

CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 8-9-24

Participants in Attendance:

- Amy Gravino (Rutgers University)
- Bella Kofner (College of Staten Island)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (College Autism Network | University of Arkansas)
- Emily Rothman (Boston University)
- Gabriella Velazquez (Purchase College, SUNY)
- Gianna Osborn (Purchase College, SUNY)
- Jane McLeod (Indiana University)
- Jessie Green (Ohio State University)
- Julia Cusano (Rutgers University)
- Katherine Palmer (Purchase College, SUNY)
- Kathy Szechy (University of Windsor)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Mackenzie McNamara (University of Rhode Island)
- Mark Tapia
- Sabrina Schultz-McClain (Loras College)
- Summer West (Universität Kassel)

CANVAS Updates

- Join our CANVAS list-serv - Our primary means of connecting, sharing info
 - Click [here to join](#)
 - Send email to the list
<https://groups.google.com/a/collegeautismnetwork.org/forum/#!forum/can-canvas/join> by emailing can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org
 - [CAN Membership Details](#) We appreciate the support your membership provides to help us offer CANVAS and other opportunities.
 - [College Autism Summit](#) (Oct 13-16)

Presentation Details

Presenter: Natalie Libster (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Vanderbilt University Medical Center)

Presentation Title: Predictors of Sexual Victimization Among Autistic and Non-Autistic College Students

Presentation Description: Sexual victimization is a critical and prevalent issue on college campuses, and undergraduate students with certain disabilities are more likely than students without disabilities to be sexually victimized. The current study examined whether autistic college students are more likely than non-autistic students to experience unwanted sexual contact and sexual assault, controlling for co-occurring diagnoses. This study further examined whether students with other disabilities, specifically ADHD, learning disability (LD), and psychological disorders, are more likely than students without these disabilities to experience unwanted sexual contact and sexual assault.

Presentation Notes:

- Sexual victimization is prevalent on college campuses; 1 in 5 female students is sexually assaulted, whereas only 1 in 8 student victims overall report it. Victims of sexual assault experience more mental health issues than their counterparts.
- According to Campe (2019), disability status produces greater odds of sexual assault than other commonly cited risk factors (e.g., binge drinking).
- Dr. Libster shared examples of quotes from other published work regarding interpersonal victimization among autistic adults. Sometimes this stems from some autistic individuals' desire to please others, as evidenced in a quote from Pearson et al. (2022).
- It is important to control for other disabilities when making sense of sexual victimization, Natalie shared.
- The purpose of this study was to examine whether autistic college students experienced a higher likelihood than their non-autistic peers in experiencing unwanted sexual content and sexual assault, controlling for co-occurring diagnoses. Additionally, the study sought to figure out whether students with other disabilities were more likely than peers without those disabilities to experience unwanted sexual contact and sexual assault.
- This study draws from secondary data from the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey, which is developed and maintained by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. 53,000+ students completed the DLE from 2017 to 2020. This study features 270 autistic student participants and 270 non-autistic student participants. There was case-controlled matching based on a variety of identities. 57 colleges were represented in the sample. Co-occurring diagnosis matching was based on learning disability, ADHD, and psychological disorders.
- Measures of sexual victimization were categorized into unwanted sexual contact (e.g., non-verbal behavior, verbal behavior, brief physical contact), and sexual assault (e.g., attempted or committed sexual intercourse or forced touching without victim's consent)
- The authors first tested whether demographic variables predicted sexual assault. Sexual orientation was significantly correlated with gender and therefore taken out of the model; most male participants were heterosexual, whereas most female participants were not heterosexual. Women were over 6X more likely than men to have had sexual contact, and over 9x more likely to have experienced sexual assault. Gender was therefore included as a covariate in the final models.
- Logistic regression models were run.
- The authors controlled for social participation scores in their model, as past research has shown that women who engage in more social participation generally have a higher likelihood of having experienced sexual assault.
- Students with ADHD were twice as likely as those without to have experienced unwanted sexual contact and assault. ADHD was a significant factor. Because of these findings, they wanted to further test whether the likelihood of experiencing sexual victimization differed among students with ADHD only and students with a combination of ADHD and other diagnoses.
- Students who had ADHD and one or more cooccurring diagnosis were as likely as students with ADHD only to have experienced sexual victimization. ADHD appears to be driving an increased risk of sexual victimization based on the findings.
- Autistic and non-autistic students with ADHD are at increased risk of sexual victimization.

