



***Giota's Journey:***  
**A Study Guide for Social Work Educators and Students**

Michael A. Wright and Stacey Borasky

CSWE Film Study Guide No. 1  
April 2013



When referencing this study guide, please use the following citation:

Wright, M. A., & Borasky, S. (2013, April). *Giota's journey: A study guide for social work educators and students* (CSWE Film Study Guide No. 1). Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.

Copyright © 2013 Council on Social Work Education

Council on Social Work Education  
1701 Duke Street, Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
[www.cswe.org](http://www.cswe.org)

Printed in the United States of America

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Overview: <i>Giota's Journey</i> .....	5
Topics	
Fear and Intimidation .....	6
Giota's Technique .....	7
Family: My Dreams, My Parents .....	8
Park: Interactions With Others .....	9
Falling in Love .....	10
Family 2: My Siblings .....	11
Equilibrium.....	12

## **Introduction**

This guide has been developed to assist social work educators and students in using films from the CSWE film festivals in their classrooms. It is one in a series of CSWE curriculum resources designed to enhance the teaching and learning of social work concepts.

We welcome your comments as the library of these resources is refined and expanded.

Michael A. Wright  
Tennessee State University

Stacey Borasky  
St. Edwards University

## Overview: *Giota's Journey*

### Film Information

Title: <i>Giota's Journey</i> Date: 2011	Director: Garry Beitel Producer: Barry Lazar
Running Time: 47 minutes	Distributor: reFrame Films/ Les Productions du Boulevard

**Context:** A 48-year-old woman with cerebral palsy communicates through eye movements.

**Overall Themes:**

1. Practice contexts
2. Advocacy and self-determination
3. Family communication/family training
4. Communication/lack of communication
5. Mental vs. physical limitations

Time Code	Topic	Central Quote	Salient Themes
1:22–3:41	Fear and intimidation	“You have to go through that... Once you’re over it, you’re in.”	Working with developmental disabilities, personalities vs. disability, relationships
3:43–12:59	Giota’s technique	“It’s inherently poetic”	Communication technique, intelligence vs. disability
13:00–24:38	Family: My dreams, my parents	“They thought that people in wheelchairs can’t do many things.”	Double life, day care, dreams
28:04–29:16	Park: Interactions with others	“That’s been a good lesson for me.”	Worker perceptions vs. Giota’s perception of events
29:33–32:20	Falling in love	“They’re afraid I may get hurt.”	Protectionism, romantic relationships
32:21–36:52	Family 2: My siblings	“I’m lucky to have a loving family.”	Communication, growing up with a disabled sibling, perceptions, Greek culture
40:50–45:32	Equilibrium	“I have some preconceived notion of what disabled people should be.”	Perception/preconceptions, worker comfort, equality

## Topics

### Fear and Intimidation

Time Code: 1:22–3:41

**Abstract:** A worker at the adult day care facility speaks about the challenges of working with individuals who have physical limitations. Fear and intimidation are to be expected from a new worker, but these initial feelings often are replaced over time. One important factor in the transformation is the relationship that the worker develops with the client.

**Central Quote:** “You have to go through that ... Once you’re over it, you’re in.”

**Themes:** Working With Developmental Disabilities, Personalities vs. Disability, Relationships

### Learning Objectives

1. Explore the fear and intimidation that accompanies the experience of working with a new practice population.
2. Identify techniques that a worker can use to engage the client population, peers, and supervisory staff to develop more comfort with the work environment and clients.
3. Compare and contrast the feelings involved in working with a client with physical limitations and working with another client population.

### Discussion Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you have experience fear when meeting a new person. What are some techniques you have used to overcome this initial fear?
2. What would be your greatest fears and potential intimidation about working with a client who has physical limitations? How would you overcome those fears?
3. List any client populations with whom you feel reluctant to work. How might you challenge yourself to learn about the client population and work environment?
4. Are you willing to challenge yourself with client populations with whom you currently are reluctant to work? Why or why not?

### Suggested Readings

- Bull, S., & O'Farrell, K. (2012). *Art therapy and learning disabilities: "Don't guess my happiness."* New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cole, D. (2010). *Three strikes*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.
- Vornholt, K., Uitdewilligen, S., & Nijhuis, F. J. N. (2013, February). Factors affecting the acceptance of people with disabilities at work: A literature review. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation* [no issue no.]. doi: 10.1007/s10926-013-9426-0

## Giota's Technique

Time Code: 3:43–12:59

**Abstract:** An enterprising worker engages the clients in a poetry exercise. She then presents a performance alongside Giota. Afterward, the worker reflects on the beauty of the exercise and the impact it made on her.

