

CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 1-19-24

People in Attendance

- Alison Wessel (University of Delaware)
- Amber
- Andrea Haas
- AnnMarie Thorpe (UMass Amherst)
- Bethany Bradley (Rochester Institute of Technology)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (College Autism Network | University of Arkansas)
- Christina Aichele (Marquette University)
- Gabriella Velazquez
- Jackie Deiana (UMass Amherst)
- Jeffrey Edelstein (Berklee College of Music and Boston Conservatory)
- Jodi Duke (George Mason University)
- John Caldora (University of Kentucky)
- Julia Gorman (Boise State University)
- Kayla Rodriguez
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Laura Gibison (University of Delaware)
- Laura Graham Holmes (CUNY Hunter College)
- Lauren Baczewski
- Lauren Lestremay Allen (SUNY Empire State University)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Lori Wischnewsky (Texas State University)
- Margot Margarones
- Maria Massolo (Kaiser Permanente Northern California)
- Mark Tapia
- Mary Baker-Ericzen
- Meredith Maroney (UMass Boston)
- Nicholas Top (Utah Valley University)
- Skye Murphy (College of Marin)
- Tara Connolly (Carleton University)
- Wes Garton (University of Delaware)
- Yvette Doss

Meeting Plan

CANVAS Updates

1. Join our CANVAS list-serv - Our primary means of connecting, sharing info
 - a. Click [here to join](#)
 - b. Send email to the list
<https://groups.google.com/a/collegeautismnetwork.org/forum/#!forum/can-canvas/join> by emailing can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org

- c. [CAN Membership Details](#) We appreciate the support your membership provides to help us offer CANVAS and other opportunities. Our updated website is much more intuitive. For the next two weeks (as of our meeting date) there is a 10% discount on renewal or new membership costs.
 - d. The College Autism Summit 2024 dates and location will be announced in our newsletter in the coming weeks. Stay tuned.
 - e. Join in for our webinar “Different Students, Distinct Programs: College Autism Support Programs for Enrolled Students Compared with Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability.” Mon, Jan 29 at 3pm ET. To learn more, [check out this link](#).
2. **Share a Resource!** Are you conducting any research studies that you’d like the community to know about? Read an interesting article recently? Discovered a cool resource? This is your chance to briefly share that news with the CANVAS group! List your name and any relevant links below so others may access it at their convenience!
- o Lee shared this article: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/women-with-autism-spectrum-disorder/202312/why-i-sometimes-forget-im-autistic>
 - o Mark mentioned a CBS Sunday Mornings segment on *How to Dance in Ohio* recording
 - o Laura and her colleagues have developed an online video library for autistic adults about topics like employment, relationships, consent, and self-advocacy. Autistic actors were hired to play the roles.
 - o Laura: “Potential resource for folks: AANE is has some support groups for various LGBTQ+ groups that are pretty affordable and some are run by autistic people. I was surprised by how many groups they had to choose from!” https://aane.org/events/?_event_type=support-groups&_identity_post=lgbtq-plus

PRESENTATION

Presenters: Lauren Baczewski, PhD (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Center for Autism at Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC.) & Kayla Rodriguez (Executive Advisory Committee Co-Chair for the Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network, a founding member of the Women Enabled International U.S. Gender and Disability Justice Alliance, & social media coordinator for the Foundation for Divergent Minds).

Presentation Title: Exploring the Mental Healthcare Experiences of Autistic LGBTQIA+ Young Adults: Colleges as Facilitators to Care & Community.

Presentation Notes:

- Lauren recognized how past work has explored autistic LGBTQ+ college student experiences, noting the prominence of prioritizing identities based on context and passing or masking at times.
- The few available studies on health disparities among LGBTQ+ autistic youth have drawn on large-scale datasets. In a study by Hall et al. (2020) LGBTQ+ ASD individuals had poorer outcomes compared to their cisgender, heterosexual

autistic counterparts, including being refused care by medical providers and having inadequate insurance provider networks.