- The study prompts reflection about if autistic adults may have difficult in identifying abusive behaviors from sexual partners. It also shows the need for institutions to do more in reducing the prevalence of sexual victimization for all students.

Presentation Q&A:

- How can practitioners elevate understanding and conversation for autistic college students around avoiding vulnerable situations related to sexual assault?
 - Sexual education is often inaccessible or not available in the first place. What complicates the situation is that some autistic people may not understand what consent entails.
- Mackenzie: “Why do you suspect students with adhd were at increased risk of sexual victimization. Why do you suspect ASD wasn’t a significant predictor (if I understood that correctly)?”
 - Past research has shown that people with ADHD tend to have more sexual partners, start having sex at an earlier age, and engage in more alcohol consumption. That said, nobody should be victimized. As for why autism did not appear to be a significant predictor, it may be that there is a lack of awareness of certain behaviors.
- Amy: Not only is sexual assault underreported, but it’s also common for perpetrators to manipulate autistic victims. Lack of education feeds into a vicious cycle.
- Bella: “How can campuses reduce the risk of sexual victimization?”
 - It starts even before college. Discussing more about consent in high school is crucial. It should be integrated into the curriculum. Further awareness could be additive.
- Mackenzie: “Based on this result where do you feel like the research needs to go next?”
 - Examining the role of sexual minority status is essential. Past research has shown that gender and sexual minorities tend to experience further victimization. Double minority stress adds risk.
- Kathy: “Have you considered looking at level of social involvement of autistic students as another variable. Many students in my sphere are less likely to be at parties, pubs, date etc. They tend to have a smaller familiar social circle, less likely to drink etc., and therefore may be less likely to be in situations where a perpetrator might assault them. Therefore it may be that they are still vulnerable if in a risk situation, compared to non-autistic?”
 - More socially-involved participants tend to experience higher rates of sexual victimization. It’s harder to interpret, because this does not mean that people should avoid being social.
 - Kathy added how many autistic people struggle in non-autistic spaces where they are not welcomed, which is problematic in its own right.

Future Meetings

Date: Fri, Sept 13 at 2pm EST

Presenter: Dana Kanhai (PhD Higher, Adult & Lifelong Education from Michigan State University; Talent Development Specialist)

Presentation Title: Faculty response to autistic college students: Faculty supportive behaviors and beliefs

Presentation Description: I'll share some key findings from my dissertation research which explored faculty perceptions of their supportive behaviors towards autistic college students and faculty beliefs about their behaviors. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) as a theoretical framework to guide this qualitative research, I interviewed 15 faculty who shared how they supported students in different aspects of their work. I'll share some of the behaviors identified by faculty, some of their beliefs about the benefits of their behaviors, important referents who provided approval or acted as role models, and supports that bolstered faculty resolve to act in supportive ways towards autistic students.

Date: Fri, Oct 4 at 1pm ET

Presenter: M. Ariel Cascio, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor, Center for Bioethics and Social Justice, Michigan State University)

Presentation Title: Dealing with scams in remote interview research: Finding fakers without adding barriers

Presentation Description: Remote interviews is an accessible, inclusive research method for many people, including autistic people. However, it is possible for people who are not eligible for the research to “fake” them. In this presentation, I describe my experience with interviews I think were “fake”, the solutions I rejected because they would add barriers, and the solution I chose. I added screening questions asking where the participant lived and how they heard about the study. I wanted questions that were easy to answer, not too private, and could find out who is “really eligible” without gatekeeping who is “really autistic.”