



Disability Inclusion Lab

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UCLA Autism Media Lab 2019 ***Inclusion is Hard. It's Worth It.***

Film Tool Kit: *CLOCKING IN*

INTRODUCTION

Imagine being locked inside a cage where no one could hear you, no matter how loud you screamed. That is the life of people with a form of autism that prevents their body from communicating through speech, even though their minds are sound and they have the same thoughts as you and I.

Now imagine a communication revolution that gave them a voice after years of being silent, and perceived as incapable of intelligence.

Now imagine these people make films about what it is like to live with autism, and the challenges they face to be included in society.

That is, in short, the Autism Media Lab, a ground-breaking documentary film production course at UCLA. From the Autism Media Lab comes a series of seven unique documentary shorts, created by non- or minimally speaking people with autism in close cooperation with UCLA students and faculty.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, the University of California at Los Angeles's Disability Inclusion Lab embarked on a cutting-edge course that endeavored to explore inclusion from in front of and behind the camera. The Autism Media Lab explored inclusion for people with autism who are non-speaking, minimally-speaking or unreliably-speaking through a unique fusion of disability studies and documentary film. This course allowed students to learn directly from non- and minimally-speaking individuals with autism called Community Teachers. This unique learning environment ensured that discovery came from immersion in both scholarship and the lived experiences of individuals facing barriers to inclusion.

The lab formed six film crews comprised of undergraduate students partnered with the Community Teachers. The crews were guided by faculty from both the UCLA Disability Studies (Judy Mark) and Film Departments (Sjoerd Oostrik) as well as a graduate student teaching assistant from the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance (Jingqiu Guan). The film crews collaboratively created six short documentary films, each exploring inclusion in various community settings with a goal of identifying pathways to inclusion. The films explore exclusion of people with autism in education, employment, friendship, public safety, health care, and religious communities.

In addition, faculty and filmmakers Oostrik and Guan made a seventh film that explored the making of the Autism Media Lab and the challenges faced to ensure inclusion behind the camera as well. The final “making of” film features the students and community teachers as they learn together in class, behind the scenes as the films are made, and as some of them make a trip to the United Nations to present the class at World Autism Awareness Day.

We hope that the documentaries will be used as conversation starters on the subject of inclusion.

DISCUSSION FORMATS

The idea of this toolkit is to give you the means to set up a focused conversation among your audience and within your community; a discussion that focuses on a few pre-determined topics with the goal of cultivating an in-depth and generative dialogue on these topics that could lead to action.

Two options for the format of the discussions following the screening include:

1. A Q&A format between a conversation moderator and the audience, using provided questions below.
2. A panel discussion with real-life experts—people with autism. If no self-advocates with autism are present at your screening, or no one is willing to take part in a panel, you can also ask family-members and friends, professional caretakers, or experts to take part in the panel. The panel could also answer some of the questions provided in this toolkit.

You can also choose to mix both formats depending on your targeted audience and the results you hope to achieve through the screening.

We recommend using the questions of this tool-kit to steer the conversation as much as possible towards the more difficult questions and points of action. The organizer can choose to share these questions prior to the film screening and guide the audience to keep these questions in mind while watching the films.

We also include ideas for action called, “Try Harder.” The actions are suggestions from the filmmakers on what audience members can do to encourage inclusion for people with autism. Some actions may be more appropriate for certain audiences. These ideas are in no way exhaustive and we encourage the organizations sponsoring the film screenings to develop additional ideas for action.

TIPS FOR FACILITATING AND MANAGING DISCUSSION

1. Inclusion of people with autism in your post-screening discussion

Because inclusion is the theme of the films, we always recommend giving autistic self-advocates the possibility to take key roles in the post-screening conversation, particularly those who type to communicate, such as typing on a letter board or an iPad. The self-advocates should be given the option to take part in the panel or to present. Because it can take self-advocates who type to communicate more time to answer questions, it is always a good idea to give them the questions several days before the actual screening so they can prepare their answers.

If people with autism who use alternative methods to communicate are going to answer questions live at your post-screening discussion, they will likely need additional time. It is important to ask the autistic person before the screening how they would like to answer questions live. Here are some possible options:

- After the question is posed, the audience can wait while the person with autism is typing.
- After the question is posed, the discussion moderator can have a speaking person on the panel answer the question while the person with autism types out their answer.
- Right after the films are shown, the audience members can write down their questions, which can be provided to the panelists. As soon as a panelist has typed their answer, the moderator could read the question and the panelist could use their device or support staff to read their answer.

2. Words Matter

When facilitating a discussion about the inclusion of people with non-speaking or minimally speaking autism, it is important to ensure that the conversation is respectful and recognizes the value that they bring to our communities. You want to correct any negative stereotypes that may surface in the discussion, such as those that question an individual's intelligence or ability to communicate.

