What is “normal”?

• Who is normal and who is not?

• Is society/environment determining what is normal and what is disabled?

• What happens when everyone has the same disability?

Example 1: Martha’s Vineyard

• Incidence of deafness in the 1880’s:
  – US: 1 in ~6000
  – Martha’s vineyard: 1 in 155
    • Chilmark: 1 in 25
      – Squibnocket: 1 in 4

• “Everyone spoke sign language”
  – Even hearing persons
    • Even town meetings are signed
  – Deafness not considered an handicap
Example 2: The Country of the Blind

• “The Country of the Blind”, a tale by H.G. Wells
  – The village was built in an “accessible” way
  – Blind inhabitants self-sufficient and content
  – Sighted visitor considered a “fool”, with underdeveloped sensorial system
  – It is not clear who is disabled and who is not!

The Risk of Pursuing Normalcy at All Costs

• **Eugenics**: The study of hereditary “improvements” of the human race by controlled selective breeding
  – Positive eugenics
    • Encourage a designated “most fit” to reproduce
  – Negative eugenics
    • Discourage/prevent “less fit” from reproducing

• Eugenic programs in 20th century:
  – Genetic screening/counseling
  – Birth control (possibly by forced sterilization)
  – Marriage restriction
  – Segregation
  – Abortion (possibly forced)
  – Euthanasia
  – Genocide
The Risk of Pursuing Normalcy at All Costs

• A danger:
  – Eliminating disability
    • may sound like
  – Eliminating people with disability

• R. Olkin’s “The Human Rights of Children with Disability”
  – Right #6: Not to Be Made to Feel that "People Like Them" Should Be Prevented