

The following is taken from: Wolfensberger, W. (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (3rd ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency, p. 58.

*... 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 taken 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 taken 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.*

## RESOURCE LIST

- **A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization**, 3rd (rev.) ed. Wolf Wolfensberger. (1998). (Available from the Training Institute at 315.473.2978)
- **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 the Training Institute at 315.473.2978)
- **A quarter-century of Normalization and Social Role Valorization: Evolution and impact**. Ed. by Robert Flynn & Ray Lemay. (1999). Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press. (Available from the Training Institute at 315.473.2978)
- **Social Role Valorization and the English experience**. David Race. (1999). London: Whiting & Birch.
- **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.
- **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.
- **A Social Role Valorization web page** can be accessed at: <http://www.socialrolevalorization.com/>

# FROM THE EDITOR

---

## PLEASE NOTE THE DATE OF THE NEXT SRV CONFERENCE

The 5th International SRV Conference “Getting the good life: From ideas to actions” will be held from September 21-23, 2011 in Canberra, ACT, Australia. For more information, please email [jarm@socialrolevalorization.com](mailto:jarm@socialrolevalorization.com).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

The websites [www.socialrolevalorization.com](http://www.socialrolevalorization.com) and [www.srvip.org](http://www.srvip.org) have lots of information relevant to SRV, including articles, workshop dates, etc. They are both regularly updated so make sure to check them periodically.

Note that there is now an SRV group on Facebook: consider contributing to the online discussion.

## THANKS TO OUR REVIEWERS & BOARD MEMBERS

I extend my gratitude to our reviewers for the past two issues, who did the behind-the-scenes work of looking at the manuscripts submitted to the *Journal* and giving me feedback. In addition to our regular editorial board (see page 2 for their names), I would also like to thank Karin Bonesteel, Cheryl MacNeil, Thomas Neuville, Deb Reidy, Paul Tabor and Ed Wilson who acted as reviewers for particular manuscripts.

Regards,

Marc Tumeinski, [journal@srvip.org](mailto:journal@srvip.org)

# SRV FOCUS QUESTION

---

IN EACH ISSUE, we publish a focus question & invite you our readers to submit a 200-300 word response to the question. Commentaries on the question, if accepted, will be published in the following issue. General advice: write clearly; focus on 1 or 2 most important points; share your opinion, backed up by evidence &/or logical argument; incorporate SRV language & concepts.

All submissions will be reviewed for suitability for publication. Note that submissions are subject to editing for length, clarity & accuracy; authors will have final approval. Please email your answer to [journal@srvip.org](mailto:journal@srvip.org) or mail to *SRV Journal*, 74 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609 USA.

## QUESTION

*The primacy of autonomy, rights and ‘choice’ is a common mindset and ideology in contemporary human services. Compare and contrast this ideology of autonomy and ‘choice’ with the principles and themes of SRV, both in terms of human service understanding and action/practice.*

*Which set of ideas is more likely to be supportive of interpersonal identification with a devalued person or group? Why? How?*

*Which set of ideas is more likely to be supportive of socially devalued people having greater access to the ‘good things of life’? Why? How?*

**SRV FOCUS QUESTION FROM THE LAST ISSUE (JUNE 2009) AND A RESPONSE**

*Analyze how and to what degree interpersonal identification between service recipient and server is affected when the server is trained to use restraint techniques (physical, mechanical, chemical) and/or actually uses restraint.* (The following response to this question was submitted by Emma Barken, and is based on her notes of a group discussion of the question at a gathering of the Ontario Social Role Valorization [SRV] study group in October 2009.)

THE GOAL OF GETTING PRIVILEGED PEOPLE (in this case the server) to see themselves in the recipient, or devalued person, is an underlying strategy of interpersonal identification (Wolfensberger, *A brief introduction to SRV*, pp. 118-120) that becomes impossible when restraint techniques are taught or used. Restraint training implies that a service recipient with whom the worker has contact is a potential or actual menace (Wolfensberger, p. 15). SRV teaches us that of all the devalued roles, the menace role is one of the most likely to inhibit interpersonal identification. If a service recipient is seen as a menace, servers will likely not want to be with them, will not communicate good things about the recipient to others, and certainly won't want to be like them. These implications are strongly linked to interpersonal identification, and lead to the following line of thinking: "because this recipient may need to be restrained, they certainly cannot be like me and would not benefit from the sorts of things that I benefit from." Instead of fostering interpersonal identification, restraint training will likely result with the server trying to avoid the recipient because that person is seen as a potential threat, and the server is fearful.

To improve the likelihood that interpersonal identification will succeed, one should refer to the 'culturally valued analogue' (Wolfensberger & Thomas, *PASSING*, pp. 30-31) and apply this to a given situation to make it as culturally normative as possible for a devalued party. The culturally valued analogue (CVA) aids interpersonal identification because it implies that, as is taught in longer SRV workshops, "this person is at least somewhat like me because we both engage in similar activities, in similar places and at similar times." There-

fore, referring to the CVA acts as a kind of evaluation measure through which we can determine if a given practice is acceptable in a specific situation, with a specific party.

Restraints in almost any form do not fit into the valued world, aside from perhaps the kind of control that parents have over small children. In other situations when restraints are used, that person is almost always in the menace role, such as a prisoner. Perhaps some sports such as wrestling present the only culturally valued way in which one person 'restrains' another, yet in that case, both parties have the potential to 'restrain' the other, which is clearly not the case with restraints used in the human service world.<sup>1</sup>

The interpersonal identification strategy of fostering people's sense of responsibility for each other is a powerful one. Taking this strategy seriously in a human service context would imply that not only is the devalued party responsible for his actions, but that the servers also play a part. If one sees oneself as responsible to some degree for another's actions, then the use of restraints would be seen to harm not only the person on whom the technique is being used, but also the person who is doing the restraining. Using a restraint technique is a major hindrance to fostering a sense of mutual responsibility that could in turn go a long way to improving interpersonal identification.

1. EDITOR'S NOTE: *It strikes me that other differences are in the complementary roles held by those involved (e.g., the roles of parent/child vs. server/client); and the heightened vulnerability of human service recipients who are restrained. Restraint training also tends to produce a different mindset in a service worker than, for example, a parent has toward their child.*

# Social Role Valorisation Theory as a Resource to 'Person Centred Planning'

Jane Sherwin

HUMAN SERVICES REGULARLY LOOK FOR what appear to be easy-to-apply collections of support strategies. One such family of strategies with much current international interest is person centred planning. This article will define what is commonly understood by the term, and identify some of the limitations in the current practice conducted under the guise of 'person centred planning.' It will then consider what Social Role Valorisation (SRV) as a theory might offer to those practitioners who are working in systems that have adopted 'person centred planning' at a statutory and/or policy level.

It is not the intention of this article to defend or to promote the adoption of 'person centred planning.' This article does however recognise that there are people who are or might be interested in the theory of SRV (Wolfensberger, 1998; Osburn, 2006) who are working in services that have adopted, at both a policy and a practice level, 'person centred planning' as the guiding practice framework.

The literature about, and the practice of, person centred planning reflects a wide interpretation of what person centred planning is. One definition of person centred approaches is that they are:

*ways of commissioning, providing and organising services rooted in listening to what people want, to help them live in their communities as they choose. People are not simply placed in pre-existing services and*

*expected to adjust, rather the service strives to adjust to the person. Person centred approaches look to mainstream services and community resources for assistance and do not limit themselves to what is available within specialist services. (Valuing People—A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century. Planning with People. Guidance for Implementation Groups)*

Person centred approaches appear to have arisen out of concern for three key issues for people with disabilities: the dominance of group based responses for people with disabilities, a domination of service-based responses, and the low levels of authority that individuals have over their own lifestyles and support arrangements. Much of the literature refers to the nature of the relationship between server and served and how power is played out within that relationship, the authority of the person or family in decisions about lifestyle and support arrangements, and the goal of ordinary lives, designed and supported in highly individualised ways.

The ideological underpinnings of person centred approaches include that individuals should be treated as individuals, and that individuals should enjoy better lives. There is some ideology that is not explicit, such as that individuals should have ordinary yet meaningful lives (cf. Wolfensberger, Thomas & Caruso, 1996), and that the role of a

service is to support this to happen; that families and the wider personal unpaid network should be involved, including having a lead role; inclusion in mainstream resources; and an emphasis on assets rather than deficits.

An international literature review (van Dam et al, 2008) revealed that it was possible to greatly improve the circumstances of people with disabilities when person centred planning is implemented; however, results are inconsistent, and perversions and misapplications exist within what are purported to be person centred service practices. This can be explained by:

- The extent to which the leadership of an organisation is committed to the intent of person centred approaches. No or low commitment leads to only a superficial adoption;
- An adoption of person centred planning tools, but not an adoption of the underpinning ethics or changes in behaviours. For example, Kendrick's work in this area has highlighted the importance of the ethics underpinning person centred responses, and that this is a continual process not an end point (2007). Kendrick also encourages humility in that perhaps what can be most hoped for is 'somewhat person centred';
- An overemphasis of one aspect of person centred approaches, such as self determination. Ramsey's (2007) work on role based planning highlighted this issue;
- An exclusion of one aspect such as personal social integration and valued social participation. This has led to person centred planning that leads to a service based life, such as people going to or remaining in centre based facilities like day centres;
- An adoption of the language of person centred approaches but not an accompanying change in practice;
- An emphasis on planning and what the individual will do differently but not what

the service will do in an adaptive response to the person's needs.

This article uses the language of person centred approaches, rather than person centred planning, so that the reader appreciates that this article is about more than an application of planning tools.

If one decides that one will or must work within person centred approaches, then one might draw on SRV in the following ways. A depthful understanding of SRV allows those who are working in a context of person centred approaches to:

- See the societal forces for social devaluation, with expressions of social devaluation played out in the service system;
- See the limits of non-personalised, service based responses to people with a devalued status. This includes seeing the negative impacts on how people are perceived, on their status and reputation, and on their levels of competence;
- Understand the distinction between programmatic and non-programmatic matters. Significant financial and human resources have been dedicated to teaching the use of planning tools, with policies developed regarding the use of the tools, without appreciating that these are non-programmatic matters. In an optimal sense, non-programmatic matters should facilitate programmatic matters, yet the planning tools, the planning meetings and the documentation are treated as if they are the main game rather than the support act;
- Stand in the shoes of people with devalued status when understanding the impact of service responses and when developing individualised responses, thus avoiding becoming caught up with non-programmatic constraints in the first instance;
- Draw on a model coherency framework in constructing individualised support arrangements (Wolfensberger, 1998, pp. 111-

118; Wolfensberger, 2009). This theme for SRV distinguishes between the service content and service processes, thus allowing for a systematic way to develop relevant and potent responses to people's needs;

- Be conscious of past wounds, since they will influence what a person's fundamental and urgent needs might be. Many planning tools use questions like 'what is important to the individual?' and 'what is important for the individual?', which are a good start. However, unconsciousness of the impacts of wounds like rejection, discontinuities and distantiation may mean that needs arising from these experiences could remain unnoticed. Worse, what might be focussed on are the behaviours that might arise as a result of these wounds, resulting in behaviour management programs rather than responses to the wounds and their impacts themselves;
- Not only be alert to 'focussing on the individual,' which is one of the mantras of person centred responses, but also be alert to focussing on the universal and specific needs of the person;
- Be conscious of the heightened vulnerability of many people with a devalued status, which assists in putting self determination in perspective, as identified by Ramsey (2007). While SRV helps us to recognise needs around autonomy and rights, it does not over-emphasise this need at the expense of other needs;
- Guide those developing the support arrangements to consider the culturally valued analogue (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2007, pp. 30-31), that is, to consider how sets of needs are normatively met, and what roles are likely to provide the person with access to the good things in life;
- Invite interpersonal identification between the person with a devalued status and those involved in the person's life;

- Promote valued roles as both a goal and a means. Being perceived as having valued roles brings benefits to one's status and sense of worth and purpose;
- Attend to the importance of developing competencies, which is consistent with human needs to learn and grow, and puts an individual in a better position to be in more valued roles and be perceived more positively;
- Attend to those channels that convey messages about the status, worth and belonging of individuals, such as through where people spend time, with whom and doing what, as well as personal appearances and how people are spoken to and about;
- Be able to discern both the optimal qualities and experiences in those who provide support (paid and unpaid), and how the status of those people flows onto the people with a devalued status.

By and large, the service system is designed to be non-person centred, and much unconsciousness leads us to continue to provide people with a service dominated, service based, group based and disempowered life. The ideology underpinning person centred approaches could be helpful motivators to want to change these things. Therefore this ideology could also be helpful motivators for people to want to apply SRV in the lives of individuals.

It is the theory of SRV that will bring a rigour to the analyses and to the design of support arrangements. This article is not suggesting that the person centred planning tools be ignored, as they could be helpful bridges between the theory of SRV and its application. A caution though is that a superficial adoption of the tools, in the absence of a depthful understanding of what socially valued roles can bring to someone's life, can lead to a life that is 'more of the same, with a few more choices.'

Without a theory like SRV as a resource to person centred approaches, it is likely that superficial responses and even neglect will result, and be done in the name of person centred approaches. ☞

SEE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON PAGE 66

#### REFERENCES

- Kendrick, M. (2007). On being somewhat 'person-centred.' *CRUCial Times*, 38, 7-8.
- Osburn, J. (2006). An overview of Social Role Valorization theory. *The SRV Journal*, 1(1), 4-13.
- Ramsey, S. (2007). Roles based planning: A thoughtful approach to social inclusion & empowerment. *The SRV Journal*, 2(1), 4-12.
- Valuing People—A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century. Planning with People. Guidance for Implementation Groups. <http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/index.jsp>. Accessed 31 October 2009.
- van Dam, T., Ellis, J. & Sherwin, J. (2008). *Person centred planning: A review of the literature*. New South Wales Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.
- Wolfensberger, W. (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (3rd ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.
- Wolfensberger, W. (2009). The construct of human service model coherency, and service model design and evaluation. Manuscript in preparation.
- Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (2007). *PASSING: A tool for analyzing service quality according to Social Role Valorization criteria. Ratings manual* (3rd rev. ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.
- 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.

---

JANE SHERWIN is an Australian Senior Trainer in SRV theory, & works as a consultant with family groups & organisations for people with disabilities & older people, focussing on people-based service quality matters.

---

#### THE CITATION FOR THIS COLUMN IS

Sherwin, J. (2009). Social Role Valorisation theory as a resource to 'person centred planning.' *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 6-9.

*Announcing the publication and “appearance” of*

## **APPEAR:**

# OBSERVING, RECORDING & ADDRESSING PERSONAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE BY MEANS OF THE APPEAR TOOL

*a new publication by Wolf Wolfensberger*

PERSONAL APPEARANCE (INCLUDING SO-CALLED “SELF-PRESENTATION”) is certainly one of the most immediate, and often also one of the most powerful, influences on how a person will be perceived and interpreted by others, and in turn, on how others will respond to and treat the person. Personal appearance is also one of the domains of social imagery, which is a big component of Social Role Valorization (SRV): the more observers positively value a person’s appearance, the more likely they are to afford that person opportunities to fill valued roles, and thereby access to the good things in life. Unfortunately, the appearance of many members of societally marginal or devalued classes is far from enhancing, or even outright repellent to many people, and increases the risk that bad things get done to them, or that good things are withheld from them.

This 2009 book explains all this. APPEAR is an acronym for **A Personal Physical Appearance Evaluation And Record**. It documents the powerful influence of personal appearance on attitudes, social valuation and social interactions. The book explains the many components of personal appearance and the ways in which these features can be changed for better or worse. It also includes a very detailed checklist, called the APPEAR tool, which identifies over **200 separate elements** of personal physical appearance, so that one can review a person’s appearance features from head to toe, noting which are positive, which are neutral, which are negative—all this with a view to perhaps trying to improve selected aspects of a person’s appearance about which something can actually be done. The book also explains how such an appearance review, or appearance “audit,” would be done.

The book contains a sample APPEAR checklist at the back, and comes with three separate (free) checklist booklets ready for use in conducting an individual appearance audit. Additional checklists may be ordered separately (see order form on next page).

Reading the book, and especially using the APPEAR tool, can be useful as a consciousness-raiser about the importance of appearance, and in pointing out areas for possible appearance improvement. An appearance audit using APPEAR can be conducted by a person’s service workers, advocates, family members and even by some people for themselves. It could be very useful in individual service and futures-planning sessions, and in getting a person ready for a new activity, role or engagement (for instance, before entering school or going on a job interview).

Studying and applying the APPEAR tool can also be a very useful follow-up to Introductory SRV training, as it deepens one’s understanding of image and appearance issues.

---

**ORDER FORM ~ APPEAR**

Name  
Address

City State or Province  
Zip or Postal Code Country

	Indicate Quantity	Price (see below for prices)
APPEAR book	_____	\$ _____
Sets of 20 APPEAR Checklists	_____	\$ _____

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
 Less any discount for quantity purchases (see below) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Add shipping & handling:  
     15% for domestic addresses, 20% elsewhere \_\_\_\_\_  
**TOTAL \$** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**ORDERS FROM US & ELSEWHERE ~ OTHER THAN CANADA**

\$15 US for book  
 \$35 US for each set of 20 Checklists

*Mail completed form, with full payment (CHECK OR MONEY ORDER) in US funds, to:*

Syracuse University Training Institute  
 c/o Syracuse University Mail Services  
 Hawkins Building, 1600 Jamesville Avenue  
 Syracuse, New York 13244 USA  
 phone: 315/473-2978; fax: 315/473-2963

---

**ORDERS FROM CANADA**

\$15 CDN for book  
 \$35 CDN for each set of 20 Checklists

*Mail completed form, with full payment in Canadian funds, to:*

Valor Institute  
 200 Chemin du Comté  
 Plantagenet, Ontario K0B 1L0 Canada  
 phone: 613/673-5148  
 e-mail: sseguin@instvalor

---

**DISCOUNTS ON BULK PURCHASES**

10% discount for 25-49 Books	10% discount for 10-19 sets of Checklists
15% discount for 50-99 Books	15% discount for 20-29 sets of Checklists
20% discount for 100 or more Books	20% discount for 30 + sets of Checklists

# Some Thoughts on the Role Valorizing Merits of Valued Paid & Unpaid Activities

Wolf Wolfensberger & Susan Thomas

EDITOR'S NOTE: *My intent is for readers of this journal to read both this article and the one following, entitled "It does my heart good": How employers perceive supported employees. These articles together provide a needed focus in human services on socially valued work for devalued people. Employment provides one of the most typical avenues to highly valued roles in contemporary society. Lack of employment remains an ongoing problem for most socially devalued adults, which contributes to, among other problems, lifewasting, lack of access to many of the good things of life, lack of valued roles, lessened competency, negative image juxtaposition, etc. These two articles raise SRV-related teaching and implementation questions, challenging readers to think more deeply from an SRV perspective about employment, valued role activities for adults, societal attitude change, etc.*

## Introduction

RELEVANT TO SOCIAL ROLE VALORIZATION (SRV) is the question what social value and role messages various types of activities contribute to devalued people. For instance, in regard to daytime occupation for devalued adults, what are the relative role-valorizing merits and disadvantages of work versus non-work activities; of full-time work versus part-time; of work primarily as a source of income and possibly thereby of greater independence, versus of work as a means of competency

and/or image enhancement or protection even if the work is unpaid.

During the eugenic era, work by members of lowly and degenerate classes was often seen as a way of distracting these classes from degenerate activities. For example, Town (1939) said that "idle hands find mischief still, and feeble-minded hands unguided, are idle hands indeed." And long before Town, but capturing the same idea, was the cultural saying that "idle hands are the devil's playthings."

The principle of normalization (Wolfensberger, 1972) emphasized work as a quintessential adult activity, which was seen as especially important for adults who were at risk of being cast in the child role, as retarded adults so commonly were.

SRV would additionally emphasize those activities that give people entrance into, or maintenance of, valued roles. All sorts of paid work could do this, especially for adults, but so could unpaid work, as could some valued non-work activities, at any age. For instance, athletics and sports can contribute much to bodily and mental competency development. This is especially true for those athletic activities that are rigorous, complex, and that are engaged in regularly and perhaps even a good deal of the time. Professional athletes engage in their sport virtually full-time—it is, in a sense, their "work"—but so do some people who undertake a sport as a hobby, such as some form of long-distance running.

In several workshops given by our Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agency, we emphasize how crucially important it is for societally devalued adults especially to assume adult work roles—even if these are unpaid. This is particularly relevant in light of the fact that for decades, studies have consistently shown that 60-70% of adults with significant physical or mental impairments are unemployed, and largely stay unemployed. Thus, if they do not perform unpaid work, they would receive none of the benefits that come with adult work roles.

### **Benefits of Holding Role-Valorizing Valued Adult Work Roles, Even If Unpaid**

**T**HERE ARE THREE MAJOR CLASSES of SRV-related benefits to valued work roles for adults, even if they are unpaid, and one class of benefits not so clearly tied to SRV.

#### ***Primarily Competency-Related Benefits of Holding Role-Valorizing Valued Adult Work Roles***

ONE CLASS OF SRV-RELATED BENEFITS is primarily related to competency.

First, regardless whether a work role is paid or unpaid, it will tend to bring with it competency-related expectations and demands that elicit and support positive, work-related habits, such as getting up on time to get to work, keeping oneself presentable for work, learning to be diligent and industrious.

Secondly, the work role is apt to bring with it the acquisition and practice of specific skills (hence competencies) needed for the work at issue: sweeping, sorting, filing, measuring, cooking, inventorizing, operating a cash register, etc.

Strongly related to work habits is stamina, which is an extremely important asset to an impaired person, including the ability to last through an adult rhythm of the day. Such a discipline may prove to be critically important, and to make for a more successful, adaptive life. At worst, it can do no harm. We do know that in work settings, failures are so often due to lack of stamina rather

than the inability to develop and practice skills, even if the failure of stamina should manifest itself as a problem social behavior or masquerade as a competency deficit. When a person gets tired and fatigued from not having been prepared bodily and mentally for a good long work day, it is then that social problems are often precipitated, or that other problems occur that impact on the work situation.

#### ***Primarily Image-Related Benefits of Holding Role-Valorizing Valued Adult Work Roles***

THE SECOND CATEGORY OF BENEFITS is primarily related to social image.

The main benefit here is that holding an adult work role earns prestige and adult image in the eyes of observers who, after all, are usually not aware how much a worker is being paid, or even whether the worker is receiving payment at all. What the observers see is a person doing useful things, and engaging in the routines that go with that.

Also to be considered is that vigorous work activities carried out over normal or even long periods of the day, week or year convey images and messages of strength, endurance, commitment, competency, etc. A mentally limited but active person can easily appear more intelligent than a person of higher mentality who is inactive. A positive image like this in turn tends to open the door to many good things in life, including sometimes to paid jobs.

#### ***Benefits of Holding Role-Valorizing Valued Adult Work Roles That Are Related to Both Competencies & Image***

THE THIRD CATEGORY OF BENEFITS of holding role-valorizing valued adult work roles consists of those that have both a competency and an image impact. There are many of these, and we will list only a number of examples.

1. Holding a valued adult work role often contains the potential for developing integrative relationships with people whom one meets at work, or on the way to work,

or in connection with work. Integrative relationships have both competency and image impacts (see Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2007, pp. 177-186 and 355-362).

2. Valued adult work roles contribute to wholesome daily and weekly routines, such as maintaining a schedule, washing one's uniform each week, preparing one's lunch the night before, etc. Such culturally normative routines are very image-enhancing, in addition to usually also having competency benefits.
3. Valued adult work roles often generate personal commitments by valued people to the devalued person, especially by valued people in the person's workplace who would otherwise not have met the person. Such commitments often get translated into both competency benefits (such as opportunities that would otherwise not have been offered) and image benefits (such as positive interpersonal juxtapositions).
4. Also, it is sometimes through first holding an unpaid job that the person obtains paid employment, either in the same workplace or elsewhere. For instance, it may be at the unpaid job that the person learns over a period of time to successfully perform a specific job. The person may then be able to apply for a paid job where these skills are needed. Or, it sometimes happens that once a person has demonstrated the ability to perform a job competently, then the party that had the person working initially on an unpaid basis may offer the person a paid job.

### **Additional Benefits**

#### **That Are Not So Clearly Tied to SRV**

**I**N ADDITION TO THE SRV-RELATED BENEFITS of holding any adult work role, paid or unpaid, there are also some benefits of unpaid work roles specifically that are, however, not so clearly tied to SRV.

1. Aside from sometimes leading to a paid job, unpaid work roles will often lead to some informal recompense. This may take the form of the worker being given gifts or money "under the table" and "off the books" by the party for whom the work is done, perhaps even on a regular basis. Or, people at the work place may start to do some favors for the unpaid worker (or his or her family).
2. Employers expect full productive value from the workers they formally employ. If a worker does not live up to fully normative expectations—as perhaps by not being 100% productive—that worker is likely to be discharged. But when a person works without pay, the party the person works for is typically much more indulgent, and will accept a performance of either lesser quality or lesser productivity. This way, the worker's valued adult work role is protected, and the worker is less likely to end up idle altogether.

### **Some of the Problems That Can Arise in Connection with Paid Work Roles**

**I**N CONSIDERING THE BENEFITS of unpaid adult work roles, it is helpful to keep in mind some of the problems for at least some devalued people that are associated with formal paid work roles.

1. One problem with pursuing primarily paid work roles for devalued adults from such employers as ordinary businesses and industries is that with paid employment typically comes formalization of the arrangement (e.g., via such things as going through an official employment process and human resources review, perhaps having to join a union). Sometimes these requirements make it impossible for some devalued people to get and keep such jobs. For instance, a handicapped person who may be capable of performing a valued work role may not be able to do so if

getting paid for it requires an interview, references, perhaps taking a test of some sort, etc. But if the person were simply permitted to do all or part of a job for no payment, all of these things that would otherwise constitute insurmountable barriers to the job for that person need not be dealt with. Furthermore, once a person has been hired by an employer, the person may no longer be eligible for certain government benefits—and yet that person may be the first to be let go when jobs are cut, leaving the person with no income whatever. (We have known of instances of this happening, and of it taking mammoth effort and much time to get the person back on government benefits.)

