

# **Editorial**

## **Points of View in the Education of Persons with Mental Retardation**

In this special issue, Jake Burack and Jeff Derevensky have brought together an impressive collection of papers dealing with some of the most controversial, and sometimes contentious, issues in the area of education of persons with mental retardation. (The term "persons with mental retardation" is used because it seems to be the most widely used one among those scholars who are writing about the special population discussed here.) These papers come from respected and well-known professionals in the field, and while there may be some overlap with regard to the citation of sources, the content of each paper reflects a unique and informative point of view. The authors of these papers come from a variety of institutions throughout North America, thus they reflect concerns that are linked to various regions and institutions.

This issue begins with an introduction by Burack, Kurtz, and Derevensky regarding the controversies surrounding the delivery of services to persons with mental retardation. They examine the educational, political, and social debates that have developed in relation to the various types of services that have been offered in the past and those that are projected for the future.

Professors Hodapp and Zigler examine the integration issue in contrast to the idea of normalization, which in their view seems to be a fundamental debate of science and values. They analyze both positions, giving equal representation to both sides of the debate. The authors look at parallel issues in education of the deaf and how educators of persons with handicaps other than mental retardation have facilitated the integration of these people into society.

Lusthaus, Gazith, and Lusthaus examine the controversies surrounding the placement of children with mental disabilities within the regular classroom. They present a rationale for full integration of these children, examining not only the benefits derived by the child with a mental disability but those derived by their nondisabled peers as well.

The controversy surrounding deinstitutionalization of persons with mental retardation has become a policy issue more than a research issue, according to Professor Rammler, who discusses the benefits of deinstitutionalization for persons with mental retardation. She points out that empirical research may not throw as much light on the issue as would approaching it from a philosophical view that considers the quality of life to which human beings are entitled.

Dr. Walsh, in contrast, looks at the opposite side of the issue to a certain extent, and reviews the benefits that people with mental retardation can receive from institutions, especially if they are envisioned as resource networks or regional resource centres. He alerts us to the fact that community settings *per se* may not always be able to offer the full range of necessary services, but that "institutions" could be used to strengthen and support community-based services.

Caro and Derevensky give an overview of a family systems model for developing intervention strategies for families who have young children with developmental delays. The family systems model involves the entire family in learning techniques for implementing, among many things, more effective coping strategies and more positive parent-child interactions. In addition, siblings may learn more effective behaviours in interacting with the brother or sister who has developmental problems.

Professor Moss and her colleagues, Gosselin and Parent, probe the issues surrounding the social integration of children with intellectual deficiencies and how integration, in the past, may have been affected negatively by a preoccupation with cognitive functioning. Studies are cited to support the idea that social integration does not appear to be difficult, especially in the preschool setting, for the low-IQ child.

Finally, Wizner and Lucht discuss, from a legal view, the cases of two institutionalized individuals with mental retardation. They describe the process whereby their advocates bring a lawsuit for the purpose of securing the [United States] constitutional rights of these two persons. The outcome, results, and implications of their case, as well as some other court cases, are illuminating and encouraging.

This issue of the Journal should certainly prove to be a useful resource for persons in the field of educating persons with mental retardation, and for persons who are studying in a program of special education.

W.M.T.