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Philip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996).

A History of Childhood and Disability offers to inform the concerns of the present through the long and wide view of the past. Safford and Safford have amassed a great deal of facts, but this book lacks the interpretative or synthetic cogency necessary to clarify important issues or to advance current debate -- historical or otherwise. If they had provided an encyclopedic series of biographical and institutional sections as can be found in Scheerenberger's works on mental retardation, then a reader might properly accept a lack of interpretative skill and thank them for a quick, reliable reference. Instead, Safford and Safford held themselves to a higher standard when they readily used and framed chapters with words such as "enlightenment," "social control," "independence," "democracy," "identity," "worth," "progressivism," "laissez-faire," "mind, body, and spirit," etc. These are concepts from social, cultural, and political studies, and our authors do not appear, from this text, to have mastered them sufficiently. They situated the writing of *The Wild Boy of Aveyron* by saying the "France of Citizen Itard was marked by belief in the rights of the individual and the responsibility -- of capable men, of the state, and of science -- to honor those rights." Yet, the ideological relationships hinted at here were left unclear and unexplored were the contradictions between liberty and the hierarchy of "capable men." (p. 51) Issues of power are examined as a human failing outside of, rather than inherent to, the authority and methods of science. Thus, when they described the close coincidence between nativism and intelligence testing, the former was attributed to "old superstitions" so that the latter remains unsullied. (p.153) There was also a general failure to keep current with literature even though they were heavily dependent upon secondary works -- as when they relied on a twenty-five year old essay and made the erroneous claim that no significant child labor reform occurred in the United States until 1933 (p.60). Safford and Safford rarely differentiated the voices of present scholars from past actors. Finally, at the beginning and the end of the book they said that children with disabilities have been the "victims rather than the beneficiaries of scientific 'progress'." (p.20, 287) They added quotes around the word "progress" to mock and disassociate themselves from it, yet on the whole the book rests upon realism and demonstrates progress (p.21, 26, 47, 69, 122, 153). These combined failings greatly inhibit the utility of this book for seminars and limit its contribution to child and disability policy advocacy.

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