2. A related problem is that once a person is an official employee of an organization, then the person comes under the gaze of what we call the imperial service structures, or even the imperial super-system. (Very briefly, these are the organized power structures of the service world and of society at large, that virtually never do good to lowly people because these structures serve the purpose—though perhaps in a way that is very hidden—of upholding the stratification which makes and keeps certain classes devalued. All of this we explain at much greater length in some of our teachings, such as our workshop on “How to Function with Personal Moral Coherency in a World That Is Disfunctional.”) For instance, once a person is employed, then this is registered on the organization’s records, and the person’s presence and earnings are reported to the government. If the organization is big enough, it probably has a human resources department, and this department now knows that the person is there and is working, whereas if the person were working on an unpaid basis, at least some of the higher-up parts

of the organization may know nothing about it. And the imperial structures want to formalize and control all situations that they see as part of their realm—but so often, what they say and do may not at all be to the devalued worker’s advantage. For instance, the empire may insist on having regular job performance reviews that the worker, realistically, may do very poorly on; the empire may rule that it is not permissible to have such a person working at such a job because of insurance liability concerns; etc. All sorts of options that are open under informal work arrangements (e.g., regarding flexibility of hours, or of what type of work is done, and where) become impossible once they come under the gaze and control of the empire, and once a person is expected to fill a specific, formally defined job.

### **Some of the Problems That Can Come with Activities for Adults Mediated Specifically by Human Serve Agencies**

**F**INALLY, ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS that are mediated by human service agencies specifically are often very problematic: they may not be culturally valued, may not be of a work nature, or may even be obstacles to more valued work.

First of all, human service agencies often slice adults into non-work activities when these adults are quite capable of doing at least some kinds of adult work on at least a part-time basis. We were once told that the mother of a retarded young man had found him odd jobs in the neighborhood for which he received some under-the-table payment. He would clean up neighbors’ lawns, run errands, etc. She asked a social worker for assistance in getting a “real job” for her son, and the imperial response was to place the young man in a “day treatment program” of value-degraded activities—or inactivity, for which, of course, he received no payment at all. Eventually, the mother had to pay a lawyer to help her become her son’s

legal guardian, in order to protect him from being “served” by programs such as this.

Secondly, it is rare for a human service agency to mediate for its clients unpaid adult work roles that are culturally valued. Instead, such agencies typically tend to provide paid work that either has all sorts of image and/or competency costs to the workers, such as work in segregated and congregated settings with other devalued people (for example, in sheltered workshops), and perhaps doing work there that is not challenging, that may not have a good image, and that may on top pay very little.

Thirdly, human service agencies now also provide paid work through something like so-called “supported employment,” but that may also have many image and competency problems, such as very few hours of work per week, or work at times when there are no potential integrators around, exemplified by a cleaning crew that comes into a building once all the other workers there have gone home for the day.

In other words, one of the costs of service clientele to impaired adults tends to be all sorts of shortcomings in regard to work. (As an aside, it could make for an interesting research study to investigate how service recipients rank the value of various kinds of either paid or unpaid work mediated by human service agencies.)

The reasons for avoiding clienthood (cf. Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1994) are many, though not all of them have to do with SRV. But some SRV-relevant ones are that agency client-

hood typically means at least some negative juxtaposition with other devalued people, some congregation with other devalued people, a loss of autonomy and control which get usurped by the agency, and often very suboptimal emphasis on the competency-enhancement potential of either paid or unpaid activities.

### Conclusion

THE IMPORTANCE OF A valued work role for adults—even if it is not paid employment—was pointed out in an episode (17 February 1987) of the old NBC TV series “Remington Steele.” Mr. Steele had just inherited an ancient castle in Ireland, complete with an extensive staff and mountainous debts. In fact, none of the castle staff had been paid in years, but they had all continued to do their jobs. When Steele asked the head butler why they had done so, the butler replied, “It’s better to have a job that doesn’t pay than not to have a job at all.”

In Grand Island, Nebraska (US), a group of unemployed retarded adults got together and started doing all sorts of useful things, including taking community college courses, and unpaid work, a lot of it fund-raising for different charities. This included collecting canned food, ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, selling honey for a parents association, and “adopting” a poor family to be provided with food and gifts (Arc of Nebraska Focus Newsletter, Fall/Winter 2008). While some of these activities carried a suggestion of a deviancy image, the group has been honored in

### Since you are reading this journal,

why not tell someone else about it? We believe Social Role Valorization is an important tool that concerned individuals can use to address social devaluation in people’s lives. As someone who shares that belief, encourage others to read and subscribe to the only journal dedicated to SRV. Information available at [http://www.srvip.org/journal\\_general.php](http://www.srvip.org/journal_general.php).

its community, and the activities certainly beat doing nothing.

The state of Georgia (US) is a pioneer in recognizing the value of unpaid adult work. It has launched a Georgia Works program that has recruited thousands of workers into temporary (six weeks) unpaid jobs which it calls "auditions." The state pays their unemployment benefits, plus some money for travel, child care, etc. An amazing 58% of such workers ended up being hired by the places where they worked for free (Should Unemployed People Work for Free?, 2009).

Of course, there are, or can be, drawbacks to unpaid work roles, just as there are or can be to other arrangements. For instance, to some people, unpaid work smacks of taking advantage of handicapped people, or even of slavery at worst—and sometimes the unpaid worker may in fact be taken advantage of. There is no arrangement without its drawbacks, or even potential perversions. But such drawbacks are not always inherent or inevitable, and they should not blind us to the role-valorizing possibilities that an arrangement provides.

Unfortunately, as we mentioned earlier, it seems that people in the field of vocational services, work, and daytime activity for impaired adults, have not given sufficient thought to these issues. Even worse is that some people have become blindly fanatical that impaired people should only work for pay—and even more so, that impaired adults should receive the same pay that non-impaired people would get for the work, or they should not work at all, even if the impaired workers are much less productive, or cost more to employ than non-impaired workers. Some parents have kept their sons or daughters out of sheltered work settings for this reason, leaving the person idle, as explained in Wolfensberger (2003). Some are also fanatical that impaired adults should work only in an integrated situation, or not at all.

Similarly, some people insist that unless the work is "interesting," then an impaired person should not do it. For instance, perhaps because such critics cannot see themselves doing repetitive work, or because they would find it boring, they

therefore imagine that retarded people also would not want to do it or would find it "stifling," when the opposite may be the case, as explained in an article on the common assets of mentally retarded people (Wolfensberger, 1988, p. 67).

Also, during the days when sheltered workshops were still just about the only work option for severely retarded adults, there were parents who took their adult sons or daughters out of workshops because it involved manual labor that dirtied the hands.

Of course, sheltered workshops, if subjected to an SRV analysis and critique, would be found to have drawbacks and disadvantages. For instance, they typically tend to be unnecessarily segregating, to involve negative image juxtapositions (including among individual persons and sub-groups within the setting), and the work is not always either competency-challenging or image-enhancing. But, as noted earlier, even this kind of work could still contribute to competency, imagery, and at least more of valued roles than no work or no other valued activities at all.

The question is not only what the relative advantages and disadvantages of paid and unpaid work are, but also whether there are any SRV-related advantages to unpaid ones when paid ones are not to be had at all, or not on a long-term basis. Thus, being prepared to arrange unpaid but valued adult work for impaired adults would be especially important under conditions of high general unemployment, because whenever paid jobs are few, they will be even more apt to go to people of valued (or less devalued) status than would be the case under better economic circumstances. As noted, unemployment rates for impaired adults tend to be very high anyway, even under relatively favorable economic conditions, and are not likely to go down when many non-impaired and valued adults are also unemployed.

Some jobs are so hazardous to health that one is better off not working at all.

There are also unusual situations in which it would not be role-valorizing for devalued people to take on certain kinds of paid work. An example might be where the paid job entails doing very

devalued work. For instance, for several hundred years in Europe, it was common for mentally retarded males to be sluiced into employment as assistants to torturers and executioners. In these positions, they were even designated as being outside the social domain of “honest” people. In such cases, another unpaid valued work role would have been vastly preferable for such persons.

Other things being equal, it is usually preferable to have a paid job doing valued work than to do the same valued work on an unpaid basis. Unfortunately, as we said, full-time well-paid work is simply not going to be available in our economy to a large proportion of handicapped people, in part because of the way a post-production economy (like ours) is structured to need many dependent people as service clients who provide paid employment to others, rather than to need them as workers (see explanation in Wolfensberger, 1997, pp. 139-143). Considering how many valued roles for adults in society have nothing to do with payment, or even with work, and how numerous may be the benefits, valued but unpaid work roles should be vigorously pursued for adults who would otherwise be idle, engaged in non-work activities, or unnecessarily segregated and image-degraded in their work. So thinking about valued adult work that is unpaid opens many possibilities for valued roles for devalued adults who otherwise will have few opportunities for such roles. Paid work roles are certainly not ruled out, whether they take place in integrated settings such as ordinary businesses, or in settings that are either partially or fully segregated. So we hope that no readers would be left with the impression that paid work should not be pursued for at least some devalued adults, or that unpaid work is the only type of work that should be pursued for them. But neither should it be overlooked or rejected. ☺

SEE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON PAGE 66

#### REFERENCES

Should unemployed people work for free? (2009, October 11). *Parade*, 6.

Town, C.H. (1939). *Familial feeble-mindedness: A study of 141 families*. Buffalo, NY: Foster & Stewart.

Wolfensberger, W. (1972). *The principle of normalization in human services*. Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Wolfensberger, W. (1988). Common assets of mentally retarded people that are commonly not acknowledged. *Mental Retardation*, 26(2), 63–70.

Wolfensberger, W. (1997). Major obstacles to rationality and quality of human services in contemporary society. In R. Adams (Ed.), *Crisis in the human services: National and international issues: Selected papers from a conference held at the University of Cambridge, September 1996*. Kingston upon Hull, United Kingdom: University of Lincolnshire & Humberside, 133-155.

Wolfensberger, W. (2003). *The future of children with significant impairments: What parents fear and want, and what they and others may be able to do about it*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (1994). An analysis of the client role from a Social Role Valorization perspective. *SRV-VRS: The International Social Role Valorization Journal/La Revue Internationale de la Valorisation des Rôles Sociaux*, 1(1), 3-8.

Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (2007). *PASSING: A tool for analyzing service quality according to Social Role Valorization criteria. Ratings manual* (3rd rev. ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

---

DR. WOLF WOLFENBERGER is Professor at Syracuse University, & directs the Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency, Syracuse, NY, USA. SUSAN THOMAS is the Training Coordinator for the Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA.

---

#### THE CITATION FOR THIS ARTICLE IS

Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (2009). Some thoughts on the role valorizing merits of valued paid & unpaid activities. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 12-18.

# “It Does My Heart Good”: How Employers Perceive Supported Employees

Judith Sandys

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following article was originally published as Sandys, J. (1999). “It does my heart good”: How employers perceive supported employees. In R.J. Flynn & R. Lemay (Eds.), A quarter-century of normalization and Social Role Valorization: Evolution and impact. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 305-316. My thanks to Bob Flynn, Ray Lemay & Judith Sandys for their kind permission to include this chapter in the Journal. This article was originally published by the University of Ottawa Press, © 1999. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission from the University of Ottawa Press.*

FLYNN & LEMAY'S BOOK, *an excellent resource based on papers from the 1994 International Normalization and Social Role Valorization Conference held in Ottawa, is available from Amazon.com.*

FOR MOST ADULTS in our society, work provides not only economic resources, but also a wide range of noneconomic benefits, including status, self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and self-actualization. Those who do not work are stigmatized, kept poor, and, if considered unable to work (rather than merely unwilling), looked upon as objects of pity and charity (Anthony, 1977; Macarov, 1980; Ozawa, 1982; Rinehart, 1987; Stone, 1984). It is therefore not surprising that studies confirm that for most people, working is an important determinant of quality of life (Chestang, 1982; Michalos, 1986; O'Toole, 1974; Warr, 1987).

Historically, people with intellectual disabilities have been excluded from workforce participation. Perceived as dependent and in need of care, they have had to rely on the state for their resources. Because this group is seen as “deserving,” they have typically been treated more generously than those perceived as able to work but not willing to. Nonetheless, exclusion from workforce participation has served to cut them off from both the economic and noneconomic benefits of work and to deny their status as full citizens (Murphy & Rogan, 1995; Oliver, 1990).

In recent years there has been an ever increasing emphasis on promoting opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to work in regular settings within the community. One manifestation of this has been the development of the supported employment model. Traditionally, vocational rehabilitation programs sought to provide training (most often within sheltered workshop settings) to individuals with regard to work skills and behaviors, and then to find jobs for those assessed as “job ready.” Unlike this train-then-place approach, supported employment programs utilize a place-then-train framework—the individual is placed in a work situation consistent with their interests and talents, and training and support are provided at the work site in order to ensure the success of the work situation. The underlying assumption is that the nature and quality of support ensures “success,” rather than “readiness”

for employment. First developed in the United States in the mid-1970s, supported employment programs have expanded rapidly in that country and more recently in Canada (Annable, 1989; McLoughlin, Garner & Callahan, 1987; Murphy & Rogan, 1995; Wehman, Kregel, Shafer & West, 1989; Wehman & Moon, 1988; West, Revell & Wehman, 1992; Revell, Wehman, Kregel, West & Rayfield, 1994).

This article presents the findings of a study that explores the perspectives of employers of people with intellectual disabilities hired through the involvement of supported employment programs. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, 21 employers in 18 different employment settings were interviewed. The study explores how these employers explain and understand their involvement with the program, their perceptions of the individual they have hired, and their views on the issue of employment of people with intellectual disabilities in general.

### 1 Theoretical Context

**A**N UNDERLYING PREMISE of this article is that issues relating to workforce participation for people with intellectual disabilities can only be understood within a wider context that looks at work and disability as they relate to the welfare state in a capitalist society. Perceptions of what constitutes work and who is able to work, the meanings attached to work, and the strategies undertaken to encourage workforce participation (for those assumed to be able to work) are all shaped by the perceived needs of a capitalist economy and the values inherent therein. At the same time, within the welfare state there are ideals of humanitarianism, equality, and justice, a belief that the state has some responsibility to ensure a minimum level of well-being to all citizens, and in particular to those who are perceived as unable to provide for themselves. More than three decades ago, Wilensky and Lebeaux (1965) spoke of the ongoing “compromise between the values of economic individualism and free enterprise on

the one hand, and security, equality and humanitarianism on the other” (pp. 138-139).

Within any society there is a configuration of dominant values to which most members of that society subscribe. These values comprise the “implicit or explicit conceptions of what individuals consider to be either ideal ends or desirable means of achieving these ends” (George & Wilding, 1985, p. 127). Invariably, there will be contradictions among values, forcing choices and compromises among them. The shared value base of a society affects not only the behavior of individuals within it, but also the way societal problems are defined and in the policies that are developed to deal with these (Deakin, 1987; Gilbert, 1983; Gilbert & Specht, 1986; Hindess, 1987).

All this is is highly consistent with Social Role Valorization (SRV) theory (Wolfensberger, 1983, 1985, 1992), which posits a relationship between the treatment accorded to people with disabilities and the extent to which they are valued or devalued within society. “Human perceptual processes,” notes Wolfensberger (1992), “are by their very nature evaluative” (p. 2). Since we cannot avoid making evaluative judgments about what we perceive, all people are perceived positively or negatively by others. Hence, “devaluation is something that is done to another person by a perceiver; it is not something which is inherent in the person perceived” (p. 2). SRV theory contends that the process of being identified as different and negatively valued (stigmatized) will have a profound effect on the individual’s identity and subsequent behavior. However, SRV/Normalization theory challenges the seeming inevitability of a deviant and devalued status and identity based on disability (or other source of stigma) and suggests that the negative impact of a particular negatively valued attribute may be offset if the person is perceived to fill positively valued roles in society. Just as negative roles confer devalued status, so positive ones confer valued status. Given the high value placed on work, those who are unable, or who are perceived as unable, to work as a result

of a disability are likely to be devalued and treated accordingly. The goal of Social Role Valorization is to enable people with disabilities or other conditions that confer a devalued status to move from that status to one that is valued within society. Supported employment programs are seemingly highly consistent with Social Role Valorization theory in their attempt to enable people with disabilities to fulfill the valued role of worker. This study seeks to examine the manner in which the dominant and often contradictory values in our society are expressed in employer responses concerning people with intellectual disabilities. Further, it examines the extent to which the role of worker, a role that is highly valued within our society, affects the way people with intellectual disabilities are perceived by employers and explores the impact of supported employment practices on these perceptions.

It is important to note that this is not a study of the experiences of supported employees but one that focuses on employers of supported employees. Since Social Role Valorization theory emphasizes the impact of perception, and since employers play a pivotal role in determining whether an individual with an intellectual disability will gain access to their workplace, it is important to understand their perceptions if we are to develop policies and practices that promote more positive outcomes. As Oliver (1990) notes, "it is not disabled people who need to be examined but able-bodied society; it is not a case of educating disabled and non-disabled people for integration, but of fighting institutional disablism" (p. 1112).

## 2 Methods

**T**HIS STUDY USED a qualitative design. "The phenomenological basis of the qualitative approach means that the researcher studies how informants make meaning out of their situations" (Biklen & Moseley, 1988, p. 155). In this instance, it is believed that the data generated through in-depth qualitative interviews of a small number of employers would generate more

significant and useful information than, for example, would a survey type questionnaire to a much larger sample.

Participants were located primarily through contacts with organizations that operated supported employment programs in or near Toronto. For the purposes of this study, the term employer was operationalized to include those who had decision-making authority with regard to hiring, and those who were involved in the development and/or implementation of hiring policy. It included some employers who were not paying people a regular (i.e., minimum wage or better) salary and several who did not have ongoing supervisory responsibility for a specific supported employee. Since the goal of the study was to explore a wide range of employer perspectives, respondents were selected to provide as much diversity as possible, in terms of the characteristics of the employers, employment settings, and jobs.

Interviews were generally about 12 hours in length. While an interview guide was used to ensure that key topics were covered with each employer, questions were informal and open-ended. As Patton (1980) notes, "the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms." In all instances, employers were very eager to talk and to share their views, resulting in a great deal of rich and detailed data. Except in two instances (one where the tape recorder malfunctioned, the other where the person so chose) all interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed, eliminating identifying information. Because the focus was explicitly on the experiences of the employers, there was no systematic observation of the supported employees nor were they interviewed. However, on a less formal basis there were often opportunities to observe supported employees at their jobs, to talk with them, and to observe interaction between employers and supported employees.

In the tradition of qualitative research, data analysis began almost at the outset of the study,

after which data collection and analysis continued simultaneously (see, for example, Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Memos and field notes served to capture initial impressions, thoughts, and hunches (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Spradley, 1979). These were helpful in identifying emerging themes that were used to construct typologies or classification schemes as a basis for interpreting the data. The informal observational data enhanced the interpretation of the interview data, often providing behavioral confirmation of the themes expressed by the employers.

### 3 The People & the Places

THREE OF THE INTERVIEWS were with employers who were not directly involved with a supported employee on an ongoing basis. This included three women (in two interviews) from human resource departments of large corporations and one man from a setting where a person had been employed until shortly before the interview took place. The women, who ranged in age from late 20s to mid-30s, all had university degrees; the man, in his late 30s, had no university education.

The employers in direct contact with supported employees were quite diverse in terms of gender, age, and educational level. Of the 17 employees, 11 were men and 6 were women. They ranged in age from early 20s to over 60 and included those with university degrees, some university or community college education, high school, or less. Employment settings included small and large enterprises, service and manufacturing organizations, for-profit and nonprofit settings. Settings with supported employees included: catering service, hotel kitchen, hospital audiovisual department, bank, fast-food restaurant, factories, car dealership, municipal planning department, administrative offices, and a discount department store.

The employers involved in this study were employing a total of 16 people with intellectual disabilities hired through supported employment

programs, including one setting where there were two people. Supported employees ranged in age from the early 20s to late 40s, with most being between 25 and 35. They had been employed for as little as 6 months and as long 42 years, with between 1 and 2 years being most typical. Of the 16 supported employees, 8 were working full-time and 8 were working part-time. All those who worked part-time were paid minimum wage or above (up to \$10.25 per hour). Of the eight who worked full-time, two were paid above minimum wage. The remaining six were paid amounts ranging from nothing (one person) to \$60 per week.

### 4 Findings

#### 4.1 The Decision to Hire: Balancing Altruism & Productivity

THE PROCESS THAT CULMINATED with the hiring of the person with an intellectual disability was sometimes initiated by the employer but more frequently by the supported employment program. Where employer-initiated, employers generally related this to reasons of self-interest, most often related to productivity concerns—labor shortages or the need for low-cost labor:

*The thought was a cost-saving measure for the dishwashing area. To be quite honest, that was the first thought.*

*It's very hard to get help ... We're a manufacturing concern and it's just very plain repetitive work. It's very competitive and we can't afford to pay gross premiums for our labor. So we started looking for alternate sources of employment.*

*I think Fast Food would admit that starting this program [to hire people with disabilities] was not altogether out of altruistic motives, but that it was out of necessity. They had a labor crunch, really the worst labor crunch ever. They had to find alternate sources of employees. They found an untapped pool.*

One employer indicated that his company had initiated contact with the supported employment program in order to fulfill employment equity requirements.

More common were the situations where the supported employment program approached an employer. In these instances employers gave various rationales to explain their decision to hire the individual. While in some instances the decision was clearly related to self-interest (the person was perceived to be able to do a particular job or task successfully, or would help to meet employment equity targets), more typically employers perceived their decision, at least in part, to be based on altruistic or humanitarian concerns. They interpreted the request from the supported employment program as a request to help. When asked if the organization would have hired the young woman whom they were employing even if she had only been able to do one very simple task, one employer commented:

*Yes, we probably would have. But you have to understand that the owners of this lab are very charitable people ... they care very much.*

Others related their decision to a desire to be fair, using words similar to these employers:

*Everybody should have a chance. These people want to work like everybody else. Why shouldn't they?*

*You give everybody a chance.*

*Everybody deserves a chance.*

Nevertheless, altruistic/humanitarian motives tended to be constrained by productivity-related concerns. People had the "right" to work, but only if they were able to do the job.

*I think that they deserve just as much a chance. As it's the right job ... I think that's the bottom line.*

Employers generally felt that in order to be employed, people had to be able to do some productive work, although the amount that was considered acceptable varied considerably. As well, employers often felt that some medical conditions (e.g., severe seizures), the inability to comprehend and follow directions, and/or the presence of unacceptable behaviors such as extreme aggressiveness would preclude employment. They did not see everybody as being able to work.

#### **4.2 Differences & Challenges:**

##### ***Dilemmas of Support within the Workplace***

EMPLOYERS REPORTED THAT THE EXPERIENCE of employing a person with an intellectual disability differed in many respects from their usual experiences and often presented significant challenges.

The supported employees often took longer to learn the tasks required of them, thereby requiring more input from the employer and coworkers: "I find that if you give them half a chance, and you're patient with them—it's a matter of repetition, constant repetition, which at times can drive you pretty well around the bend."

In terms of behavior, the supported employees were often perceived to be very childlike:

[Referring to a woman in her late 20s:]

*I realized that I had to treat her as someone who is much younger, like someone who is in the sixth or eighth grade, someone who needed to be told what to do and what was expected of her. But she has really progressed. Now I can treat her as a young woman of mid high school age ...*

*Bob likes to be pampered. He likes it when you tell him what to do or scold him. He puts his head down and grins. You can tell that he likes it. You have to treat him like a 10-year-old child ...*

*We have to treat Tom like he's a ten-year-old ...*

*With all due respect, I find I relate to him more like a 5-year old ...*

*She's like a kid.*

Some supported employees were reported to exhibit behaviors that were menacing or disruptive, including “fake seizures,” emotional outbursts, destruction of property when upset, strange mannerisms, and poor grooming and/or hygiene.

*You really have to watch him when he gets a cold, because he starts taking cold medication and he flips out on cold medication ... You won't know what he's going to do. One day he locked himself in a car and wouldn't get out.*

*If he thinks he's made an error he will start doing a jerking motion with his head and his arms and will fling them open to a point where it's almost like a bird taking flight.*

As a result, employers reported engaging in tasks they did not usually encounter with non-disabled employees.

*Something else we did that we felt would help was for her to bring in a log book. We wrote down specific jobs she had to do each day ... then at the end of the day I would write down what she did, whether she had a good day or a bad day.*

*He has a problem with body odour ... Sometimes people he works with will complain that it is so bad they can't stand to work with him. When that happens I have to talk with him. I tell him that he has to be clean, that people don't like it ... After that he will be fine for quite a while. But then it starts again.*

Employers were not alone in their efforts to deal with the challenges presented by the supported employee. They had available to them the assistance of a staff person from the supported employment program (referred to here as the support worker). As is typical for such programs,

the support worker was very involved when the supported employee first began working, and became less active as the person adjusted to the work and the workplace. Overall, employers felt very positively about the program staff, seeing them as competent and caring people. While there were occasional complaints about staff turnover, or about something a support worker did or did not do, these were very much the exception.

One role of the support worker was to assist in training the supported employee to do the required tasks. While for some employers this was very important, others felt that they could do any required training themselves. More important was assistance when problems arose with the person's behavior. If the person was late repeatedly or did not show up for work, if the person seemed upset or exhibited troublesome or inappropriate behavior, if the person's work performance worsened, if there were difficulties between the person and other employees—in these and other situations, the employer was expected to contact the supported employment program so that the reasons for the difficulties could be explored and remedial action developed. Where problems persisted, the support worker remained very much involved. Generally, employers felt that the support worker played a key role in the success of the placement.

Employers identified closely with the staff of the supported employment program and saw themselves working collaboratively with them. They saw themselves not simply hiring a particular individual, but being a part of a program designed to assist people with intellectual disabilities: “[It is satisfying] just participating in a program like this and dealing with the people.”

#### **4.3 Employer Satisfaction: Gaining Satisfaction through the Accomplishments of Supported Employees**

FOR VIRTUALLY ALL THE EMPLOYERS interviewed in this study, the experience of employing a person with an intellectual disability through a supported employment program had proven to be a

very positive experience. The supported employees were seen to be reliable and hardworking: "She's a very good employee. She's extremely reliable ... I feel confident in leaving her in the unit if I happen to be called out."

Employers spoke about the variety of tasks that their handicapped employees have been able to learn: "She spends a lot of her time assembling planning documents for us, punching them, putting them in numerical order and assembling them on a plastic ring. She does photocopying and she delivers newspapers within the department once a week ... [Also] lots of folding of maps and plans, and putting them in their proper slots."

