

In 'NeuroTribes', full autism spectrum considered in historical terms

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.**

Within two generations, the popular and scientific understanding of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and related conditions have undergone a massive shift in some parts of the world. We have moved from routine institutionalization (or worse) of people with ASD to an appreciation of a spectrum of social communication.

How did this sea change come about? Journalist Steve Silberman has been writing and commenting on autism for years, notably with a 2001 feature in *Wired* magazine on ASD rates in California's Silicon Valley. He has compiled his exhaustive research into *NeuroTribes* to try to answer that question.

Genetic and neurological studies now firmly suggest that 'autism' describes a constellation of behaviours. In 2014, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that one in 68 U.S. children had ASD. Only about half of people diagnosed with ASD also have intellectual disability, and we now recognize that autistic people can have a hugely varying range of impairments and abilities, which can change throughout life.

The clinicians most often credited with discovery are Hans Asperger and Leo Kanner. Asperger's clinic in 1930s Vienna embraced the full range of ASD. But Silberman asserts that to protect his charges from euthanasia by the Nazis, Asperger focused his case reports on gifted children ostracized by their peers, later termed high-functioning. Eventually, these cases would be called Asperger's syndrome; in the *DSM-5*, controversially, this diagnosis is folded into ASD.

**Read full, original post:** [Autism: Seeing the spectrum entire](#)