



Divergent Natures

Embodying Doing and Being in Neuroqueer Ecowellness

Transformation has long been central to neurodivergent experience. The inclusion of autism, attention deficits, brain injuries, dyslexia, dyspraxia, advanced mindfulness, psychedelic exploration, and other non-ordinary states of consciousness merely begins the work to illustrate a naturally occurring variety of experiences. What could be seen as “normal” within infinite diversity?

Given that most of these divergent ways of doing and being are met with stigma and pathologized by those responsible for providing guidance and care, is it any wonder that neurodivergent populations suffer? This presentation provides the resources needed to support you and offer invitation to personal transformation:

Once you know better, you can do better.

Annotated Bibliography

- Bottema-Beutel, K., Kapp, S. K., Lester, J. N., Sasson, N. J., & Hand, B. N. (2021). Avoiding Ableist Language: Suggestions for Autism Researchers. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0014>
Autism research overflows with ableist ideology and discrimination against disabled realities. Bottema-Beutel et al. provide examples for how research teams, indeed any professionals, may effectively reflect upon and avoid use of ableist language, as well as the often thoughtless continuation of harmful stereotypes delivered with messages about autistic people as inferior.
- Chapman, R., & Botha, M. (2022). Neurodivergence-Informed Therapy. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 65(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/dmcn.15384>
Interdisciplinary studies of literature from activism and academia regarding neurodivergent praxis tend to focus on autistic experience. Chapman & Botha explore how the concept of neurodiversity originated in autistic communities in the late 1990s and has evolved to include ADHD, dyspraxia, and dyslexia; offering psychotherapeutic implications and recommendations.
- Douglas, S., & Sedgewick, F. (2023). Experiences of interpersonal victimization and abuse among autistic people. *Autism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613231205630>
Autistic people experience bullying, ostracization, unemployment, housing struggles, and crime. Douglas & Sedgewick explore how intimate partner violence and sexual assault among autistic populations reveal unique vulnerabilities and outcomes. Neurodivergent people may not present 'standard narratives,' and may struggle to recognize and react to abusive behavior.
- Green, J., & Shaughnessy, N. (2023). Autistic phenomenology: past, present, and potential future. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1287209>
Scientific investigation of autism rooted in a behavioral phenotype has historically ignored autistic subjectivity. Green & Shaughnessy draw from autistic life writing to present possible futures which might be achieved through authentic representation in co-created, systematic, and empirical approaches supporting previously neglected research in healthcare and education.
- Jones, D. R., Nicolaidis, C., Ellwood, L. J., Garcia, A., Johnson, K. R., Lopez, K., & Waisman, T. (2020). An Expert Discussion on Structural Racism in Autism Research and Practice. *Autism in Adulthood*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.29015.drj>
Non-white people and experiences have historically been missed by autism researchers. Jones et al. introduce an expert panel discussion by plainly stating "Autism research has a race problem." Even lower rates of employment, education, and participation in social activity found in these populations (vs. white autistics) reveals increased impacts of racial and ethnic discrimination.
- McGuire, A. (2013). Buying time: The S/pace of Advocacy and the Cultural Production of Autism. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 2(3), 98. <https://doi.org/10.15353/cjds.v2i3.102>
Autistic people are frequently classified as too slow and inflexible, therefore economic burdens. McGuire illustrates Starbucks and United Nations campaigns which reinforce grossly negative connotations about autistic embodiment while they "at once, produce *and* regulate, create *and* constrain conducts that are beyond the norm."