- This community-partnered qualitative study explored the following research question: what are the first-hand experiences of LGBTQ+ autistic young adults (ages 18-28 years old) in the mental healthcare system?
- This study's community partnered approach utilized an autistic LGBTQ+ advisory group made up of 5 autistic LGBTQ+ adults from around the country. The autistic LGBTQ+ advisory group met every few weeks and members were compensated for their work. Kayla explained how we the board looked at the data together.
- Lauren shared examples of the participant recruitment materials. The team used the College Autism Network, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, and the Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network, among other outlets, to help spread the word. The target was to enlist 25 participants.
- Inclusion criteria entailed being autistic (self- or formally-diagnosed), LGBTQ+, 18-28, within the United States, and have obtained or tried to obtain mental healthcare.
- 29 people signed up for the study, and ultimately the sample consisted of 28 individuals. 20 participated in interviews, whereas 8 engaged in the survey. There was great geographic diversity. Participants' gender identity and racial identity varied considerably. 95% of participants were assigned female at birth. 75% completed some college or had at least a Bachelor's degree.
- The survey consisted of 25 items, whereas interviews were semi-structured. Interviews often lasted about two hours and encompassed topics including a focused life history, details of their experiences, and reflections of experiences related to mental healthcare.
- Board members and Lauren developed the initial codebook informed by Braun & Clarke (2006) 6-phase thematic analysis.
- Almost 90% of the overall sample reported having anxiety. 80% reported having depression.
- More than half of young adults had ADHD.
- Each participant endorsed at least one co-occurring condition or disability. When asked about their current mental health, participants noted that their mental health was influenced by both current events and past experiences of trauma.
- Many participants described a similar road to obtaining support through the mental health system. The road started with obtaining mental health diagnoses, followed by attempting to obtain support, though barriers (cost of insurance and/or therapy, executive functioning, therapist fit) were inhibiting. Facilitators supported obtainment of getting their needs met. Forks in the road prompted participants to wonder if there could be another way of obtaining support, as many felt that they did not get their needs met through the traditional mental healthcare system. Thus, many found alternative practices that could help mental health, including individual coping strategies and community care.
- The first barrier to care that Lauren mentioned was the notion of providers and others denying autistic LGBTQ+ individuals of their identities. Lauren shared an

anecdote toward this end. This is an opportunity to think about how mental healthcare centers on college campuses fully acknowledge students' intersectional identities.

- The second barrier to care was in providers' lack of fluency in supporting diverse autistic clients. Participants hoped their special interests could be incorporated into therapy, along with being in a sensory-friendly environment, that their therapists engage in self-education about autistic LGBTQ+ people, and set communication expectations upfront, among other recommendations.
- Some facilitators for care existed, too. Participants repeatedly indicated how important it was for them to access care through existing relationships and systems that they already belonged to (e.g., college campuses, LGBTQ+ community centers).
- Participants sought alternatives to traditional means of accessing mental healthcare. Community care was one alternative practice that supported participants' mental health. Community care included sharing resources with others, and getting support from others with similar lived experiences. Complexities of community care manifest in securing accessible resources and even experiencing in-group discrimination.
- Key takeaways: there are high rates of mental health diagnoses and high mental health need among autistic LGBTQ+ young adults; colleges can facilitate access to diagnosis and/or mental health supports for autistic LGBTQ+ young adults; and autistic community connectedness and belongingness as a buffer to minority stress experiences (per the work of Botha et al. [2022].)
- The team recommends that campus providers and staff require more supports in identifying autistic traits among late-diagnosed people and understand the differences in autism presentations across demographics. They also suggest hiring more campus personnel who have a variety of cultural and neurotype backgrounds.
- It would be helpful for campuses if they have more autistic affirming materials, provide appropriate health care services that affirm patients, and offer accessible campus programming recognizing students' intersectional identities.
- Lauren asked Kayla why it's important for them to connect with other autistic LGBTQ+ people. Kayla shared how she doesn't want to feel alone and finds it helpful to connect with others who are also queer and autistic. Lauren also posed the question about Kayla's experiences in seeking support for mental health, and with finding therapists or providers who understand intersectional identities. Kayla shared how their providers lack specialization in autism, which can be inhibiting at times. Kayla mentioned that it would have been helpful to have a better plan out of high school to help make the shift to college and, consequently, that contributed to not finding college to work for them. Kayla reflected that college campus programs that are specialized to support autistic and other disabled students could help other autistic people transition to college and stay in college.
- Contact Lauren: lbaczewski@childrensnational.org
- Contact Kayla: kaylarod@awnnetwork.org

