

## CANVAS Meeting Minutes, Sept 13, 2024

### **Participants in Attendance:**

*(note that we had an additional eight people in attendance, though their names were unfortunately not documented)*

- Amy Dennis (CSI)
- Ariel Cascio (Michigan State University)
- Brett Ranon Nachman (College Autism Network | University of Pittsburgh)
- Chloe Marbell Davidson (City of Irvine Disability Services, National Center for College Students with Disabilities)
- Clare Baek (University of California Irvine)
- Connie Syharat (University of Connecticut)
- Elinor Lim (University of Portsmouth)
- Erika Greenblatt (University of Mount Saint Vincent Bridge Program)
- Erin Hopkins (Augustana College)
- Gary Burdette (Leavenworth USD 453/University of Saint Mary)
- Gina Hoagland (UMBC)
- George Wolford (Appalachian State University)
- Juliet Ellinger (University of Cincinnati)
- Katie McDermott
- Lauren Collier (UMass Amherst)
- Lee Burdette Williams, College Autism Network
- Mark Tapia, unaffiliated
- Patricia Haberkorn (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Sabrina Schultz-McClain (Loras College)
- Sasha Zeedyk (California State University, Fullerton)
- Susan Hedges (Appalachian State University)
- TC Waisman (Autism Training Academy) Canada
- Trayle Kulshan (UMGC)

### 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  
<https://groups.google.com/a/collegeautismnetwork.org/forum/#!forum/can-canvas/join> by emailing [can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org](mailto:can-canvas@collegeautismnetwork.org)
  3. [CAN Membership Details](#) We appreciate the support your membership provides to help us offer CANVAS and other opportunities.
  4. [College Autism Summit](#) (Oct 13-16)
- **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!

1. From the meeting agenda: “Jinx Mylo (jmylo@bgsu.edu). Seeking participants (18 and over) for my dissertation experiment on how we form impressions of autistic and non-autistic tv characters. Takes about an hour, but there's also a short version (as short as 15 minutes) automatically given to anyone who says they don't have an hour in the first question. If anyone is teaching and would like to offer their students a little extra credit for participating, I have a system set up for that (email me!). Study link: [https://bgsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9LD2yxjFvJtMbGe?rgp=xpr&src=snc](https://bgsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9LD2yxjFvJtMbGe?rgp=xpr&src=snc)”
2. Mark is in the process of publishing a website.
3. Gina: “UMBC Students are starting a Neurodiverse Student Org!”
4. Maya: “Michigan State University College of Social Science is launching a career preparation course for ASD students”

### **Presentation Details**

**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 Notes:**

- Dr. Kanhai’s presentation was a qualitative study on how faculty respond to autistic college students. Specifically she was interested in their behaviors and beliefs that undergird their behaviors.
- In reviewing the literature Dana noticed the emergence of autistic college student experience, though not as much on the faculty belief and experience side. Work on accommodations shows the commonality of only implementing standardized offerings.
- Dr. Kanhai drew on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to broadly understand the role of behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. She arrives at this work from a learning and development standpoint. The theory posits that intentions is a good predictor of actual behaviors.
- Behavioral beliefs influence individuals’ attitudes and to whom are those benefits derived. Meanwhile, normative beliefs influence faculty, for instance, to act in a particular manner and engage in a form of social pressure. Finally, control beliefs relate to barriers and supports for specific behaviors; in the case of faculty may feel their institution offers resources for accessibility. This framework guided the interview processes and coding.
- The central research question was “how do the salient beliefs of faculty shape their interactions with and support of autistic students?” Two smaller components were about faculty response and the ways beliefs guide faculty responses.
- The methodology followed employment of semi-structured individual interviews with 15 faculty who knowingly interacted with and supported autistic college students. Dana read through transcripts and coded based on thinking about those three types of beliefs, forming themes within categories.

