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# SRV MATTERS 22

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## The more things change ...

Are we as progressive as we think we are? Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr said *'the more things change, the more they stay the same'*.

This quote reflects something important about human nature. Technology changes. Society changes. But the core of what it means to be human does not change much. Our desires, fears, motivations, and aspirations remain largely the same across generations.

In 'SRV Matters' # 2 we introduced the idea of 'Universals'. This is the idea that people share numerous common desires and needs in life. Karr's quote connects to this idea.

***While society might look different on the surface, the deeper dynamics, including power structures and social patterns, often stay the same.***

### What does this mean for using SRV?

Recently, an ASRVA Book Club studied a 1994 article by Deborah Reidy. The article appeared in the book *A Quarter-Century of Normalization and Social Role Valorization* and was titled *'Social Integration: How can we get there from here?'*

Remember, this was written 32 years ago.

Reidy observed that when institutions were closing in the 1980s and people began moving into the community, many expected benefits of 'social integration' did not actually happen. Simply being present in the community did not automatically lead to valued roles or meaningful relationships.

Is that still true today?

So let's now check out key elements of what Reidy wrote about.

Her first major point was that, during the active closure of institutions in the 1980s, and people beginning to live in community, 'many of the anticipated social integration benefits failed to materialize'. In other words, is being present in society enough to (miraculously) gain roles and relationships? Clearly not. Is that very different today, at least for many people?

### What went wrong?

#### 1. Assumptions about welcome

People assumed communities would naturally welcome those who had previously lived in institutions, people who had been absent for their lifetimes and those of community members. Negative mindsets and doubts about people's capacity and right to live ordinary community lives were common. Key 'offenders' included self-interested institutional staff. Parents also had deep concerns about the promises about community living.

#### 2. Failure to use knowledge about attitude change

***There was already strong research on how to change community attitudes. Yet many in the field did not use it. Instead, efforts often stayed within 'disability' systems rather than using other bodies of useful knowledge.***

### 3. Too much focus on services

Many change agents had strong 'service reform' mindsets but limited experience or interest in broader community life. Reidy warned that focusing only on improving services misses the larger goal.

This feels familiar today. Much energy goes into meeting requirements (such as those of the NDIA), but far less goes into intentionally building real roles and relationships in the community.

#### **A new vision**

Reidy proposed clearer goals:

- \* Help devalued people hold valued roles in their communities.
- \* Support real integration at a personal level.
- \* Encourage a wide range of unpaid, freely-given relationships.
- \* Enable participation in meaningful, age-appropriate activities in ordinary community settings.

These goals still sound relevant today, especially if you use SRV.

#### **Promising Approaches**

Reidy suggested three effective ways to change attitudes:

##### 1. Consciousness-raising

Helping people examine and question the beliefs and ideologies that shape their thinking.

##### 2. Action

Pursuing real involvement, doing something constructive with or on behalf of devalued people, rather than just talking or reading about it.

##### 3. Positive personal contact

Working to create genuine, positive experiences between people.

These approaches remain powerful.

### Reflections from the Book Club

***Members agreed that, after 30 plus years, the core issues have not changed much. One common mistake is believing that if we remove what is 'bad,' the 'good' will automatically follow. It does not. Society does not magically change on its own.***

Instead, we must intentionally replace what is 'bad' with something better, especially by pursuing valued social roles as well as building community connections and meaningful relationships.

Several key SRV ideas were evident in the article:

- **Interpersonal Identification** – seeing oneself in another person.
- **Culturally Valued Analogue** – meeting needs in ways that are typical and valued in the broader community.
- **Mindset Shifts** - bringing positive mindsets to all efforts.

This means helping people take on roles that are similar to those most citizens hold, and helping people connect through shared interests and common experiences.

***The group also discussed Dr. Wolfensberger's idea of 'freely-given' relationships – relationships that are not paid or forced, but offered willingly. These are more likely when genuine interpersonal identification and connection occur. Such relationships tend to be powerful safeguards for devalued people.***

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## In Summary

What Deborah Reidy wrote in 1994 is still highly relevant. The goals remain the same: helping people who experience devaluation access the good things of life through valued roles and real relationships.

If we are not careful and intentional, if we do not actively work on community engagement and attitude change, then Karr's words will continue to ring true:

Afterall, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Note: Wolfensberger defines 'personal social integration and valued social participation' as '(a) valued participation, (b) with valued people, (c) in valued activities that (d) take place in valued settings'.

## 15 Years Since Dr Wolfensberger's death

Dr Wolfensberger passed away on 27th February, 2011.

Dr Wolf Wolfensberger is the originator of Social Role Valorisation and Citizen Advocacy, concepts that strongly influenced disability policy and practice. He is widely recognised as a major contributor to the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities in the 20th century and had a reputation for being a stirring and controversial speaker.

Wolf was born in Mannheim, Germany and emigrated at age 16 to the U.S. He earned a master's degree in clinical psychology at St. Louis University and a doctorate in psychology from Vanderbilt University specialising in mental retardation and special education.

His professional positions included postings at Nebraska Psychiatric Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical School, National Institute on Mental Retardation in Toronto, Canada, and the institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership and Change Agency at Syracuse University New York.

He was the author and co-author of more than 40 books and monographs, and more than 250 chapters and articles. His writing has been translated into 11 languages. His best known books are Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded, The Principle of Normalization, PASS, and PASSING.