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# Integration and Development:
## Reconciling two conflicting perspectives

**Abstract**

*Integration and development can be seen as two distinct "world views," each with its own history, values, and assumptions. This article examines the history and underlying assumptions of each perspective and notes how analogous issues have pervaded the field of deaf education for over 100 years. Although a rapprochement of integration and developmental perspectives will be difficult, better educational and residential services for persons with retardation are likely to occur if each side attempts to understand the perspective of the other.*

**Résumé**

*L'intégration et le développement peuvent être perçus comme deux "vues du monde" distinctes, chacune ayant sa propre histoire, ses valeurs, ses suppositions. Cet article examine l'histoire et les suppositions rattachées à chacune de ces perspectives, et note à quel point des questions analogues ont envahi le secteur de l'éducation pour mal-entendants depuis au-delà d'un siècle. Bien qu'un rapprochement entre les perspectives d'intégration et de développement sera difficile, une amélioration des services pédagogiques et résidentiels pour les arriérés pourra être réalisée si les deux parties essaient de comprendre la perspective l'un de l'autre.*

At least since Galileo, there has been a clash between science and society. Specifically, those interested in scientific explanations have fought with those who explain the world in accordance with religious, political, or social values. This conflict has usually been portrayed starkly, with "objective" science the victor over "irrational" values in most historical accounts. We therefore hail Galileo for his view that the earth revolves around the sun, or

Darwin for his theory of evolution, while we simultaneously denigrate those who opposed them on religious or political grounds. Our sense is generally that the more rational, progressive view is held by the scientists, the more irrational and reactionary view by their value-oriented opponents.

The integration issue in the field of mental retardation presents a curious twist to the science-values debate. Here too science and values clash, but in this instance many would claim that the positions are reversed. The adherents of normalization—usually considered to be the values side of the debate—appear more progressive, more interested in social change. To integrationists, the value of integration demands that major changes be made in a wide variety of social systems. Normalization proponents thus advocate the mainstreaming of all children with retardation and the community living of all adults. On the surface at least, advocates of integration occupy the more progressive pole of the normalization debate.

In contrast, those interested in promoting individual development—usually thought of as the science side of the issue—generally favor the maintenance of many aspects of the existing service-delivery system. While noting that improvements in many services are needed (Zigler & Hodapp, 1986), developmental workers advocate the traditional continuum of services from normalized to specialized. As long as the service-delivery system renders services tailored to the individual's developmental needs, developmentalists argue, the system may need improvement but not radical alteration. Developmentalists assume that good services can be delivered in any setting, be it normalized or specialized.

The above recap sketches the two positions, but it also makes clear that the essential problem in the normalization debate is that each side overlooks the concerns of the other. On their side, adherents of integration fail to consider the role of individual development when they discount the need for special services. Conversely, developmental workers insufficiently emphasize the societal value of full participation of persons with mental retardation into society.

To most integrationists, then, there is a single, overriding good arising from integrating into the society all persons with mental retardation. As Burton Blatt (1987) notes, "The 'freedom' [i.e., integrationist] argument does not address whether segregation or integration is 'clinically better' for mentally retarded people. Rather, this argument is based on the conviction that people are entitled to live free in a natural setting, irrespective of what particular environment most enhances their reading capability or vocational aptitude" (p. 161). Greenspan and Cerreto (1989) further suggest that "value systems cannot, and should not, be subjected to empirical testing" (p. 448).

Conversely, developmental workers call for research examining interactional processes and developmental effects of various educational or living settings, but only secondarily consider the importance of integration as one of those processes or effects. Zigler and Muenchow (1979) note that, for mainstreaming, "the proof is in the implementation," with implementation here focused primarily on aspects of the child's development. In the same way, Zigler, Hodapp, and Edison (1990) call for a field that goes beyond the "social address" model in service delivery to examine the actual interactions taking place within various settings. In all cases, adherents of the developmental view emphasize what is best for the individual with mental retardation; they pay much less attention to the social or societal values inherent in the integration movement.

In this paper we will argue that both sides are incorrect, that each advocates only one of several nonexclusive values. Neither individual development nor societal integration is an all-encompassing value that should be followed in every instance. At various times in recent history, society (or large segments of society) has sacrificed integration and individual development for a greater social good. In describing and critiquing these two views and in reviewing the parallel history of this issue in deaf education, our goal will be to reach some balance between these two conflicting perspectives.

