

epilogue

The principle of normalization appears to be profoundly threatening to some individuals who have a strong or historical commitment to alternative human management ideologies, even if they may not recognize what these ideologies are. For example, those associated with dehumanizing programs will not identify very readily with normalization. However, more subtly, individuals who have been identified with relatively benign but paternalistic or pity-derived human service projects also have great difficulty adjusting to the demands of the normalization principle, such as those that call for a dignifying measure of risk, for granting autonomy and independence to impaired individuals and particularly adults, and for according full adult status to them.

It also appears that objections to the normalization principle frequently have both manifest and latent forms. In many instances, it may be objected that normalization requires conformity, that it does not furnish adequate emotional support, and so on, when at a deeper level there may be found motives such as those discussed above. Therefore, in concluding this book, I want to reiterate six points that are often misunderstood or advanced as objections when the normalization principle is discussed. All six points have been covered in the text, but their importance is such as to warrant their being restated here in such highlighted fashion.

ONE One reaction to the principle often heard is that it is not new. In a sense this is true, and in another sense it is profoundly false. At the very least, the normalization principle has not been systematically stated and explored, tied to sociological theory and empirical evidence, and spelled out in detail in a comprehensive fashion. Often those who claim that they have always practised normalization have not yet understood the principle; and in many instances, their clinical or systemic work is clearly inconsistent with it.

TWO Some individuals object to the use of the term 'deviant'. On occasion, they confuse it with 'deviate'. Actually, the term was borrowed from sociology where it has been found to have a great deal of theoretical utility. It certainly refers to a phenomenon that needs and deserves to be termed, and at present there exists no alternative label that has as much theoretical and explanatory power. However, the reader may have noted that throughout this text, pain has been taken not to make a noun out of an adjective; we have not made 'deviants' out of persons, but referred to persons as being deviant, and deviance has been clearly defined as being in the eyes of the beholder rather than in the person being perceived.

THREE The concept of 'normative', as used in the definition of the normalization principle, is a statistical one, or is at least idealized as one. However, there are behaviors which are normative, and yet which would be judged as being immoral by many people. Thus, we should assist a person to become capable of meaningfully choosing for himself among those normative options that are considered moral, and those that are not. If a person is capable of a meaningful choice, he must also risk the consequences.

FOUR The normalization principle does not imply gross imposition of conformity. It is true that there are certain limits which are forced upon all of us by society, and rightly so. But primarily, the normalization principle implies that we provide the conditions which eventually permit a person to function as normatively as possible unless he deliberately chooses to be deviant. If he chooses deviancy, we should practise as much tolerance as is possible in a well-ordered society.

FIVE Normalization does not mean that only normative human management tools and methods are used – merely that these be as normal as feasible. In many instances, there will come a point where extraordinary means are needed. This, the Scandinavians refer to as 'complementation', and it is similar to what Cobb (being published) calls an 'instrumentality' of support.

SIX Finally, the question often comes up whether the public will accept the implications of the normalization principle, especially those implications that have to do with integration. I believe that they will, especially because we are becoming an increasingly pluralistic society in which differences are no longer so apt to be viewed as deviances. However, I plan to explore this issue further in another context.

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