

## What is Grey Integration, and Is It Good or Bad?

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In Germany, a new concept has arisen that is interesting but problematic. It is “grey integration” or “silent integration.” This refers to a handicapped person living an integrated life, as we would understand it in SRV terms, (a) without being part of some kind of culture of handicapped people, (b) without special formal service supports for the integration, and (c) without a great deal of conscious mind orientation toward one's own handicap.

This sounds like the kind of integration that SRV would promote, and would even see as near-ideal. So why is this integration called “grey,” and why is this problematic? For three reasons. (a) This kind of integration is being called “grey” in order to disparage it, even though integration without “intervention” by formal structures and programs is usually the best kind. (b) Calling it “grey” does indeed seem to delegitimize what in SRV terms is a very successful integration. (c) The new militants in movements of handicapped people are apparently demanding that handicapped people be highly politicized and ideologized about their handicap in society, that they even be preoccupied with this and with their condition, and that they consort extensively with other handicapped people in a culture of handicap, in a sort of countersegregation that was first trumpeted as “beautiful” by the militant Black Power and Black Panther movement of the 1960s. That is apparently the reason they have given the pejorative term “grey” to “real” integration. Yet actually, the less a handicapped person is preoccupied with his/her condition, the less he/she is apt to be (a) devalued, and (b) maladjusted. This is yet one more reason why it is generally better for handicapped people to do work that has nothing to do with services to other devalued people, because when a handicapped person is in human services to afflicted people, the person is more apt to be or become a member of a culture of handicap, and to be obsessed about his/her own handicap.

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