

Book Review

Title: *Representing Disability in an Ableist World: Essay on Mass Media*

Author: Beth A. Haller

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Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

Representing Disability in an Ableist World consists of 10 essays, most previously published elsewhere, but all updated for this excellent 2010 book. Haller, a newspaper journalist, who has become a professor of media, and a proficient blogger of media issues related to disability, approaches her subjects from a disability rights and disability studies viewpoint. While Haller clearly empathizes with the disability rights movement and is clear in her writing about her position, she is also able to provide a well-nuanced, balanced approach to each of these issues/essays.

Many chapters are based on qualitative or quantitative content analysis as well as the author's interpretation of subjects ranging from assisted suicide to movies (or more specifically movie: "Million-Dollar Baby") to telethons, humor and more. Several essays focus on disability in news media, including case study of autism and inclusive education.

In the chapter titled, "Changing disability terminology in the news," Haller explains why language is so important to disability rights activists:

"Language has always had the power to define cultural groups. The words used to refer to a group of people are important: they have ramifications for self-perception, but they also play a large role in shaping what the general public believes about the group....The language in stories about disability, they say, helps shape what the public understands about the disability condition" (p. 49).

In our media-based, social-networked society, understanding how disability is represented in the media is of great import and Haller's book would be useful in courses ranging from disability studies to journalism to history to economics (the chapter on advertising) and many more.

Steven E. Brown, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Disability Studies at the University of Hawai'i Center on Disability Studies, an Editor of *RDS*, and co-founder of the Institute on Disability Culture. He may be contacted at sebrown@hawaii.edu