## Conflicting World Views

Normalization has been characterized as "a banner in search of some data" (Zigler, 1976) and as a debate generating more heat than light (Zigler *et al.*, 1990). Conversely, the view espousing the need for some specialized services has been called "archaic" (Menolascino & McGee, 1981) and "inconsistent with history, contemporary practice, and public policies" (Krauss, 1990). Adherents on both sides are generally amazed at how little each understands the other. Unbiased observers (if any exist) note that the two sides are talking past each other, unable or unwilling to understand the other's perspective.

Such misunderstandings have been described in the history of science as the problem of "differing world views." First extensively discussed by Pepper (1942), differing world views occur when two persons disagree on deeply held, widely applicable, meta-theoretical perspectives. For example, children can be conceptualized as either machines (the mechanistic view) or as living systems (the organismic view), and the metaphor one chooses will greatly affect subsequent ideas about the nature of children's development. Divergent histories, philosophies, and rules for what constitutes evidence also accompany differing world views, and it is debatable whether two world views can ever be successfully reconciled (Pepper, 1942; Reese & Overton, 1970; Zigler, 1963).

Similarly in the normalization controversy, the possibility of reconciliation remains unknown. As adherents of two opposing world views, integrationists and developmentalists rely on differing histories and assumptions in advocating their respective positions. Although some rapprochement might be possible, we first need to explore these histories and assumptions before offering at least a preliminary reconciliation.

## The Integration Movement

The integration movement in North America has several sources, from both the United States and Europe. In the United States, the 1950s and 1960s featured the movement toward civil rights for blacks and other minority groups. This movement was highlighted by the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on separate school systems in 1954 and culminated in the adoption of the many civil rights laws in the 1960s.

During roughly the same period, professional and media attention exposed horrible living conditions in several large institutions. Blatt and Kaplan's (1966) *Christmas in Purgatory*, Geraldo Rivera's television exposé, and Robert Kennedy's trip to Willowbrook all documented large, impersonal institutions in which residents were isolated even though in large groups, privacy was minimal, and abuse and neglect were rampant. The physical environment was also bleak, featuring large, dimly lit rooms, blank or dirty walls, and little furniture or decorations of any kind. These conditions at Willowbrook, Pennhurst, and other large institutions led to a public outcry and, later, to court cases and decisions that changed institutional practices and settings (Vitello & Soskin, 1985).

In education as well, there was a movement to integrate children with handicaps into classes with nonhandicapped children. Although not as shocking as the institutional history, in the educational system, too, individuals with mental retardation were being neglected in that parents and professionals struggled to force school systems to educate children with retardation (Lazerson, 1975). This struggle, along with the feeling that the application of new educational advances could accommodate children with mild handicaps into regular classes (Dunn, 1968), led to the passage in the United States of *PL 94-142*, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975*. For the first time, "a free, appropriate" public education was deemed a right (not a privilege) for all children with handicaps. Further, this education was to take place in "the least restrictive educational environment," which has generally been translated into an education within mainstream classes alongside nonhandicapped children (for a review, see Scheerenberger, 1987).

In addition to these more publicized events, Scandinavian workers developed the philosophical position that served as the underpinning to the

integration movement. In 1968, the Swedish worker, Bengt Nirje, described his concept of "normalization," the idea that persons with mental retardation should enjoy as close to a "normal" lifestyle as possible. Nirje defined a normal lifestyle as those practices common for individuals in the culture; in Western societies, a normal lifestyle features a daytime routine that includes work or school, a week that includes work-days and week-ends, and a year that includes vacations as well as work.

Although Nirje's original focus was on the normalization of one's style of life, the focus shifted in 1972 with Wolfensberger's book *Normalization* (Mesibov, 1976). According to Wolfensberger, a normal lifestyle could only occur through a normalization of services. Wolfensberger, Blatt, and others maintained that only in mainstreamed classes or in community living settings could persons with retardation ever hope to achieve a more normal style of life. To many, normalized placements came to appear the only logical and humane treatment for persons with mental retardation.

Before examining the developmental argument, it is necessary to highlight some assumptions held by many integrationists. These assumptions involve ideas about human development, segregated settings of any type, and a sense of history.

The first assumption is about those factors that promote human development and the self-evident nature of these factors. Essentially, this argument states that integration is good and segregation bad for human development. This assumption is probably best exemplified in what has been called the "contact hypothesis" in the mainstreaming literature (Christopoulos & Renz, 1969), the idea that placing children with retardation within the regular classroom will result in more contact with nonimpaired children (and vice-versa). The evidence for this assumption is tenuous: without special efforts, children in mainstream classrooms do not interact much with nonretarded peers (Gottlieb, 1981, 1990), nor do group homes placed in community settings necessarily promote more interaction with surrounding neighbors (Landesman, 1988). More normalized settings can promote more integration, but whether they always or even usually do is another matter.

The second assumption involves segregated settings. To most integrationists, segregation *per se* is bad, for any reason. Even the idea of segregation for special services is denigrated. Yet each of us every day takes part in segregated services: we go to hospitals when sick and age-graded schools throughout childhood. Granted, these services differ from segregated services for persons with mental retardation, as such "normally segregated" facilities serve individuals either for shorter intervals (e.g., hospital) or for specific and societally important functions (schools for learning). But the need for special services—and the possibility that special services sometimes work

better in segregated settings—seems at least arguable in cases such as specialized group homes for persons with Prader-Willi Syndrome (Walsh & McCallion, 1987) or small institutional settings for those with severe emotional, behavioural, or medical needs (Craig & McCarver, 1984).

The third assumption involves history or, more precisely, the lessons of history. The adherents of normalization draw on history to make their point about the need for integrated services. In particular, the history upon which they draw involves experiences of abuse, neglect and human intolerance, both from the 1960s (e.g., Willowbrook, Pennhurst) and before (American slavery, the Holocaust) (Blatt, 1987). These experiences, they feel, serve as object lessons in what can happen when any group becomes marginalized, labeled, or segregated.

### The Developmental Perspective

Although not as clearly a "movement" as normalization, the developmental or clinical perspective also has a history and underlying philosophy. Its history involves the debate about best practices that have occurred over the past century and its philosophy is one that emphasizes research over values. Both the history and philosophy of the developmental view center around the goal of providing services that will lead to better functioning and development for persons with mental retardation.

In residential services, this history is exemplified by Walter Fernald, the main leader in the mental retardation field in the early 20th century. Over a long and distinguished career, Fernald initiated multidisciplinary assessments (Fernald, 1922), was twice president of what later became the American Association on Mental Retardation, produced numerous studies, and served as the director of the Waverly Facility in Boston (later the Fernald State School in Waltham) (Wallace, 1925). To some, he is best known for his often-quoted "legend of the feeble-minded," his statement in 1912 that "the feebleminded are a parasitic, predatory class, never capable of self-support or of managing their own affairs." According to this view, all persons with retardation require life-long institutionalization. But later, Fernald changed his views. Swayed by his own study showing good outcomes for half of the 646 residents "paroled" from the Waverly facility, Fernald (1919) noted that "the survey shows that there are bad defectives and good defectives. . . . And it shows much justice in the plea of the well-behaved adult defective to be given a trial outside, for apparently a few defectives do not need or deserve life-long segregation" (from Davies, 1930, pp. 200-201). Although such sentiments today seem unenlightened, Fernald's view of research and of the importance of promoting individual development are hallmarks of the developmental perspective.

In schooling as well, the emphasis among developmentalists has been on examining which practices will best promote the child's development. As Lazerson (1975) notes, special classes arose from the universal schooling

movement and the public schools' practice of "tracking" children by age and level of ability that began in the early 1900s. Indeed, the very idea of special classrooms arose out of the feeling that regular classes and classroom teachers could not accommodate children with special needs. Even relatively recently, Robinson and Robinson (1965) noted that "the consensus of special educators today definitely favors special class placement for the mildly retarded" (p. 436).

However, the findings for what are the best educational practices for children with mental retardation are mixed, providing little support for developmentalists or integrationists. As summarized in several reviews, children with retardation perform about equally well academically in special versus integrated classes. The children in mainstreamed classes show higher social skills, but are stigmatized by nonhandicapped peers. Levels of racial segregation are about equal in the two settings. Costs are less in mainstreamed than in segregated classes, but the instruction may not be as individualized to the needs of the child with retardation. In addition, regular class teachers often feel unprepared to instruct children with handicaps, with this discomfort increasing in the higher grades (cf. Zigler & Hodapp, 1986, Ch. 11). There is, in short, no easy answer to whether mainstreamed placements better promote development for children with retardation.

Before commenting more fully on both perspectives, it is important to examine some underlying assumptions of the developmental view. The first is its research base and its emphasis on findings over argument. With the exception of obviously poor practices, developmentalists believe that research is necessary to tell us which educational or residential settings are most effective, for which particular individuals. A corollary to this view is that the processes and outcomes of particular settings are not always obvious. Thus, studies show that some large institutions are home-like and not "institutional" (Butterfield & Zigler, 1965), and some group home settings do not, in fact, promote the community living for which they were designed (Landesman & Butterfield, 1987). Concerning both processes and outcomes, then, developmentalists believe that research is needed to determine which practices are best for the individual's development.

A second assumption involves history or, again, the lessons of history. As opposed to the history of alienation, abuse, and neglect emphasized by integrationists, developmentalists focus more on historical trends in mental retardation over the past 130 years. They note that the field is beset by over-optimism followed by over-pessimism (Zigler & Harter, 1969) and caution that what is considered the "best practice" in service delivery changes over time. Developmentalists further argue that only by closely monitoring both the provision and effects of various service options can we best serve persons with mental retardation.

This historically-based caution leads developmentalists to be skeptical of several of the changes brought about by normalization. For example, the integrationist, Burton Blatt (1987), notes that mainstreaming ". . . does not suggest dumping the child in an untenable regular classroom, ignoring special needs, or discounting specialized teaching, equipment, or curricula" (p. 167). Similarly, regular-class teachers and students should be well-prepared and supported when children with handicaps enter the regular classroom. But, developmentalists argue, just how often does such "perfect" mainstreaming occur? Or, is it instead the more common experience that "general educators in urban school systems seldom see the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and many believe that if a child is mainstreamed that child should be able to succeed without any modifications to the regular class program" (Gottlieb, 1990, p. 17)? Furthermore, when high-quality mainstreaming does not occur, are children with retardation better off in segregated or mainstreamed settings?

Developmentalists also note the historical ambivalence between regular school and special education personnel (Lazerson, 1975) and how such tensions have been exacerbated by recent cost-cutting and taxpayer revolts common in many cities and towns. In effect, they wonder whether mainstreaming is often simply a convenient, "politically correct" device for hard-pressed school administrators to cut costs. Similarly, developmentalists worry about the community residence movement as it actually operates, pointing to the recent evidence of abuses within certain community-based settings (Hurst, 1989 a, b, c). Like the integrationists, then, developmentalists too have their own philosophy, history, fears, and goals, all of which lead to their sense that at least certain specialized services might be needed in educational and residential services for persons with mental retardation.

## Parallel Issues in Deaf Education

Although many issues with *PL 94-142* have arisen around children with mental retardation, these have not been the only children affected by this law. Children with motor impairments, blindness, deafness, emotional problems, learning disabilities, and other handicaps are included within the law's provisions.

For most of these groups, integration into society has generally been considered a good idea—Landesman and Butterfield (1987) note the consensus over the goals (but not the practices) of normalization. For children with deafness, however, even the goal of normalization is debated, with most in the deaf community against—or at least skeptical of—the entire mainstreaming movement.

To understand this skepticism, some historical background is necessary. For nearly 100 years, leaders in the deaf community have argued passionately

about whether to teach deaf children through the oral method (i.e., teaching children to produce and understand spoken language) versus the "combined" or "total communication" method (teaching children to sign and, if possible, to speak as well). Although the debate dates to the late 1700s, it is most clearly seen in the decades-long controversy between the oralist Alexander Graham Bell (the inventor of the telephone) and combinist Edward Miner Gallaudet (president of what became Gallaudet University and son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the first teacher of the deaf in the United States).

