Why is autism relevant to Disability Studies?

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Introduction

• What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and what is prevalence in Utah?
• Relevance of ASD for Disability Studies
• Vision for Utah
A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interactions across multiple contexts.

B. Restrictive, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities.

C. Onset in the developmental period.

D. Clinically significant impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of current functioning.
Autism in APA Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM)

- 1952 DSM-I: 106 disorders but not autism
- 1968 DSM-II: childhood schizophrenia but not autism
- 1980 DSM-III: autism first listed
- 1987 DSM-III-R: Asperger’s listed
- 1994 DSM-IV: Rett’s listed
- 2013 DSM-V: Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Social-Communication Categories combined
  - Asperger’s & PDDNOS Categories eliminated
How many children were identified with ASD?

About 1 in 68 or 1.5% of 8-year-olds were identified with ASD by the ADDM Network.

1 in 68

About 1 in 58 or 1.7% of 8-year-old children were identified with ASD by UT-ADDM in 2012. This percentage is higher than the average percentage identified with ASD (1.5%) in all communities in the United States where CDC tracked ASD in 2012.

1 in 58


Abbreviations: ADDM = Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network; E+H = education and health records; HO = health records only.
* Cases per 1,000 children aged 8 years. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals.
Relevance: 10 medical, social, legal, political & economic features of ASD

1. High prevalence
2. Life-long duration
3. Range and variability of impairments
4. Complex causes: hundreds of genes and environmental factors
5. $1.4M lifetime cost to families and society
6. Association with genius, hyperfocus & special skills
7. Association with sensory hyper- or hypo-reactivity, intellectual disability, seizures & syndromes
8. Opportunity for workforce development
9. Civil rights: housing, employment, education
10. Advocacy for inclusion, autonomy, acceptance
Transition to Adulthood is a Cliff like Angel’s Landing.
Self-Optimization Workshops

- Model for interactive sharing of stories of success that we call *Self-Optimization on The Spectrum*
- Interactive, informative workshops presented by and for adults on the autism spectrum and their adult family members
- Enhances autonomy and self-advocacy by supporting adults who identify as on the autism spectrum
- Model has been piloted through three workshops involving 100 participants

Elliot Francis
Co-Founder
A Challenging Vision

Can we build on our Utah culture of collaboration to develop opportunities to nurture the work skills and interests of individual youth with ASD along a trajectory of lifelong career development?