3. "Person with Autism" versus "Autistic Person"

There is a debate within the autism community about whether you use person-first language ("person with autism") or identity-first language ("autistic person" or "an autistic"). Many in the disability rights community believe that person-first language is the most respectful because it implies that the individual is a person first and their diagnosis is not all that they are. But many self-advocates with autism argue that being autistic is as much a part of their identity as race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. If you are including autistic self-advocates on a discussion panel, you should ask them how they would like to be identified. In our films, you will hear both person-first and identity-first language and, during our course, we would use both terms depending upon how the individual wanted to be identified.

4. Inclusion versus Segregation

The theme of the films is "Inclusion is hard. Try harder." You may encounter audience members who have tried inclusion and find that it didn't work. They may advocate for special programs, classrooms, and housing communities for people with autism. During the discussion, it is important to probe why inclusion hasn't worked and what could have been improved. Ask, "Were there enough supports in place? Was everyone at the school committed to inclusion? What other barriers existed?" There are many examples of inclusion working successfully, but behind that success almost certainly existed people who fought very hard for inclusion against significant challenges. You could ask the audience for some inclusion success stories or ideas.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE for *CLOCKING IN*

For each film, we included discussion questions based on specific themes and scenes we identified. The call-to-action section, titled "Try Harder," encourages the audience to identify one specific, relevant, and executable action. Finally, we also provided a list of suggested readings related to the topic each film addresses. These readings offer helpful contextual information for each film.

***CLOCKING IN* Film Description:**

People with developmental disabilities deserve to be employed just like you and I do. The reality, however, is that most companies aren't willing to hire people with autism. The short documentary *Clocking In* shows one of the first days of work of two young men with developmental disabilities starting a paid internship at Kinecta

Credit Union. As they navigate their way to full-time employment, their managers slowly start to realize that this is far more than just a charity hire.

Discussion Questions

A. Charity hire?

Ed Lynch, Executive Director of Mychal's Learning Place, the organization that prepares and facilitates the internship of Johnny and Dominic, says the following at the beginning of the film: "Companies need to understand this is not a charity hiring." The employment has to be as if it is for you and me: same expectations, clock in, clock out, dress attire, appropriate behavior, showing up on time, everything."

1. Do you agree with him? Why? Why not?

B. Labels

Ed Lynch says the following about their students and the labels that come with their disabilities: "Somebody has attached a label to their name and said, "Now that you have that label attached to your name you can't do certain things." I don't buy that. I believe in getting rid of the label, throwing the students into the fire with the skills and the supports and see what happens."

1. Do you agree with his critique of labels?
2. Why do you think we use labels?
3. What could be the benefits of having labels? What are the downsides of them?
4. How do labels affect you personally? What things did you think you couldn't do because you were categorized in a certain way?

C. Assume intelligence

Disability rights advocate and consultant for people with disabilities, Sue Rubin, makes a point about assuming intelligence, specifically when it comes to people who are non-speaking. "If you assume a person is intelligent and you were wrong, no harm has been done. But if you assume a person is not intelligent and don't educate her, much harm has been done."

1. What do you think Sue means here?
2. Have there been moments when you assumed that someone couldn't do something and it turned out you were wrong? How did that play out?
3. Have there been moments when someone assumed you couldn't do something that you most definitely could. How did that play out?
4. How do you think we should deal with the assumption of competence?

D. Preconceived ideas

Ed Lynch concludes the film by saying the following, "A lot of companies are so hesitant to provide employment for our students, and that is really disappointing. The reason why employers are hesitant to hire our population is they don't know enough about them. If you are a business owner, hopefully next time somebody comes looking for a job you consider hiring somebody with a disability, and put aside your preconceived ideas of what they can or cannot do."

Questions for employers

1. Have you employed people with a developmental disability? Why? Why not?

2. Are you hesitant to hire a person with a developmental disability? Why? Why not?
3. Why would you employ people with disabilities?
4. What could non-speaking people with autism add to a company that neuro-typical employees might not?
5. What obstacles do you expect you need to overcome? How would you try to overcome those obstacles?

Call to Action

What can you and your community do to make sure people with autism can be meaningfully employed? Try to come up with at least one action you can take in the immediate future.

Suggested Readings

Condon, C. (2003). More than just a job: person-centered career planning. Institute for Community Inclusion. Retrieved from https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=16

Kapp, S. & Raynor, O. (2014). *Employment first movement: The train has left the station*. Retrieved from University of California, Los Angeles, California Employment Consortium for Youth website: https://www.semel.ucla.edu/sites/all/files/cecy_consortium/CECY_EFBrief.pdf