

Autism and Identity: Standing at the Axis of Oppression

Overview

- 1.** Women and girls with autism experience overlapping forms of marginalization
- 2.** Miranda Fricker's account of epistemic injustice describes aspects of the social environment that impact women and girls with autism
- 3.** Feminist standpoint theory provides a theoretical foundation for interrogating gendered inequalities and autism
- 4.** Suggestions for practices to address inequities of epistemic injustice and the situated experiences of women and girls with autism

**A Construction of Autism
Inequalities for Women and Girls**

What is Autism?

Medically defined as a neurodevelopmental disorder, common traits of individuals with autism include difficulty in social functioning, reciprocity, flexibility, communication, and sensory processing (Milner 2019)

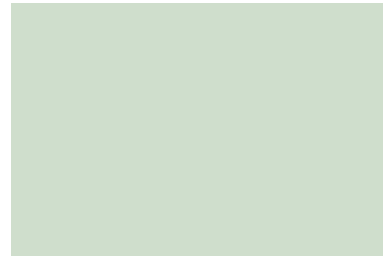
Wing's triad of impairments include qualitative impairment in social interactions, verbal and non-verbal communications, and restricted interests (Barret 2015)

Women and Girls with Autism



The social model of disability (Tremain 2018)

Misfitting (Garland-Thompson 2011)



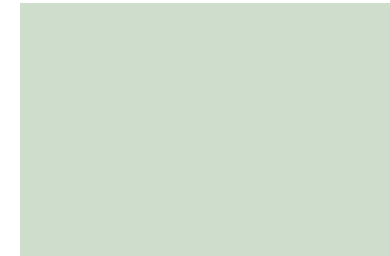
Misdiagnosed (Bargeila 2016)

The three to one ratio (Loomes et al 2017)



The female autism phenotype (Hiller et al 2014)

Camouflaging and masking (Lai et al 2016; Fowler et al 2021)



Androcentric conceptions of autism (Baron-Cohen 2003; Sample 2012)

Epistemic Injustice
Autism in the Social Environment

Epistemic Injustice

■ Testimonial Injustice

A deflated or inflated credibility of a speaker's word (Fricker 2007).

Social injustice creates epistemic injustice, which attends to the social environment of peoples' interpersonal interactions (Medina 2013).

■ Hermeneutical Injustice

A form of structural prejudice and a gap in interpretive resources (Happe 2019).

■ Participatory Injustice

A judgement that people in marginalized groups are deemed irrelevant as contributors of intellectual discourse.

Addressing Objections to Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic virtue might not be feasible for interpersonal interactions (Sherman 2016).

Miranda Fricker's account of epistemic injustice does not adequately account for the social structure that perpetuates injustices in interpersonal interactions (Collins 2002).

From Epistemic Injustice to Autism

Contributory Injustice is a form of willful ignorance in maintaining and using structural and hermeneutical resources that entail epistemic harm to specific agents (Dotson 2012). Important to contributory injustice is the idea that an agent's ignorance and structural prejudice encompass this type of epistemic injustice.

Media portrayal of autism

Everyday settings reflecting the social structure

The diversity of autism

Feminist Standpoint Theory
Why the Situated Knowledge Thesis
Matters

Feminist Standpoint Theory

1. The Situated-Knowledge Thesis: Social location systematically influences our experiences, shaping and limiting what we know, such that knowledge is achieved from a particular standpoint.
2. The Thesis of Epistemic Advantage: Some standpoints, specifically the standpoints of marginalized or oppressed groups, are epistemically advantaged (at least in some contexts) (Wylie 2003: Intemann 2010: Anderson 1995: Ashton Mckenna 2018: Harding 1991).

Addressing Objections to Feminist Standpoint Theory

Objections to FST as a dangerous form of relativism (Wylie 2012).

FST might undercut its feminist. It might assume a standpoint that excludes women with overlapping forms of oppression (Narayan 1989; Crasnow 2008; Lugones 2003).

Re-configures preexisting systems, such as autism research, to create positive social consequences for the marginalized.

Gender and Society

People with autism are divided by gender in society. Excluding this gender division from autism research and social change is to ignore one of the main ways autism is sorted in society.

Suggestions to Address the Social Structure of Autism

First-person accounts of autism and caregiver accounts of challenges should be prioritized in restructuring resources for more effective support systems.

Include people with autism in autism research and prioritize marginalized groups to examine how prejudice and oppression function for people with autism.

Autism and disability studies to be a priority in education and learning.

Education and learning must coincide with policies and resources that are specified to women and girls with autism

Suggestions for Further Study

In an online survey of 67 individuals with autism, autistic people are more likely to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and other sexual orientations than their neurotypical peers (Lewis et al 2020).-- More analysis of autism and gender minorities

- Community-oriented and collaborative studies that provide resources to schools, the public, and policy-makers with suggestions to improve their educational and healthcare systems for people with autism
- More community collaboration and outreach to understand what women and girls with autism need in differing settings-- Voices

Conclusion

- 1.** Women and girls with autism face particular challenges in relation to gender and disability.
- 2.** Autism is a fraught term that has medical and social meanings. Interacting with others is often challenging for those on the spectrum, so epistemic injustice in an individual context impacts women and girls with autism in their day-to-day lives and in the social environment.
- 3.** A feminist approach to autism uncovers varying forms of oppression in relation to identity-based oppression and the diagnosis
- 4.** Complex forms of oppression necessitate nuanced changes in society

Thank you

Do you have any questions?

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