

normalization

The principle of normalization in
human services

WOLF WOLFENSBERGER



NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON MENTAL RETARDATION

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THE PRINCIPLE OF

NORMALIZATION

IN HUMAN SERVICES

with additional texts by

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SIMON OLSHANSKY

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON
MENTAL RETARDATION

SPONSORED BY THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

foreword

The underlying principles inherent in NORMALIZATION have led to such recent developments as the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons* brought into being by the International League of Societies for the Mentally Handicapped.

This book is the first one to document normalization from its origins in Scandinavian services to the mentally retarded to its implications to the field of human services. The National Institute on Mental Retardation has published this text to support the current growing interest in normalization concepts and fuller integration of the retarded into the community. This concept is currently having a major impact on the pattern of programming in a number of countries. The views expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect the Institute's specific strategies, or those of its sponsor, the Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded.

The publication of *The principle of normalization in human services*, and earlier of *Mental retardation • the law • guardianship* and *Standards for educators of exceptional children in Canada* are examples of the Institute's recently established publishing policy to bring to the attention of a wider public new concepts, innovative programs and reports of studies by the Institute itself and by others in the field of the mentally handicapped and in human services generally.

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Director,
National Institute on Mental Retardation
November 1972

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biographical notes

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Simon Olshansky is the Executive Director of Community Workshops in Boston, Mass. He has served as a selective placement director for the U.S. Employment Service and as a vocational rehabilitation counsellor. Somewhat of a 'rehabilitation philosopher', he is a frequent contributor to literature.

Robert Perske is Executive Director of the Greater Omaha Association for Retarded Children in Nebraska. Former Chaplain at the Kansas Neurological Institute, he has written and lectured widely on pastoral work in retardation, and on humanization and normalization.

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prologue

In efforts to support an adaptive, communal, regulated way of life, society has developed many institutionalized ways of rendering help, assistance, or service to its individual members. These 'helping forms' are carried out primarily by professional groups (such as counsellors, educators and trainers, therapists, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, social workers, and to some degree ministers, physicians, and nurses) and their auxiliaries, functioning through a wide range of agencies (such as courts, employment services, hospitals, clinics, schools, treatment and training centers, sheltered workshops, prisons and reformatories, and residential homes and institutions). These professionals and agencies address themselves to many human problem areas (such as delinquency and crime, mental disorder and retardation, physical and sensory disability, social incapacity, illness, poverty, and addiction and habituation to drugs), by means of numerous activities and functions (such as case assessment, diagnosis and evaluation; correction and detention; counselling, guidance, and psychotherapy; teaching and training; supervision and consultancy).

There are many continuities of training, manpower patterns, legislation, administration, and ideology in the above professions, agencies, activities, and problem areas. After all, these professions and agencies are concerned with human service to other humans, and they almost invariably render such services via societally sanctioned roles, and via a relatively small number of helping mechanisms.

Also, many benevolent, humanistic clinicians see themselves as servants of the public, offering themselves and their services in a non-controlling fashion. They see their clients as free agents, free to accept or reject the offered services. Their self-concept – in part due to the indoctrination received during training – is frequently incompatible with action perceived as controlling, directing or dictating client behavior. Yet, here it is where so many human service workers deceive themselves, because their roles are not only almost always societally sanctioned, but in an endless array of encounters between the server and the served, the server is the interpreter of and agent for the intents of society, and wields a truly amazing amount of power and control, even if he may not consciously perceive himself as so doing.

Human services fall into a number of categories, depending on whether they must be rendered, and whether they must be accepted. Both education and unemployment benefits must be rendered, but only education must be accepted. Even in services which need not be accepted, and in which the consumer has much freedom and choice, the one who renders the service is in an exceedingly powerful situation. Although the server may lack statutory power, he often exerts other types of power, since his decisions can affect the

social, emotional, physical, and financial future of his client. Even in his least powerful role, he exerts a great deal of what psychologists call 'stimulus control' over his client.

Unlike education, which must be both rendered and accepted, no one is 'forced to accept' welfare payments; and even in areas as apparently non-controlling as – let us say – high school vocational counselling, the one rendering the service holds enormous stimulus control over the client who is seen as being in a position to 'take it or leave it'. Indeed, it is not too much to say that who will be rich or poor, healthy or sick, bright or dumb, honest or crooked – and even born or unborn – depends in many cases, and to a significant extent, upon the decision of human managers. The fact that this dependency is merely frequent rather than universal, and merely substantial rather than predominant, detracts in no way from the enormity of the phenomenon.

In order to speak parsimoniously about the many helping forms, functions, and manpower structures mentioned above, to underline their commonalities, and to honestly acknowledge the strong stimulus control exercised by them, this book will make frequent use of the term 'human management'. More formally, we might define this term as referring to 'entry of individuals or agencies, acting in societally sanctioned capacities, into the functioning spheres of individuals, families, or larger social systems in order to maintain or change conditions with the intention of benefitting such individuals, their family or other social systems, or society in general.' The term 'human management', it is hoped, will help to keep us humble and perceptive of what we do and are, and of that part of our functioning that we are often inclined to deny.

At this point, I want to state the three goals that this book is intended to achieve: to explain, clarify, and elaborate the principle of normalization as a system of human management; to 'translate' it from its Scandinavian origins so as to make it fully relevant to the North American scene; and to bring the principle to the attention of a broad range of human management disciplines.

In part A of the book, the normalization principle will be presented in its universal nature. Part B will contain illustrative elaborations of the application of the principle to a number of specific problem areas or issues. Since the principle has universal application in all of the human management areas discussed above, including even areas that interact with human management, such as architecture, it is to be expected that additional elaborations will be forthcoming in time. The ones presented here are intended to be primarily illustrative. In part C, some of the strategies and mechanisms for implementing normalization will be presented.

Not all the content of this book is new; some parts are adapted from previous publications, as indicated in footnotes. Material from one previous article (Wolfensberger, 1970c) was used in several chapters, and is not specifically acknowledged again.

Also, some parts of the book cover topics on which I have received considerable assistance from others. I am particularly indebted to Richard Kurtz for the discussion of deviancy in chapter 2, to Linda Glenn and Kris Rogge for work on the PASS project, which is summarized in chapter 18, and to Helen Zauha for her work in and on citizen advocacy which is summarized in chapter 17. George Thomas, former Director of the Nebraska Office of

Mental Retardation, gave much initial support both to the citizen advocacy movement discussed in chapter 17, and the development and use of PASS reviewed in chapter 18.

Wolf Wolfensberger
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