Sometimes this contributed to the overall efficiency of the operation: "She has taken away some of the jobs that the technicians were doing to let them do more complicated things. And it's actually helped us, because it has to be done regardless."

However, even more important to these employers were the benefits that were seen to accrue to the supported employee. These employers reported that work was very important in their own lives. They described themselves as workaholics and indicated that they had worked hard to achieve success. The importance of work for them extended beyond the remuneration it generated. In discussing the benefits of working for the supported employees they again focused on the noneconomic benefits, only rarely mentioning financial benefits. (In fact, for a significant number of people the financial benefits were modest or nonexistent.)

They were impressed with the individual's motivation to work: "It's very inspiring to see a man with such limited mental ability trying so hard and succeeding and accomplishing things."

They talked about the person's development and improved well-being—skills they had acquired, ability to relate to people, maturity, self-esteem, sense of self worth, sense of belonging, and so forth:

*She's certainly more sociable ... Now she looks at you in the face and talks to you directly ...*

*We've given her the chance to feel that she's doing a job and that she's a needed person ... And I think we've also done wonders for her self-confidence ...*

*It's inspiring ... It's incredible how much he has developed.*

To have played a part in bringing about these benefits was clearly a source of satisfaction to these employers:

*To know that we've provided an opportunity for these individuals to work and everything that goes with that. I'm not talking about the money so much as the self-esteem and the feeling of belonging much more than they would otherwise have.*

*I like working with Bob. I like working with slower people. It gives you a good feeling if you can teach them something, if they are out there working.*

*It does my heart good to see how much he has developed.*

#### **4.4 Employer Responses to Employment Equity/Affirmative Action; Choice or Obligation?**

WHILE EMPLOYERS ARTICULATED A BELIEF in the "right" of people with intellectual disabilities to work in the community, described the experience as positive, and felt that more employers should be encouraged to hire such individuals, there was little support for strengthened employment equity/affirmative action legislation that might require employers to hire people with disabilities.

In this regard, this group was not different from many other employers. An informal survey of 30 employers by a Toronto consulting firm reported in *The Globe and Mail* (Gibb-Clark, 1991) reiterated some of the common sources of opposition to any kind of quota system. The primary reason given by those employers was that to impose quotas would undermine the merit system that is at the very heart of our economy.

While the employers interviewed for this study did on occasion raise this objection, they tended more often to frame their response in very different terms. Rather than simply opposing such legislation because it might not be in their own best business interests, they maintained that it would not be in the interests of people with disabilities. They argue that forcing employers to hire people with disabilities would result in employers resenting their presence. Under these circumstances, they would not exhibit the same kind of care and concern for the well-being of the disabled employee:

*I don't think you can force it on employers ... It would be very difficult for an individual with a handicap to cope with a hostile situation.*

*You would have a negative attitude on the part of the employer right off the bat.*

Furthermore, if forced to hire, it was argued, employers would seek people with the most minimal handicaps and ignore those with more seriously handicapping conditions.

### 5 Analysis & Discussion

**G**IVEN THE AMOUNT OF EFFORT involved for employers, why do they feel so positive about the experience? The most cynical perspective would suggest that the direct benefits to the employer, whether in terms of providing “cheap labor,” contributing to the efficiency of the operation, or helping to meet employment equity targets, outweighed any inconvenience to the employer. Certainly these motivations played a significant part in some situations. However, they would seem insufficient to explain the overwhelmingly positive attitudes of the employers or the sometimes considerable energy they devoted to making the situation successful.

Rather, it would seem that employers who hire people with intellectual disabilities through supported employment programs may interpret what they are doing within an ethic of care. They define

what they are doing primarily in terms of “helping” someone, and come to measure their own success by the extent to which the person appears to benefit from the situation. While they do not, by any means, abandon their productivity expectations entirely, these may be modified by other considerations. The interpretation of hiring a person with an intellectual handicap as a humanitarian act may be strengthened by the involvement of the supported employment program. Employers often perceived the request from the supported employment program as a request to “help.”

Interpreting the employment of people with intellectual disabilities within an ethic of care has a number of implications, both positive and negative. On the positive side, it seems to buy a higher level of tolerance for the person with the disability, increasing the range of challenges with which an employer is prepared to contend. Behaviors such as repeated lateness, absence, emotional outbursts, aggressiveness, and poor-quality work are responded to differently when the person is identified as having an intellectual disability and when the person has been placed in the job with the involvement of a supported employment program. While such behaviors would likely elicit a negative reaction—perhaps disciplinary action or even dismissal—in the case of a nonlabeled person, in the instance of a person with an intellectual disability hired through a supported employment program, these behaviors are interpreted as part of the person’s “problem” and the employer assumes greater responsibility for trying to ameliorate them.

Because employers define their own success in terms of how well the person is perceived to be doing, there is an incentive for employers to invest their energy in eliciting positive outcomes. For these employers, work is something that is challenging and fulfilling; they work hard to ensure that it is so for the handicapped employee too. Helping the individual to expand the range of tasks they can do certainly contributes to the productivity or efficiency of the workplace. However, for these employers it is also a sign that they

are being successful in terms of helping the individual to develop and grow. Some employers go to considerable lengths to enable the person to do different and more challenging tasks, even when there may be no direct or immediate benefits to that employer. In several instances employers arranged for the individual to work in a different department for part of the time, in order to provide new learning opportunities and challenges.

If this ethic of care has some positive outcomes, it also has some that are negative, in fact or potentially. At its worst, a mind-set in which the employer defines her/his role as providing a service that will contribute to the personal development of an individual may serve to obscure the fact that the person is performing work for which he or she should be appropriately remunerated. It may lead to situations where not paying the person according to the same standards as others is justified or legitimated by the perception that the employer is providing a service and that the person is benefitting in other ways. One finds situations where an individual's productivity was reported to be equal or similar to others doing the same job, but where the person was not receiving

anything approaching the same rate of pay. Various rationales were offered for paying people less than minimum wage, including that pay was not important to the individual, that paying the person more might jeopardize his or her pension, or that paying a regular wage would create higher productivity expectation resulting in too much pressure on the person.

Employers in these situations rarely feel any sense that they are being exploitive. Indeed they take pride in the role they have played in contributing to the well-being of the individual and may even interpret not paying a regular wage as a necessary part of the helping process. The fact that they are realizing some economic or practical advantage is seen as fair exchange for the service that they are providing to the individual (e.g., promoting development) and to the larger society (e.g., taking care of the individual, reducing costs to government). An employer who is paying half of minimum wage explained: "The benefit is two-fold. You are lowering the amount of money the government has to spend on taking care of people with intellectual handicaps and you are saving 50% of the wage."

---

---

## PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

*ISSUES OF THE SRV JOURNAL occasionally include a section of double blind peer-reviewed articles. Full-length manuscripts on research, theory or reviews of the literature relevant to Social Role Valorization (SRV) are invited. These articles, with no identifying information about the author(s), will be sent by the Editor to appropriate experts for review of academic merit and relevance to SRV theory and application. Reviewers will be drawn largely, but not exclusively, from the editorial board. It is anticipated that the review process will take two to three months, at which time the Editor will communicate directly with the lead author regarding the outcome of the review process. Manuscripts may be accepted as submitted, may be accepted contingent on revisions, or may be rejected for publication. The final decision as to whether or not an article is published rests with the Editor.*

*The average length for peer reviewed articles is 6000 words. Authors should submit articles as an email attachment. All identifying information about the author(s) should be included in the body of the email that accompanies the attachment, not on the attachment itself. If at all possible, articles should be submitted in Microsoft Word. They should be double-spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman font.*

*Articles should be sent to the attention of Marc Tumeinski, The SRV Journal, journal@srvip.org.*

Another (potentially) negative outcome of the ethic of care is to reinforce the perception of the person with an intellectual handicap as dependent, childlike, and in need of care. Employers reported many childlike behaviors. Assuming that these are accurately reported (and there is no reason to assume otherwise), it is also true that employers spoke to and about people as though they were much younger than their chronological age. To what extent does perceiving people as childlike elicit childish behavior, and vice versa? Wolfensberger and Thomas (1983) speak of the power of "role expectancies and role circularities" (p. 325). We know that the expectations we hold of people have a powerful influence in shaping the behaviors that are elicited, and that these in turn will serve to reinforce our initial expectations. While it is impossible to determine the extent to which employer expectations influenced the way people were perceived and responded to, and the impact of this on their subsequent behavior, one can assume some interrelationship between these elements.

It is important to note that negative role expectancies surround people with disabilities throughout their lives. They are socialized into their role as dependent and childlike over many years and in many settings. The foregoing discussion is not meant to suggest that employers alone create or sustain these roles, nor that it is entirely within their power to change them or the behaviors they may have elicited. It is to suggest that the idea that enabling a person with a disability to work in the community can or will suddenly erase this history is unrealistic. Instead, the employers may get entangled in the web of role expectancies that has been woven around the person. While there were many positive benefits reported for the people with disabilities who were working for these employers, in a good many situations this did not affect the perception of them as dependent and childlike.

The involvement of the supported employment program was in many ways reassuring to

the employers, offering support and assistance with difficulties that arose. It drew in the employer as part of the helping team that would, together, assist the person with the disability. It provided an opportunity for the employers to see themselves in the new role of helper or counselor. All this drew the employer into a situation where new rules applied, where success is measured not in productivity or dollars, but in terms of personal development, growth, and self-esteem. At the same time, the message of the supported employment program is that this is a person who is "different," who may act in unusual ways, who needs to be handled differently and with particular skill. Employers may interpret what they are doing as a humanitarian or altruistic act, regardless of their initial motivation for hiring the person, and regardless of the extent to which there are material benefits accruing from the person's employment. Because hiring such an individual is seen as falling within the purview of altruism, employers are very resistant to any thoughts of legislation that might compel them to do so. While they may decry the prejudices, callousness, and insensitivity of other employers, or speak eloquently about the "right" to work of people with disabilities, ultimately hiring a person with an intellectual handicap is defined as an altruistic act that employers should be encouraged but cannot be compelled to do. They say, in effect: "I do it because I am a kind and generous person and I want to help. But don't try to force me to do it."

Essentially these employers were maintaining that efforts to legislate the employment of people with disabilities, including those with intellectual handicaps, would take the act of hiring such an individual out of the arena of altruism. To employ such a person would be a legal obligation, rather than an altruistic response. In such an event, many of the rewards that accrued to the employer, in terms of defining themselves (and being defined by others) as a good and caring person, would be at risk of being lost.

## 6 Conclusions & Implications

**T**HIS STUDY DEALS WITH EMPLOYERS who have hired people with intellectual disabilities with the involvement of supported employment programs. Because no effort was made to select a representative sample, it is very possible that the employers who were located through contacts with supported employment programs represent those whom the agencies considered particularly successful. Generalizations from this population to any other must be made with extreme caution. One cannot assume that the responses on all issues are characteristic of all employers. The study does not answer the question as to why some employers hire people with intellectual handicaps and some do not. It does not answer the question as to why some placements “succeed” and some do not. Nevertheless, the study does help to identify some of the challenges inherent in efforts to promote valued roles for people with intellectual disabilities through workforce participation in the context of a society that places a high value on productivity at the same time as it seeks to promote equality and humanitarianism. It demonstrates the impact of the value base of welfare capitalism on the meanings that employers attach to their experiences with supported employees and on how such individuals are perceived.

There is growing evidence that supported employment programs have failed to meet their initial promise (Mank, 1994; Wehman & Kregel, 1995). While the number of people in supported employment programs has continued to increase, the number of people in segregated employment has increased even faster. Supported employment initiatives have had minimal impact on those with the most severe disabilities. Further, supported employment often means part-time employment, low wages, and continued social isolation. Despite this, supported employment programs represent a far more positive alternative than segregated, sheltered settings. Research on the outcomes of supported employment programs indicate that

people take pride in having a “real job,” experience increased self-esteem, learn new skills, and are perceived as more independent and more confident by those who know them. Generally, they express considerable satisfaction in working in the community despite any shortcomings they experience with their particular job (Inge, Banks, Wehman, Hill & Shafer, 1988; Moseley, 1987, 1988; Pedlar, Lord & Van Loon, 1989).

Social Role Valorization theory is rich and complex, stressing the interplay between societal values and the devaluation of specific individuals, groups, and classes of people. It recognizes that people invariably fill multiple roles, with each having an impact on how people are perceived and treated within society. Nevertheless, there is perhaps a tendency for service providers to think that finding one particular valued role for an individual will overcome the impact of other, devalued, roles. This study does support the relationship between valued roles and positive life experiences. While outcomes were not entirely positive, as evidenced by work that was most often part-time and poorly paid (or not paid), the role of worker did affect the way that employers perceived the supported employee. While the focus of the study was not on the experiences of the supported employees, the data that were available in this regard did suggest many positive outcomes. However, while the role of worker may have had a positive impact, it did not overcome or erase the impact of the other more characteristic and negative roles into which people with disabilities are so often cast.

There is a tendency in the supported employment literature to presume that if service providers can only figure out how to do it “right,” supported employment will yield the desired outcomes. One dramatic manifestation of this is the growing emphasis on “natural supports” (Hagner, 1992; Nisbet & Hagner, 1988; Rogan, 1996; Test & Wood, 1996), where it is presumed that support provided by coworkers is more “natural” and effective than program-generated support. Certainly seeking new and better ways to deliver sup-

ported employment services is a worthy goal, and this study does suggest some issues that supported employment programs need to address. Greater sensitivity to the way people with disabilities are interpreted in the workplace, careful modeling of appropriate behavior, efforts to minimize the employer's care-giving role, and a more clearly defined expectation that pay will be forthcoming all might be expected to have some impact. In particular, proponents of "natural support" must ensure that these efforts do not further reinforce the perception of supported employees as dependent and childlike.

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that the very existence of these programs, located within the social service system and designed with the specific purpose of helping this population fit into the existing structure of the workforce, has within it certain inherent limitations. This reinforces the perception of people with intellectual disabilities as being in need of care and suggests that it is the people with disabilities who need to change, rather than the society in which they live. As long as the task of enabling people with intellectual disabilities to work in the community is seen primarily as the responsibility of the social service sector, the people served by these programs are at risk of being interpreted as needing and receiving care, even when they are working and contributing. As long as employers feel that they are doing the individual a favor by hiring him or her, people with intellectual disabilities remain vulnerable to exploitation. Enabling people with intellectual disabilities to be accorded their full rights as citizens demands that we develop policies that support their inclusion in the workplace not as a favor, but as a right. ♡

#### REFERENCES

- Annable, G. (1989). *Supported employment in Canada 1988: Final report*. Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.
- Anthony, P.D. (1977). *The ideology of work*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Biklen, S.K. & Moseley, C.R. (1988). "Are you retarded?" "No, I'm Catholic": Qualitative methods in the study of people with severe handicaps. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13(3), 155-162.
- Bogdan, R.C. & Biklen, S.K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Chestang, L.W. (1982). Work, personal change and human development. In S.H. Akabas & P.A. Kurzman (Eds.), *Work, workers, and work organizations: A view from social work*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 61-89.
- Deakin, N. (1987). *The politics of welfare*. London: Methuen.
- George, V. & Wilding, P. (1985). *Ideology and social welfare*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Gibb-Clark, M. Employment equity worries firms. *The Globe and Mail*, 16 May 1991.
- Gilbert, N. (1983). *Capitalism and the welfare state: Dilemmas of social benevolence*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gilbert, N. & Specht, H. (1986). *Dimensions of social welfare policy* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Press.
- Hagner, D.C. (1992). The social interactions and job supports of supported employees. In J. Nisbet (Ed.), *Natural supports in school, at work and in the community for people with severe disabilities*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 217-239.
- Hindess, B. (1987). *Freedom, equality, and the market: Arguments on social policy*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Inge, K.J., Banks, P.D., Wehman, P., Hill, J.W. & Shaffer, M.S. (1988, June). Quality of life for individuals who are labelled mentally retarded: Evaluating competitive employment versus sheltered workshop employment. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*.
- Macarov, D. (1980). *Work and welfare: The unholy alliance*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mank, D. (1994). The underachievement of supported employment. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 5(2), 1-23.
- McLoughlin, C.S., Garner, J.B. & Callahan, M. (1987). *Getting employed, staying employed*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

- Michalos, A.C. (1986). Job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, and the quality of life: A review and a preview. In F.M. Andrews (Ed.), *Research on the quality of life*. University of Michigan, Survey Research Center: Institute for Social Research, 57-83.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A source book of new methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Moseley, C.R. (1987). The job satisfaction of workers in supported employment. Paper presented at the 1987 TASH Annual Conference.
- Moseley, C.R. (1988). Job satisfaction research: Implications for supported employment. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13(3), 211-219.
- Murphy, S.T. & Rogan, P.M. (1995). *Closing the shop: Conversion from sheltered to integrated work*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Nisbet, J. & Hagner, D. (1988). Natural supports in the workplace: A reexamination of supported employment. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 13, 260-267.
- Oliver, M. (1990). *The politics of disablement*. London: Macmillan.
- O'Toole, J. (Ed.). (1974). *Work and the quality of life*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- O'Toole, J. (1974). Introduction. In J. O'Toole (Ed.), *Work and the quality of life*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1-23.
- Ozawa, M.N. (1982). Work and social policy. In S.H. Akabas & P.A. Kurzman (Eds.), *Work, workers, and work organizations: A view from social work*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 32-60.
- Patton, M.G. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pedlar, A., Lord, J. & Van Loon, M. (1989). *The process of supported employment and quality of life*. Kitchener: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services.
- Revell, W.G., Wehman, P., Kregel, J., West, M. & Rayfield, R. (1994, December). Supported employment for persons with severe disabilities: Positive trends in wages, models and funding. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 256-261.
- Rinehart, J.W. (1987). *The tyranny of work* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Rogan, P. (1996). Natural supports in the workplace: No need for a trial. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 21, 178-180.
- Spradley, J.P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Stone, D.A. (1984). *The disabled state*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Taylor, S.J. & Bogdan, R. (1984). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: The search for meanings* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Test, D. & Wood, W. (1996). Natural supports in the workplace: The jury is still out. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 21, 155-173.
- Warr, P. (1987). *Work, unemployment and mental health*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Wehman, P. & Kregel, J. (1995). At the crossroads: Supported employment ten years later. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 20, 286-299.
- Wehman, P., Kregel, J., Shafer, M.S. & West, M. (1989). Supported employment implementation I: Characteristics and outcomes of persons being served. In P. Wehman, J. Kregel & M.S. Shafer (Eds.), *Emerging trends in the National Supported Employment Initiative: A preliminary analysis of twenty-seven states*. Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Supported Employment, 46-74.
- Wehman, P. & Moon, M.S. (Eds.). (1988). *Vocational rehabilitation and supported employment*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- West, M., Revell, W.G. & Wehman, P. (1992). Achievements and challenges I: A five-year report on consumer and system outcomes from the supported employment initiative. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 17(4), 227-235.
- Wilensky, H.L. & Lebeaux, C.N. (1965). *Industrial society and social welfare*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wolfensberger, W. (1983). Social Role Valorization: A proposed new term for the principle of Normalization. *Mental Retardation*, 21(6), 234-239.

Wolfensberger, W. (1985). An overview of Social Role Valorization and some reflections on elderly mentally retarded persons. In M. Janicki & H. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Aging and developmental disabilities: Issues and approaches*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 61-76.

Wolfensberger, W. (1992). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (Rev. ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (1983). *PASSING (Program Analysis of Service Systems' Implementation of Normalization Goals): Normalization criteria and ratings manual* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Institute on Mental Retardation.

---

JUDITH SANDYS, PHD, is the Interim Director of the School for Social Work at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, & a member of the North American SRV Council.

---

**THE CITATION FOR THIS ARTICLE IS**

Sandys, J. (2009). "It does my heart good": How employers perceive supported employees. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 19-32. Reprinted from R.J. Flynn & R. Lemay (Eds.), *A quarter-century of normalization and Social Role Valorization: Evolution and impact*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 305-316.

# The “Happiness Issue”: A Brief Elaboration on a Common Obstacle to Social Role Valorization

Joe Osburn

## Introduction

ONE WAY TO THINK OF Social Role Valorization, or at least of PASSING (Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2007), is as a set of very high standards for addressing the wounds of devalued people, supporting them in valued social roles, and thereby nurturing their experience of the good things in life (Wolfensberger, Thomas & Caruso, 1996). As with any set of high standards, Social Role Valorization (SRV) ought to present varying degrees of challenge for those who wish to both learn and practice it. And, of course, it does do so. Most people who encounter SRV (Wolfensberger, 1998; Osburn, 2006) feel challenged by it on at least some occasions and in some ways. The challenge can arise from something within or outside the people themselves as well as from something intrinsic or extrinsic to SRV. In order to understand why the “happiness issue” can be an obstacle to SRV for some people, I will first mention three of the most common ways that people are likely to feel challenged by SRV, and then elaborate the “happiness issue” as an example of one of these ways.

### *Challenge to One’s Intellectual Capacity*

IT TAKES SOME TIME AND EFFORT to learn SRV at any depth beyond the superficial. However, experience as an SRV trainer tells me that most people who try to learn SRV can. For example, 99% of the trainees who come to introductory SRV training

workshops report that they like it, a lot: they find most of it to be pretty straightforward, make a lot of sense, and not all that difficult to understand. At the same time, most also find certain elements of SRV to be somewhat more intellectually challenging than others. For example, an important theme of SRV that most people grasp right away is the construct of imitation, because the tendency to imitate others is so natural for human beings, and the trainees are often vividly aware that they practice imitation all the time, and in hundreds of ways. On the other hand, most have to work a little harder to grasp the SRV relevant concept of service model coherency (Wolfensberger, 2009).

Related to the potentially intellectually challenging nature of SRV is that introductory SRV content can be conveyed in all sorts of different formats, degrees of comprehensiveness, and levels of demanding-ness, from short, slow and easy to lengthy, complete and quite rigorous. For example, a one-hour SRV overview for non-human service workers or members of the general public is at one end of the range, and at the other end are those introductory workshops which we often conduct that are designed to train SRV trainers of SRV trainers, what we sometimes call SRV leadership training, which are very comprehensive and taught at a high level of rigor and expectation. We tell potential participants that this type of training is geared to people who have college level minds, whether or not they actually went to college. Be-

yond introductory SRV training, there are various post-introductory training opportunities, and there is also an advanced Social Role Valorization workshop. So, one could say that the intellectual challenge involved in learning SRV is analogous to most learning processes of incremental learning advances: some SRV learners master the material more easily than others; some go further in their mastery than others.

### ***Challenges to Aspects of One's Identity***

SECOND, AND MORE COMMONLY, some people find that SRV presents a challenge to aspects of their personal or professional identity, such as their self-image, their beliefs or values, or commitments, or roles, or their attitudes or mind-sets, or even quite often, their livelihood. For instance, someone who gets paid to segregate devalued people in large groups and engage them in meaningless activities all day is very likely to feel challenged if he comes to SRV training and hears (perhaps for the first time) that what he has been doing all along is harmful to people. Or, the identity challenge may come from the fact that SRV does not fit well with what the person wants to believe, or wants the world to be like. A common example of this is the difficulty many people have in coming to grips with the reality of devaluation, or with the implications of that reality, perhaps because devaluation gets them very close to some of the most basic questions of human existence. For instance, they may be the type of person who resists the notion that human beings do devalue some other human beings, perhaps because they do not want to believe that they themselves do that. Or, they may agree that there is devaluation, but resist the notion that particular devalued people are, in fact, devalued. In either case, they, therefore, also have a great deal of difficulty fully appreciating that valued and devalued people are not the same because the sheer condition of being socially devalued creates major existential differences between those who experience it and those who don't. (We give many examples of this in SRV training.)

This reality also runs against the grain of some people, who therefore have trouble accepting its logical implications to role-valorizing service. A key point about this second type of challenge is what the person who feels it does about it. He might decide from it that SRV is not for him; or, he might conclude that SRV is right and that he needs to change what he is doing.

### ***Challenge to One's Service Skills & Discipline***

A THIRD VERY COMMON TYPE OF CHALLENGE has to do with putting its ideas into practice—actually doing things to valorize the social roles of one or more individuals. While, of course, some people do much better at this than others, almost everybody finds SRV challenging to implement. Sometimes, this is for reasons already mentioned, such as incomplete understanding or incompatible attitudes. But also, even in services provided by people who both understand SRV fairly well and want to do it, it may still be hard to carry out fully. We see this in SRV-based evaluations of such services—few attain a score on PASSING in the excellent range (cf. Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2007).

There are many reasons for this. For instance, because SRV has implications across the board to nearly every facet of addressing service recipients' needs, even people with high SRV proficiency and commitment are tested in their efforts to implement it fully. For example, it is usually much easier to support people in (ascribed or attributed) relationship roles than in (function-contingent) roles that require skills and competent performance; likewise, it is relatively easy to put into effect many SRV implications having to do with image enhancement, but much more challenging to implement SRV requirements of competency enhancement.

Over and above the facts that SRV is hard to implement in general and that some parts of it are harder to implement than others, the biggest difficulty comes from the fact that people who want to do SRV have to do it with real people in real life circumstances, where things do not al-

ways work well because the real world is not only full of obstacles, but is also where the devaluation is. Moreover, even if SRV-implementers do get everything just right, that state of affairs may not last, and the implementers will have to make adjustments or even start over again. Sometimes even very good SRV arrangements are disrupted by things that are hard to anticipate. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

One family I know is pretty committed to SRV mainly because one of their children has Down's syndrome. More than two years after he graduated from high school at 21 years old, he finally got a decent work role: a full-time paid job in the main offices of a large corporation. When he was hired, his parents and agency support worker approached this opportunity very carefully in terms of preparing him to succeed in the corporate world, helping him learn the building layout, study the employees' handbook, get outfits of new clothes in line with the dress code, and so on. After a month or two into the job, everything was going pretty well. One night, he went out to eat with some coworkers, and later a couple of them took him to a night spot, where they all carried on and had a good time. The next day at work, he was on the elevator with a woman who complimented him on how nice he looked, saying "That's a nice suit." Trying to return the compliment, he said "Thanks ... those are nice breasts."