Q&A:

- Mark: “How would you like to expand this study for future research?”
 - Lauren said some team members would like to perhaps expand the scope of the study, including widening the age range.
 - Kayla said there could be value in exploring these issues with children or older adults. Additionally, examining autistic trauma would offer help to many individuals.
- Lee: “How much knowledge about autism is enough? And how do licensed counselors/therapists best achieve that level?”
 - Lauren wished more professionals obtained autism training. Sometimes it’s limited to electives, though not necessarily formal curricula. They should be familiarized with autistic individuals’ sensory preferences, special interests, etc., as Kayla noted.
- Lori: “Did you see a difference in experiences between early diagnosed versus late diagnosed participants?”
 - Lauren said that this would be a fascinating lens to apply with subsequent analyses.

Upcoming CANVAS Meetings

Date: Tues, Feb 20 at 1pm EST

Link: <https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/93254514512>

Presenter: Gary McManus (Spectrum Support Program Specialist, Rochester Institute for Technology)

Presentation Title: How Autistic College Students Define Success

Presentation Description: The Spectrum Support Program (SSP) helps autistic students make connections at RIT for academic, social and career success. To be effective allies, we must look past the “ends” of their success, which are usually quantitative – retention, graduation, employment – to focus on the “means” of their success, which are more qualitative: staying healthy, making friends, building a supportive campus network. This presentation will look at action-research data collected throughout 2022/23 from almost 100 SSP members as they reflect on their progress toward these three goals, and on the successes and failures of the academic year.

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Date: Wed, March 22 at 12pm EST

Link: <https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/98991011042>

Presenters: Chiara Latimer (Co-Director Center for Neurodiversity, PATH Program Coordinator, Rowan University); Dr. Amy Accardo (Co-Chair and Associate Professor, WISE Department, Rowan University); and Dr. Casey Woodfield (Assistant Professor, WISE Department; Faculty Fellow, Center for Neurodiversity, Rowan University)

Presentation Title: Affirming Neurodiversity Culture on Campus: Priorities of Neurodivergent Students, Faculty and Staff

Presentation Description: Through the lens of the neurodiversity paradigm and holding the understanding that neurodiversity is valuable to society, we gathered the perspectives and priorities of neurodivergent university students, faculty, and staff via a mixed method sequential two-phase study and a qualitative study on the impacts of neurodiversity affirming professional development certificates . Research questions included: What are the perspectives of neurodivergent students, faculty, and staff around neurodiversity culture on campus and what are recommendations for improvement?

Date: Fri, April 26 at 1pm EST

Link: <https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/95595277598>

Presenter: Mark Tapia, Ph.D. (Researcher)

Presentation Title: Self-Advocacy at the University Level: Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Advocate for Their Needs

Presentation Description: Research provides some evidence to support self-advocacy skills, but little has occurred to explore how best to teach these skills at the postsecondary level. To that end, there is a positive model that emphasizes the unique needs of persons with autism, and it is the video model. Video modeling has a solid evidence base; however, studies involving video modeling for undergraduate students to advocate on college campuses are non-existent. The current study sought to explore how the use of video modeling, paired with a task analysis and role-play, impacted the ability of undergraduate students with ASD to use self-determination and self-advocacy skills in a university setting successfully.

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Date: Tues, May 7 at 2pm EST

Link: <https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/96337840057>

Presenters: Dr. Cindi May (Professor of Psychology, College of Charleston) and Dr. Christopher E. Whelpley (Assistant Professor of Management, Virginia Commonwealth University)

Presentation Title: Biases in the Hiring Process for Job Candidates with Autism...and Solutions That Might Help Level the Playing Field

Short Description: Our research demonstrates a clear bias against prospective employees with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the job interview process. This bias stems from differences in social style and interaction rather than the perceived competence or qualifications of candidates with ASD. We consider different approaches to addressing this bias, and recommend two steps for leveling the playing field for candidates with ASD. Our approach emphasizes educating employers rather than masking employees' autistic traits.