- Findings were fourfold, which Dana dove into in more depth with subsequent slides.
- On the behaviors front, it varied according to the domain of their work. On the teaching front, faculty aimed to demonstrate open communication and leverage autistic students' strengths. In their service, they worked to educate people about autism and aimed to develop college transition or autism support programs. In their research some engaged in participatory research purposes and worked with autistic co-authors. Some even coached autistic learners.
- Dr. Kanhai drew on illustrations from Daniel Blaze, an autistic person, to visually capture the essence of the themes.
- One theme related to the faculty behavioral belief that students experience triumph and empowerment when they (faculty) interacted with them in supportive ways. Faculty used differentiated instruction and Universal Design to help students feel at their best.
- Regarding behavioral beliefs, faculty believed that, via their own actions, they could help students strengthen their social skills and networks, thus building community in safe spaces. For example, participant Russell connected one of his students to his autistic students due to seeing the possibilities of friendship.
- One normative beliefs theme was that all faculty learned about autism from autistic people directly. They expressed seeking approval from the autistic community based on their actions, as participant Nina indicated.
- Other faculty drew from their colleagues as role models and experts. They liked learning from a faculty who was direct and straightforward with their autistic students.
- One control belief was that faculty could challenge their own stereotypes and assumptions.
- Another control belief related to the lack of professional development opportunities. Participant Danielle worked at an institution with a fee-based autism support program, though she was sad that they lacked formal training, in essence counterintuitive given the student support.
- Implications and recommendations for faculty developments are many. They should:
  - Reflect autism knowledge and preferences
  - Amplify perceived benefits of supportive practices toward autistic students
  - Provide an opportunity for faculty to feel supported by a network of like-minded colleagues
  - Allow faculty to share the benefits and barriers they perceive to supporting autistic students in an open and nonjudgmental space
  - Provide opportunities for faculty to uncover and challenge ableist or deficit-based beliefs that can impede their desire to support autistic students
  - Include info about where to find additional supports for students and when to refer students to these supports
  - Make opportunities available to graduate teaching assistants and faculty-aspiring graduate students

### **Questions and Answers:**

- Lauren: “Sorry if I missed this, but I'm wondering how you recruited and identified faculty to participate in this study? Seems like you found some really great allies :)”

- Answer: Dana recruited through her professional networks, one of the benefits associated with convenience and snowball sampling, though that also served as a limitation, as every participant demonstrated a desire to be supportive.
- TC: “It sounds like faculty were very knowledgeable about autism...did they go through a specific training about autism prior to the research and/or prior to their work with students? Sorry if I missed that.”
  - Answer: Faculty had varying levels of knowledge of autism. Many participants lamented that, in their personal experiences, they lacked formal training about autism from their institutions.
- Ariel: “I’m not sure how to succinctly ask my question, but I’m curious about the theme of (my paraphrase) faculty feeling validated by autistic students giving them positive feedback on their approach to autism. It makes me think of the common faculty problem: one negative student evaluation comment overshadows 100 positive comments. Did participants describe any negative feedback they received from autistic students (or non-student autistic people)? If so, how did they address them in their own minds and planning? These faculty seem to represent the resilient ones who keep trying to do better - any insights from them that could help faculty who are just starting down this path when they feel discouraged? OK sorry that was super long.”
  - Answer: That question was not specifically asked, as Dana was bounded by the theory and interview protocol tethered to the framework. Faculty expressed that some autistic students were very direct and had to not personalize the feedback.
- Juliet: “Hi Dana, were the faculty all part of the same university or various institutions?”
  - Answer: 15 faculty participants existed across multiple institutions, though a few participants were at the same institution. Some faculty knew one another; this connects to the snowball approach.

## **Future Meetings**

**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.”

**Date:** Fri, Nov 8 at 12pm EST

**Presenters:** Emily Coombs (PhD Student, University of Alberta), Dr. Megan E. Ames (Assistant Professor, University of Victoria), Dr. Carly McMorris (Associate Professor, University of Calgary), and Dr. Jonathan Vincent (Lecturer, Lancaster University)

**Presentation Title:** Autism in Higher Education: Canadian Findings and Key Themes

**Presentation Description:** This team has examined the support needs, accessibility, and experiences of Autistic postsecondary students across Canada. In this presentation, they summarize findings from their work including:

1. Canadian mapping of postsecondary programming for autistic students, as well as facilitators and barriers of development and implementation
2. Major themes of reviews on autism in higher education
3. Academic and non-academic support needs of Autistic post-secondary students

Their presentation will summarize the Canadian landscape for autism postsecondary services, the key themes of the existing research in the area, and future directions.