Well, he was not fired, but was suspended a few days so he could be counseled by the company's human resources people. This did not make him "happy," but was very instructive for him and everyone else concerned. This brings us to "the happiness issue," which seems to be an obstacle to some people "getting" SRV, and is a common example of the second type of challenge mentioned above, i.e., to aspects of one's identity.

### The "Happiness" Issue

**M**OST OF WHAT I have to say here about this issue is taken directly from Wolfensberger's *Guidelines for Evalua-*

*tors During a PASS, PASSING, or Similar Assessment of Human Service Quality* (Wolfensberger, 1983; p. 60, numbers 5 a, b & c.) I have added a few embellishments to these, hopefully without distorting them in any way.

Many people who are in a human service role to a devalued person think that the best and most important thing they can do for that person is to make, or keep, or let him or her be, "happy." (That is why we call it "the happiness issue.") This is particularly the case if the devalued person upon whom they are serving is very young, or elderly, or mentally retarded, or severely impaired. They simply believe that being "happy" is the highest priority in life, at least for that person, and they may feel this way even if they do not believe the same is true for themselves. Meaning no disrespect, and for lack of a better term, I will call those who think this way "happiness-invokers," because they invoke the state of being happy as the ultimate yardstick for determining whether a service action is appropriate or not.

We find "happiness-invokers" in both formal organized services and in informal contexts. For example, people, such as paid staff, who are in formal service roles may be "happiness invokers." Or, adult children taking care of elderly parents in an informal service role may be "happiness-invokers," as could be the parents of a handicapped child. In other words, many human service workers, as well as many ordinary people, like family members, are like this.

"Happiness-invokers" often clash with other servers who simply do not support the constant pursuit of happiness for the devalued person, or who advocate things that seem to interfere with the devalued person's happiness. Such clashes sometimes occur between people who have been trained in SRV and those who have not, because one believes that role valorization of the person served is of utmost importance while the other believes that keeping the person always happy is the main thing. A typical example of this kind of clash is one that takes place between the non-

SRV-trained parents of a handicapped person and the SRV-trained staff of an agency that provides services to that person. However, I hasten to add that just because someone has been trained in SRV does not mean he is always going to be right, or just because two parties have had SRV training does not guarantee that they will always agree on every issue (although there is likely to be a higher degree of agreement on most SRV-related ones).

In the minds of “happiness invokers,” an SRV measure is simply wrong if it runs counter to what seems to make or keep a service recipient “happy.” However, it is possible—and even likely—that some SRV measures may be quite contrary to what some people think; after all, some of its implications are counter-intuitive. If this occurs, people who invoke happiness as their standard think SRV should be disregarded or else changed to accommodate their issue because, they believe, service recipient happiness trumps all other considerations. They may disagree with SRV partly, or reject it completely, over this one little issue. This may be the only reason, or at least the only expressed reason, why they never fully embrace SRV or never pursue SRV any further after their initial encounter with it.

Following are some useful guidelines for developing an SRV perspective on this problem. The first thing is to develop an adaptive predisposition to the “happiness issue.” This can come from cultivating four basic mental stances about it.

### ***Maintain Consciousness of the Ultimate Goal of SRV***

FIRST, ONE NEEDS TO REMAIN AWARE that the goal of SRV is to enable devalued people to experience the good things in life: this is what SRV is ultimately aimed toward. These good things do not necessarily fall into the laps of most devalued people; and so, both they—and those in service roles to them—will usually need to put forth some effort, some persistence, some struggle in order to gain them and maintain them. Remaining conscious of this worthy goal can help sustain one

through those times when carrying out SRV gets difficult and requires one to hold to one’s rigorous SRV-derived expectations, even when that means confronting or even clashing with others, such as “happiness invoking” staff, but possibly also with service recipients themselves.

### ***Avoid Equating “Happiness” with Role Valorizing Conditions***

SECOND, ONE MUST KEEP IN MIND that valorizing the social roles of a party is not incompatible with that party’s happiness, a point I will come back to in a moment, but neither are they the same thing, as some people think they should be. Therefore, we should be very careful ourselves not to equate service recipient “happiness” with either a good life, or with role-valorizing service conditions whose ultimate aim is to enable the person to experience the good things in life.

### ***Avoid Oversimplifying SRV***

THIRD, WANTING THINGS TO BE simple and easy is a pretty common human trait, but it is not rational or helpful to oversimplify or dumb-down complex multi-layered things. We see this often with SRV, when people try to reduce it down to something maybe as simple as “SRV is just common sense,” or “SRV means being nice to people.” I have heard individuals responsible for teaching SRV to others say things like “SRV is all about integration,” or “SRV really all boils down to one thing: rights!” The “happiness issue” is in the same mode of thinking. One needs to help others understand that the good things in life for a devalued person or, for that matter, any person, do not reduce down to simply being “happy,” because there is a lot more to life than that. Fortunately, there is likewise a great deal more to SRV.

### ***Give SRV Due Consideration, i.e., A Fair Hearing***

FOURTH, IF SOMEONE REALLY AND TRULY wants the good things in life for a devalued person then he or she would be wise to take SRV very seriously

and to consider it in some depth, because SRV theory has so much to offer anyone who wants the good things in life for a devalued person. SRV is so potentially important for making someone's life better that the server would be unfair to him or herself, and more importantly also to the person served, to either neglect SRV, or to reject it, on the basis of some casual exposure to it, or of some less-than-complete understanding of it, or of an impulse or feeling provoked by it.

Let me now elaborate a little bit on these four basic mental stances by making ten additional derivative points.

### ***SRV Measures & Happiness Often Correlate***

FIRST AND FOREMOST, it should be made very clear that there is an exceedingly high degree of correlation between SRV measures and the kinds of things that would help to assure "happiness" for most people, including service recipients. For instance, SRV contains thousands of specific im-

plications for positive actions on behalf of devalued people that would directly affect their well-being, security, identity, self-esteem, dignity, respect, belongingness, acceptance, education, learning, growth, development, home-life, work and career, contributions to others, valued participation and involvement in their society and its culture, high quality and adaptive interpersonal interactions, engagements in meaningful, caring and long-term relationships, and the realization and fulfillment of their desires, hopes, and dreams—all of which would contribute enormously to the likelihood of the person's happiness. To reject SRV because one out of a zillion potentially valorizing actions on behalf of a specific individual might momentarily diminish that person's "happiness" is not rational, especially if it also leads one to reject working on some of the zillion-minus-one other things that are virtually certain to improve the person's life. (See Wolfensberger, 1983, p. 60, #5b.)

---



---

## 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  
*The SRV Journal*, 74 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609 USA  
 508.752.3670; journal@srvip.org; www.srvip.org

Thank you.

### ***SRV is Not Primarily a Therapeutic or Clinical Tool***

SRV IS CONCERNED PRIMARILY with measures that support people in valued social roles. It is not a clinical instrument that measures individual characteristics and personal dynamics. Thus, SRV is not oriented to how specific individuals “feel” about or assess their so-called “quality of life,” or how others may do so, but rather SRV is oriented to the conditions existing in a service provision that are likely to contribute to more “valorization,” though not necessarily “happiness,” in the lives of all service recipients. (See Wolfensberger, 1983, p. 60, #5a.)

### ***Happiness is Idiosyncratic; Not Fully Under Others' Control***

IT IS NOT UN-IMPORTANT THAT a person be happy; happiness is generally a desirable thing. Yet, for most people, most experiences of happiness in this world tend to be random, transitory and imperfect. Only the saintliest people seem able to sustain a state of happiness over time, and of course, many saints were sublimely happy when they were suffering! On the one hand, even under optimal conditions, some persons will be unhappy, and create their own hell. On the other hand, some people are very serene under even the most adverse conditions, including ones that may last a lifetime. Therefore, personal feelings of well-being and happiness are only partially controllable by other people, including those in serving roles, such as family members and program staff, or by service provisions, or by program structures. (See Wolfensberger, 1983, p. 60, #5a.)

### ***Happiness is Subjective & Relative***

HAPPINESS IS A SUBJECTIVE FEELING STATE, and is thus always relative, not only to the person, but also to the (fleeting) present moment and temporal circumstances. Obviously, no one is ever “perfectly happy,” at least not for very long. Most people, most of the time, say they are only relatively moderately happy: if someone always seemed

ecstatic, others would think there was something wrong with him or her.

### ***SRV is Often Demanding***

VALORIZING LIFE CONDITIONS do not always imply reduction in stress or discomfort. To the contrary, in a sheltered and non-valorizing setting, it may be much easier for certain people to be content, while a role-valorizing structure may be demanding, stressful and at times turbulent. For example, high developmental challenges do not always bring happiness. There is an idea called the “dignity of risk,” meaning that a certain inherent dignity is attached to a person who tries, who takes on developmental growth risks, who confronts and struggles with challenges, and this dignity the person retains even if he should fail. He may not be happy that he failed, but perhaps the dignity of having tried is more important than “happiness.” (See Wolfensberger, 1983, p. 60, #5c.)

### ***Some Believe Happiness Outweighs its Negative Costs***

AS NOTED EARLIER, many people apparently believe that “happiness” is what matters most in the life of a devalued person. They argue (at least implicitly) that whatever makes such a person “happy” is okay, even if it also has negative consequences for that person, which they tend to downplay or disregard. This clashes with a fundamental notion in SRV that has endless implications, which is that if one thinks it is important to help others think good things instead of bad things about a vulnerable person, then one would not support things that might lead others to think less of that person or to see that person in a negative light. For example, one would avoid doing or saying or supporting things that might encourage, or risk conveying, any negative stereotypes that the person one cares about is vulnerable to. And, there are all sorts of pernicious stereotypes affecting devalued people. As an example, perhaps the most common stereotype about people with mental disorders is that they are violent or dangerous, and

therefore scary and menacing. So, knowing that, if one serves people who are likely to be thought of in that way, then getting them enrolled in a class where they learned how to shoot handguns would be a real problem—even if it did make them “happy.” This is just what the staff of a group home for people coming out of psychiatric facilities actually did with several of their residents. So, in the minds of those staff people, it was okay to cast their recipients further into the menace role, as long as it made the residents happy, even if it scared the hell out of their already fearful neighbors and practically sealed this very negative stereotype permanently into their minds.

As one can see, the “happiness” criterion is especially problematic when applied in service to devalued people, particularly if they are image- or competency-impaired. Those who hold this perspective, that is, people who invoke “happiness,” should be forthrightly challenged to consider if what they call “happiness” constitutes the highest value in earthly life, especially if brought at the expense of independence, self-sufficiency, acceptance and respect from others.

### ***Happiness Can Be Used as a Cover or Detoxification***

IF ONE WHO INVOKES “HAPPINESS” acknowledges that measures which seem to make a devalued person “happy” also have problematic aspects, and yet insists on defending those measure nonetheless, then several things may be at work. There may be some degree of defensiveness (psychologically speaking) or other type of emotional investment in a practice being argued for, often because the arguers themselves or someone they know may engage in that practice. For example, some people who work for services that segregate devalued people often argue that this is good for such people because they are “happy with their own kind.” Some service workers, family members and others defend institutions based on that rationale. Or, the arguer may be ambivalent about devaluation. For instance, as mentioned before, he or

she may simply refuse to believe that it is real, or may accept its reality, but insist that particular individuals, groups or classes of devalued people are not devalued. Or, he may see that a particular person is devalued, but be unable to appreciate that that person’s heightened vulnerability makes him or her different from non-devalued people and requires a more cautious and careful, or “conservative,” service approach. In any case, the “happiness-invoker” may try to “detoxify” the problematic elements, meaning try to make them appear less problematic than they really are, or else do things to cover them up.

### ***There Are Many Paths to Happiness***

THIS SOUNDS MORE LIKE Zen than SRV, but it applies here nonetheless. The point is that some people will insist on the acceptability for a devalued person of a de-valorizing, but “happiness-inducing” practice, as if it were the only thing that could possibly make the person happy, and as if nothing else of a role-valorizing nature could equal it, let alone bring even greater potential happiness. When one runs up against this type of argument, it can be helpful to communicate to the “happiness-invoker” that one personally has nothing against happiness and that, in fact, some of one’s best friends are happy, and that surely the two of you should be able to come up with other, more valorizing ways that the person in question can experience a bit of happiness. Not being able to do this usually indicates a failure of the imagination more than that there is only a single path to happiness.

### ***Happiness May Be Invoked as a Cop-Out***

IN OUR EXPERIENCE, THE “HAPPINESS” criterion is invoked almost exclusively on the side of acquiescence to the status quo, or what might be called the “default” position, which is most often that of doing nothing, and it is almost never invoked on the side of active intervention on the part of the invoker. People rarely seem to make the “happiness” argument when it would require them to

work harder. In other words, if they genuinely put the person's "happiness" above all else, one would expect them to argue for it at least as strenuously when they would be required to work very hard or to make significant personal sacrifices in order to assure it. We suspect that many people who resort to this argument require nothing more of themselves than toleration of a service recipient's maladaptive, but presumably happiness-inducing, behaviors or decisions. Such complacency can be a form of laziness or even outright irresponsibility on the part of the serving entity. This, in turn, may result from lack of identification, or conversely, from an unhealthy over-identification with the service recipient, or to a lack of genuine caring for the person, or a lack of commitment to providing an excellent service overall to a wounded person.

### ***Low Expectations May Be Defended by Invoking Happiness***

LASTLY, PEOPLE WHO INVOKE the "happiness" rule may harbor low expectations of certain devalued people, which allows them to defend a practice that confirms those negative role perceptions and expectations. For example, if people hold the belief that a particular devalued person is a "holy innocent" or an "eternal child," they may exempt that person from any duties or obligations or rules or challenges which that person does not like. This attitude is why many devalued people never learned the value and importance of work, or were never challenged in school, or lack social graces.

### **Conclusion**

THE "HAPPINESS ISSUE" HAS IMPLICATIONS to the dissemination of SRV insofar as effective SRV teaching requires knowledge of the issue, its roots and its rationales. It also requires communicating the countervailing rationales for pursuing SRV. The issue also has implications to effective SRV practice which requires a disciplined and strategic approach rooted in well-thought-out principles applied to individ-

ual people; an approach, in other words, that is likely to understand and withstand the clamoring of "happiness-invokers" in its pursuit of higher, or at least more valorizing, overall aims. As an SRV trainer, my own experience with the "happiness issue" is that many people come to SRV training thinking this way somewhat intuitively, but are usually able to sort it out and, in effect, change their minds, because SRV puts this and many other issues they may have in a larger more coherent context, and helps them to distinguish between SRV and non-SRV issues, and between issues that are related but different. For instance, there is some overlap between the happiness issue and the "client choice" issue, but they are not exactly the same. Also, as readers familiar with PASSING will know, that instrument renders a number of sub-scores in addition to the overall service performance score. These sub-scores measure elements of service quality not contained in single ratings, but rather are derived by summing the scores of various combinations of different ratings. One such sub-score is "Felicity," comprised of ratings which measure conditions that taken together would likely contribute to a recipient's overall sense of "well-being" or, yes, feelings of "happiness." However, again, making "happiness" the decisive factor in one's service philosophy is not the same as the idea of supporting a felicitous set of service conditions which potentially might facilitate such a state.

Finally, in summary, let me reiterate that SRV is not "anti-happiness" and, I am happy to say, neither am I. ☺

SEE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON PAGE 67

### **REFERENCES**

- Osburn, J. (2006). An overview of Social Role Valorization theory. *The SRV Journal*, 1(1), 4–13.
- Wolfensberger, W. (1983). *Guidelines for evaluators during a PASS, PASSING, or similar assessment of human service quality*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Wolfensberger, W. (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (3rd ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

Wolfensberger, W. (2009). The construct of human service model coherency, and service model design and evaluation. Manuscript in preparation.

Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (2007). *PASSING: A tool for analyzing service quality according to Social Role Valorization criteria. Ratings manual* (3rd rev. ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

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.

---

JOE OSBURN is the director of the Safeguards Initiative in Bardstown, KY, USA, & a member of the North American SRV Council.

---

**THE CITATION FOR THIS ARTICLE IS**

Osburn, J. (2009). The "happiness issue": A brief elaboration on a common obstacle to Social Role Valorization. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 33-41.

# The Ring of Words: On Rhetoric, Writing & Social Role Valorization Dissemination

Marc Tumeinski

*The first rule of all writing—that rule to which every other is subordinate—is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and precisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers. All considerations about the purity and dignity of style ought to bend to this consideration.*  
~ Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859)

AS MENTIONED IN THE LAST COLUMN, we recommend that readers of this *Journal* can and should learn to write and write to learn (Zinnsner, 1988), particularly in regard to Social Role Valorization (SRV) dissemination. Writing can help us to deepen our understanding of SRV, whether for purposes of teaching, implementation or both. Writing well about a particular topic is not possible without a firm understanding of that topic, its scope as well as its limitations, its broad picture as well as its minute details. Thus, writing about issues from an SRV perspective will improve our ability to teach others about it.

Regarding implementation, writing about a dilemma we face in our service to others or about the life experiences and social roles of someone we serve, can help to clarify for us what is most important, show us connections we did not see, bring out more clearly the SRV-related implications, suggest possible approaches, craft a vision of what is desirable, and so on.

A tool that I have found quite helpful in SRV-related writing is a method initially developed by Darcy Elks. My thanks to Darcy for permission to include it in this column. Note that this heuristic was developed in the context of writing a PASSING report (more on this below). The method incorporates three topic areas:

## I. Statement of the issue

- A. What is the issue? (e.g., Segregation—what is it?)
- B. Why is it an issue? (e.g., What has characteristically been done to persons who are socially devalued vis-a-vis segregation? What are the effects of segregation upon devalued people in general? Etc.)

## II. Why is this an issue in the lives of the socially devalued people met by the PASSING team?

- A. How did we see this issue reflected in the lives of the people met by the PASSING team? (i.e., Present the information gathered)
- B. What is the impact upon the people?

## III. Recommendations relative to this issue

- A. Long-term
- B. Short-term

How might we use this heuristic? One of the most obvious, and the original intent, is in writing a PASSING report (see below). I have though also

used it and taught others to use it in other contexts. For example, if you are struggling with a problem in your service to a vulnerable socially devalued person, make the space and silence to write about it, using this method. Such writing and reflection can be done individually and later even shared in a group context. It can also be used for training purposes, as a framework for participants to write about a particular person or a particular program they are familiar with. Other readers may have additional suggestions; please email them to me at [journal@srvip.org](mailto:journal@srvip.org) and I will share them in a future column.

### PASSING Report Writing

WRITING PASSING REPORTS, in my experience, deepens and strengthens one's SRV training and implementation efforts. What is a PASSING report? In a PASSING workshop, a team of participants visits a human service program and assesses it from an SRV perspective. A PASSING report is an in-depth analysis written by one member of a PASSING team—with the editorial assistance of the team leader, senior trainer or others—though it may also be written by the team leader. A report focuses on one service site assessed by a PASSING team, and includes a lengthy narrative as well as scoresheets, with numerical information indicating the levels assigned by the team for the 42 PASSING ratings (cf. Wolfensberger & Thomas, 2007).

Learning to write, and actually writing a PASSING report, can benefit all the members of the team who read the report, the report writer themselves, the larger SRV/PASSING culture, and potentially the assessed service. At least indirectly, therefore, a PASSING report can benefit the devalued people served by the program written about as well as socially devalued people more generally. As an aid to consciousness raising, writing PASSING reports is a highly beneficial tool in the SRV/PASSING training culture and for SRV implementation efforts.

To find out more about report writing opportunities, please contact:

- Marc Tumeinski, SRV Implementation Project, 508 752 3670, [journal@srvip.org](mailto:journal@srvip.org)
- Susan Thomas, Syracuse University Training Institute, 315 473 2978

The Syracuse University Training Institute has prepared a number of documents which are very helpful in writing a PASSING report, and indirectly helpful in SRV-related writing broadly considered. These documents are entitled:

- Rationales for written reports of PASS/PASSING practicum evaluations
- PASSING report editing protocol
- List of documents needed in order to write a PASSING assessment report
- A basis for fruitful collaboration between a PASS/PASSING report writer and a report editor
- Checklist for report-writers before transmitting a PASS or PASSING report draft to anyone, including a report editor

The above documents are available from the Training Institute, 315 473 2978.

### Learning to Write ~ Resources

SOME OF OUR WRITING RELEVANT TO SRV will be prose writing that includes some aspect of research, whether quantitative or qualitative. With this focus in mind, two good books on writing research-based essays and papers are:

- Chastain, E. (2008). *How to write a research paper*. NY: Spark Publishing.
- Marshall, J. (2008). *How to write an essay*. NY: Spark Publishing.

The above books were written for college students; they are practical and easy to use. A good online resource is available from the Colorado State University writing center:

- <http://writing.colostate.edu/learn.cfm>

If you have specific questions about writing or its relevance to SRV, please let me know and we will try to cover them in future columns. ☺

*Bright is the ring of words when the right man rings them. ~ Robert Louis Stevenson, Songs of Travel*

#### REFERENCES

Wolfensberger, W. & Thomas, S. (2007). *PASSING: A tool for analyzing service quality according to Social Role Valorization criteria*. Ratings manual (3rd rev. ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

Zinnser, W. *Writing to learn*. (1988). NY: Harper & Row.

MARC TUMEINSKI is a trainer for the SRV Implementation Project in Worcester, MA, USA, & editor of *The SRV Journal*.

THE CITATION FOR THIS COLUMN IS

Tumeinski, M. (2009). The ring of words: On rhetoric, writing & Social Role Valorization dissemination. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 42–44.

## The Citizen Advocacy Foundation of America

### From the Editor

CITIZEN ADVOCACY (CA) is an advocacy model developed by W. Wolfensberger which in practice is informed by and relevant to Social Role Valorization. CA arranges and supports relationships between socially valued, competent citizens, and individuals who are socially devalued. The intent is for the typical citizen to respond to and to represent the devalued person's needs and interests as if they were their own.

The Citizen Advocacy Foundation of America is a non-profit, tax-exempt foundation. It solicits financial contributions to be used to make grants to CA-related projects, providing a means for assuring the continuity of CA and CA programs. Historically, CA programs have had great difficulty finding initial and ongoing funding. The Foundation will only fund projects closely related to CA, striving to achieve the greatest benefit to the CA movement overall.

The viability of this Foundation depends on financial contributions made to it by generous donors. We ask readers of this *Journal* to please consider making a donation, and/or to share this information with others who may be able to make a donation. All contributions are exempt from US taxes. For more information about the Foundation, contact Susan Thomas at 231 Miles Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13210; 315.478.3797.

#### To learn more about Citizen Advocacy, three excellent written resources are:

Wolfensberger, W. & Zauha, H. (1973). *Citizen Advocacy and protective services for the impaired and handicapped*. Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Hildebrand, A. (2004). *One person at a time*. Brookline, MA: Brookline Books.

O'Brien, J. & Wolfensberger, W. (1988). *CAPE: Standards for Citizen Advocacy program evaluation (Syracuse test edition)*. Syracuse, NY: Person-to-Person Citizen Advocacy Association.

*Announcing the availability of*  
**A SET OF FIVE DVDs OF TWO PRESENTATIONS BY DR. WOLF WOLFENSBERGER  
 ON THE HISTORY OF HUMAN SERVICES**

In 2009, the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities produced a set of DVDs, based on a videotape, of two one-day presentations on the history of human services presented by Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger & Susan Thomas at Millersville University in Pennsylvania. The first day is entitled "An Interpreted Pictorial Presentation on the History of Human Services with Emphasis on the Origins of Some of Our Major Contemporary Service Patterns, & Some Universal Lessons for Planning & Structuring of Services Which Can Be Learned from this History." It constitutes approximately 6:15 running time.

The second day is entitled "Reflections on a Lifetime in Human Services, from Prior to the Reforms of the 1950s-70s to the Present, with Implications for the Future: What Has Gotten Better, What Has Gotten Worse, What Is the Same, & What Lies Ahead." It constitutes approximately 3:50 running time.

Each day consists of lecture presentations on the topic, using many overheads & slides (photos & illustrations). At the end of each day, the presentation draws out some lessons from the coverage to contemporary services.

The set of five DVDs takes about 10 hours to show. The set is available for purchase for US \$485.00, which includes permission to show the DVDs to others; for instance, in teaching a class or conducting a seminar. The first 10 purchasers will receive, FREE, a copy of the book *The Origin & Nature of Our Institutional Models*, autographed by the author Wolf Wolfensberger.

To order, complete the attached form & send it, along with full payment, to the address on the form on the next page.

**DAY 1: An Interpreted Pictorial Presentation on the History of Human Services**

- 1a Pre and Post Greco-Roman Times (26:33)
- 1b Early Christianity and the Middle Ages (28:03)
- 2a Medieval Hospice and Hospital Design (32:01)
- 2b The "Menacization" of the Afflicted (10:35)
- 2c The Rise of Pauperism (29:42)
- 3a Deportation and Exile (16:28)
- 3b Containment and Confinement (15:47)
- 4a Degradation and Elimination of the Altar (11:46)
- 4b The Panopticon and Central Observation Stations (28:11)
- 5a Service "Deculturation" and Moral Treatment (17:09)
- 5b "Menacization" Images and Associations with Leprosy and Contagion (23:58)
- 6a The Association of Hospices with Houses of Detention (13:43)
- 6b Various Beliefs That Played a Role in Menacization (4:59)
- 6c Human Service Assumptions Based in Materialism (14:18)
- 6d Further Menacization Through "Treatments" Based on Punishments (31:23)
- 6e Regimentation and the Use of Military Imagery (17:07)
- 7a Historical Lines of Influence in the Perversion of Western Human Services (14:51)
- 7b Core Realities, Strategies and Defining Characteristics of Contemporary Services (31:21)
- 7c Some Conclusions (10:53)



# Valued Siblings

**Debbie Race**

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following stories speak to the power and relevance of family relationships, particularly between brothers and sisters, in the lives of socially devalued people. These true stories play out against the background of the significant struggles and changes that have occurred in service systems over the past 50 years as well as ongoing struggles, e.g., against segregation. Awareness of this background should give our readers a context for analyzing the paternalistic, non-helpful service/program practices pointed out in the article, as well as stereotyped assumptions and expectations. The power of the relationships described in this article is not meant to make us ignore potentially harmful service practices, as the writer makes clear, but rather to underscore the importance of the relationship, and of the role, of brother or sister. This understanding also invites us to adopt a mindset of trying to see harmful practices from the perspective of the person and their family, rather than more impersonally as paid staff or clinician. Such a mindset is helpful from an interpersonal identification perspective and can make for a better server. The article also helps point out that what might seem to 'outsiders' a small success can still provide a socially devalued child or adult greater access to some of the good things of life, as well as give a sense of pride, shared commitment and strength to them and to their family.*

## Introduction

THIS ARTICLE DESCRIBES in some detail the valued social role of well-loved family member and in par-

ticular that of sibling, with reference to two particular sibling relationships with which I am very familiar, as I am the sister of the first person described and the mother of the second. In particular this article looks at the mutuality of the sibling relationship and the potential benefits for all parties. In terms of Social Role Valorization (SRV), this relates especially to role modelling, expectations, developmental assumptions and interpersonal identification (Wolfensberger, 1998; Race, 1999).

