

# research in brief

## **Attitudes Toward the Mentally Retarded**

The measurement of attitudes toward the mentally retarded is difficult because of the variety of characteristics and degrees of mental retardation. Several investigators have indicated that mildly retarded individuals are perceived more favorably than severely retarded ones. (Jones, 1974; Jones and Gottfried, 1962; Jones, Gottfried and Owens, 1966; Warren and Turner, 1966; VonBracken, 1967).

In this study, 75 undergraduate education majors were the subjects. Five different classes of mentally retarded persons were described and attitudes were recorded using several instruments.

Results showed that mentally retarded children weren't rated differently than mentally retarded adults. This study revealed the importance of specifying the attitude referent of study subjects.

*Implications  
for Extension*

How serious are the attitudes and stereotypes of adults and youth toward the mentally retarded and their involvement in Extension programs. A few states—Indiana, Pennsylvania, Washington, Minnesota—have involved the mentally retarded in youth programs. We, perhaps, not only need materials, training guides, and a willing staff, but changed attitudes of youth and adults toward involving more handicapped people in Extension programs.

"Attitudes Toward Mentally Retarded Persons: Effects of Attitude Referent Specificity." Jay Gottlieb and Gary Siperstein. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, LXXX (1976), 376-81.

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