

## **CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 9-17-20**

### **People in Attendance:**

- Amanda Wynter (Purchase College)
- Annette Bade (NSU)
- Ariana Riccio (CUNY)
- Auston Stamm
- Bella Kofner (CUNY)
- Bertrand Monthubert (Toulouse, France)
- Beth Felsen (Spectrum Transition Coaching LLC)
- Brad Cox (Florida State University)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (CAN | UW-Madison)
- Cheryl Widman (University of Illinois at Chicago)
- Claire Barnett (Vanderbilt University | Frist Center for Autism and Innovation)
- Courtney Butler (Rutgers University)
- Dave Caudel (Vanderbilt University | Frist Center for Autism and Innovation)
- Eilidh Cage (University of Stirling)
- Emine Gurbuz (University of Portsmouth)
- Eric Endlich (Top College Consultants)
- Jennifer Williamson (University of Calgary)
- Jessye Herrell (Tech Kids Unlimited)
- Jill Underhill (Marshall University)
- Jonathan Vincent (York St. John University)
- Katie McDermott
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Kim Jameson (STARS – Christian Brothers University)
- Kristen Gillespie-Lynch (CUNY)
- Laurie Ackles (Rochester Institute of Technology)
- Lee Williams (CAN)
- Maggie Armstrong (Washington University in St. Louis)
- Monique N. Colclough (NC State)
- Patrick Dwyer (UC Davis)
- Rachel Wright Jones (Progressive Inclusion LLC, Madison WI)
- Siva Priya Santhanam (Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado)
- Steven Kapp (University of Portsmouth)
- Summer West (Universitat Kassel)
- TC Waisman (University of Calgary)
- Tom Beeson (Clemson University)
- We also had a few others join us by phone

### **Meeting Plan**

#### **CANVAS Updates**

- Join our CANVAS list-serv - Our primary means of connecting, sharing info

1. Click [here to join](#)
  2. Send email to the list by emailing [can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org](mailto:can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org)
  3. [Updated college autism programs list](#)
- [College Autism Summit](#) (virtually; Oct 27-30)
    1. Keynote speakers are Robia Rashid and Anthony Pacilio
    2. Early bird registration ends Oct 1
  - CANVAS Cross-Institutional Collaborations Working Group (TC)
    1. We are excited to announce that our Autism and Universal Design faculty/teaching staff training study has just launched: [www.autismresearch.international](http://www.autismresearch.international)
    2. Please contact [autismhigheredtraining@gmail.com](mailto:autismhigheredtraining@gmail.com) if you have any questions.
  - Share a roughly 30-second elevator pitch of a recent article (magazine, news, journal) you have read! List your name and a link to the article below so others may access it at their convenience!
    1. [Reflection from an autistic advocate](#) (NBC News) - Brett Nachman
    2. [Nachman co-authors review of literature on college students with autism](#) (U. of Wisconsin) - Eric Endlich
    3. [Abed is an Example of Autistic Head-Canon I Love](#) (“Neuroclastic-Information About the Autism Spectrum from Autistic People”) – Maggie Armstrong
    4. [New journal article by Cox and colleagues](#) – Brad Cox
    5. [New article on autistic identity, disclosure, and camouflaging](#) – Eilidh Cage

## Research Presentation

**Dr. Jonathan Vincent** (York St. John University) discusses "Transitions from higher education for autistic students and graduates: qualitative insights from the UK context"

### Presenter Notes

- Jonathan shared the findings of two studies on students’ transitions into employment.
- Jonathan shared findings from a Jackson et al. (2018) study that about half of autistic children transitioning into adulthood will enroll in college over the next decade
- Jonathan was most interested in students’ pathways once they leave higher education, following folks after six months and two years.
- Autistic people often have the highest rates of unemployment among disabled people, and lowest rates of full-time work among disabled people.
- The first phase of data collection entailed semi-structured interviews, featuring 21 autistic students and recent graduates (across eight universities). Meanwhile, the second phase centered on 16 focus groups featuring 58 community stakeholders.
- Jonathan illustrated a see-saw to show the ups and downs of college for autistic students, including transitions out of university amplifying the following: anxiety, loss, positive departure, and identity development.
- One primary theme was the notion of “fear of the unknown.” Many other students tried to avoid thinking about leaving university due to fears. This served as a coping mechanism.

