

LouAnne Boyd

The Sensory Accommodation Framework for Technology

Bridging Sensory Processing to Social Cognition

Synthesis Lectures on Technology and Health

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To my sun and my moon, Alex and Natalie.

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Introduction to Autism for Assistive Technologists

1

The Birth of Disability

The disabled experience is less common than the norm and less understood (leading to fear of the unknown) thus often becomes stigmatized within each culture (Goffman, 2009). This “uncertainty of what is expected” between able-bodied and disabled bodies (Berger & Wilber, 2013) results in perspectives on the human experience from the able bodies viewing the disabled and the disabled viewing the abled. The disabled view is that these norms that stigmatize are socially constructed by society for the purpose of exclusion (Berger & Wilber, 2013). The able-bodied view, referred to as “the essentialist view”, “medical model” (Berger & Wilber, 2013) or “deficit model” (Harry & Klingner, 2007) focuses on deficits from the perceived norm.

From the start of medicine as a field or discipline, this orientation towards disability has been to alleviate the symptoms that lead to human experiences that lie outside the expected norms, often referred to as the “medical model of disability” (Marks, 1997). Underlying this rationale is that the disabled experience must be somehow “less than” the abled body experience; therefore it should be remedied so that one’s quality of life is improved (Berger & Wilber, 2013). The medical model of disability has often spilled into other areas, such as education and parenting, in which impairment and “cure” become the focus. Henceforth, dozens of disciplines have emerged along with views that range from the contrary to complementing views of the disabled experience. Disability advocates, allies, and others have critiqued this medical model (e.g., Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017; Guberman & Haimson, 2023; Mankoff et al., 2010; Williams & Gilbert, 2019, 2020; Woods & Waldock, 2021), the history of which is now a fractured history of assistive technology and one of disciplinary debate.