**Central Quote:** "It's inherently poetic."

**Themes:** Communication Technique, Intelligence vs. Disability

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify the elements of successful communication.
2. Review a number-based communication system based on the recognition of eye movements.
3. Explore the complexity and inferences involved in a communication system based on the recognition of eye movements.

### Discussion Questions

1. Consider the communications that you take for granted each day. What interaction do you think would be the most difficult to give up if communicating was a challenge?
2. With a partner, take 10 minutes and attempt to communicate, without talking or writing, what you ate for breakfast and what you want for lunch. What creative ways did you establish to communicate?
3. Attempt to achieve question no. 2 only through the movement of your eyes. Were the challenges different or similar? Explain.

### Suggested Readings

Hart, S. L., & Banda, D. R. (2010). Picture exchange communication system with individuals with developmental disabilities: A meta-analysis of single subject studies. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*, 476–488. doi: 10.1177/0741932509338354

Murphy, K. P. (2010). The adult with cerebral palsy. *Orthopedic Clinics of North America, 41*, 595–605. doi: 10.1016/j.ocl.2010.06.007

Trembath, D., Balandin, S., Togher, L., & Stancliffe, R. J. (2010). The experiences of adults with complex communication needs who volunteer. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 32*, 885–898. doi: 10.3109/09638280903349537

## Family: My Dreams, My Parents

Time Code: 13:00–24:38

**Abstract:** At home, Giota shares her dream to travel to Paris. Her father suggests that it would cost too much money to support caregivers and Giota's travel expense. Viewing the interaction, we are made privy to the dynamics between the parents and Giota.

**Central Quote:** "They thought that people in wheelchairs can't do many things."

**Themes:** Double Life, Day Care, Dreams

### Learning Objectives

1. Explore the role played by parents in the life of a client.
2. Compare and contrast caregiver, day-care worker, and parental roles.
3. Trace the origin of lifelong dreams.

### Discussion Questions

1. If we identified the mezzo-practice concern as Giota's relationship with her parents, how would you approach advocacy on Giota's behalf?
2. Have your parents ever communicated fear or trepidation for dreams that you have shared? What were the ways you attempted to convince them and allay their fears?
3. Explore the fears and barriers stated by Giota's father. Advocating for Giota, address each to create a reasonable plan for Giota's trip to Paris.

### Suggested Readings

Dark, L., Balandin, S., & Clemson, L. (2011). Communicating about loss: Experiences of older Australian adults with cerebral palsy and complex communication needs. *Communication Disorders Quarterly, 32*, 176–189. doi: 10.1177/1525740109353936

Peterson, B. (2011). *We climbed every mountain: The life story of Don and Bonnie Peterson*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

Trueman, T. (2012). *Life happens next*. New York, NY: HarperTeen.

**Park: Interactions With Others**

Time Code: 28:04–29:16

**Abstract:** A worker shares an experience she had while accompanying Giota to the park. The worker was initially offended by the comments of a woman at the park. After she realized Giota's acceptance of the comments, she gained a different perspective and possibly a new appreciation for Giota's point of view.

**Central Quote:** "That's been a good lesson for me."

**Themes:** Advocacy, Worker Perceptions vs. Giota's Perception of Events

**Learning Objectives**

1. Distinguish between advocacy and reinforcing your own narrow perspective.
2. Define what it means to see the world from the perspective of the client.
3. Explore the concept of learning life lessons from your clients.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Identify a situation in which you were the person in charge, but you learned from those you were in charge of. What in your approach made your learning possible?
2. List some ways to ensure that your advocacy for clients fits the agenda of the clients?
3. What micro-practice concerns would you identify for advocacy with this population?
4. What macro-practice concerns would you identify for advocacy with this population?

**Suggested Readings**

Dew, A. H. (2011). *Recognising reciprocity over the life course: Adults with cerebral palsy and their non-disabled siblings* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Sydney, Australia. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7111>

Shinohara, K., & Wobbrock, J. O. (2011, May). In the shadow of misperception: Assistive technology use and social interactions. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 705–714). Available from ACM Digital Library. doi:10.1145/1978942.1979044

Snyder, L. A., Carmichael, J. S., Blackwell, L. V., Cleveland, J. N., & Thornton, G. C., III. (2010). Perceptions of discrimination and justice among employees with disabilities. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 22, 5–19. doi: 10.1007/s10672-009-9107-5

## Falling in Love

Time Code: 29:33–32:20

**Abstract:** Giota talks with a worker about the prospect of falling in love. She shares that her parents are opposed to the idea. They do not want Giota to be hurt by a relationship that does not last.

