ELEVATING STRENGTHS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND PRACTICE THROUGH CRITICAL AUTISM STUDIES

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References on request

INTRODUCTION

Critical Autism Studies (CAS) is an interdisciplinary field examining autistic experiences, which 'questions deficit-based definitions of Autism' and explores how 'culture intersects to produce disability'.

Often led by autistic individuals, CAS delves into **under-researched areas**. By questioning medical models and including autistic voices, CAS provides new insights into **strengths-based perspectives** on autistic lived experience.

METHODS

Each of us, as researchers, delved into **distinct ways of integrating CAS into our research methodologies**. CAS principles influenced all three research projects, underscoring the significance of amplifying autistic voices and adopting neurodivergent-friendly terminology

CONCLUSION

The interdisciplinary nature of these projects enriches the research landscape by integrating insights from psychology, sociology, education, religion and beyond, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of autism across different contexts. This expands the scope of research and influences policy-making and practice

KATRINE CALLANDER

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"My work highlights the impact of late-identifying Autistic women's **elevated risks of mental, physical and cumulative trauma**. The research considers how personal trauma narratives interact with **social othering and marginalisation, inequality, embodiment, impact on identity and reclaiming neurodivergent agency**. By amplifying autistic voices, it aims to enhance understanding and promote **neurodivergent-supporting, trauma-informed practice**."

NATHAN KEATES

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"My research includes the potential strength-based approach in a specific theatre practice, elucidating how **improvisational comedy** might **provide autistic space** and could reduce anxiety. Through a focus on autistic lived experiences during this project, the work remained positioned within critical autism studies and a metaphysical framework of the neurodiversity paradigm."

CROSS-CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PROJECTS

- Fostering Strengths-Based Approaches rather than deficits.
- Centring the perspectives and experiences of autistic people in research and discourse.
- Interdisciplinary Integration to enrich understanding.
- Deepen understanding of autistic people's social, cultural and personal complexity.
- Guiding policy-making and practice to consider the nuance of autistic lived experience.

KRYSIA WALDOCK

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"Autistic people **'disrupt' neuronormative behavioural expectations** that exist within churches and mosques and can be argued to be 'impossible subjects' within religious settings. Autistic identity can disrupt the ability to perform the normative religious role identity and is perceived as **'unable to be included'**. Being socially included and experiencing feelings of belonging are contingent on meeting neuronormative behavioural expectations. Hence, Autistic people may create their own sense of belonging through **various forms of neuro-queer spaces and practices in religion**."