## Jenny

JENNY WAS BORN IN SEPTEMBER 1950. She was the second daughter of an ordinary middle-class family who were offered some unexpected advice, given the era and its prevailing approach of suggesting such children should be in institutions. Our parents were advised to take her home and treat her like any other child. They were also advised, crucially, the reasons for her having Down's syndrome, and reassured that it was neither their fault nor something to be ashamed of. Perhaps their belief in the power of science and education (they were both teachers) and their Christian faith helped them accept such advice. So they went home determined to love Jenny and have high expectations of her achievements. Thirteen months later I was born and thus Jenny had a baby sister. It is my sibling relationship that I wish to describe in detail.

Jenny and I grew up in many ways like twins; we walked and talked at about the same time; shared

prams, baths and beds; and were seen as the tiresome twosome at times by our much elder sister when we were particularly boisterous or otherwise interrupting her more “grown-up” activities. Like most siblings, Jenny and I fell out occasionally. I frequently came off worst in these early tussles before the development of a spot of cunning helped me hold my own. Our early life is a haze of happy memories. Jenny did not start school at the age of five as other children did, but as she turned six, she started in the local infant reception class alongside me. I showed her where to sit and generally looked after her, which gave her something to think about apart from her own nervousness at this big new step. (It has to be acknowledged that the step was not that major given that the school was next door to our home and, as our father was the headmaster, the school was not unknown to us or us to the school.)

This pattern of starting things together was continued with Brownies<sup>1</sup> and then Guides, who accepted Jenny on condition that I attend and provide help as needed. However, Jenny’s opportunity to participate fully in all the things I as her younger sister did was limited by the systems of the era. Children with an IQ below 50 were deemed uneducable and therefore were excluded from the school system. Those with IQs in the 50-70 range were sent to ‘special schools,’ and this is what happened to Jenny after one year in a mainstream school. The school she attended was in the next town several miles away and she was transported to and fro by taxi each day.

One noticeable difference in our lives was that Jenny could not have friends round after school, as they lived some distance away and transport was not readily available. I, on the other hand, walked to school as did my friends, so visiting each other’s houses was much easier. This system of educational apartheid meant that our sibling relationship was restricted to times outside school, but that still gave plenty of time for the normal fun and scrapes of childhood. We walked the family dogs together; indulged in make-believe play; as well as doing jigsaws, playing cards, dominoes and other educational

games encouraged by our parents. Having Jenny in the family provided a role for me, that of supporter and guide. This role enabled me as her rather shy sister to face many new situations with greater equanimity by focusing on Jenny and her needs.

A further difference in our lives was the expectations of others. I was expected to do well at school and go on to higher education before a career and family. Expectations for Jenny were very different and, apart from those of our family, very low. As she came to the end of her school career at the age of 16, the service system decided that she was not capable of earning her living in open employment and advised that she should attend an adult training centre. Our parents disagreed. What followed was a two-year struggle, unsupported except by the kindness and openness to possibilities shown by the manager of an old people’s home a short distance from where Jenny lived. At the end of this difficult period, Jenny was accepted as a permanent employee of the home, working 30 hours per week and receiving the standard wages for her role as domestic assistant.

The first real split in our lives as sisters came when I left home to go to university. This became a permanent separation as life after university involved a job and then a husband and a home some distance away. From then on our relationship continued to be loving, and to involve regular time together at Christmas and other holidays, but to be predominantly apart.

During those years Jenny had a full life, living with our parents and sharing in so much with them. She managed to fit in:

- Visits to relatives in Canada, Hong Kong, Bermuda and Zambia.
- Being a very kind godmother and aunt.
- Helping out in selling tens of thousands of pounds worth of Christmas cards for Mencap (the national voluntary organisation for the families of people with learning/intellectual disabilities in the UK).
- A taste for good food and the odd glass of wine or two.

- A host of holidays all over the world, including her dream trip to Disney World where I accompanied her so she did not have to take her aged parents with her!

Jenny retained her job for twenty eight years until early onset dementia meant she had to retire early. At this point she started to attend a day service and met a man who became her boyfriend. For the first time in her life (and for too short a period) she knew the joy of being loved by someone other than family members.

As the dementia took hold, Jenny needed more support than her family could offer, especially as first our mother and then our father died. She moved to live in a small home near me run by an organisation that was committed to and trained in the principles of normalization/SRV. In line with this commitment, when Jenny moved in, the staff were determined to find out as much as possible about her in order to communicate better with her, maintain her routines and respond to her tastes and wishes. One example of this is the effort they went to, in order to help her retain her role of churchgoer, by supporting her attendance at church, and when that was no longer feasible, encouraging the vicar to call instead. I am sure that, as well, Jenny's loving and sunny nature contributed to the loving and caring response she received from the staff at the residential home.

The home was well organised but flexible. We were welcome to pop in at any time as well as make longer arranged visits or to invite Jenny to stay with us for Christmas. However, despite the staff commitment to SRV principles, the home was a registered care home and had to abide by certain rules and regulations.<sup>2</sup> Jenny had always enjoyed a glass of wine or sherry and this she continued to do. In fact, at the time when she was using less and less speech, everyone found that a glass of wine seemed to relax her enough to encourage her to talk more, such as holding her glass out and saying "more," though this caused concern among staff. Despite the fact that Jenny was an adult and the

wine was her own, a second glass could not be provided until the staff arranged a meeting with me to discuss this. This situation occurred because of the "risk" rules and the concern of the staff to encourage all residents to maintain healthy lifestyles. At the meeting everyone very quickly agreed that an occasional second glass of wine when requested was neither going to make Jenny an alcoholic nor impact on her health when she was already suffering from a terminal illness. Still, the incident showed the paternalistic element engendered by rules designed to protect and their inflexibility to the individuality of human beings.

This was just one incident amongst many positive experiences of the home. When I popped in, Jenny was sometimes with the other residents in the lounge, garden or dining room; and sometimes in her own room. When she was in her room, there was usually one of her favourite videos playing or one of her music tapes. At other times I found staff going through a photo album with her or looking at her holiday diary and helping her keep memories fresh.

This brings me to the point where I discuss the last couple of years of Jenny's life. By this time she had lost all speech and was also incontinent. She used a wheelchair and in the early part of this stage clearly enjoyed going out. Her face was still very communicative. On one occasion when I took her shopping, we saw in the supermarket an enormous display of Heinz baked beans, which had always been a favourite of hers. The blue-green colour and traditional design obviously evoked a pleasant memory and she got quite animated. I put four tins in her lap and Jenny hung on to them, just about letting me pay for them at the checkout. That evening she had beans on toast for tea and ate every scrap.

As the dementia progressed, we worked together to make life as comfortable as possible. In the last days of her life, I spent many hours with her and staff ensured she was never left alone. We propped family photos up so she could see them, and played her music tapes softly, be it the Beatles

or a collection of hymns, as she dozed. Her death was peaceful and the attendance at her funeral showed how the love she expressed was reciprocated by so many.

I have tried to think what Jenny would have valued and been proud of in her life and the things that occurred to me were:

- Using the first aid skills she learned at Guides to help her grandmother when she cut her leg very badly.
- Being a godmother—I can still see the pride in her face when she held her nephew in her arms at the christening.
- Getting a long service award from work.
- Being a sidesman at church responsible for handing out and collecting the hymn and prayer books.
- Selling Christmas cards.
- Generally being helpful.

But there's one thing that I don't think she would have thought of being proud of because it was so much part of her that she wouldn't really have considered it. For me, Jenny was the most loving person that I have ever come across.<sup>3</sup> She gave love and affection to every one and received it in return. In particular Jenny loved me, not for anything she did but just because we grew up doing so much together. We learned to walk and talk together, shared a bedroom and so many childhood games and memories. For these reasons Jenny always treated me as number one; her partner of so many escapades and the one who received the beaming smile and the hug. That love helped define my childhood and to make me a different person; more socially conscious and determined to battle the discrimination and devaluation that Jenny and others faced; a powerful example of interpersonal identification.

Jenny, and the part she played in people's lives, will not be easily forgotten. She would not have wanted us to be sad at her early death. She hated to see

people sad or angry, so I for one give wholehearted thanks for Jenny's life and the love she shared with me and others. All our lives would have been emptier and colder without her and we will continue to be sustained by our memories of her.

### Adam

ADAM IS A YOUNG MAN with Down's syndrome, born in the mid eighties, who grew up in a family with three older brothers. The service system that faced Adam and our family had moved on from the one that was available to Jenny (cf. Race, 2007). Expectations were different and many, though not all of the earlier institutions of Jenny's childhood had closed to be replaced by a system that largely enabled children to grow up in families. There was still an educational apartheid system of special schools but no one was excluded from the school system as uneducable. In addition, a few areas of the country were supporting some children with learning disabilities to attend mainstream schools, though mainly in the primary (up to eleven) years.

Adam started his formal education at the same nursery school as his brothers but when he reached compulsory school age, the system deemed that he would be best served by attending a mainstream school in another town several miles away that had a "special unit." My husband and I fought hard and managed to get agreement for a preliminary period attending the same village school as his brothers. Adam performed up to our expectations. His teachers gradually discovered that teaching a person with a learning disability was well within their capabilities as long as the teachers had open minds and could break things down into small enough steps. As well as teaching the teachers to understand and value their own skills better, Adam was teaching a number of the other children to reduce their fear of difference. When Adam was due to transfer to secondary school, the teachers and other children were the best advocates for Adam remaining in the mainstream system, which he did.

Having elder brothers gave Adam a host of examples of valued roles to copy and identify with. He was not in the same position as Jenny in having a brother very close to him in age but, given that our family is sport-mad, he leaned from a very early age to swim, play football and cricket, and later also developed a taste for pool. A less positive example of interpersonal identification came with some bullying of Adam as well as taunting of his brothers. His brother closest in age to him managed to get into a couple of scrapes at school defending his brother. However the school was supportive and largely addressed the issue in school. Outside school and especially on buses was another matter, but the presence of brothers provided some moderation of the more overt bullying.

The attitude of the vast majority of teachers was supportive and they placed high expectations on Adam, both academically and in relation to behaviour, most of which he lived up to. Again his brothers provided good models as far as was feasible within the limits of a large secondary school.

His capacity for doing as he was told got him into a few problems, as children encouraged him to do the things they wanted to but dare not. In addition he got himself excluded or suspended for a few days by hitting his support worker. This was exactly what he wanted, though, given that his granny who spoilt him was visiting for a few days. Discussions with the school made them realise that Adam had artful skills that they had not anticipated and persuaded them to find a way of keeping him occupied and apart from his granny during normal school hours. They also changed their approach because everyone realised that Adam liked company and the warning of having to work alone could work wonders.

The positive approaches and high expectations enabled Adam to leave school at sixteen with six GCSE passes.<sup>4</sup> He is proud of this, especially as it means he has better school results than his footballing hero David Beckham. Adam wanted to do what each of his brothers had done and go to university, though leaving home was not part of his plans. Luckily the

County University had just taken over the town's further education college as it wanted to expand. This meant Adam could attend the college and be going to University like his brothers.

While he was at the college, Adam was lucky enough to have a person-centred planning session facilitated by John O'Brien. At this meeting he shared his dreams which were to:

- Play football for Manchester United.
- Have a proper job.
- Have a home of his own that he shared with someone, possibly his then-girlfriend.

This gave his family, his friends and the service system plenty of challenges as well as plenty of room for being imaginative. Since then, which was about seven years ago, Adam has gone on to:

- Become a registered Manchester United supporter, attend several games each season, and get photographed with various trophies that Manchester United won. Acquire a signed "David Beckham" Real Madrid (he'd just left Manchester United) football shirt, as well as several other items of their trip (NB: communicators of the role of 'fan;' cf. Wolfensberger, 1998, 107).
- Play football for a club of disabled people and get himself selected for the West Midlands 5-a-side football team.
- Attend the UK Special Olympics in Glasgow with the West Midlands team and return home with a gold medal.
- Obtain a proper job working as a domestic/cleaner for the county council, working in several locations, the latest of which is an old people's home. This took considerable effort on the part of the supported employment service and a few false starts trying jobs that were not to Adam's liking (cf. Race, 2007, p. 212, on limited job opportunities).
- Move into a house of his own about two hundred yards from where we live. This he

shares with the youngest of his three brothers Jon, as his relationship with his girlfriend never developed to the point where she wanted to live with Adam.

In addition to all this, Adam has joined the local pub pool team and is a valued member of the team, winning a good proportion of his singles and doubles games. Although his brother is also part of the team, they do not partner each other in the doubles because Adam will only listen to advice from others (What do brothers know?!). He would like to have a really close girlfriend like his brothers do but, as they keep on reminding him, time is on his side, and they all went through rejections and short lived relationships before they became more settled.

So what about the impact of Adam on his brothers? It has made them all much more aware of issues related to disability and devaluation. They have all made efforts in their different ways to address these issues. One helped out for several years at a summer club for disabled children, and then acted as a worker for Camp America in a club for children with disabilities. One ran in the London marathon for Mencap, raising money via sponsorship. The third went to Africa to help build a school for disadvantaged children. They love their brother, sharing in his delights and woes, and spending time together.

Adam's youngest brother Jon shares a home with him. This provides an interesting combination of opportunities for young men to have fun together as well as brotherly falling-outs over trivial matters. It has also given him a role which offers him the same advantages in addressing his shyness as it gave me with Jenny. It gives him some standing in the village for acting responsibly when the media is full of people who don't. For both of them it provides loving affection and they both gain from the deal.

### Conclusion

SO, BACK FROM THE PARTICULARS of Adam and Jenny, to the general issue of the valued role of sibling. What I hope I have demonstrated in my examples, and I recognise that not all sibling relationships

work well or have love at their core, is the benefits of a good sibling relationship for both parties. Jenny would never have had the chance to attend Brownies or Guides without me in attendance nor learn the first aid that was so valuable to our grandmother. Adam would not have developed the ball skills that led him to a gold medal and a place on the pool team. None of us would have known such a depth of unconditional love, nor benefited from being able to adopt a caring role as a cover for shyness.

Of course both Jenny and Adam had loving committed middle-class parents who knew how to get the best possible out of the system. They both had parents who were prepared to battle for what they felt was right for their offspring, but having siblings gave them something extra. It brought a wealth of opportunities to participate in the ordinary things of life; the rough and tumble of family life; learning to share and take turns, as well as the fun of sport, games and hobbies; the provision of a host of role models to the full extent of that phrase.

The other advantage of good sibling relationships is that they tend to be life-long. Parents have a habit of dying before their children, and in families where there are no positive sibling relationships, this can leave a learning disabled person dependent on the care system without an effective advocate. My experience of sibling relationships in helping disabled people access the good things in life is that they are both powerful and often unrecognised or undervalued.

I would like to end by saying I believe the world would be a better place if everyone could have a Jenny or an Adam in their life and I give thanks that they have been part of mine. ☺

### ENDNOTES

1. Brownies are the younger version of Girl Guides/Girl Scouts, offering activities for 7-11 year old girls.
2. EDITOR'S NOTE: Note the distinction re: non-programmatic factors influencing service provision.
3. See Wolfensberger, 1988 for more related to this topic.

4. GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. Secondary school students take GCSE exams at the age of 15 or 16.

#### REFERENCES

Race, D.G. (1999). *Social Role Valorization and the English experience*. London, England: Whiting & Birch.

Race, D.G. (2007). *Intellectual disability—Social approaches*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Wolfensberger, W. (1988). Common assets of mentally retarded people that are commonly not acknowledged. *Mental Retardation*, 26(2), 63-70.

Wolfensberger, W. (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (3rd

ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

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.

---

*DEB RACE is the parent of a son with Down's syndrome. She has worked in academia & social care in the developmental disability field for over 30 years.*

---

#### THE CITATION FOR THIS ARTICLE IS

Race, D. (2009). Valued siblings. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 47-53.

---



---

### LEARNING TO TEACH SOCIAL ROLE VALORIZATION (SRV)

SOCIAL ROLE VALORIZATION, when well applied, has potential to help societally devalued people to gain greater access to the good things of life and to be spared at least some of the negative effects of social devaluation. This is one of the reasons why it is important for people to learn to teach SRV, so that its ideas and strategies are known and available to the right people in the right places who can apply it well. Unless people continue to learn to be SRV trainers, the teaching and dissemination of SRV will cease. Many SRV trainers for example could teach lots of people how to **implement** SRV, but not how to **teach** it to others. At a certain point there might be implementation of aspects of SRV, but the knowledge of SRV itself might not be passed on to others, such as the next generation of human service workers. Teaching about SRV, and learning to teach SRV, can be done in many ways, depending in part on one's abilities, interests, resources and so on.

The North American SRV Safeguarding, Training & Development Council has developed a specific model for teaching people to competently do two things: (a) teach Social Role Valorization; and (b) teach other people to teach SRV. People who can do the former, the Council calls "SRV trainers." Those who can do the latter, the Council calls "trainers-of-trainers" of SRV. The Council named this a "Trainer Formation Model," i.e., a model for forming or developing SRV trainers and trainers-of-SRV trainers. A description of the Trainer Formation Model is available if you are interested ([http://www.srvip.org/about\\_mission.php](http://www.srvip.org/about_mission.php)); also see the article referenced below.

To find out more about studying SRV and learning to teach it, please contact Jo Massarelli at *The SRV Implementation Project*, 74 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609 USA; 508.752.3670; [jo@srvip.org](mailto:jo@srvip.org). She will be able to help you or to put you in touch with someone more local to your geographic area who can be of help.

#### RESOURCE

SRV Development, Training & Safeguarding Council (2006). A Brief Overview of the North American SRV Council's Trainer Formation Model (November 2005). *The SRV Journal* 1(1), 58-62.

# REVIEWS MORE

---

**WHAT ARE OLD PEOPLE FOR? HOW ELDERS WILL SAVE THE WORLD.** By WILLIAM H. THOMAS, M.D. Acton, MA: Vanderwyk & Burnham, 370 pages, 2004, \$24.95. **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ [www.srvip.org](http://www.srvip.org)**

Reviewed by Judith Sandys

WILLIAM H. THOMAS is a physician who specializes in working with older people or, to be more specific, with very old people, many of whom reside in nursing homes. He teaches a course on geriatrics to medical students. He has, in his own words, “devoted years of [his] life to ‘fixing’ nursing homes.”

This is an ambitious book, which deals with aging from a variety of perspectives. In his preface, the author suggests that issues of aging “define some of the most important risks and opportunities that confront our society” (xii) and that freeing ourselves “from the shackles of fear and prejudice” around aging “can and will save the world.” The book draws on many sources. While it may well be of interest to those working with elderly people, it is designed for a general audience—including all of us who are, or expect one day to become, old ourselves.

The book is divided into eight chapters, titled: *True Longevity*, *Becoming Human*, *The Rise of Elderhood*, *Navigating Life*, *Tragedy*, *Distant Thunder*, *A Wink and a Smile*, and *The Ripening*. Each chapter is further divided into a number of short sections. Also of interest are an appendix entitled “The First Green Houses” and 28 pages of notes which clarify, provide examples, or cite the source of material presented in the text.

In the first five chapters, Thomas outlines and critiques typical societal perceptions of elderly people and, relatedly, the way elderly people are so often treated. He discusses the profound devaluation of aging and elderly people within our obsessively youth-oriented culture, the myths and stereotypes that surround aging, how elderly peo-

ple have been perceived and treated historically, how aging fits within the life cycle. Throughout these chapters, Thomas challenges the reader to think about aging and elderly people from a different perspective, to focus on the positive roles elders have played throughout history and the significant contributions they have made to the advancement of civilization.

The last three chapters take a different direction. In these, Thomas outlines alternative approaches to supporting elderly people, discusses some of the issues he feels need to be addressed in order for change to occur, and indicates why he feels that elders are so important to society.

The strength of this book is in its ability to challenge the traditional way that we tend to conceptualize aging. There is much in the first few chapters that will resonate with those familiar with SRV theory. Thomas presents a clear and compelling analysis of how the strong societal value placed on youth leads to the devaluation of elderly people. He notes that reducing the aging process to its “mechanics”—describing the decline and fall of cells, tissues and organs—reflects “a steadfast denial of the essential humanity of old age” (33).

However, while there are some very positive aspects to the first five chapters, the remaining chapters are very disappointing. Despite the alternative view of aging that Thomas has sought to present in the beginning chapters, the later chapters are fraught with negative and stereotypical assumptions about what old people want and need. Further, his penchant for inventing new words and the somewhat ‘new age’ mystical tone of much of the discussion is more than a little disconcerting.

The sixth chapter, entitled *Distant Thunder*, discusses a number of approaches favoured by Thomas. One of these is the ‘Eden Alternative,’ essentially an effort to create better institutions. Facilities that operate according to the principles of the Eden Alternative seek to address the three

major plagues of institutions, identified here as loneliness, helplessness and boredom. The strategy for addressing these invariably involves introducing animals, plants and children into the institutional environment.

Thomas also discusses the concepts of 'intentional communities' and 'Green Houses.' He defines an intentional community as one where "a group of unrelated people come together in order to share the deliberate pursuit of some noble aim." A Green House is "an intentional community for elders built to a residential scale and devoted to the pursuit of the most positive elderhood possible."

All the alternatives outlined by Thomas are based on the premise that elderly people need to live together and that they need paid people to support them. While there is a discussion of connecting elders with the broader community, there is no recognition of the impact of segregated services. Initiatives which connect elders with children are seen as particularly positive, with no understanding of negative image implications of this juxtaposition on elders who may already be at risk of being perceived as in their second childhood. Words like "intentional community," "green houses" and (my favourite) "sanctuary" paint a picture that is at odds with the realities of these kinds of environments. Invented words like shahabaz/shabazim, convivium and eldertopia are used in a failed attempt to suggest that something truly new and remarkable is being suggested. (A shabaz is a person who is paid to protect, sustain and nurture the elders with whom they work, while convivium refers to "the sharing of good food with people we know well" [265]).

The final chapter tries to wrap things up by presenting a "reconstructed" approach to elderhood which focuses on all that elders have to offer and envisioning a world in which elders are truly a valued part of the community—the state which he refers to as Eldertopia. Here, Thomas comments on the positive contributions that elders can make—as peacemakers, as the source of wisdom, as the creators of a 'legacy'—and which can be passed down to future generations.

He writes: "Our longevity exists, has meaning, and creates value because it provides human beings with a mechanism for improving the lives of people of all ages" (302). Unfortunately, much of what he says appears at odds with this statement.

Despite its serious limitations, there were some high moments in this book. As we get older, most of us experience some limitations in our physical abilities along with an ever increasing number of aches and pains. Even when we continue to be active and involved, we begin to dread the ever increasing decline that we associate with old age. It is difficult not to get caught up in societal views of aging. It is good to be reminded of some of the positive aspects of aging, to know we are a source of support to our adult children, to delight in our grandchildren, to be involved in our communities, to continue to try to make the world (or at least a small piece of it) a better place.

---

JUDITH SANDYS, PHD, is the Interim Director of the School for Social Work at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, & a member of the North American SRV Council.

---

**THE CITATION FOR THIS REVIEW IS**

Sandys, J. (2009). Review of the book *What are old people for? How elders will save the world* by William Thomas, M.D. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 54–55.

• • •

**THE PLAGUE AND I.** By BETTY MACDONALD. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1948 (2nd impression). **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ [www.srvip.org](http://www.srvip.org)**

**Reviewed by Susan Thomas**

THIS WAS WRITTEN by the same author of *The Egg and I*; this book title is apparently a play on words of the previous one. The book is actually quite humorous, even though it tells of the author's contracting tuberculosis (TB), and of her subsequent stay in a TB sanatorium in Washington State, about two hours outside Seattle, called The Pines. She never tells the exact date of this occurrence,

but it is presumably sometime in the 1930s, because she reports of several Japanese inmates in the sanatorium, and if this had happened in the 1940s they would presumably have been segregated in some other setting because of the world war. As noted, the book is quite funny, though the wit is often of the tragic-comic, acid kind, sometimes even gallows humor. Below are a few elements of the story that are relevant to Social Role Valorization (SRV).

For newcomers, the sanatorium insisted on complete bedrest, including no talking, laughing, sitting up, or moving at all. This was done in order to rest the diseased lung because it was believed that only when the lung was fully at rest could the tubercular part be safely walled off (done surgically) from the rest of the body, and that any unnecessary movement of the tubercular organ sent the germs coursing through the rest of the body. The rooms were also kept cool, even cold, as was the water, and the windows and doors were constantly open to the air, even in the winter. Thus, at least in the Bedrest Hospital (for the sickest patients), the patients were constantly cold, and nothing would be done to make them warmer. Institutional deindividualization is illustrated by one patient explaining why everything was kept so cold: “somebody decided that the average patient could keep warm in this temperature and with this number of blankets and if you can’t then that is your problem” (p. 56).

The rules of the sanatorium constantly emphasized how grateful the patients should be for everything, even for discomforts because these supposedly contributed to their cure, and to even have a bed in a sanatorium when there were so many diseased people on waiting lists for one (e.g., pp. 121-122 and p. 127). However, recovering patients were given work tasks around the hospital once they had improved enough to be allowed “time up” (i.e., time up out of bed).

The hospital (at least its main building) was apparently built on a version of the 1809 Glasgow

Lunatic Asylum design, because it is described as having “feebly-lit mysterious corridors radiating out from a central point” (p. 50). As Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger explains in his one-day presentation on the history of human services (*EDITOR’S NOTE: see p. 45 of this issue*), the Glasgow Lunatic Asylum was a radial design, and became one of the most influential and most copied service designs. It was popular in good part because it enabled staff at a central location to look out over—to “surveille”—all the clients or inmates, thus reflecting the idea that service recipients had to be constantly watched.