- Other students felt transitions out entailed a positive departure, in that some felt they had gained skills to communicate with employers and achieve their objectives.
- Reaching the end of the journey also felt like a loss to some students, as they were perhaps losing independence (by moving home) and no longer being in the spaces where they had gained so much freedom.
- Some students experienced identity development as they embarked on this new transition. Jonathan shared the example of Lily, who was more confident in dealing with new situations.
- Jonathan also shared about the main factors that contributed to autistic individuals' transitions to employment: 2020 study.
- One finding: employment im/mobilities. One participant explained that they fell under the radar, whereas another said he applied to 2,000 jobs before landing one. These individuals experienced rejection and not always feeling like they were reaching their objectives.
- Autistic graduates also communicated how recruitment processes were inaccessible, based on how the language is written, for example. This leads applicants to find it hard to interpret expectations.
- Some autistic graduates wondered if and how to disclose their identities on application forms. Some people do not see their disabilities as a negative and therefore may not have access to particular accommodations.
- The embodied experience of autism is sometimes underplayed, Jonathan shared. One graduate (Grace) mentioned how her autistic identity accounted for her being very organized and attentive to detail. On the other hand, there can also be draining experiences, such as overfocusing on body language and masking autistic traits.
- Participants talked about the importance of resourcing employment mobilities, such as career services and employment courses at universities.
- Implications for practice include that autistic people are entering higher education, but often experience difficult exit transitions, thus further exacerbating employment opportunity gaps. There is also unevenness of employment mobilities. Higher ed staff must work more on making transitions smoother. He encourages more mixed-methods and longitudinal research to understand phenomena.

## Q&A

- Maggie: “Did you find that most participants had both positive and negative feelings about graduating, or was the group as a whole more split between those positive and negative emotions?”
  - Answer: Students felt positively about graduating. There was some unbalance over future anxiety. Frequency of codes: more anxious than excited
- Cheryl: “What kinds of vocational support services do UK universities typically provide (cv writing, recruitment for jobs through the university, etc.)?”
  - Answer: There are different employment courses run by universities. He credited University of Bath as being very thoroughly developed. Jonathan has been involved in conducting some mock interviews. The work is very piecemeal at the moment.
- Siva: “Very insightful presentation, Dr. Vincent. Thank you! :) Was it easier to find jobs in some professions? Or were there other factors you thought, that helped some folks find

jobs more easily than others? It reminds me of the book by Janine Booth, an autistic author wrote on workplace equality and experiences.”

- Answer: While not a representative sample, not everybody wanted to enter similar fields.
- Eilidh: “Great talk, thanks Jonathan! Very interested to see camouflaging come up. What do you think employers could or should do to help autistic people to \*not\* camouflage?”
  - Answer: Unless employers know that employees are autistic, it’s difficult. Pro Autism encourages that autistic people feel more comfortable in disclosing their identities. Until the culture changes, it’s going to remain challenging.
- Kristen: “Thanks for an excellent talk Jonathan! What factors do you think longitudinal research in this area should investigate?”
  - Answer: Mental health and well-being would be one topic, for example.
- TC: “Wonderful presentation. Did participants talk about safety when disclosing diagnosis to potential employees? For example, did they feel they ‘lost’ the job as a result of disclosing?”
  - Answer: This remains a massive issue. Some people felt like they couldn’t disclose, and others felt they would be massively discriminated against. Every employer is different.
- Steven: “Great talk! Link to the YouTube channel in case this is more convenient:”  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvOQAns2pFbitAeyBVaOEOQ>

### Upcoming CANVAS Meetings

- **Thurs, Oct 15** at 2pm ET: **Dr. Julie Lounds Taylor** (Vanderbilt University) discusses serving as an editor of the *Autism* journal: "Pulling back the curtain: tips from the editorial desk"
- **Thurs, Nov 12** at 3pm ET: **Dr. Cheryl Widman** (University of Illinois at Chicago) discusses "Understanding Parent Participation in the Postsecondary Education of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder"