

Educational Handicap, Public Policy, and Social History: A Broadened Perspective on Mental Retardation.

Seymour B. Sarason and John Doris.
New York, New York:
Free Press-Macmillan, 1979.

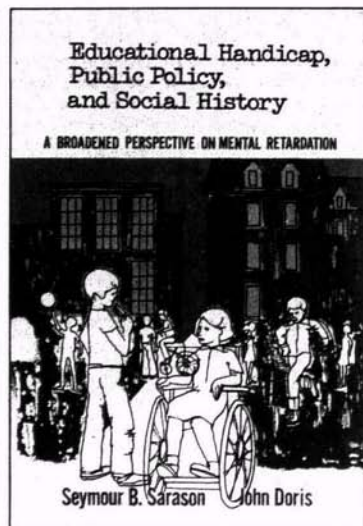
—Reviewed by Burton Blatt, Centennial Professor, Dean, School of Education; Andrejs Ozolins, Lecturer; both at Syracuse University, New York.

For the past century, the dominant view of mental retardation has been some version of the "medical model." In this view, mental retardation is an individual problem, a defect located within the person. To understand the problem we need only examine the afflicted person, and to "treat" the problem we need only change that person.

During the past two decades, however, this thesis has come under serious attack. The antithesis to it does not consist of any one, monolithic doctrine but comes from a large body of work which criticizes various aspects of the medical model. It ranges from Mercer's "social system perspective," in which the "status" of being mentally retarded is an outcome of the way society is organized, to more narrow views, such as Sameroff's "transactional" perspective, which urges that an individual's problems be viewed as arising from his/her family and community context. But, this critical antithesis to the medical model also includes the compelling (and perplexing, even paralyzing) work of such writers as Holt, Coles, or Illych.

Thus, the field has become saturated with an air of unresolved controversy. The basic institutions addressing the problems of mentally retarded people have remained basically unchanged, while criticism of those institutions has been increasing in volume and persuasiveness. One does not have to be particularly Hegelian to long for a synthesis that can resolve some of the controversies and point a more hopeful direction for the field of mental retardation.

We believe that this book by Sarason and Doris provides a major step toward



such a synthesis. Unlike most textbooks in mental retardation, it doesn't offer the reader a compilation of accepted facts structured in the old predictable packages. Rather, what we have here is a synthesis of what's known about the field itself in the context of several major social-political movements. The result is a fresh and informative picture of how the educational handicap industry got its start in America, what powers it, what sustains it, and what policies need to emerge for it to endure and, indeed, prosper. Drawing on their experiences as psychologists, scholars, and shapers of professional opinion, Sarason and Doris create here a contribution of impressive proportions and depth.

Will *Educational Handicap, Public Policy, and Social History* be adopted as a textbook in the field, one to compete with the likes of Robinson and Robinson or Macmillan? It should, but it probably won't. Except for those who don't play all of their games by the rules, this book will be put aside as very interesting and very worthwhile but not a textbook. It defies several presumably important traditions of textbook construction—that is, that approximately 85 percent of the material in it is covered in other recognized textbooks, that the book is sequenced like other recognized textbooks, that there are familiar chapter headings, that there are pictures and clarifying subheadings, that the authors assume that readers know

nothing about the field and its agenda. On the other hand, we hope that some teachers of beginning courses in mental retardation will see this as a textbook because it contains a great deal about what's important to be understood in the field, because it's written with commendably little jargon and hardly any pretensions, and because it may be the only textbook which takes the social-historical-political context seriously. For those reasons, we would submit this as a candidate for "Textbook of the Year." Of course, Sarason and Doris knew what they were doing, knowing as they do that "The day is past when one can write a conventional textbook on mental retardation replete with definitions, descriptions of clinical syndromes, tests and diagnostic criteria, and suggestions for educational and institutional placement and programming" (p. ix). There already are such books. The day may be surely past, but it remains to be seen whether the marketplace wants anything more than a conventional textbook, whether the marketplace genuinely wants to wrestle with dilemmas which can't be resolved, whether the marketplace is interested in wisdom more than facts.

Fundamental to this book is the idea of mental retardation as an invented disease where all too often the intended cure is as corrosive as the disease itself. Consequently, basic to the authors' argument throughout are two propositions: The individual cannot be understood apart from his or her social context; and, the present cannot be understood apart from its historical context. The first half of the book develops a view of mental retardation as a transactional phenomenon; that is, if one wishes to understand mental retardation he/she shouldn't be confined to counting brain cells or IQ points, but must examine the context in which the problem occurs. Indeed, that idea is the basis for the transactional model which, as Sameroff (p. 21) explains it, is paying attention to not only the effects of the caretakers on children but of the children on the caretakers. Or, as Sarason and Doris discuss it, "Heredity and environment are never dichotomous . . . the transactional approach is always a two-way street. There is nothing in the transactional formulation that denies the existence and influence of genetic processes or the existence of a socially

structured context populated by diverse people" (p. 25). Or, "Plots are always transactional" (p. 25).

The second proposition—that the present cannot be understood apart from its historical context—is the basis of the second half of the book. While there may be more comprehensive histories around, especially those dealing with the global issues—for example, universal education, the impact of World War II on American society, and the civil rights movement—we haven't encountered any which so admirably synthesize this particular field with those movements. Throughout the sweeping historical survey—how our public schools got started in America, why the parochial schools emerged, how the schools changed in the face of child labor laws and mandatory free schools, why the Amish of Pennsylvania are left alone by the courts while the Hasidic Jews weren't, how the special education system took hold under the pioneering efforts of such people as Elizabeth Farrell—we come again and again to a recognition of current issues in mental retardation. The idea that the past holds lessons for the present is, of course, not new. But it is surely very rare, if not entirely new, that those lessons should actually be drawn and taken seriously. Whether the field is ready to take them seriously remains to be seen.

Sarason and Doris' book addresses this field's "Gift of the Magi" irony: we have sold or disdained what we need most—our capability to make rational transactional judgments—for membership in the company of a narrow science which can't give us answers to questions we have, much less to the questions we're too ignorant to formulate. This is a book for all students—for those taking the courses, for those teaching the courses, and for those who have written the wrong books for the courses.

Beyond Facts: Objective Ways to Measure Thinking.

Harry G. Miller, Reed G. Williams,
and Thomas M. Haladyna.

Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:
Educational Technology Publications,
1978.

—Reviewed by George J. Posner, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

This book appears to be aimed at teachers who wish to use multiple-choice tests but also wish to avoid testing only for recall. In a step-by-step manner, it tells how to construct more sophisticated multiple-choice tests. It covers such topics as test formats, grammatical considerations, test admin-

istration, test scoring, construction of foils, and a range of pitfalls encountered by item writers.

The major weakness of the book, though, is its dangerously presumptuous tone. It gives the impression that all one has to do is read the book to become a competent test writer, and that multiple-choice tests are far and away the best sort of test to administer. This sort of "oversell" is typical of many recent books in educational technology and has the potential for producing overconfident and overzealous technologists who do not understand the limitations of their skills or their techniques.

With this major weakness of the book in mind, I can recommend it as a primer on multiple-choice test construction.

Assertive Discipline: A Take Charge Approach for Today's Educator.

Lee Canter and Marlene Canter.

Los Angeles, California:

Canter & Associates, Inc., 1979.

—Reviewed by Sylvester Kohut, Jr., Chairperson, Department of Secondary Education and Foundations, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee.

Assertive Discipline is a practical guidebook based on the theoretical and practical aspects of assertiveness training. With special worksheets in the appendix and numerous examples included in all chapters, it would be useful for preservice or inservice for teachers in grades K-12.

Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles: A Practical Approach.

Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn.

Reston, Virginia:

Reston Publishing Company,
division of Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978.

—Reviewed by Mario D. Fantini, Dean,
School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

While the general idea of learning and teaching styles has been around for some time, only during the last decade has a more specialized theory been developed. The need for a more carefully orchestrated match between teacher and learner became one of the foundations for the so-called "alternative school movement" taking place in the 1960s and 1970s. However Rita and Kenneth Dunn translate the theory into

practice and design a technology, if you will, that puts substance to the theory.

The Dunns have constructed a model for diagnosing learning styles to use in generating practical pedagogical prescriptions. The model has several carefully delineated components: the environmental, the emotional, the sociological, and the physical. These basic elements are given operational definitions and the reader is taken through a step-by-step review of each until a learning inventory or profile is obtained. Once the reader understands the model and the inventory, the next task is to design an educational environment matched to the learning style profile.

The authors examine in great detail a variety of instructional patterns, including small group techniques, learning stations, individual contracts, and so on. Fully illustrated case studies are presented to buttress their arguments and to provide a basis for analysis.

With this volume the Dunns have made a valuable contribution both to scholars and practitioners.

Classroom Management.

Daniel L. Duke, editor.

Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1979.

—Reviewed by H. George Bonekemper, Principal, Upper Perkiomen Middle School, East Greenville, Pennsylvania.

The 78th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education attempts to organize existing knowledge about classroom management and to suggest ways it can be improved in the future. Despite the problem of multiple authorship and the recognition that classroom management problems vary according to student age and ability, subject matter, and teaching style, the volume definitely meets the society's objectives of practical value, sound scholarship, and scientific investigation.

Ideology and Curriculum.

Michael W. Apple.

London, Boston & Henley:

Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.

—Reviewed by John J. Gilroy, Associate Dean, Division of Professional Studies, College of Arts and Science at Oswego, New York.

Curriculum scholars, teachers of curriculum theory, social scientists, and philosophers should find this an interesting and controversial book. It is well organized and the arguments are consistent with the author's neo-Marxist philosophy.

Apple explains how schools create and foster conditions that enable social control over cultural and economic forms to be maintained by dominant groups without the necessity of an overt display of power. In each of the eight chapters, six of which have appeared in slightly different form elsewhere, the author posits the notion that education acts to reproduce inequality. He contends that what we do and what we teach in schools, both overtly and via the hidden curriculum, support present cultural and political viewpoints and institutions and thus perpetuate social inequality. More important, our ideological configurations are not consciously constructed and are, therefore, rarely questioned.

To Apple, educational issues are fundamentally ethical, economic, and political, and social justice cannot prevail unless the values of our society are scrutinized and modified. He realizes the need for further study and more open discussion of the relationship between ideology and culture and between power and knowledge, and he suggests some routes for further analysis of these issues.

Using Evaluations: Does Evaluation Make a Difference?

Marvin C. Alkin, Richard Dailak, and Peter White.

Beverly Hills, California:
Sage Publications, 1979.

—Reviewed by Robert Crumpton, Minnesota State Department of Education, St. Paul, Minnesota.

This book examines in detail the results of five case studies of special and/or compensatory school programs and their evaluations. Data collected from each program administrator, through interviews and office memorandums, are used to address two questions: Does evaluation make a difference? Why does an evaluation either have an impact or not have an impact? The summary of the case studies presents a checklist of important considerations as a guide to effective evaluations. The essential elements involved are assessment and judgment. There is also a contribution about the common problems plaguing the evaluation process.

The unique structure of this book and its focus on how the administrator can shape and redirect the conduct of evaluation make it not only one of the most up-to-date, in-depth looks at whether or not evaluation makes a difference but also an excellent reference book for evaluating special and/or compensatory school programs.

Schools and the Courts, Volume II.

Malcolm M. Feeley, Philip K. Piele,
Ellen Jane Hollingsworth,
and William H. Clune, III.
Eugene, Oregon:

ERIC Clearinghouse on
Educational Management, 1979.

—Reviewed by Robert Munnely, Reading Public Schools, Reading, Massachusetts.

In recent years, school leaders have seen many important initiatives in school policy dictated by the decisions of activist courts. I believe a definitive and sensible evaluation of this trend is sorely needed.

The scholarly papers presented in this symposium do not constitute such an assessment; they only inform us of the broad scope and complexity of the task. Nevertheless, the perspectives from the fields of law, political science, sociology, and education are rich and provocative. School leaders will find Ellen Jane Hollingsworth's research on teacher misunderstanding of student rights and discipline cases particularly pertinent.

Taken together, these studies of court impact are solid first steps towards that definitive assessment of the role of the courts in school policy.

Building a Teachers' Center.

Kathleen Devaney.
New York:

Teachers College Press, 1979.

—Reviewed by Sarah Caldwell, Director, Staff Development, Ferguson-Florissant School District, Ferguson, Missouri.

Building a Teachers' Center is not a "how-to" manual but a series of readings that impart the underlying philosophy and common purposes of the movement. Nevertheless, the discussions of philosophy, goals, and attitudes contain very practical ideas and suggestions for implementing a teachers' center program.

The book is important for staff and curriculum developers because it may help them ponder the deficiencies in staff development programs that caused the rise of the teacher center approach. In this new model, teachers are supported in their efforts to define their own needs and to explore resources and solutions to problems. *Building a Teachers' Center* captures the essence of this type of inservice program.

Helping Boys and Girls Discover the World.

Leonard S. Kenworthy.
New York:

United Nations Association of the
United States of America, 1978

—Reviewed by Elizabeth Stimson, Assistant Professor, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio.

Helping Boys and Girls Discover the World might have been titled "All You Ever Wanted to Know About the Teaching of Global Concerns and the United Nations—and Then Some!" Its nine sections begin with "The Importance of Teaching About the World and the United Nations" and end with "Research and Evaluation on Studying the World and the U.N." The suggestions and ideas are practical and to the point.

One section is designed to help teachers collect accurate background materials. Included is a list of 35 books representing a wide variety of topics, a list of films, and a brief description of other audiovisual materials available through the United Nations. This is a businesslike, no-nonsense publication, strictly a working booklet for working teachers.

School Renewal Through Staff Development.

Judith Schiffer.
New York:

Teachers College Press, 1980.

—Reviewed by Edward J. Sullivan, Superintendent of Schools, Harding Township Public Schools, New Jersey.

Initially, *School Renewal Through Staff Development* establishes the historical perspective of teacher inservice from the colonial period to contemporary times. After thoroughly analyzing the input of power and attitudinal structures inherent during each phase of American education, Schiffer conceptualizes a staff development model that focuses on political, personal, and organizational characteristics commonly attributed to schools. Detailed practical principles, assumptions, objectives, and activities provide a framework that should appeal to teachers, administrators, board members, and parents. Schiffer establishes a rationale for greater teacher involvement in the staff development decision-making process as the only means to achieve lasting and effective improvements in schools.

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