Those patients who were expected to die very soon were put in the “light room”—this was the room where what was called Alpine Light treatments were given to those who had TB of the throat—with the result that being sent to the light room created a strong death expectancy in the patients (p. 134), even if they were actually being sent there for a dose of treatment.

The patients were never given any warning when they might be moved or taken for some treatment, and when someone came to their room to take them somewhere for something, they might not even then be told where they were being taken, or why (p. 148). This sort of thing was very common in the days of paternalistic and authoritarian human services.

The author says that the staff intentionally distanced themselves from the patients because they did not want to get attached to people who might die. Some staff were reportedly friendly, others were not just cold but outright hostile.

There was also an awful lot of physical discontinuity—moving patients about from ward to ward, room to room, even while they were still at the same level of care and so remained in the same building—and again, without any explanation of why this was being done.

How alienated from normal routines and rhythms the life in the sanatorium was is illustrated by the author’s report that while a patient, she no longer followed the normal progression

of times and seasons, but that the days were all exactly alike, and she differentiated them—even the holidays—only by whether that day was scheduled for a bath, a visit from people outside, an opportunity to put in an order from the store, etc. (p. 164). She calls this “divorce from normal living.”

Much like lepers, people with TB were reputed to be sex-crazy (as well as overly optimistic), so saltpeter was added to their daily coffee (saltpeter was believed to reduce the sex drive, though its main effect is that it makes people vomit). The one exception to this practice was made on Thanksgiving Day; and the sexes were totally segregated from each other.

The author describes a classic negatively-imagining service juxtaposition (p. 38) of the city tuberculosis clinic being located in the same site with the police station, city jail, emergency hospital and venereal disease clinic. As SRV explains, such a co-location of all these services means that the images associated with one (e.g., the image of vice with the VD clinic, the image of menace with the police station and jail) transfer to the others, thus giving them all a much worse overall image.

---

*SUSAN THOMAS is the Training Coordinator for the Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA. She is the co-author of PASSING.*

---

**THE CITATION FOR THIS REVIEW IS**

Thomas, S. (2009). Review of the book *The plague and I* by B. MacDonald. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 55–57.

• • •

**THE SOLOIST: A LOST DREAM, AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP, AND THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF MUSIC.** By STEVE LOPEZ. New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 289 pages, 2008. **REVIEW AVAILABLE ONLINE @ [www.srvip.org](http://www.srvip.org)**

**Reviewed by Raymond Lemay**

**Life Imitating Art & the Six Ages  
of a Homeless Musician**

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.*<sup>1</sup>

WOLF WOLFENSBERGER IN HIS *Origin and nature of our institutional models* (1969) suggested that role perceptions could determine a person's place in the world, including legitimating the incarceration of individuals with disabilities into institutions. Very simply, the power of the stereotypes we share about certain broadly attributed roles shape and limit our responses to people in those roles. Roles are an essential component of the person that have long captured the imagination. Early on in his monograph, Wolfensberger quotes the “All the world's a stage . . .” passage from Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*; verily, there are real life situations full of the dramatic and tragic that capture the imagination and teach us essential lessons. In *The Soloist*—through the roles played by Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Jr. as well as the author Steve Lopez, and lesser parts played by the likes of the renowned cellist Yo Yo Ma and the psychiatrist Dr. Mark Ragins—we are presented with powerful scenes that tell us about devaluation, the power of valued social roles, and how friendship comes about through unlikely and fortuitous circumstances. The story is so compelling that Hollywood had to make a movie about it, which could have been subtitled: How valued social roles open up the good things in life. But as always, the book is simply better than the movie (and Nathaniel Anthony Ayers better looking than the actor who portrays him), so this synopsis and review will be about the book.

Steve Lopez is a well-known columnist with the *Los Angeles Times* and this book tells the story of his relationship with Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Jr. The title of the book, *The Soloist*, is very apt.

The first and most important thing to know about Nathaniel Anthony Ayers is that he is alone. He is homeless, a street person, an itinerant; he doesn't have much commerce with common folk generally and he doesn't have much interest in hanging around with other street people. For much of the book, Steve Lopez attempts to bring Nathaniel Ayers into organized services for homeless people, and Mr. Ayers is very much reluctant to go along because of his very low opinion of itinerants and of the professionals employed in such circumstances. Throughout the book, the author describes a number of events that reveal the extent to which the crazy Mr. Ayers is no fool.

***At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms ...***

Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Jr. was born into a Black-American family on January 22, 1951. Ayers, with his sisters Jennifer Ayers-Moore and Del (who is mentioned but twice in the book), was born and raised in a black neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio (US). His mother and father divorced when he was 11 and his mother remarried twice. He did not get along particularly well with his step-fathers or step-siblings.

***... And then the whining school-boy, with his  
satchel and shining morning face, creeping  
like snail, unwillingly to school ...***

Early on, Nathaniel showed an interest and some talent in music. He became very interested in the string bass and, with the assistance and mentorship of remarkable music teachers, he received a scholarship to go on to university. Later he was accepted at the Juilliard School in New York City.

Though Juilliard is one of the best music schools in the world, Lopez tells us that only one out of every 25 graduates actually makes it as a professional musician. Thus, as one can imagine, the competition at Juilliard is intense and every student is a high achiever. It would seem that this is one of

the factors that contributed to Mr. Ayer's eventual breakdown, that and the added pressure of being a highly rare black person in an overwhelmingly white middle- to upper-class high prestige institution. As one of Ayers' contemporaries mentions, Juilliard was not a particularly nurturing institution. Survival of the fittest was an appropriate description of its organizational culture. Mr. Ayers was not one of the fittest. This book will bring us to meet one of his school classmates, a certain Mr. Ma, an exemplar of what is meant by fittest. The pressure to fit in was a great challenge for Nathaniel Anthony Ayers. His school acquaintances and friends remember Nathaniel as being very much on his own, aloof and angry.

Though he had an incredible talent and produced a marvelous sound, his school reports that Nathaniel was not a diligent student. Sometime during his second year at Juilliard, he had a major breakdown; and during his third year was sent home to Cleveland where he was 'medicated' and given electroshock therapy. He eventually became a street person, surviving Cleveland winters and summers for over twenty years. When his mother died in 2000, he wandered across America to Los Angeles in search of his father. Those meetings were not very successful. Because of the better weather, Nathaniel decided to settle in Los Angeles where he had lived as a street person for over five years, when Steve Lopez happened upon him.

***... And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow ...***

When Mr. Lopez comes upon him in 2005, Mr. Ayers is the consummate player of what might be viewed as the improbable combination of two roles: homeless man and classical musician. He is a virtuoso itinerant and has mastered the intricacies of the homeless role. For 30 years he has survived on the streets of Cleveland—in the cold and snow of winter—and Los Angeles. He has refined the technique for keeping rats at bay with his two

faithful sticks. He husbands his many possessions in an elaborately organized shopping cart; he has discovered the places where he may safely wash, eat and sleep. He has an almost routinized existence, going from bridge to park to shelter according to his daily program of practicing his art and managing his bodily needs.

But it is his art and the vestiges of the valued role of artist/classical musician that seem to keep this homeless man focused and energized. He found in Pershing Park a statue of Beethoven and it is here that this great composer's music speaks to him.

It is an intriguing story of two and even three seemingly conflicting yet powerful roles. One need only consider the array of stereotypes and all manner of prejudice conjured up by the word 'homeless' and its related images. Lopez describes the 90,000 homeless people who scratch out meager existences from Los Angeles streets. Lopez, a resident of Los Angeles for many years, has crossed paths with these anonymous and dehumanized people, day in and day out, without much of a passing glance, though possibly an uplifted nose. It is not the role of the homeless person that leads Lopez to stop and take notice. Rather, it is the other incongruous role, a secondary though powerful one, one that makes him stop and take notice.

Curiosity makes Lopez stop and listen to a homeless man playing a much abused two-string violin. The sound coming from the violin is not altogether unpleasing. There might be a story here thinks Lopez, but what clinches it is a third even more improbable role: that of Juilliard alumnus. Here is a story that must be told, the former phenom who crashed; the tragedy of an outlier who was once at one end of the bell curve ending up at the other extreme. Here we have the interplay of three roles, three systems of stereotypes, all coming into conflict and all powerfully influential but at the end, with the help of Lopez, it is the valued roles of Juilliard alumnus and musician that will win the day, not only for Nathaniel Anthony Ayers but for many homeless people in Los Angeles. Indeed, because of Lopez, but more par-

ticularly because of how Mr. Ayers' story captures the imagination of the citizens of Los Angeles, the mayor and the federal government find some 600 million dollars to invest in lodging and services for the throng of homeless people of Los Angeles. It is far from being enough but better than nothing. Greater benefit comes from the juxtaposing of the roles of musician and Juilliard alumnus to the imagery that surrounds the homeless Nathaniel Anthony Ayers. Because of Lopez's reporting, this juxtaposition splashes some humanity and respect on the other homeless people who share his meager estate.

***...Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation, Even in the cannon's mouth.***

It is the heroic Mr. Ayers that one glimpses through the newspaper columns and the book. It is the man who clings to the vestiges of his musician role that captures the imagination. This heroism is displayed in Mr. Ayers' refined eccentricities, for he is a man of character. Mr. Ayers is particularly well-mannered, a polite gentleman who insists on treating people with respect and addressing them formally. He was well brought up as a youth and he always refers to Steve Lopez as Mister Lopez (a formality that survives to this day) as he does to all other people he meets. Indeed, upon meeting Yo-Yo Ma, he instinctively calls him Mister Ma and even the great Yo-Yo is unable to get him to call him by his first name. The gentleman has a great sense of organization and routine. He is clean about his person; he has a certain aesthetic flair and maintains a distinguished posture. He is a gentleman in another important way as when he shows kindness to others who are down and out.

Another eccentricity is his intolerance of filth, particularly of cigarettes and butts strewn about pavement and property. One can imagine how his patience must be tested on the streets of Los Angeles, particularly in the neighborhoods he tends to

move about in. He has a particularly low opinion of smokers, drug addicts and drugs. Smokers and addicts are provocations and he often raises his voice and fist to express his displeasure about all of the 'thieves and bums' that surround him. He does not have a great wardrobe but tends to dress up, though sometimes his eccentricities seem to be carried too far, as when he wears a brassiere around his neck or on his cello. His speech often is stream of conscience, jumping from one subject to the next, at times incoherent and irrational. However, one striking thing is that when he speaks of music to musicians, his talk is rational and well-ordered.

But then eccentricity amongst artists is not completely unknown—one need only think of Salvador Dali for instance—but amongst musicians, craziness and eccentricity have sometimes accompanied greatness. Consider the self-engrossed Beethoven who walked with his hands behind his back humming to himself; the scatological Mozart; and the great Tchaikovsky who at times would conduct the orchestra with one hand, holding on to his head with the other for fear of losing it.

An important struggle played out in the book and around Mr. Ayers has Steve Lopez trying to choose between the approaches of the predominant bio-psychiatry, that in essence is mostly about forcibly hospitalizing and drugging people like Nathaniel Anthony Ayers (for their 'own good' of course), and an alternative approach that eschews coercion. But Mr. Ayers has no such struggle and is quite clear minded on the issue. He will have nothing to do with psychiatrists or hospitals. He has been electroshocked and been on psychotropic drugs before, and he will not do it again. He doesn't feel alive, doesn't hear his music, when he is on such 'medication.' Moreover, Nathaniel has learned to not trust psychiatrists and refuses to have any dealings with them.

The other psychiatric trend is exemplified by Dr. Mark Ragins, who suggests that respect and relationship are the only ways to address the problems of homeless people like Mr. Ayers. Ragins opines

that having a friend, like Mr. Lopez, will most likely be a significant factor in Mr. Ayers' possible recovery. Steve Lopez, however, is forever impatient; as we will discuss further, he simply wants to move on with his life, but as he feels responsible for Mr. Ayers, a solution must be found. Hospitalization and medication seem to fit the bill. He muses a number of times about forcibly confining Mr. Ayers, getting him on 'medication,' and giving him (whether he wants it or not) the treatment he needs. In the end, he doesn't do it, primarily because of his growing relationship with Nathaniel. The curious journalist and acquaintance, the observer so to speak, can easily contemplate the possibility of forcible confinement and drugging, but for the friend these become unconscionable.

In Steve Lopez's mind, it should be easy for Mr. Ayers to give up the street for a better life. By the time he makes his entrance in the soloist's life, the few roles Mr. Ayers has left have been much practiced and mastered and, as with his shopping cart of possessions, he has learned to safeguard them well. His identity can be summed up as that of homeless man-cum musician-former prodigy. It is this combination of roles, Mr. Ayers' identity, that has captured Mr. Lopez's attention—that have made Ayers interesting—but the columnist is initially unable to comprehend the importance and the courage, effort and persistence that have been deployed to maintain them for over 30 years. Even Nathaniel's family roles have been lost by his estrangement from his father and sisters. *The Soloist* shouts loud and clear that there are no quick fixes or miracle cures to be found or even needed. He is who he is, and why should he change?

The book covers a period of almost two years. Though Lopez has at least weekly encounters with Nathaniel Ayers, and sometimes many times more, Ayers will only very slowly move to a better place in life. For the first year, he remains homeless, refusing even to take up residence in a homeless shelter, despite the fact that Lopez uses trickery and coercion to get him to stay at the Lamp, a human service for homeless people in Los An-

geles. Having been entrusted with a number of musical instruments for Mr. Ayers, he organizes it so that Ayers can only retrieve his instruments by attending the Lamp where they are kept under lock and key. But Mr. Ayers is a wily musician, not easily duped, and makes away with what are in fact his instruments.

Lopez is finally able to convince Ayers to live in an apartment and then eventually shed his shopping cart. This whole part of the story is very instructive on how Ayers is almost obsessively tied to his very few material possessions which he carts around all over the place, as props to his very few roles. He won't give them up for the simple promise of something better. Stuart Robinson, an employee at the Lamp, gets to know Nathaniel Ayers fairly well. Lopez recounts his comment to the effect that "sometimes, he says, it's not that clients don't want to move inside. It's that they don't trust their own ability to hold on to a place of their own, or they fear that something or someone will force them out. The advantage of life on the street, Robinson says, is that you have nothing to lose" (pp. 178-179).

*The Soloist* teaches that there are no simple solutions to homelessness or even to the plight of a solitary homeless individual. What we learn is that it is very difficult to leave a well-integrated and sure identity, even if it is devaluing, for more positive roles that can only be more ephemeral, at least initially. And how it must all take time. After 30 years of homelessness, Mr. Ayers will take more than a year to take up residence in a new apartment and he will only do this because of his friend Mr. Lopez. There are no contrived miracles in this book except for those that bring people together.

***And then the justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part.***

Over 30 years, millions of people have crossed paths with Nathaniel Anthony Ayers but here is

one Steve Lopez, celebrated journalist, who takes notice, finds an angle and writes a compelling story. The story, of course, should remind us of the power of luck and fortuity. Such meetings occur and such things happen, quite un-facilitated or un-mediated by a human service or professionals. How important it is to multiply opportunities for devalued people, if only to increase the likelihood of lightning striking and fortuity doing its thing. In reading this story, one has to be struck by the momentary contrast between two contemporary students of the Juilliard: Mr. Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Jr. and Mr. Yo Yo Ma. There but for the grace of God ... Devaluation seems to be, at least in part, an exclusion from good fortune; but for the 90,000 homeless people of Los Angeles, bad luck is simply not random. Much research shows the extent to which devalued people simply have fewer opportunities; they are isolated and idle. This is not only a waste of time and energy, but it seems such a waste of the potential bounties of lady luck. It would seem that the sun shines less and the rain falls more on the homeless.

Mr. Lopez came upon Mr. Ayers playing his battered two-string violin, and wrote a great story that captured the imagination of thousands of Los Angelinos. At the beginning, the relationship was exploitative; Mr. Lopez was using Mr. Ayers. Mr. Lopez conveys his guilt about this and his growing feeling of responsibility for Mr. Ayers. Having gained so much from Mr. Ayers, he could hardly leave him on his current life course. But he felt he needed to do something quickly so that he could get on with his life. One tends to want people to be true of heart and pure of intention, but Mr. Lopez goes a long way in his book in describing how in his case this was not how it all began. Mr. Lopez is quite clear, he was happy for the story, happy for the success, and he wanted Mr. Ayers to be helped very quickly (by someone else) so that he could get on with his life. Indeed, his early interest in biopsychiatry, medication and hospitalization was simply as a search for a quick fix. Over and over again in the book, one finds Mr. Lopez very impa-

tient with Mr. Ayers' lack of progress. However, at the same time, it's quite touching to see how Mr. Lopez spends sleepless evenings searching for Mr. Ayers, thinking that he had been the victim of this or that thug on a rampage against homeless people in Los Angeles. He goes so far as to try to sleep one night on the street to better understand. But eventually it is not the quick fix of 'medication' but rather the slow magic of relationship, another type of chemistry if you will, that will make the difference. It takes time but they do hit it off, though it is important to consider the sequence. It starts with Mr. Lopez feeling guilty, then responsible, then concerned and, finally, moving to esteem and friendship. All of this is Mr. Lopez's own *cheminement* (i.e., advancement). Later on in their relationship, Mr. Lopez will even instrumentally use his friendship for Mr. Ayers to convince him to move to his apartment, go to the Disney Concert Hall (home of the LA Philharmonic), and so on. He tells Mr. Ayers on a number of occasions that he and others have been to a lot of trouble to do this or that for him. "Do it for me ... for us!" And it works; for this is not therapy, it is life.

Again and again in this book we find out how social roles are the context of relationship, and how it is social roles and relationship that make the difference. There are important lessons here about the vestiges of almost forgotten roles, particularly valued ones that can sustain a person over the years, and then end up being the basis of the person's positive encounter with members of mainstream society, which in turn lead to a return and welcoming into valued society and recovery.

Lopez will not label this story with the (now over-worn) label 'recovery,' but rather writes of redemption (as in his subtitle: "the redemptive power of music"). Because of his music and Mr. Lopez's efforts, all sorts of new relations open up. Small things become big things. Small secondary roles become huge primary roles and then cascade into a multiplicity of roles, enriching and transforming identity and opening up many good things in life. Mr. Ayers becomes an acquaintance of Mr. Lopez's

social circle, including his family and his children. Moreover, Mr. Lopez makes an effort to establish contacts with professional musicians, both jazz and classical, in the city of Los Angeles. There are also some wonderful vignettes describing how the Los Angeles symphony orchestra and some of its elite members not only take an interest in Nathaniel Anthony Ayers but actually establish acquaintanceships with him, provide him with music lessons and opportunities to attend symphonies, and meet with some of the best performers. He becomes a regular at the Disney concert hall and even gets to meet again and discuss music with his fellow Juilliard alumnus, Yo-Yo Ma, a superstar performer. Members of the orchestra, aided and abetted by Lopez, make the reunion happen. There are happy scenes in this book of Mr. Ayers spending Easter with Mr. Lopez and his family. Mr. Ayers recovers some of his family roles when he is reunited with his sister, Jennifer, after many years of estrangement. Because of Mr. Lopez and because of the book, Mr. Ayers becomes a relatively rich man, who is not at all interested in money; thus the basis for a Foundation that carries his name.

But it is Steve Lopez, the participant observer and narrator, who is mostly transformed or redeemed over the course of the story. Both the film and the book make very clear that Lopez's interest in Nathaniel was, to begin with, purely instrumental, so to speak. He played this homeless musician with a two-string violin for the human interest story that would give him rich material for columns that he had to produce on a daily basis for his newspaper. Lopez's introspections begin as those of a self-engrossed narcissist, a modern hazard for writers, but they do tell the story of a man transformed. How can an upper middle class member of the intelligentsia relate and interact with riff-raff? Lopez turns out to be a true friend and he makes the most important part of the book revolve around Nathaniel Anthony Ayers: how he gets to know him and how he discovers the heroic dignity of the man.

The reference to redemption in the book's subtitle is quite surprising. It is possible that the author

is quite unwittingly evoking the early Christian practice of service that gave us the seven works of mercy and the teaching that giving shelter, clothing, food, drink, accompaniment or care to a stranger or a lowly person are redemptive, leading to the server's salvation. Salvation is to be found because, as the King of heaven said, "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

In the book, there are a number of digressions on the issue of friendship and Lopez's relationship with Mr. Ayers. These are actually quite well done and moving. Steve Lopez acknowledges that Nathaniel Ayers has had more impact on him than the other way around. It is clear than Nathaniel Anthony Ayers is quite self-involved and engrossed in his own inner life, which means that it's somewhat difficult for Lopez to reciprocate relationship. "Come to think of it, Nathaniel and I don't really have conversations. Mostly he talks or plays music and I listen. He can't relate to my world and I have trouble relating to his, except for my growing interest in classical music" (p. 211). Samuel Johnson, Boswell's biographer, aptly describes such an evolution of relationship: "We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over." In reading the book, there is not an identifiable moment when this 'unlikely' friendship blossoms. It just grows and then it is there.

### ***The sixth age shifts***

***Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound.***

By the end of the book, things are a bit better for Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Jr. He lives in a small apartment in one of the dingiest parts of Los Angeles. Lopez has managed to get him another room

that he can use as a music studio. Ayers is named 'artist in residence' of the small community where his studio is housed. Because of his notoriety, he has accumulated a number of musical instruments, including violins, cellos, a string bass, a piano, a trumpet, all instruments that he can play.

However, Nathaniel Anthony Ayers won't soon be able to take up the role of professional musician. He still has a great difficulty in managing his thoughts and his behavior, and he can still get into trouble. Moreover, he is simply not that good a musician. The man has talent but he really hasn't played all that much in years. He especially lacks the precision and virtuosity that comes from focused practice and disciplined repetition.

Mr. Ayers has accumulated an impressive repertoire of eccentric habits of speech that are the natural props of his roles of homeless musician and artist. The author does us the favor of reproducing a number of soliloquies, speeches (or what some DSM<sup>2</sup> aficionados might term schizophrenic babblings) that call to mind the licks of jazz musicians. Licks are stock patterns or phrases of music, or groups of notes that are well-practiced and well-memorized, and that can be spontaneously interspersed in programmed music. Licks are at the basis of embellishments, ad-libs and solos. They are most likely at the heart of much improvisation in music, including classical improvisation.

It's striking that this concept of licks, which is well known in music, seems quite applicable to regular speech. Our own capacity to extemporaneously elaborate on this or that is undoubtedly tied to our memorized speech patterns, or speech licks if you will, that we easily reproduce as when we unthinkingly prattle on about this or that. These seem to have become caricatured in Mr. Ayers' discourses: when excited or stressed, he goes on rants about racial injustice and iniquities that are on the one hand quite outrageous and almost incoherent but, on the other, obviously well-rehearsed. Swearing and patterns of invective come to his lips, but we too employ and intersperse regular speech with well-rehearsed licks, such as those bundled in Mr.

Ayers' discourses. However, he is mellifluous when speaking of a musical opus or its composer; here again, other licks of the musician and music lover. Lopez reproduces his own well-rehearsed licks when he complains about the vagaries of newspaper publishing. And our own licks are undoubtedly tied to our well-rehearsed identity defining roles.

### Epilogue, Awaiting the Seventh Age

THERE IS HOPE throughout this book, but there is no therapeutic magic. As we reach the last page, Mr. Ayers is still quite crazy, schizophrenic if we must professionally label it, but his eccentricities are now camouflaged by a multiplicity of activities and social relationships that increasingly look like a full life, indeed a good life. Activities and relations fill up his days and reduce the time available for crazy behaviors and monologues. Mr. Ayers does not come out of this a new man, completely cured, recovered or having been transformed. If anybody is changed in this book, it is mostly Lopez, and possibly the reader. At the same time, this book is an eloquent testimony to the importance of socially integrated relationships—valued social roles (valued activities with valued people in valued places)—and how problems such as schizophrenia and other like problems are quite irresolvable collectively or with this method or that approach. Rather, what each homeless person requires, what each so-called “mentally ill” individual needs, is a few people who are valued, competent, constant and who maintain relationships over time, through thick and thin. It is only then that they might discover an important property of valued social roles: that they do tend to multiply as one moves through the ages of life. It is likely that this is what Mr. Ayers meant when he concluded an interview on the US television program *60 Minutes* by saying: “It is very good to be alive right now; it is very good to be able to be in the company of Mr. Lopez!”

#### ENDNOTES

1. From William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* (Act 2, Scene 7). Lines spoken by the character Jacques.

2. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

#### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Lemay, R.A. (1999). Roles, identities, and expectancies: Positive contributions of role theory to Social Role Valorization theory. In R.J. Flynn & R. Lemay (Eds.), *A quarter-century of normalization and Social Role Valorization: Evolution and impact*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 219-240.

Lemay, R. (2006). Social Role Valorization insights into the social integration conundrum. *Mental Retardation*, 44(1), 1-12.

Lemay, R. (2006). « J'entends des voix »: Le courant de la pensée, les hallucinations et l'intervention. *Travail Social Canadien/ Canadian Social Work*, 8(1), 98-112.

*60 Minutes*. (2009). How Mr. Ayers and Mr. Lopez Became Friends. (First broadcast on 22 March 2009). [http://www.tv.com/video/ZDnFfbuH3dulgtqI1I\\_fTxOmnYsY2IC1/mr-lopez-meets-mr-ayers?o=cbs](http://www.tv.com/video/ZDnFfbuH3dulgtqI1I_fTxOmnYsY2IC1/mr-lopez-meets-mr-ayers?o=cbs). Accessed 18 October 2009.

Wolfensberger, W. (1969). The origin and nature of our institutional models. In R.B. Kugel & W. Wolfensberger (Eds.), *Changing patterns in residential services for the mentally retarded*. Washington, DC: President's Committee on Mental Retardation, 59-171.

Wolfensberger, W. (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (3rd ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

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.

---

RAY LEMAY is the Executive Director of Prescott-Russell Services to Children & Adults, & is the former editor of *SRV/VRS: The International Social Role Valorization Journal/La Revue Internationale de la Valorisation des Rôles Sociaux*.

---

#### THE CITATION FOR THIS REVIEW IS

Lemay, R. (2009). Review of the book *The soloist* by S. Lopez. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 57-64.

