Writing and Publishing on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders
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Gelman 702
Who am I: Multidisciplinary Background

- Psychology, medicine, education policy, special education
- Gap between science of learning and education practice →
- Bridges among neuroscience, health sciences, and the special education and disabilities studies communities
- Special education students learn about related fields and draw new connections – *interdisciplinary thinking*
- Challenged to consider how work in one field informs or affirms work that has been done in another (point of this series)
Who am I: Multidisciplinary Background

- Interest in translational models for bridging cognitive neuroscience research and special education research and practice
- Chartered Center for Developmental Science and Neuroeducation (May 2012) in GSEHD
- Build programs of applied research in education and related service delivery systems that serve children, youth and families with disabilities and health disparities
Educational interventions work and why?
How do we sustain inclusive policy in K-12 and post-secondary? Build self-determination skills?
How do we achieve interagency coordination?
How can we design and sustain effective transition through K-12 and beyond?
How can we promote access to post-secondary education?
How can we promote access to employment and support long-term success
Autism doesn't magically disappear in adolescence. These kids grow up, and that's the age group we know the least about.

- 50,000 individuals with ASD turn 18 each year in the U.S.
- Studies of ASD ages 19-23 who have been in special education when they were in school →
  - 34.7% had attended college; 55.1% had held paid employment during the first 6 years after high school
  - More than 50% of youth who had left high school in the past 2 years had no participation in employment or education
ASD and Transition to Adult Life

- Compares with only 7% of young adults with speech/language impairments, and 3% with LD, and 25% with intellectual impairments
- Lowest rates of participation in employment and the highest rates of no participation compared with youth in other disability categories
- Higher income and higher functional ability were associated with higher adjusted odds of participation in postsecondary employment and education (Shattuck, et al. (2014). *Postsecondary Education and Employment Among Youth With an Autism Spectrum Disorder.* American Academy of Pediatrics)

http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/6/1042
ASD and Transition to Adult Life

Less attention being paid to the challenges faced by students with autism who are making the transition to post-secondary education or work.

- All 2 and 4-yr colleges enroll some students with learning disabilities -- 56% have students with ASD and 79% with ADHD.
- IDEA requires K-12 schools to provide customized support that will help students succeed.
- College students enjoy a vague right to *reasonable accommodations* that requires less of institutions; students must ask for help.
- Little is known about special issues of engaging and sustaining this age group in treatment and services.
ASD and Transition to Adult Life

- Issues complicated by heterogeneity in impairment and abilities
- Complicated by multiple systems relevant to individual’s service need
- Optimal timing and coordination needed to systematically engage youth, their families, and multiple service providers in transition planning has not yet been determined
- Effectiveness of individual services/service packages in improving health, behavioral and functional outcomes must be established
Educators on Strategies

- Traditional universities now offer supplemental support for additional tuition (K&W Guide to College Programs for Students With Learning Disabilities or AD/HD)
- Now lists 362 programs, the majority of them offer comprehensive services
- No standards for such on-campus programs (Jane Thierfeld Brown, author of 3 books, including a college guide for autism spectrum students)
Educators on Goals and Strategies

- Reduce and prevent disparities in postsecondary education, employment, health care access, and quality of life for transition-age youth with ASD
- Develop and test strategies to identify and serve transition-aged youth with ASD in a wide variety of service system settings in order to prevent lapses in acquired skills and behaviors and to interrupt negative trajectories
- Address mental health needs and prevent or ameliorate interactions with the criminal justice system
- Treat comorbid psychiatric disorders, reduce victimization, and improve housing outcomes
- Develop service strategies that enable youth with ASD to transition to the adult service system without lapses in care and supports
Outcomes of interest:

- maintenance or improvement in functioning in work, education, social, familial, and other settings;
- maintenance or improvement in health, safety, and quality of life;
- reduction in ASD-related symptoms;
- high degree of coordination among providers of medical, mental health, education, employment, vocational, and social support services, state disability programs, third party payers, and families in community settings.
So What About Writing and Publishing?
What do I Write About?

My Strategies for Publishing

- Reach out to co-authors (peers and faculty) in other fields and help with translation across disciplines
- Example: neurological sensitivity to light → antecedent packages
- Example: co-occurring diagnoses & ASD → assumptions about behavioral interventions in classroom
- Share ideas with publishers (conferences)
- Emphasize need to examine issues through cross-disciplinary lenses – they need to understand why
My Strategies for Publishing

- Argue that issues of ASD have social, behavioral, genetic, biological, neurodevelopmental, and educational perspectives
- Emphasize need to redefine, reconceptualize, challenge traditional assumptions
- Emphasize appeal of interdisciplinary approach to a wider audience (publishers always interested in this!)
- Use creative ‘leverage’- celebrities with autism (Susan Boyle, Darryl Hanna, Vernon Smith (Nobel Laureate in Economics), Temple Grandin)
Opportunities for “venture talks” or ‘imagination talks’ where faculty can collaborate to discuss translational issues and potential research projects

Incentives for cross-disciplinary literature reviews that could lead to proposals for research/external funding