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Web Roundup

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By Katie Vizenor

The WHO Release of their World Report on Disability

On September 12th and 13th, the [World Health Organization](#) and [World Bank](#) hosted a two-day symposium on the outskirts of DC to discuss the U.S. launch of their new joint [World Report on Disability](#). The two day panel discussion should be posting soon on the University at Buffalo's Center for International Rehabilitation Research and Information Exchange (CIRRIE) symposium website, so please check the [symposium website](#) for the update. I was lucky enough to be able to attend the event and highly recommend reading the report.

The report documents the current state of knowledge concerning the prevalence and condition of persons with disabilities around the world. It also provides details concerning current and potential measures and programs that might help improve disability participation in social, educational and economic spheres. As such, it serves as a guide to the proper implementation of the [UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

The report features an in-depth discussion of its new, expanded definition of disability. It explains how the new [International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health \(ICF\)](#) organizes and defines disability concepts by including both environmental and personal factors as important elements in understanding the barriers that disabled individuals encounter. Click [here](#) for more information on ICF application areas in epidemiology, social policy and research. Click [here](#) for more information on ICF Application and Training Tools.

As disability scholar, [Tom Shakespeare](#), pointed out, the United States has a tendency to discuss and address disability as a civil rights issue and many of our lobbyist organizations use the disability civil rights legislation as a means to push forward specific improvements and objectives. (For a good introduction to many disability rights issues please see, [Charlton's Nothing About Us Without Us](#) and [Shapiro's No Pity](#)). But global efforts require a more universal perspective and discussions such these are important not only for those interested in multi national disability projects and initiatives but for the U.S. too. As the U.S. population becomes more

and more diverse, disability rights lobbyists, special education instructors, and aid organizations will need to understand how disability is constructed and discussed in other cultures. This knowledge has the potential to improve education outcomes for students from diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds in our schools. The need for cultural competency skills in special education was recently discussed in [this article](#) in the September Journal for Visual Impairment and Blindness. The U.S. can also improve its own social and economic participation by looking at some of the innovative strategies and programs developed by other countries and cross-country partnerships such as the Finnish funded teacher training program in Ethiopia and the Australian Sports outreach program which seeks to create inclusive sporting and games opportunities (both are discussed at length in the WHO Report).

Panel discussion centered on an in-depth review of the report's chapters. Tom Shakespeare, sociologist, disability scholar, geneticist and author of [Disability Rights and Wrongs](#), discussed the opening chapter of the report, Understanding Disability. Shakespeare served as an editor and consultant on the project and anyone acquainted with his work is sure to see his mark on the nuanced discussion of the meaning and definition of disability.

The discussion of education focused largely around what barriers exist for disabled students. David Rose of the [Center for Applied Technology \(CAST\)](#) gave an inspiring talk about [Universal Design for Learning](#); those interested in curriculum design and the impediments to achieving inclusive education should consider looking at CAST research, training materials and initiatives.

One of the most interesting discussions concerned the chapter on Work and Employment, including presentations from the [Mathematica Policy Research Organization's Center for Studying Disability Policy](#). The discussants reviewed labor markets and formal and informal economies but also expanded on issues such as the "benefit trap" encountered in many high-income countries. Two reports go into more detail about the "benefit trap". The first is from the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#), the second is from the [International Social Security Association](#).

Finally, throughout the report and the symposium talks there were comments and concerns regarding the dire need for more quality evidence, both qualitative and quantitative. Particularly in this age of economic crises, when many disability and rehabilitation programs are in danger of being cut, the need for research that can help develop innovative and cost effective projects that are backed up with strong evidence is great.

Elsewhere around the Web for September:

The New York Times' *The Stone* features a nice back and forth series between philosophers Alex Rosenberg and Timothy Williamson on the subject of naturalism. Start the discussion with Williamson's post entitled "[What is Naturalism?](#)", then Rosenberg's "[Why I am a Naturalist](#)" and then Williamson's rebuttal, "[On Ducking Challenges to Naturalism](#)".

The Atlantic published an article entitled [The Triumph of New Age Medicine](#) on the rise of integrative, complementary clinics located within larger academic medical centers such as the Mayo Clinic, Harvard, Yale and Duke.

Both the [Washington Post](#) and the [Utne Reader](#) explore the rise of alternatives to traditional psychological counseling through philosophical counseling and bibliotherapy.

[The New York Times](#) grapples with the complicated issues concerning allegations of Shaken Baby Syndrome.

The Atlantic also has an amazing [review](#) of [Shelley Adler's new book *Sleep Paralysis: Night-mares, Nocebos, and the Mind Body Connection*](#). She discusses the phenomenon of Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome (SUNDS) among young, healthy, male Hmong refugees in the early 1980s and concludes that the deaths occurred as a deadly mix of genetic factors (a rare cardiac arrhythmia found among Southeast Asian populations) and their beliefs in spirits that seek revenge when proper worship and rituals are not observed (something that would have been difficult to continue in their California, Wisconsin and Minnesotan refugee communities).

Three new books from the University of California Press explore the history, meaning and practice of humanitarianism. [Didier Fassin's *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*](#) explores recent changes in discourse concerning humanitarianism and the moral ambiguity that ensues when humanitarian idealism confronts real political conflict, poverty and war. The second, Miriam Tiktin's [Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France](#) discusses how France's immigration policies force refugees to create "unusual pathologies" to explain and defend seeking asylum. [Omri Alisha's *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches*](#) examines how faith-based social outreach initiatives allow parishioners to put their faith to practice, and how practitioners often struggle to reconcile their religious and social conservatism with their interests in racial and social justice, compassion and understanding.

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