# 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](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:

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE IN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE. By V. NZIRA & P. WILLIAMS. London: Sage Publications, 223 pages, 2009.

VULNERABLE COMMUNION. By T. REYNOLDS. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 256 pages, 2008.

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

WHO GETS BORN? Wellington, New Zealand: TOI TE TAIAO: THE BIOETHICS COUNCIL, 64 pages, 2008.

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

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

ROLLING. By GRETCHEN BERLAND (Director). 71 minutes, 2004.

WAITING FOR RONALD. By ELLEN GERSTEIN (Director). 2003.

MODELL, S. & CROPP, D. POLICE OFFICERS & DISABILITY: PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 45(1), 60-63 (2007).

EISENMAN, L. SOCIAL NETWORKS & CAREERS OF YOUNG ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 45(3), 199-208 (2007).

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

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

---

THIS FEATURE PROVIDES, for those who are interested, a way to continue learning from and engaging with a *Journal* article after they are done reading it. We will support such learning by publishing questions based on selected articles, prompting the reader to continue considering, reflecting, discussing and even writing about what they read. Such questions can be useful in deepening a reader's level of understanding of the article content and its SRV implications, whether for teaching or application, and may even lead to a shift in mind-set. We hope that these questions will be used for example by individual readers, as well as by university/college professors in their classes, by program managers during staff meetings, and so on.

### PERSON CENTRED PLANNING & SRV (PP. 6-9) ~ SHERWIN

1. What are the main messages in the column?
2. What are your reactions to the cautions the author gives about 'person centred planning'? Have you seen any of these scenarios play out in services? If so, what effect(s) did such scenarios bring about for vulnerable people?
3. Describe what an organisation that purports to use person centred approaches would look and feel like: a) from the point of view of service recipients; and b) from the point of view of paid workers. How might a knowledge of SRV strengthen such an organisation?
4. To what extent do any person centred planning efforts within your organisation have a solid theoretical base?

### ROLE-VALORIZING MERITS OF PAID & UNPAID ACTIVITIES (PP. 12-18) ~ WOLFENBERGER & THOMAS

1. Identify contemporary examples of unpaid socially valued roles and activities, specifically work and volunteer-related ones. Where do these roles fall in terms of social value in your particular town, city, state or province? (cf. Wolfensberger, *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization*, 1998, pp. 29-33). What 'good things of life' might such roles open the door to for socially devalued people?
2. In what ways might socially valued unpaid work-related roles address the heightened vulnerability of a socially devalued person? Consider how such roles might: diminish or eliminate a person's devalued roles, open the door to other valued roles, increase a person's social status, etc.
3. What programmatic service practices can support the attainment and maintenance of socially valued unpaid work-related roles for devalued people?
4. If you are in a teaching or training role, or in a supervisory human service role, how might you help students, trainees or employees to think about and act on the issues raised in this article?

5. Does this article challenge you on the level of your experiences and/or beliefs? Why? How will you reconcile those challenges?

**THE “HAPPINESS ISSUE” (PP. 33-41) ~ OSBURN**

1. From the perspective of service relevance and potency, as described in SRV, consider and compare two of the frameworks mentioned in the article, namely, pursuit of ‘the good things of life’ with ‘happiness-invoking.’

2. Have you seen this issue in your own service efforts, work, teaching, etc.? If so, how has it been expressed? What particular challenges did it bring? What effects did it have: a) on you; b) on servers; c) on devalued people; d) on their family; etc.?

3. What has been your response(s) to occurrences of this issue? What has the response(s) of others been? If different, why do you think they are different? What effects have these different responses had: a) on services; b) on devalued people; etc.?

4. What can you learn from this article which can contribute to: a) a better understanding and perspective on this issue; b) an improvement in your service practice and ability to deal with the issue in the future; and/or c) better teaching and training of others about this issue?

---

If you know someone who would be interested in reading  
*The SRV Journal*, send us their name & address  
& we'll mail them a complimentary issue.

# CALENDAR OF SRV & RELATED TRAININGS

---

THIS CALENDAR LISTS UPCOMING SRV & PASSING workshops we are aware of, as well as a number of other workshops relevant to SRV. Each event varies in terms of length & depth of coverage of material; contact the person listed to make sure the workshop fits what you are looking for. Additional training calendars may be accessed at [www.srvip.org](http://www.srvip.org) & [www.socialrolevalorization.com](http://www.socialrolevalorization.com). To notify us of SRV, PASSING & SRV-related workshops for upcoming issues, send information to: [journal@srvip.org](mailto:journal@srvip.org).

## **5th International SRV Conference**

September 21-23, 2011  
Canberra, ACT, AUS  
email [jarm@socialrolevalorization.com](mailto:jarm@socialrolevalorization.com)

## **An Introduction to SRV: A High-Order Schema for Addressing the Plight of Devalued People (\*with an emphasis on developing leaders in SRV\*)**

March 22-25, 2010  
Charleston, West Virginia, US  
email Linda Higgs ~ [Linda.S.Higgs@wv.gov](mailto:Linda.S.Higgs@wv.gov)

April 13-16, 2010  
Victoria, AUS  
email Claude Staub ~ [cstaub@st.johnofgod.org.au](mailto:cstaub@st.johnofgod.org.au)

April 19-22, 2010  
Fall River, Massachusetts, US  
email [register@srvip.org](mailto:register@srvip.org)

May 5-8, 2010  
Toronto, Ontario, CAN  
email Peg Jenner ~ [pjenner@rogers.com](mailto:pjenner@rogers.com)

## **An Introduction to Social Role Valorization**

February 9-10, 2010  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, US  
email Pam Seetoo ~ [pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org](mailto:pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org)

May 3-5, 2010  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, US  
email Pam Seetoo ~ [pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org](mailto:pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org)

September 13-15, 2010  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, US  
email Pam Seetoo ~ [pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org](mailto:pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org)

## **Practicum With SRV Using the PASSING Tool**

*prerequisite: attendance at a leadership level SRV workshop*  
February 8-12, 2010  
Rockhampton, Queensland, AUS  
email Jenny Smith ~ [jags14@bigpond.com](mailto:jags14@bigpond.com)

June 13-18, 2010  
Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, CAN  
email Judith Sandys ~ [jsandys@gwemail.ryerson.ca](mailto:jsandys@gwemail.ryerson.ca)

October 11-15, 2010  
Halifax, Pennsylvania, US  
email Pam Seetoo ~ [pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org](mailto:pseetoo@keystonehumanservices.org)

## **Towards a Better Life:**

**A Two-Day Basic Introduction to SRV**  
February 4-5, 2010  
Sydney, AUS  
email [foundationsforum@yahoo.com.au](mailto:foundationsforum@yahoo.com.au)

March 1-2, 2010  
New Zealand (venue to be advised)  
email Lorna Sullivan ~ [lorna@imaginebetter.com.nz](mailto:lorna@imaginebetter.com.nz)

April 29-30, 2010  
Sydney, AUS  
email [foundationsforum@yahoo.com.au](mailto:foundationsforum@yahoo.com.au)

June 28-29, 2010  
Sydney, AUS  
email [foundationsforum@yahoo.com.au](mailto:foundationsforum@yahoo.com.au)

## **The Importance of Personal Appearance**

January 7, 2010 (2:30 to 4:30 pm)  
Syracuse, New York, US  
call Susan Thomas ~ 315.473.2978

## **Dilemmas in Serving for Pay upon People in Need**

February 11, 2010 (1 to 4 pm)  
Syracuse, New York, US  
call Susan Thomas ~ 315.473.2978

# Social Role Valorization News & Reviews

**Wolf Wolfensberger**

AS IN EARLIER ISSUES of this journal, my intent for this column is five-fold, at least across multiple journal issues if not in each one.

(a) Briefly annotate publications that have relevance to Social Role Valorization (SRV). Conceivably, some of these might be reviewed in greater depth in a later issue of this journal. Some of these items may serve as pointers to research relevant to SRV theory.

(b) Present brief sketches of media items that illustrate an SRV issue.

(c) Present vignettes from public life that illustrate or teach something about SRV.

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

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

I have about 20 SRV-related topics, from among which I try to present a selected few in any particular issue.

Aside from being instructive to readers, persons who teach SRV will hopefully find many of the items in this column useful in their teaching.

## **Role Valorization & Valued Role Defense**

\*In some regions of Europe, an attempt was made in the seventh century to succor the poor in a dignified way by forming them into corporations, and giving them valued roles in return for the support they received. These included attending Mass regu-

larly, rendering simple services to the local parish church or cathedral, and functioning as mourners at the death of a bishop (Möser, n. d.).

\*At the shrine (since the Middle Ages) for healing the mentally afflicted in Geel in Belgium, the afflicted who came there were never called “fools” or “madmen,” but “pilgrims,” thus bestowing on them from the start what was at that time a valued role (Goldin, 1994).

\*Around the 1850s, Albrecht von Graefe had the reputation of being one of Prussia’s best eye doctors. Though an aristocrat, he favored the poor, and a high government official complained that if one wanted access to v. Graefe, one had better come dressed as a laborer. Obviously, v. Graefe was practicing role-valorization, trying to bring the lowly upward. He had help from another physician, Dr. Ernst Ludwig Heim, who had a reputation for being gruff. Long after his death, it was discovered that Heim secretly was paying for the prescriptions of as many as 1000 patients at a time, which he did by soaking the rich.

\*In 1896, a member of the family of William Booth (who had founded the Salvation Army) set out to make homes for men coming out of prison that would be “as unlike an institution as possible.” Similarly, homes for unwed mothers and reforming prostitutes tried to give these women

the best rooms, while staff took the lesser rooms. Also, the residents got the finest furniture (Magnuson, 1977).

\*Koester, D.J. (1991). *The cane: Historical and contemporary symbolism and design as a stimulus for further development*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. When people have to start using a walking cane, they usually acquire an ugly, functional medicinal one. This was not good enough for one retired man who had once been a wood turner. In this (not entirely accurate) history of the cane, we learn that he refused the usual canes offered him, and instead acquired a beautiful one. His friends in his former occupation noticed it and began to make additional individualized and beautiful canes for him. Not only were these more image-enhancing, but they were also symbols of his former role, plus they made him the owner (collector) of a collection of unique and aesthetic walking sticks.

\*How SRV draws on ancient universals, and thus on the empiricism of history, is underlined by the fact that it includes strategies used already by the earliest Greeks in a culturally normative fashion for the treatment of mental disorders. Already in the Iliad and the Odyssey, written in the eighth century BC, these included the practice of valued social relationships, conversation, singing or storytelling, taking of wine—and some use of herbs to dull pain and combat grief. (Simon, B. & Weiner, H. [1966]. Models of mind and mental illness in ancient Greece: The Homeric model of mind. *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences*, 2, 303-314).

\*In the early 1900s, the Rome State School (for the mentally retarded) in New York State ran a number of small outliers (much like large group homes) called 'colonies.' Some were urban, some were rural. One rural colony was in the Adirondack Mountains. A retarded youth who was placed there to plant trees ended up planting more trees

in one year than anyone else in the country (Arnold Gesell, writing in O'Shea, 1924). This is an example not only of a valued achievement, but of the importance of translating achievements into role language, such as 'champion tree planter,' 'arborist,' etc.

\*There is a new model of nursing home called either the 'cultural change model,' 'cultural change' principle or 'resident-centered care.' In essence, it is a way of trying to normalize nursing homes, though no debt to the normalization principle is acknowledged. Bedrooms are arranged in small 'pods,' each pod having its own social area and kitchenette, and staff are assigned on a permanent basis to one pod, and given greater autonomy. Some pods have their own entrances, and several pods may be arranged into a 'neighborhood.' Residents are also given greater control and more privacy. This is an example of role valorization by manipulating the environment.

\*The importance of not having one's identity and life be defined by devalued roles was underlined by a pitcher for the World Series-winning Boston Red Sox, Jon Lester. At age 22, he was diagnosed with a serious cancer. But, he says, "I don't want to be Jon Lester, cancer survivor. I want to be Jon Lester, pitcher" (*Parade*, 15 March 2009, p. 10).

\*Here is an interesting occurrence that could have a lot of role-valorizing potential: in France, where the Tour de France is one of the biggest and most watched sporting events, a group of convicts in Summer 2009 embarked on a two-week bicycle trek across France called the "Tour de France Pénitentiare." The convicts were accompanied by their jailers, and the event was organized by the prison administration as "a teaching tool." In the photo about the event, the convicts and the jailers all wore identical biking outfits, and except for the unnecessary word 'pénitentiare' on the back of their shirts, one could not have known, from

appearance and activity alone, that they were anything other than ordinary cyclists. This activity could not only be competency-contributive, but also casts the riders into the valued roles of athletes, cross-country cyclists and adventurers (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 9 June 2009, p. A2).

\*Modern technology has finally found the cure for an age-old symptom of insanity: talking aloud to people (or things) that are not there, which is in the class of symptoms called hallucinations, and which ever since the advent of modern psychiatry has been considered an almost certain sign of psychosis. The cure is for such a hallucinating person to hold a cell phone to the ear. Everyone will then assume that the person is talking to someone else, which these days is considered normal, or rude at most, even if done around the clock, in the toilet, in a restaurant or at church, etc. With everybody everywhere in public appearing to talk with themselves, the stigma is taken away from those people who indeed talk to themselves in public. This is not an example of what we call 'role equalization' in SRV theory, because it is not the valued party that engages in something less valued. So if one knows someone who is considered to be insane, and who talks to him or herself, one SRV strategy would be to give this person a cell phone (an old broken one that does not work is preferable), and teach the person to hold it near the mouth when talking. At least to the unknowing public, the person will then appear to be totally normal, and be treated accordingly.

\*The art world, and especially that of modern art, affords role-valorizing opportunities for mentally disordered people whose art products may be indistinguishable from those of supposedly sane people—and some of the mentally disordered artists may in fact be talented. An example comes from the story of Wesley Willis (drawn to our attention by Bill Forman). Willis was a formerly homeless man who channeled his schizophrenia into a career as a hero in the world of punk rock

and alternative music, because his "unfettered emotional outbursts" and "unpredictable and unstructured" lyrics fit right in with the music of that world. His performances often consisted of rants and usually ended with catch phrases from advertising slogans, but he was admired by many big names in these circles, and actually had recording contracts and released 50 albums. He died at the age of 40 in mid-2004.

Relatedly—and perhaps this helps to explain why mad people can find or create valued roles at least in these circles—it turns out that jazz musicians are four times more likely to have mental problems than other people, according to a study released in September 2003. Jazz musicians also are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.

\*Many blind people develop above-normal finger sensitivity, and so in Germany, for the first time, six blind women were trained to become 'breast feelers,' to test for breast abnormalities. Their blindness may also make their patients less bashful. This way, the impairment of vision was converted to a strength. These women are highly sought after and very employable (*Das Band*, June 2008, pp. 4-5).

\*During World War I, large horns were made that could detect aircraft motors (and thereby enemy aircraft) miles away. These devices were called "acoustic locators." Sometimes blind men were recruited to listen to these devices because they had more sensitive hearing. Thereby, an affliction became the basis for a valued role (*Invention & Technology*, Summer 2009, 24(2), p. 41).

\*In 1999, a German charity launched a chain of relatively small supermarkets with 6000 products. Most of the employees are handicapped, and wear shirts with the inscription CAP on them, derived from 'handicap.' As of 2008, the franchise had grown to 60 stores near city centers. There are about 50% more workers in these stores than in ordinary ones. Many workers are graduates of

sheltered workshops. The stores also sell some products made in sheltered workshops (*Das Band*, June 2008, pp. 10-13).

\*A charity in Germany opened a specialized coffee shop, staffed by handicapped workers. The specialty consists in offering coffee made from scores of different and exotic coffee beans. Customers get a slip of paper that lists the choices, which they mark off and give to a waiter/waitress. Each order is custom-roasted and brewed, and served with a chocolate-covered coffee bean. The décor is also very nice and comfortable. The enterprise is a great success, especially in this age of hedonism. Here too, many employees are sheltered workshop graduates (*Das Band*, June 2008, pp. 14-15).

\*Some university people in Cologne, Germany, started a series of 'reading clubs' for mentally retarded people, though reading ability is not a prerequisite. Each club has four to six members and two mentors who meet for one hour a week, when someone reads something aloud that is then discussed. There is also some socialization. One hope is that this will result in some members wanting to improve their reading, or learning to read. It is also more image-enhancing to belong to a reading club than a literacy class.

\*The importance of social roles is underlined by reading the obituary page, because obituaries typically mention the roles of the deceased. A recent obituary actually started as follows, before even giving the deceased's name: "NHL scout, college hockey coach, teacher, mentor, husband, father and grandfather" (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 25 July 2009, p. A9).

\*Obituaries often report that the deceased had served in some branch of the military, and 'veteran'—though a small and narrow role—is a role that is usually valued in most societies. In many locales, veterans' groups read the obituaries for

mention of past military service, and when they find such, they call the funeral home and offer to have an honor guard at the burial, and to hand over the national flag to the surviving family (each veteran's survivors receive a flag). This is an example of both how past roles (valued or devalued) continue to have an impact on a person, even after death; and of how some roles can be the most important thing about a person to at least some perceivers, especially when little or nothing else about the person is known—in this case, the role of veteran being the most important thing to veterans' groups, and regardless whether the veteran was young or old, competent or debilitated, alcoholic, drug-addicted, etc.

\*For decades, we have been emphasizing (to mostly deaf ears) that it is more social role-valORIZING for an impaired adult to enter unpaid adult work roles than to be idle, or attend a non-work day program. Being in such a work role is probably even more likely to lead to paid work than will the efforts of paid rehab people. In Syracuse, it even saved a man's life: a "disabled" former city employee usually sits on his house steps in the morning, and then picks up neighborhood litter. One day, he started his litter round early—and the place where he would ordinarily have sat got peppered by gunfire between a bunch of hoods (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 18 May 2009, p. A4).

\*A girl with Down's syndrome was elected Homecoming Queen at a Texas high school (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 3 March 2009, p. A6).

\*Two SRV strategies are role recovery, meaning to recapture a valued role that a person once held but has lost, and role defense, meaning to protect a valued role against loss. Both these strategies are illustrated by the guitarist Billy McLaughlin, described both with the role term "guitarist" and as "a finger-style player noted for his technique of tapping on strings." He was diagnosed with an incurable neuromuscular disease that froze his fingers, and has

ended many another musician's career. But he decided to relearn guitar-playing with his unaffected left hand, a very difficult feat. This also required some adaptations of the instrument, having his guitars refitted and restrung for his left hand (*Syracuse Post-Standard/Stars*, 26 July 2009, pp. 3-5).

\*There are middle- or higher-class people, some in the professions, who lost their jobs since the 2007-08 economic melt-down, but who get snazily dressed every day, and go to their pretend jobs. In reality, they may sit around a coffee shop or meet with colleagues. A psychologist has encouraged this practice because it maintains a personal routine, and can be a "social survival" strategy (*Monitor on Psychology*, June 2009, p. 12). In SRV language, we would call it role defense.

\*We discovered that at the old Syracuse (NY) State School for retarded people, one employee worked until she was 101 years old (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 17 May 2009, p. B2). This gave her a very valued role, but today, she would almost certainly be mandatorily retired for fear of lawsuits.

\*Some efforts at role enhancement can be ludicrous. A Chinese-American woman Yiyun Li who had never published a single novel was designated as one of the best young American novelists (*Newsweek*, 16 February 2009, p. 56). Apparently, a motive here was the PC glorification of diversity and multiculturalism. What would be the advantages and costs of doing something like this, even on behalf of societally devalued people? An example might be giving a mentally retarded person who is math-illiterate and does not know anything about physics the physics Nobel Prize; or giving someone a Nobel Peace Prize in the hope that they will do something for peace. (NB: This item was written **before** the awarding of the Peace Prize to US President Obama.)

### Role Valorization Via Role Equalization

\*One of the strategies of role valorization is role equalization, where valued people do things usu-

ally associated with devalued roles, with the consequence that those things will be looked upon as less devalued. The German writer Justus Möser (1720-1794) had already argued for a version of role equalization. He called for all privileged people (including the nobility) to learn a manual craft, and cited several benefits if this practice were adopted. Among other things, he said, "Once a manual occupation is devalued, then only poor and lowly people will engage in it; and what poor and lowly people do will rarely come into good taste, positive regard, value and excellence." He called this a "schrecklicher Zirkel," or vicious circle, that could only be destroyed by privileged people letting their children learn a manual craft. He also said that once someone had learned the skills of a craft, he would feel the urge to put his hands to it occasionally. To some degree, this actually happened when some nobles had their children do so. One German emperor before World War I became a skilled locksmith, kept a workshop, and worked in it as a hobby. The German emperor deposed in 1918 was a passionate wood-chopper.

\*In some religions, devotees were expected to occasionally break out into mad spells. For instance, some Hindu gods did, and so did their devotees. This is a form of role-equalization, in that it diminishes the stigma of clinical insanities (Miles, M. [1995]. Disability in an Eastern religious context: Historical perspectives. *Disability & Society*, 10, pp. 49-69).

\*We were informed that there is a new form of role equalization via language among young people in Germany. They have started to call each other Dicker, meaning 'fat one.' Presumably, this takes away some of the stigma of obesity, in that people are called Dicker regardless of their weight.

There is another interesting implication here. If everyone in the youth culture started to call each other 'retard,' every self-advocacy group, and probably all state developmental disability coun-

cils, would rush to the law to establish a right for retarded people to also be called 'retards,' and not to be discriminated against or 'excluded' from being called 'retard.'

### Imagery & the Image Interpretation of Devalued People

#### Introduction

I have many subheadings on that topic, and usually include at least a few in an issue, as I do here.

\*In these days of political spin, imagery manipulation, and 'virtual worlds,' it hardly needs saying that one cannot trust what one sees to be a valid representation of reality. However, for some time after photographs were invented, people mistakenly believed that they were "a perfect and faithful record" of the subject (Tagg, J. [1988]. *The burden of representation*. New York: Macmillan).

\*In SRV teaching, it is pointed out how spatial concepts such as right, up, forward, etc., tend to be positively valued, while their opposites are negatively valued. A research study suggested that handedness is more important than cultural influence in assigning value to leftness versus rightness. Right-handed people associated 'right' with positive ideas, and 'left' with negative ones, but left-handed people showed the opposite pattern—in other words, they rose above the majority cultural ideals (*Monitor on Psychology*, July/August 2009, 40(7), p. 9).

#### Imaging Users of a Setting Via the Setting or Serving Body History

\*In early 2008, there was publicity about a prison (named for St. Anne) in Avignon, France, that had been built around 1750 on the ruins of a 13th century insane asylum. The prison was closed in 2003 in response to pressure from the European Union for more humane penal facilities. A buyer now wants to convert it into a luxury hotel (AP in *Syracuse Post-Standard*, 2 February 2008, p. A2). Building a prison on top of an insane asy-

lum transferred some of the negative imagery of insanity—especially criminal insanity—to the prisoners. Why are deviancy facilities so rarely built on the sites of former luxury hotels, palaces and other prestigious facilities?

\*Barken, E. (2008, April). "The New Brunswick lazaretto: An early Canadian institution, 1844-1868." Paper written for course by Professor Suzanne Morton at McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada. As part of her college studies, Emma Barken wrote a paper on the history of the leprosarium on Sheldrake Island in New Brunswick, Canada, that functioned from 1844-1849, and until 1965 at Tracadie. Leprosy was first detected in 1815 in the French-speaking Acadian community of New Brunswick, mostly around Tracadie. Rather than building a leprosarium near Tracadie, the provincial government decided to use an old quarantine station on Sheldrake Island, because it already had buildings. This is another instance of one devalued group inheriting the stigma of another one that had used its service facility earlier. The island was hard to get to, and virtually impossible to do so at all in the winter, thus being a big disincentive to the cultivation of family ties.

Many Acadians felt that the leprosy was a punishment for being French and Catholic. Many of the 'English' thought it was due to the French being dirty, or that leprosy was hereditary. One Francophone doctor thought that the disease was really syphilis, reinforcing an ancient idea that there was a link between leprosy and sexual licentiousness.

The fate of the inmates was terrible. For a long time, virtually nothing was done for them.

\*In Syracuse, New York, a shelter for orphans and battered women was opened in 1851, and became a well-known operation in that part of the state. However, in recent decades, it converted to a range of residential services to the elderly. This is an example of how the image of service recipients can suffer from the history of their serving agency. In this case, the image of childhood may

transfer to the elderly now being served, at least in the minds of people who know the history of the agency. However, this is a relatively minor negative image transfer, in comparison to some others.

\*In the late 1980s, a mental health center in Ithaca, New York, was put into a space formerly occupied by a 'psychic center' whose operator had the most popular local call-in TV show. No wonder people talk of shrinkery, and view it as voodoo.

\*Here are several historical vignettes of bad image juxtapositions to prisons, as if these did not have a bad image already without further image insults (most of these are from Garrett & MacCormick, 1929, *Handbook of American Prisons and Reformatories*).

The Western State Penitentiary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was built on the site of the old House of Refuge, probably an institution for poor youths (p. 848).

The Rhode Island Reformatory for Women in Howard was right next door to the State Hospital for the Insane, at least in the late 1920s (p. 874).

At least as late as the late 1920s, right next to the state prison for men in Auburn, New York, there had been a state prison for women—which was built on the grounds of a former state institution for the criminally insane, used until the late 1890s (p. 647).

Milledgeville in Georgia has not only been the site of the state's largest asylum (both mental and mental retardation institutions), but was also the site of the state prison at least until the mid-1800s (p. 237), and recently has been used as a prison again.

### ***Imaging Via Service, Program, Activity & Setting Names***

\*Until about 1900, institutions often had a small building near their hospital or infirmary for isolating residents with infectious diseases, such as diphtheria. These buildings were often called "pesthouses," though officially they were often called "fever hospitals" (Johnson, 1923).

\*During World War I, the US armed forces instituted mental testing, and excluded large numbers of men because of low scores. The army also constituted so-called "casual camps" for unpromising and low-scoring soldiers while they were being processed, mostly for discharge, which took a long time because of red tape. The camp inmates were called "casuals," and one such camp near Charlotte, North Carolina, was commanded by a captain who greatly resented his assignment. He said that he had come to the camp to train soldiers, but instead found himself keeper of an imbecile asylum (Johnson, 1923, pp. 422-423).