- Milton, D. E. M. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The 'double empathy problem'. *Disability & Society*, 27(6), 883-887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.710008>
Autistic people are frequently pathologized as having social deficits and lacking theory of mind. In exploring the dominant knowledge structures surrounding autism, Milton details how people on both sides of neurotypical / neurodivergent divides experience empathy failures regarding unfamiliar embodiments and cultural norms. Such failures negatively impact down-power roles.
- Murray, D. (2020). Monotropism: An Interest-Based Account of Autism. In: Volkmar, F. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*. New York, NY: Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6435-8_102269-2
Autistic processing tends to coalesce on and distill to a given focus while excluding other input. Murray got help from Jeanette Buirski in coining the term when publishing on monotropism in 1992. To understand the depth of this concept one must embrace a view of the mind as a system or ecology of interests which serves to inform cognition, perception, and emotion.
- Pearson, A., & Rose, K. (2021). A Conceptual Analysis of Autistic Masking: Understanding the Narrative of Stigma and the Illusion of Choice. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0043>
Autistic stigma and identity management consume a vast array of resources and represent very nuanced topics. Pearson & Rose illustrate negative outcomes including, though not limited to, diagnostic failure, burnout, poor mental health, and suicidality while describing "an unsurprising response to the deficit narrative and accompanying stigma that has developed around autism."
- Raymaker, D. M., Teo, A. R., Steckler, N. A., Lentz, B., Scharer, M., Delos Santos, A., Kapp, S. K., Hunter, M., Joyce, A., & Nicolaidis, C. (2020). "Having All of Your Internal Resources Exhausted Beyond Measure and Being Left with No Clean-Up Crew": Defining Autistic Burnout. *Autism in Adulthood*, 2(2), 132–143. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2019.0079>
"Autistic burnout appears to be a phenomenon distinct from occupational burnout or clinical depression." Raymaker et al. studied chronic exhaustion, loss of skills, and reduced stimulus tolerance as the result of the cumulative load of life stressors without relief which negatively impacted health, independent living, quality of life, and suicidality in autistic participants.
- Sasson, N. J., Faso, D. J., Nugent, J., Lovell, S., Kennedy, D. P., & Grossman, R. B. (2017). Neurotypical peers are less willing to interact with those with autism based on thin slice judgments. *Scientific Reports*, 7(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep40700>
Autistic style, more than substance, drives robust and enduring negative impressions. Sasson et al. found that first impressions "made from thin slices of real-world social behavior by typically-developing observers are not only far less favorable across a range of trait judgments compared to controls, but also are associated with reduced intentions to pursue social interaction."
- Shkedy, G., Shkedy, D., & Sandoval-Norton, A. H. (2021). Long-term ABA Therapy Is Abusive: A Response to Gorycki, Ruppel, and Zane. *Advances in Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, 5(2), 126–134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41252-021-00201-1>
Autism research persists in empty claims of how Applied Behavior Analysis is evidence-based. Shkedy, Shkedy, & Sandoval-Norton present a scathing rebuttal to a review of ABA literature,

methods, and ethics that sought to demonstrate its efficacy. ABA promoters were shown to neglect autistic brain structure, overstimulation, and child development trajectories.

Singhal, N., Nicolaidis, C., Ratazzi, A., Corrons, T., Hossain, S. W., Azeem, Q. F., Panesar, P., Vaidya, S., & Muriuki, K. (2019). An Expert Discussion on Autism in Adulthood in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *Autism in Adulthood*, 1(4), 241–247.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2019.29006.njs>

Autism research has not focused on communities where most diagnoses occur. Singhal et al. describe how a vast majority of those diagnosed are not represented in research, specifically noting how these low-resource environments focus more on access to water, child mortality, malnutrition, and poverty. Even still, autistic academic concerns shared some U.S. sensibilities.

Stevenson, J. L., & Mowad, T. G. (2019). Explicit Associations with Autism and Disability. *Autism in Adulthood*, 1(4), 258–267. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2019.0028>
Autistic people continue to call for greater public acceptance, citing the need to confront ableism. Stevenson & Mowad show that “a person with a disability” rated more negatively than all other labels in general public and college-aged cohorts. The label “a person on the autism spectrum” rated second most negative in explicit associations, or consciously held attitudes.

Walker, N., & Raymaker, D. M. (2020). Toward a Neuroqueer Future: An Interview with Nick Walker. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.29014.njw>
California Institute of Integral Studies psychology professor and transdisciplinary neurodiversity and critical autism studies scholar Nick Walker explores the intersections of neurodiversity, embodiment, queer theory, and transformative practice. Corresponding with Dora Raymaker, she calls out the potential pitfall of the essentialism inherent to accepting assignment into categories.

Ward, J. H., Weir, E., Allison, C., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2023). Increased rates of chronic physical health conditions across all organ systems in autistic adolescents and adults. *Molecular Autism*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13229-023-00565-2>
Autistic people present with higher rate of mortality, poorer quality of healthcare interactions, and poorer health. Ward et al. found “significantly elevated rates of non-communicable conditions across all organ systems in autistic people, including gastrointestinal, neurological, endocrine, visual, ear/nose/throat, skin, liver and kidney, and haematological conditions.”

Woods, R., Milton, D., Arnold, L., & Graby, S. (2018). Redefining Critical Autism Studies: a more inclusive interpretation, *Disability & Society*, 33:6, 974-979,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1454380>
“Autistic persons are integral for autism studies scholarship to have epistemological integrity.” Woods et al. examined extant definitions of Critical Autism Studies (CAS) and found power dynamics and autism perceptions to be central considerations, noting that neurodiversity movement criticism is common to CAS while showing respect and support of autistic voices.

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