

Pierre Brasseur, Note de lecture des sexualités et des handicaps : Questions d'intimités, A.Giami, B. Py, A.-M. Toniolo (Eds.). Presses universitaires de Nancy (2013).

Translation from French to English by the author

The book 'Des sexualités et des handicaps: Intimate Questions' edited by A. A.-M. Toniolo, B. Py, and Giami (Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2013) offers a significant contribution to the literature on the connection between sexuality and disability. The book is relevant to the growing interest in this subject among human sciences and France's potential implementation of sexual assistance for the disabled. The editors have assembled a diverse team of experts from various disciplines to investigate the topic, which makes it a unique and distinct approach compared to the majority of French literature that has been written by activists or experts in care and disability.

The book comprises 34 contributions that are grouped into three sections: "Sexuality and Disability in Institutions," "Sexuality, Intimacy, and Disability," and "Old Age, Cancer, Mental Disability." The book's sections cover different aspects of the topic, such as the institutional frameworks that regulate the expression of sexuality, the legal framework for protecting privacy in institutions, and the role of sexual assistance in enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities.

One of the book's essential contributions is its examination of institutional frameworks that regulate the expression of sexuality, which is strongly supported by Giami's chapter. The author shows that institutionalisation has a detrimental effect on a person's capacity for sexual activity, especially for people with disabilities who frequently find that living in specialised institutions drastically reduces their opportunities to engage in sexual activity. This issue is further explored by M.-A. Mercier and M. Moreau, who study institutional charters and how they handle matters of emotion and sexuality. They distinguish between four different strategies: promoting affective and sexual life while ignoring the quality of life; putting the emphasis on quality of life while ignoring sexuality; and recognising emotional and sexual desires while ignoring the quality of life.

The book also addresses the legal framework for protecting privacy in institutions, as discussed by M.-F. Callu, a senior lecturer in law, and M.-C. Mitetkiewicz, who consider privacy in the home, particularly in the bedroom, as a possible place of intimacy. Additionally, the book explores the role of sexual assistance in enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. Marcel Nuss, one of the first promoters of sexual assistance in France, is featured in the book, and his personal journey highlights the importance of sexual assistance in enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. The book also includes contributions from professionals who specify how they can and should support people with disabilities in sexual matters.

However, despite the book's significance, it lacks coherence and clear connections between the contributions. Some articles are brief, while others are overly long, with introductions that either repeat information found in earlier contributions or could have been included in a more thorough one. Additionally, the chosen article division does not support the topic's clarity, and some articles have shaky links to the issue of disability.

In conclusion, 'Des sexualités et des handicaps: Intimate Questions' is a relevant book that fills a gap in the current discourse on the connection between sexuality and disability. Despite its shortcomings, the book offers insightful testimonies from industry experts and associations, and it provides theoretical reflections and real-world examples from an interdisciplinary viewpoint.