**Central Quote:** “They’re afraid I may get hurt.”

**Themes:** Parenting, Protectionism, Romantic Relationships

### Learning Objectives

1. Consider that love and romance extend beyond the limits of physical ability.
2. Explore the competing roles experienced by parents of protecting a child versus allowing the child to experience life independently.
3. Identify supports and cautions for differing parenting styles in this context.

### Discussion Questions

1. Compose a position supporting the parent’s reported view toward protecting Giota. What facts can you cite to support their view?
2. Compose an argument supporting Giota’s view toward allowance to experience the world around her. What facts can you cite to support her view?
3. What roles do you think a parent should play in the love life of a daughter? Explain how those roles change in the context of a physically disabled daughter.

### Suggested Readings

Dune, T. M. (2011). *Making sense of sex with people with cerebral palsy* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Sydney, Australia. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7724>

Favre, D. T., & Stanford, S. (2010). *The cure for the chronic life: Overcoming the hopelessness that holds you back*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Kaufman, M., Silverberg, C., & Odette, F. (2007). *The ultimate guide to sex and disability: For all of us who live with disabilities, chronic pain, and illness*. San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press.

## Family 2: My Siblings

Time Code: 32:21–36:52

**Abstract:** Giota's siblings, including her sister-in-law, share their view of Giota as an integral member of the family. Giota's brother offers a reflection on the experience of growing up. Giota's sister-in-law shares the trepidation and disbelief that she experienced prior to meeting Giota. The challenges and patience required to communicate, especially during family gatherings, are highlighted.

**Central Quote:** "I'm lucky to have a loving family."

**Themes:** Communication, Growing Up With a Sibling Who Is Disabled, Perceptions, Greek Culture

### Learning Objectives

1. Explore statements made about Greek culture and the communication styles and patterns that are augmented when communicating with Giota.
2. Consider how ability or lack of ability establishes a new "normal" within family dynamics.
3. Identify challenges and solutions that may be experienced among siblings.

### Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast another culture with the culture exhibited in Giota's household. List some interactions that may be changed due to differences in communication style (i.e., the use of gestures, nonverbals, or verbal reliance).
2. At one point, the sister-in-law reflects on the fact that she does not feel sorry for Giota, but she did feel sorry for other physically challenged adults from day care. To what do you attribute this perception?
3. Compare and contrast other physical limitations, such as dwarfism, with Giota's ability. What challenges beyond communication might you expect among siblings? What solutions can you create?

### Suggested Readings

- Barr, J., & McLeod, S. (2010). They never see how hard it is to be me: Siblings' observations of strangers, peers and family. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 12*, 162–171. doi: 10.3109/17549500903434133
- Guse, T., & Harvey, C. (2010). Growing up with a sibling with dwarfism: Perceptions of adult non-dwarf siblings. *Disability & Society, 25*, 387–401. doi: 10.1080/09687591003701322
- Kim, T., & Horn, E. (2010). Sibling-implemented intervention for skill development with children with disabilities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 30*, 80–90. doi:10.1177/0271121409349146

## Equilibrium

Time Code: 40:50-45:32

**Abstract:** A worker reflects on his “preconceived notion” and how it has changed after working with Giota. In a rather revealing segment, the worker admits misgivings and even misinformation. He resolves to a sense of equality in moments of quiet reflection at the park.

**Central Quote:** “I have some preconceived notion of what disabled people should be.”

**Themes:** Perception/ Preconceptions, Worker Comfort, Equality

### Learning Objectives

1. Compare your own preconceived notions about this population and other client populations.
2. Consider what work environments or contexts may work best for your temperament and interests.
3. Identify ways to inform your perceptions and overcome fears of working with a client population.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the differences and similarities between your perception and that of the worker depicted in the film?
2. List the environments you would like to work in and those you would not like to work in. What could cause you to reconsider your favorites?
3. What resources have you begun to trust to inform you of practice contexts?

### Suggested Readings

Grugulis, I., & Stoyanova, D. (2011). Skill and performance. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 49, 515–536. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8543.2010.00779.x

Nosek, M. A. (2011). The person with a disability. In D. R. Maki & V. M. Tarvydas (Eds.), *The professional practice of rehabilitation counseling* (pp. 111–130). New York, NY: Springer Publishing.

Turner, D. M. (2012). *Disability in eighteenth-century England: Imagining physical impairment* (Routledge Studies in Modern British History, 8). New York, NY: Routledge.