\*Johnson, A. (1923). *Adventures in social welfare: Being reminiscences of things, thoughts and folks during forty years of social work*. Fort Wayne, IN: Author. Alexander Johnson, who called himself a social worker, was a leader in American human service circles for a whole generation from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. In 1923, he compiled a list of names for poorhouses. It included "County Asylum for the Poor," "Poor Farm," "Almshouse," "County Infirmary," "County Hospital," "City Home," "Home for Aged and Infirm," and in Britain, "Union Workhouse," informally called "the Bastille." Anticipating political correctness, Utah had a "Home for Those Financially Unfortunate." Nantucket Island had "Our Island Home." Johnson called them "a social cemetery" (p. 138).

\*One of the programs of the 'school department' of the Rome State School for retarded people in New York State in 1926 was the "Ideo-Imbecile Habits Training Group."

\*The notion that institutionalization was the treatment par excellence for the insane explains why services given to inmates who were released was for at least two generations called 'aftercare,' implying that what went before (the institutionalization) was the real care.

\*Hollingworth, H.L. (1943/1990). *Leta Stetter Hollingworth: A biography*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing. (Original edition published by the University of Nebraska Press, 1943; with an added bibliography of works about her). In 1939, Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City launched an experimental school, called the Speyer School, or Public School 500, that had classes for slow and rapid learners. The slow classes were called “Binet classes” for the inventor of mental tests, and the rapid classes were called “Terman classes” for the Stanford professor who studied gifted children. Actually, naming the slow classes after Binet was not such a bad image.

\*In the printing trade, collating forms, folding, hand-stamping envelopes, etc., were long referred to as either “women’s handwork” or “idiot’s delight” (Moise, 2005).

\*In London in the early 20th century, there were two institutions for mentally retarded people located on Downs Road. How fortunate that at that time, no one had as yet thought of calling the “Kalmuc” condition, or Mongolian idiocy, Down or Down’s syndrome (Shuttleworth, G.E. & Potts, W. [1922]. *Mentally deficient children* [5th ed.]. London: H.K. Lewis & Co.).

\*The Public Interest Law Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, scheduled a 40th anniversary celebration to be held at the Down Town Club. On the invitation flyer, the phrase Down Town was about an inch above a picture of a youth with Down’s syndrome. He ought to sue them!

\*There is a group of promoters in Syracuse, NY, who call themselves the UpDowntowners. This gave us the idea that the unthinking anonymous party that decided that the name Down’s syndrome should be changed to Down syndrome should have called for calling it Updown syndrome. It certainly would have been better than invoking only the ‘down’ image.

\*Healy was one of the US authorities on juvenile delinquency. Borstal was a juvenile corrections institution for boys in Britain, and the name generalized as a descriptive term to other such facilities, including for girls. One of the juvenile correction institutions in England (near London) was named Wormwood Scrubs. A juvenile correction facility near Nottingham, England, was located in Lowdham, and called Lowdham Grange, which could be read as ‘low dam’—a not very enhancing image. Hopefully, no one with ‘Down syndrome’ got put there, lest they be seen as ‘low down’ or ‘low damn down’ (Healy, W. & Alper, B.S. (1941). *Criminal youth and the Borstal system*. New York: Commonwealth Fund).

\*Teachings of normalization and Social Role Valorization seem to have come and gone in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, maybe being pronounced ‘passé’ or replaced by better things, because as of 2009, there was still a nursing home called the Sunset Adult Residential Center (in Pugwash) (*Globe & Mail*, 2 April 2009). The death-imagined word ‘Sunset’ has been a persistently popular one in the name of nursing homes.

And a nursing home in the Syracuse, NY, area is called The Crossings, which evokes ‘crossing over’ (dying), or crossing the River Styx into the underworld. In this case, the death imagery was probably deliberate. In 2008, the service was fined \$13,300 for poor care of a choking resident (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 19 November 2008, pp. B1-B2).

\*In Syracuse, NY, there is a program (as of 2008) for problematic children that is focused on “having fun,” on the assumption that unless children have fun first, nothing else works. Right or wrong, it is called “The Detached Worker Program,” which suggests a meaning opposite to an engaged child worker (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 18 December 2008, p. A15).

\*In 2009, there was a one-week Camp Twitch and Shout for “Tourette kids” in Georgia (source

item from Guy Caruso). People with Tourette's syndrome often have uncontrollable bodily (especially facial) movements, and sometimes emit barking-like noises. The camp name would be analogous to a "Camp Cry and Laugh" for manic-depressive people.

\*As a fundraiser, the coaches of local sports teams play together in a basketball game, with the spectators' admission fees going to cancer research. In one building where a team of five handicapped people works as a cleaning crew, a poster was put up with photos of each of the crew members' heads pasted over a cartoon of a basketball player in a lemon yellow uniform. The poster announced that the crew would play its own game to also raise money for cancer, and the team was called the "Zesty Lemonheads"—hardly a flattering image for mentally handicapped people insofar as (a) defective new products are called 'lemons,' and (b) in this context, an image of subhumanity (fruits, vegetables) is evoked.

\*A writer in *Books & Culture* (Winter 2008/2009, p. 13) referred to the US federal Community Reinvestment Act program as CRAP because it was behind much of the current financial crisis by mandating the suspension of the earlier traditional credit rules in home-buying. Unspoken has been the fact that these rules were suspended as an act of political correctness, to afford home ownership to 'diversities.'

\*A Texas law changed the names of the state institutions for the mentally retarded from "state schools" to "supported living centers" (Jack Pealer, in *Safeguards Letter*, Spring 2009, p. 3).

\*The so-called Dickey-Wicker amendment passed by the US Congress under the second President Bush prohibited the use of federal tax dollars to create human embryos for research purposes. Syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker—though untrained in SRV—had the wits to call

the amendment "unfortunately named" (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 16 March 2009, p. A8).

### *Images of Vice & Decadence*

\*Diseases thought to be the consequences of vice have always had a bad image. At one time or another, these have included leprosy and syphilis, and more recently, AIDS. Few people are aware that until the early 20th century, one of several theories of the origin of Down's syndrome was that it resulted from parental syphilis. A major proponent of that theory was Dr. G.A. Sutherland in ca. 1900. Otherwise, he was a keen observer and describer of that condition. What contributed to this theory was an overlap of certain symptoms, such as problems with dentition, eyes and hearing. Even Dr. Langdon Down himself had referred some of his patients to Dr. Hutchinson, a famous expert on congenital syphilis. At any rate, for a few decades, 'Mongolian idiocy' (as it was called) carried the suspicion among many people of being due to vice.

\*National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day happens to fall during Black History month, on February 7—a most unfelicitous image juxtaposition for 'black history.'

\*The sexual scandal involving former Governor Eliot Spitzer of New York State has been an unexpected windfall for charities dealing with battered, homeless, etc., women. Many politicians had received campaign contributions from Spitzer, and after the scandal broke, rushed to give back these funds by unloading them on charities dealing with such women. Unfortunately, this conveys a vice image on them, since the only women who figured in the scandal had been prostitutes (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 16 March 2008, p. A9).

\*It is bad enough that in the middle of September, in the Syracuse area, there is an annual 'Christmas parade' of boats on a river, in which boats decorated in Christmas motifs float by for

review before paying spectators. However, things get worse: the parade is to benefit Special Olympics! This associates mentally retarded people with a violation of cultural norms as to when Christmas is (see item elsewhere in this issue). Yet worse is that in 2005, one of the participating boats staged a lewd sex scene on its deck in which a topless young woman spanked a man on his bare bottom with a strand of Christmas lights, and allegedly also performed simulated sex. This made the image association with retarded people even more negative, to say nothing of what it did to the image of Christmas. Nothing would have come of this if a spectator had not captured the performance on a video camera, which brought the case into court, with the perpetrators being sentenced to probation—a slap on their bare behinds, so to speak.

\*We saw some artwork symbolizing the Americans With Disabilities Act. One element of the symbolism was a hand with one finger sticking up. Presumably, this is a sign in American Sign Language (ASL), but it looked like a crude proverbial American insult. Surely, of all the ASL signs, there would have been a better one—unless the message really was meant as an assault on ‘temporarily able-bodied’ people (The Council on Mental Retardation newsletter [Louisville, KY], December 2008, p. 3).

### **Imagery of Sickness & Death**

\*There are many good reasons why there is such a thing as image transfer via juxtaposition, especially where the image is negative. Only one of these is that before diseases could be scientifically explained and understood, people knew that when one person got sick, others around that person might get (‘catch’) the same sickness. Thus, not only was disease negatively imaged, but so were those who had been near a diseased person; they were to be avoided. Since so many diseases were undifferentiated, people did not make distinctions between diseases one could actually catch and those one could not, and it was adaptive to

avoid all of them. Once this pattern became hard-wired, this probably contributed to its generalization to other negatively-valued differences.

It is the above dynamic that most likely accounted for the fact that in parts of the world, and at certain times, people believed that delirium and insanity were contagious. For a while, this belief swept from late 18th century France across the Western world.

\*The white cane used by the blind has a long deviancy-associated history. For instance, in the Middle Ages, a white staff had to be carried in public by beggars, by certain persons who had committed crimes, and by those who had been sentenced to exile but then had been pardoned. Insurrectionists who had been spared the death penalty also had to carry a white staff with them for the rest of their lives. And whenever there was plague about (which there was frequently in Europe and England from the mid-1300s to the late 1600s), ‘searchers’—that is, those who tried to find out who was infected—and persons who had been exposed to the plague, had to carry a staff or wand as a sign to others that they might be infectious. Usually this was white, but sometimes this staff was red or blue. These colors also corresponded to the color of the crosses made on the doors of dwellings where there was plague.

England (and other European areas as well) was almost chronically beset by plagues from the mid-1300s on, and especially so until the late 1600s. The plagues often became local, wreaking havoc in one area while sparing another. Plagues had much more influence on political, economic and military events than the history texts usually tell us. Often, quarantine stations and pest cabin cities were established on a temporary basis, sometimes in tent cities or in cheap temporary buildings hastily erected outside a town. (Sources: Hinckledey, C. [1984]. *Justiz in alter Zeit*. Rothenburg o. T.: Museum of Criminal Justice. [Vol. 6 of the monograph series of the Museum of Criminal Justice of Rotherburg o. T., Germany]; and Mul-

lett, C.F. [1956]. *The bubonic plague and England: An essay in the history of preventive medicine*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.)

\*The black skull-and-crossbones on a white field has long been considered a symbol of death. In maritime history, it was used on a flag as a signal that there was disease aboard a ship, but this signal was abandoned when pirates started using it since about 1785, instead of their previous red (for blood) flag, known incongruously as the Jolly Roger. Instead, a yellow flag began to be used to convey the message of disease, and to this day, yellow is the symbol of contagious disease and plague. Visitors to isolation rooms in hospitals are issued yellow paper gowns to this day. This is why yellow is an image-tainted color in human services. Yet we ran across a drug-and-alcohol rehabilitation program that flew a yellow flag outside its premises as its emblem.

\*A public protest complained that a particular locale was “infected with undocumented workers,” and the marchers wore protective masks (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 30 April 2009).

\*In Hamburg, Germany, a physician came to a nursing home and demonstrated to its residents his suicide device, as a solution to “the suffering of the elderly brought about by cuts in health care” (*Update*, 2008, 22(1), p. 5). On PASSING, this would receive a very low rating on R131 Image Projection of Service Activities and Activity Timing.

\*A medical group practice in oncology and hematology has a physician member whose name is Morbidini.

\*We discovered that near the entrance of a hospital’s palliative care unit (for people believed to be ‘dying’), there was posted a very pretty picture of ... the Titanic. This is not a very positive image juxtaposition. Without a very high consciousness of the image issue, it is very difficult to avoid the

attachment of unnecessary negative images onto devalued people, or devalued human conditions.

\*It hit the news in Syracuse, NY, that the driveway to the emergency room of one of its major hospitals had a ‘Dead End’ sign on it. A hospital spokesperson agreed that this was “a bad image, no doubt.” When the city was approached, it said that the sign, “although in an unfortunate location, is the appropriate sign” for the road, and nothing could be done about it. A citizen wrote in that the sign was “ridiculous.” “Who would expect to pull into a hospital driveway and it go anywhere but to the hospital?” If it could not be removed by the city, the hospital should add its own sign saying, “We disagree.”

When the early normalization teaching in the 1970s pointed to image juxtapositions as important, people almost universally denied it, and the above public debate would not even have taken place. The trickle-down of normalization teaching had much to do with this kind of consciousness-raising, as has the emphasis on imagery and ‘spin’ in politics.

\*We have been told—and we can believe it—that parents are now using calling hours and wakes at funeral homes as convenient drop-off places for their children; they let the kids off at the funeral home, and return several hours later to pick them up. The children may or may not know the deceased and his/her family. Obviously, this is yet one more sign of the abdication by parents of child-rearing responsibilities, and in this instance, it constitutes a deviancy image associated with death, and maybe even a message that the parents would prefer the inconvenient children to be dead.

\*SRV teaching has long made fun of do-gooders who put on culture-alien ‘Christmas in July’ (or August, etc.) feasts for devalued people, such as inmates of nursing homes. Such events convey child, pity, and even dying images, plus can be mentally confusing to people already confused.

Now the already badly imaged (clown and sickness) Ronald McDonald House in our area really did put on a 'Christmas in July' celebration in 2009 (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 29 July 2009, p. A4).

\*In 2007, it was reported that in one nursing home, a cat would appear near any resident who was about to die. Soon, there were all sorts of jokes and cartoons about cats with scythes showing up when someone was about to die, or lose a job (*Syracuse Post-Standard*, 16 July 2007,

p. A15). In a few years, after people have forgotten the incident, all these cartoons and jokes will be unintelligible.

### Segregation & Integration

\*During the eugenic period, writers (including the famous psychiatrist Adolf Meyer in 1910) sometimes referred to long-term segregation (in institutions) of devalued classes as 'social quarantine' and likened it to the long-term segregation of lepers. However, by definition, quarantine is short-term, and thus, the use of that phrase for

#### A NOTE ON THE WORD 'SAFEGUARD'

THE WORD 'SAFEGUARD' can be used as both a noun and a verb. As a *noun*, it indicates protection, safety, custody or safekeeping—often afforded by a specified person or thing (e.g., a law). It can be used particularly to indicate a guarantee of safety given by a person in authority (e.g., safe passage authorized by a military official).

The *verb* 'safeguard' means to keep secure from attack or danger; to guard, protect, or defend. Current general usage tends to use the verb safeguard chiefly with immaterial objects (e.g., to safeguard a particular law). One of the first written uses of the verb safeguard was by Robert Fabyan when writing about Brenne, an early king of England, in his chronicles of England and France: "Brenne ... was fayne to Sauegard hymselfe by flyght" (1494 AD). Flight may at times still be a good option when it comes to poor quality services!

The *adjective* 'safe' indicates that someone or something is free from hurt or damage, preserved from danger, whole ('safe and sound'), restored to health, secure, free from danger, not likely to be harmed. Relevant definitions of 'guard' include to: keep in safety, stand sentinel, escort, keep safe, protect or watch over.

Related words include safeguarding, safeguarder and safeguardance.

A safeguarding mindset on behalf of socially devalued individuals and groups can be derived from and informed by Social Role Valorization (SRV) theory (e.g., such as from the phenomenon of wounding, the 'conservatism corollary' of SRV, etc.). Dr. W. Wolfensberger's development of Citizen Advocacy (Wolfensberger & Zauha, 1973) and of hospital protection (Wolfensberger, 2005) are excellent examples of safeguarding efforts and a safeguarding mindset consistent with SRV.

Wolfensberger, W. (2005). A guideline on protecting the health & lives of patients in hospitals, especially if the patient is a member of a societally devalued class, 2nd rev. ed. Syracuse, NY: Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency.

Wolfensberger, W. & Zauha, H. (1973). *Citizen Advocacy and protective services for the impaired and handicapped*. Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Source information from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

long-term—even life-long—segregation in institutions was actually a form of detoxification.

\*The latest ship of fools. Starting in the late middle ages, local authorities in Europe would sometimes gather unwanted people (the insane, the idiotic, the crippled, beggars, etc.) and put them on a boat to be taken far away and dumped there. Sometimes, the boats were prevented from doing this by the inhabitants of foreign parts, and the boats would roam about looking for a chance to dump. Versions of this policy of merciless expulsion have occurred ever since. The latest version has been set in motion by ordinances all over the US that sex offenders could not enter vicinities in which children might be concentrated. This has closed off entire cities for them, made many homeless, and resulted in congregate colonies under bridges, on prison grounds, etc. A whole new dispossessed, deeply rejected and mentally miserable and desperate subpopulation is being created, which could grow to huge numbers given the breakdown in sexual competence and morality. The irony is that many persons classified as sex offenders are harmless (e.g., voyeurs or exhibitionists), plus that the measure does not prevent recidivism. As currently enacted, it is therefore a mindless cruelty—but very popular (e.g., *Newsweek*, 3 August 2009, pp. 46-51).

\*The wound of eternal segregation. In SRV teaching, it is sometimes pointed out that segregation can go as far as segregating the dead in the same way they were segregated when live, as by burying them in separate cemeteries. In one West Australia prison, this got carried one step further by burying the convicts—together with paupers and suicides—in unconsecrated ground, as if to condemn them to hell for eternity—not just a life sentence but an eternal sentence (Hasluck, A. [1978]. *Unwilling emigrants: A study of the convict period in Western Australia*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press).

\*Alexander Graham Bell had a deaf mother and a deaf wife. Much of his work had to do with making sound more accessible to people with hearing problems. He believed in the integration of the deaf into society, and therefore promoted lip reading and speech therapy, but also the manual alphabet. He felt that sign language isolated deaf people into a deaf culture. In 1889, he opened a private integrated kindergarten in Washington, DC, and both his hearing daughters attended it with deaf children. Unfortunately, the school had to close again soon because Bell was being consumed by litigations around his inventions (Grosvenor, S.E.S. & Wessen, M. [1997]. *Alexander Graham Bell: The life and times of the man who invented the telephone*. New York: Harry N. Abrams).

Strangely enough, isolation into a fairly closed deaf culture (spelt “Deaf” by its advocates) is exactly what many deaf people today want.

\*We learned that many old people like election days because they get to go out, meet many old friends at the polls, and then go to a restaurant. Columnist Joel Stein of *Time* (27 October 2008) suggested that special elections be instituted just for old people so as to afford them this opportunity for socialization, stimulation and some integration.

\*A study reported that the two highest sources of stress of mentally retarded people were (a) hearing other people argue, and (b) interactions with other retarded people. The first finding is surprising. If valid, it could mean that retarded people see their security imperiled by what arguments among people around them could lead to, e.g., confusion, violence, divorce of parents. The second finding underlines the benefits of what we call real integration, which would reduce interactions among retarded people with each other, while still meeting their needs for socialization (Hartley, S.L. & MacLearn, W.E. Jr. [2009]. *Stressful social interactions experienced by adults with mild intellectual*

disability. *American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 114(2), pp. 71-84).

\*While the Special Olympics has always been an occasion of some integration, because of the involvement of so many unpaid volunteers, it finally has taken another step toward greater integration by including 'unified teams' in its competitions. These are teams consisting of an equal number of handicapped and non-handicapped players. (Unfortunately, the non-handicapped players are called 'partners' while the handicapped ones are called 'athletes.')

As SRV would predict, this makes for better competitions, improves the performance of the handicapped players, and helps to establish positive relationships between handicapped and non-handicapped players. (It also helps the image of the handicapped players, and of the games, though this benefit was not reported in the coverage of the issue in *Parade* magazine, 25 January 2009.) Of course, even better would be to integrate as many handicapped players into ordinary athletic games and competitions, such as in schools, parks and neighborhood leagues, etc.

\*Failure to emphasize psychomotor and physical education of retarded children is particularly tragic considering that (a) they enjoy these activities more than academic class work, and that (b) they can often (learn to) perform them closer to the norm. Integrated classes may cheat such children out of these activities because ordinary children learn many of these skills before and outside the schools, and therefore the relevant activities are not taught there. Also, increasingly, such activities have been reduced in ordinary classes in order to give more time to academics.

\*In 2009, we first heard the expression that a first grade class consisted of pupils "of mixed ability," which was used as a euphemism for saying that some pupils had "special needs," which was also used as a euphemism for saying that some pupils had low intelligence (*Syracuse Post-Standard*,

4 January 2009, pp. B1, B6). Elementary schools have always had pupils of "mixed ability," and specifically retarded pupils, in their classes. That is where most mildly retarded ones were found, even after segregated special classes came into vogue.

\*People who reflexively promote inclusion for everyone, and for all children in school, might contemplate that when Helen Keller was first being taught by Anne Sullivan, she was not 'included' with other students. In fact, she was never 'included' with other children in educational contexts. If she had been, Sullivan would not have been able to teach her as and what she did, and Helen Keller might have ended up retarded her whole life long. Of course, Sullivan was a very competent teacher.

\**Newsweek* (10 November 2008, pp. 40-41) claimed (almost scandalously) that the election of Obama to the US presidency would be "the culmination of inclusion that began with Andrew Jackson in the 1840s"—this despite the fact that (as the article also noted) 'blacks' and 'whites' are more separate now than they were at the end of the 1960s, plus that de facto segregation is worse in those areas of the US that have the highest levels of 'black' participation. A prime example is New York State where there is a 'black' governor, but where there is also one of the worst levels of segregation in the US; similarly with Chicago, whence Obama came. The article attributed this to "ethnocultural differences," which seemed to be a polite way of saying 'behavioral differences.' Yet from PC quarters we are constantly being told that these differences should be celebrated rather than diminished (Patterson, O. [2008, November 10]. The new mainstream. *Newsweek*, pp. 40-41).

\*Nieli (2007) claims that studies have shown that the more heterogeneous and multicultural ('diverse') a community or society is, the less do its members trust each other. A corollary is that in a community or society in which one ethno-

racial group predominates, its members, and the members of its minority component, actually trust each other more than do members of highly heterogeneous contexts. For instance, interracial trust is higher in homogeneous places such as South Dakota than in highly heterogeneous San Francisco or Los Angeles.

A study (called the Community Benchmark Survey) also found that social cooperation and community engagement were negatively correlated with the ethno-racial heterogeneity of an area. In areas where there was great such heterogeneity, the following cooperation and engagement indices were lower: registration to vote; having close friends and confidants; working on a community project; confidence that others will cooperate to solve collective action problems like water and energy conservation; giving to charity or doing volunteer work; confidence in local leaders, local politicians, and the news media; perceived quality of life; and overall happiness. What was higher were protest marches (but with little confidence that these would make a difference), TV watching, and saying that TV was one's most important entertainment (Putnam, 2007). (Nieli, R. K. [2008]. Diversity's discontents: The "contact hypothesis" exploded. *Academic Questions*, 21(4), pp. 409-430; & Putnam, R.D. [2007]. E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(2), 147.)

All of this bears out what normalization and SRV have taught since ca. 1968: that groups and communities have a certain amount of assimilation potential, but that this potential can be exhausted at a certain point. This exhaustion point will differ, depending on the nature of the group or area, and the nature of the negatively valued differentness of the as yet unassimilated people. This is an empirical fact that is entirely wished away, talked away, and denied in politically correct circles.

\*The ancient Persians had made war against the Greeks for centuries. When they captured Greek

soldiers, they would amputate a man's foot, arm, ear, or nose, and then settle them in labor colonies. When Alexander the Great advanced into Persian territory in 331 BC, he encountered 4000 such mutilated men. He offered them repatriation to Greece, or subsidies where they were. Most of them chose to stay put, because they had strength in numbers, whereas in Greece, they would be dispersed, and possibly discriminated against. This episode sheds interesting light on why devalued people often prefer segregated congregation (Miles, M. [1995]. Disability in an Eastern religious context: Historical perspectives. *Disability & Society*, 10, pp. 49-69).

\*In March 2009, it hit the news that a man with an IQ below 50 had a special bowling talent, and bowled 5 perfect games in 2008 (AP in *Syracuse Post-Standard*, 21 March 2009, p. A4). He bowls well enough to compete in a regular league, but instead plays in the Special Olympics. This seems to be an example of so-called role-avidity, and perhaps his having been steered toward segregated rather than integrated bowling. After all, in the world of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

\*Here is an example of integration run amok. In Germany, a seven-year-old child with Down's syndrome was assigned to a school 14 miles away, specially arranged to teach both ordinary and handicapped pupils. The family wanted to send the child to the neighborhood school where the child would be treated like any other child. The authorities ruled that since the special integration schools had been set up with specialists, the child had to go there (*Das Band*, April 2009, p. 28). ☺

---

WOLF WOLFENBERGER, PHD, is Professor at Syracuse University & directs the Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency, Syracuse, NY, USA.

---

THE CITATION FOR THIS COLUMN IS

Wolfensberger, W. (2009). Social Role Valorization news & reviews. *The SRV Journal*, 4(2), 69-83.

# The SRV JOURNAL

ISSN 1932 - 6963

www.srvip.org

*A journal for those interested in applying Social Role Valorization  
with the goal of making positive change for societally devalued people*

\* **The purposes of publishing this journal include:** 1) disseminating information about SRV; 2) informing readers of the relevance of SRV in addressing devaluation in society & in human services; 3) fostering, extending & deepening dialogue about & understanding of SRV; & 4) encouraging the application of SRV as well as SRV-related research.

\* **Two year subscription rates in USD ~ two issues per year:**

		NORTH AMERICA	INTERNATIONAL
FAMILY/STUDENT			
	PRINT	65	85
	PDF	50	50
INDIVIDUAL			
	PRINT	85	105
	PDF	65	65
	PRINT & PDF	105	125
ORGANIZATION			
	PRINT	150	170
	PDF	125	125
	PRINT & PDF	180	200
LIBRARY			
	PRINT & PDF	275	295
	& BACK ISSUES IN PDF	400	420

\* **To subscribe online, with a credit card, please access:**

[http://www.srvip.org/journal\\_pay\\_online\\_choose.php](http://www.srvip.org/journal_pay_online_choose.php)

\* **To pay by check, please send your name, street address, phone number & email address, plus a check or money order in USD made payable to *The SRV Journal*, to:**

The SRV Journal, Subscription Manager  
74 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609 USA

\* **For more information, please contact:**

Marc Tumeinski, Editor

Phone: 508.752.3670 ~ journal@srvip.org ~ <http://www.srvip.org>