



Special Education in Context: An Ethnographic Study of Persons with Developmental Disabilities

John Joseph Gleason

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Originally published in 1989, *Special Education in Context* is an important and thought-provoking book. An ethnographic study of five years in the daily lives of the severely and profoundly mentally retarded residents of a state school in the United States, it was unique in its attempt to interpret their experience in their own terms and from their own perspective. Professor Gleason's findings led him to argue forcefully for a change in the approach to developmental disability. Rather than being based on the imposition of criteria such as 'normality' and focusing on the clinical characteristics of populations with special needs, as was traditionally the case, therapeutic practice is reconfigured as being thoroughly grounded in an understanding of the populations' behaviour patterns. The book redefined the concepts of deinstitutionalisation, normalisation and mainstream which guided much practice and provided an innovative framework for future investigation and practice with special populations.

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