

## **CANVAS Meeting Minutes, 2024-10-04**

### **People in Attendance**

- Ariel Cascio (Michigan State University)
- Andrea Haas
- Brad Cox (Michigan State University | College Autism Network)
- Brett Nachman (University of Pittsburgh | College Autism Network)
- Christy Giambastiani (Sonoma State University)
- Clare Davis (University of Sussex)
- Dana Kanhai
- Gary Lam
- George Wolford (Appalachian State University)
- Gina Hoagland (University of Maryland Baltimore County)
- Hannah Morton (UNC Chapel Hill)
- Hyejung Kim (Binghamton University)
- Jessie Green (Ohio State University)
- Karly Ball (Michigan State University)
- Ken Gobbo (Landmark College)
- Kirsten Brown (United Services University)
- KJ Brazier (University of Sussex)
- Laura Wolford (MGH Institute of Health Professions)
- Lauren Allen (SUNY Empire State University)
- Lee Williams (College Autism Network)
- Mahd Awan (University of Calgary)
- Meredith Maroney (UMass Boston)
- Pauline McDonald (University of Sussex)
- Rachel Schuck (Stanford University)
- Stephanie Carroll (University of Michigan)
- Summer West (Universität Kassel)
- Tara Connolly (Carleton University)
- TC Waisman (Autism Training Academy)

### **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](mailto: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:** 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

> **Published article on this topic:**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14687941241255234>

> **Access copy of presentation narrative:** [2024 CANVAS.docx](#)

## **Presentation Notes**

- Discussing scams, fake responses, fraudulence, and imposter participation in research is of vital concern for so many researchers.
- Dr. Cascio shared a story about recruiting autistic participants ages 14 and higher in Michigan, engaging in remote participation by phone and online. The team offered multiple modes of communication. Autistic consultants offered feedback on the project. Within the flyer, they featured details on the type of gift card.
- Recruitment started in February 2022.
- One time they had an interview scheduled with cameras off. Ariel noticed the participant communicated less than fellow participants; however, they offered some good information to questions for the most part. Within 30 minutes of it concluding she had a phone call from a 14-year-old who wanted to participate in the study. Shortly thereafter multiple other calls expressed interest in the study; this had been a rapid burst of interest, which seemed unusual.
- With the second participant, they had a feeling that they weren't indeed eligible based on how they responded to questions. At this point Dr. Cascio felt they weren't talking with someone who fit the study expectations.
- The participants that day had several similarities that were not problems in and of themselves: all seemed to prefer voice-only conference options and wanted to engage in quick interviews. They all had the same accent and answered questions in a similar manner.
- Dr. Cascio did not want to exclude "eligible, but unusual, responses," as noted by Jones et al. (2021).
- The burst of sudden interview inquiries, complemented by similar trends, led Dr. Cascio to feel these were off base. Dr. Cascio felt unsure about if it would be too harsh to question the legitimacy of these participants.
- In communicating with IT, those folks questioned the nature of participants' messages.
- Dr. Cascio faced procedural anxiety associated with IRB, ethics, and other factors.
- Dr. Cascio paused recruitment for a period and postponed schedules to think about the issue. A revised amendment to IRB was submitted.
- A few new screening questions came into the mix: asking about where participants live or work, and how they heard about the study. Based on the responses, Dr. Cascio felt they could be excluded.

- Modifying the IRB protocol was deemed necessary, as initially it was only aimed to remove participants if they seemed distressed. Dr. Cascio added points that participants would be asked screening questions to determine fit; for those who did not provide satisfactory answers, they would be withdrawn from continuing. Other conditions were added into the mix, too.
- Dr. Cascio wanted to figure out who was eligible without gatekeeping potentially autistic people. This led the team to continue to maintain remote interviewing options. Recognizing that many autistic people are questioned about if they are autistic (i.e., fakeclaiming, disability con), Dr. Cascio and team did not want to uphold those problematic practices.
- Other suggestions from the literature were rejected.
  - Some survey software is suggested over others. However, these are not viable in semi-structured interviews.
  - Sometimes researchers argue for tracking or verifying participants' identities (e.g., mailing addresses or online behaviors). Yet these practices could deter participants from engaging in the study.
  - Researchers may also warn potential participants they will not be compensated if suspected of fraudulent responses, yet Dr. Cascio felt handling that could intimidate or make uncomfortable legitimate participants.
  - At times researchers advise against listing the compensation amount, yet clarity and early communication is important.
  - Paying less or providing a raffle also did not feel viable; they do not honor participants' time.
- Dr. Cascio offered many strategies for identifying locally relevant screening participants:
  - Review methodological literature on studies with similar participants for their successful screening questions
  - Review the responses of pilot studies or previous interviews with this group for comfortable and culturally relevant screening topics. They may differ across contexts.
  - Consult community members.
- Dr. Cascio worked with an autistic colleague to update the revised script and potential new questions.
- Additional screening can be helpful, as sometimes participants will screen themselves out (e.g., hanging up phone) or acting in a more defiant manner.
- It works to engage in additional screening practices, even though it takes time. Some potential participants who fit some scam patterns did turn out to be genuinely eligible after screening.

### Questions and Answers:

- Kirsten: "Part of what I do is help students anticipate the amount of time it will take to complete a research project. If someone were to read your article before doing a study, how many hours would you suggest budget to address screening / this process?"
  - Answer: Dr. Cascio spent a few hours reviewing the literature, creating screening questions, etc. A whole study's worth of materials may take a few hours to review all of the relevant materials. Practically speaking they have likely had 50 ineligible participants go through this process. It takes a lot of emotional labor.

- TC: “Q: Do you think the IRB process could be of assistance in flagging or ruling out possible ‘fake’ participants? 2. Based on your important learning, are you considering developing protocols to assist other researchers to navigate this challenge in future research?”
  - Answer: IRB can be helpful and offers examples of how to withdraw participants. There is an ongoing tension in IRB in that many examples relate to biomedical matters that are not appropriate in social sciences contexts. Helping other researchers navigate this challenge is a priority, hence being transparent about the process. Other new papers on similar issues have emerged since Dr. Cascio submitted this paper; both involved disabled participants. It’s hard to tell if these challenges are more common in disability spaces.
- Brad suggested to be as generic as possible in describing detection of fraud in IRB.
  - Ariel mentions that there’s value in not following a specific script, so one can change it up.
  - Brad mentioned there is valuing delaying compensation is helpful.
- Hannah: “I am currently finishing up a manuscript with some colleagues at different institutions describing our similar experiences across a range of studies. We asked an established researcher in the field for input and she suggested being very vague and maybe not even publishing at all because we don’t want the imposter participants to learn how we are screening them out and adapt accordingly. Is that anything you’ve heard from others or considered.”
  - Ariel thinks it’s worth the risk. Often fraudulent participants are looking for the path of least resistance. Interviews are typically more of a barrier than surveys, but not as always. Ariel suspects participants are unlikely to review peer-reviewed literature to find these examples.
- Kirsten: “A bit of a follow up. You mentioned one social media site, we have noticed Twitter / X as being problematic. Are others having that experience?”
  - Ariel shared how some participants access the study via social media. However, Ariel avoided Twitter/X due to the commonality of issues from there.
  - Staggering in sharing the flier is helpful for figuring out which postings are most problematic.

## **Future Meeting**

**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.