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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

Multiply Handicapped Deaf Children: Medical, Educational, and Psychological Considerations. McCay Vernon. The Council of Exceptional Children, Washington, D.C.: 1969. 124 pages. Paperback.

As stated in the author's introductory chapter, the purpose of this landmark study is "to attempt to determine some of the major causes of the secondary handicaps prevalent in deaf children today and to describe the nature of the handicaps associated with these causes." The reasoning underlying the study is that the leading causes of deafness are also etiologies of other disturbances such as brain damage.

The author presents a thorough review of the literature concerning prematurity, hereditary deafness, rubella, complications of Rh factor, meningitis, and tuberculous meningitis. Included are discussions of the nature of each of these conditions, their incidence, and their sequelae.

The subjects of the study consisted of 1,468 deaf children who attended or were given preadmission evaluations at the California School for the Deaf, Riverside, from 1953 until 1964. Their ages ranged from 3 to 21 years. The independent variables studied included meningitis, erythroblastosis fetalis (only those with Rh factor complications were included in this category), heredity, maternal rubella, and prematurity. These were identified through an analysis of medical records on the subjects. The dependent variables of the study were intelligence, educational achievement, psychological adjustment, behavioral evidence of brain damage, communication skills, hearing loss, and incidence of physical anomalies.

The author concludes, on the basis of his findings, that:

1. A significant amount of the behavioral variance among children who are deaf is not due to their hearing loss but can be understood in terms of the etiology of their deafness. This variance

- is in areas critical to academic learning, psychological adjustment, and physical health.
2. The recent rise in the prevalence of multiply handicapped deaf children is best understood as a combination of the current disease entities causing hearing loss and of modern medical advances and consequences related to the treatment of these diseases.
 3. The data on the extent and nature of these multiple handicaps and their relationship to specific etiological conditions can be generalized to other deaf populations having similar causes of deafness. The logical planning and direction of programs and techniques to help these children and to project their future needs should take account of the findings of this study.
 4. The findings concerning the changing etiologies of deafness may be reflected in a population of less academically capable deaf youth in the future. The current emphasis on expanded college and technical education may be somewhat unrealistic when the projected educational need will probably be for more vocational preparation at the skilled or semiskilled level.
 5. Many of the learning and behavior problems that have in the past been thought of as due only to deafness probably have their basis in central nervous system dysfunctions that are additional to the auditory impairment. Successful learning and psychological therapy will require techniques which take this into account.
 6. Certain similarities in behavioral, physical, and psychophysical patterns of the rubella, premature, and Rh deaf children suggested similar central nervous system involvements. Corollary to this, the meningitic gave evidence of a different kind of neurological damage and the genetic deaf seemed relatively free of this pathology.
 7. Finally, the evidence from the rubella, premature, and meningitic groups suggested that the earlier in the development of the child that disease or premature birth occurs, the more pervasive and permanent are the residua.

Among the many merits of this book is its emphasis upon the fact that multiply handicapped deaf children have very serious learning and adjustment problems, and that the numbers of multiply handicapped deaf people in need of services can be expected to increase in the future. This has important implications for

program development and instructional techniques in educational and rehabilitation settings.

Only one major criticism could be aimed at this study. This concerns the factor of early childhood communication and parental understanding and acceptance of the deaf child. It would seem logical that the hereditary group would have understanding and accepting parents with whom they could communicate from an early age, whereas those with deafness from other etiologies would have parents who could not communicate with them and who had little understanding and acceptance of deafness. However, the family interaction effect on such variables as communication skills, educational achievement, and psychological adjustment was not controlled in this study.

This book by one of the country's leading authorities on multiply handicapped deaf children and adults should be required reading for parents, educators, medical workers, rehabilitation counselors, and others who are concerned with the growth and development of deaf children.

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