In many ways, Bell and Gallaudet's struggles mirror today's controversy between integration versus developmental perspectives. As Winefield (1987) summarizes the positions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries:

> A key difference in the nineteenth century oral and combined philosophies was the expected outcome of each approach. The oralists advocated integration as the primary desired outcome. While not eschewing language skills and other academic attainments, they saw these more as means to an end, that end being assimilation. The combinists, in turn, did not reject integration as a desired outcome. To them, however, it was not crucial; their emphasis was on the intellectual and social development of the individual. (p. 80)

This argument about how best to educate deaf children—and about which value is most important—continues to this day. At present, approximately 65% of classes for the deaf in the United States practice combined or total communication methods, while 35% are oralist (Winefield, 1987, p. 96). To most leaders in the deaf community, the value of development has been chosen over integration.

The practice of mainstreaming, too, is problematic. For children with profound levels of hearing loss, most deaf leaders favor special class or even special school placements at which combined methods are used and children can interact in sign with other deaf children. These leaders fear that the "specialized services" supposedly present in mainstream classes simply will not be provided, as most school districts have only one or a handful of deaf children (Neisser, 1989; Schein, 1989). The end result, these leaders believe, is a child who is "not fully accepted by either the deaf or the hearing community" (Garretson, 1983, quoted in Schein, 1989, p. 143).

This review of mainstreaming for deaf children is provided not to criticize the idea of integration, but rather to show that neither integration nor development are all-important or all-pervasive. Indeed, in the preface of his book reviewing the 100 year history of the oralist-total communications issue, Winefield (1987) provides examples of two children harmed by the stridency

of this debate. One child, who was only slightly hard of hearing, could have benefitted from placement in a mainstreamed class, but was never allowed such a placement. The child spent many years learning sign language with other deaf children in a residential school, never interacting with hearing children. Another child, with a more severe hearing impairment, spent many years unsuccessfully learning spoken language in a mainstreamed setting. This child eventually was taught sign in a special school for the deaf, and blossomed as a result. In both cases, total communication and oralist proponents acted in ways that did not benefit either child. In short, both integration and development are single values among many, and neither is all-pervasive.

## Toward Reconciliation

In a debate that seems irreconcilable, the integration versus development issue in mental retardation does indeed seem a contrast of two conflicting world views. Yet as we have tried to demonstrate, neither societal integration nor individual development are overriding values that apply in every instance.

More importantly, both integration and development embody philosophies and histories that instruct the other. On the integrationist side, we must continue to acknowledge that institutional abuses have occurred, more often and to a greater degree than has yet been documented in group homes. Therefore, when specialized settings are required—for the most profoundly impaired individuals or for those with particular, specialized needs—these settings must work hard to promote as much integration into the society as possible. In short, a lifestyle with the goal of maximum participation into the wider society needs to be considered an important aspect of individual development.

In the same way, developmental values need to be emphasized within integrated settings. Mainstreaming cannot be allowed to feature placements without necessary adaptations to the specialized needs of the child with handicaps. Indeed, such practices are antithetical to the school's primary purpose of promoting individual development. Developmentalists' skepticism about the use of mainstreaming to cut costs is also partially justified.

This suggested reconciliation between integrationists and developmentalists may already be beginning. In his 1990 presidential address to the American Association on Mental Retardation, James Ellis first advocates taking account of the potentials and limitations of persons with retardation. He acknowledges that "there are things that others know, and can do, and can learn that people with mental retardation do not know, cannot do or learn, or, as is often the case, can do or learn only with special assistance and under favorable circumstances" (p. 265). At the same time, however, Ellis notes that "we must continue to insist on public policies that will enhance the integration and

competencies of people who have mental retardation" (p. 266). This "newly realistic approach" to mental retardation thus combines acknowledgement of disabilities with the twin goals of integration and development for persons with retardation.

In this reconciliation among integrationists and developmentalists, science too plays an important role. The old dichotomy should be discarded and neither the developmental nor integrationist perspectives should be equated with research or science. Research can determine the effectiveness of practices promoting either development or integration. The extent to which particular practices promote individual development can be measured in any number of ways, as can the degree to which settings promote the integration of individuals with mental retardation into the larger society. Ultimately, as Bronowski (1965) notes, science and human values do not conflict with, but reinforce, one other. Let us therefore allow our scientific talents to be used in multiple ways, as we promote the two human values of societal integration and individual development.

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