

How to reduce systematic racial barriers: experiences of a Black autistic woman

Warda Farah
(BSc, PGCert, HCPC)





- Everybody's **STORY** is **IMPORTANT**
- Processes for diagnosis can be **EXCLUSIONARY**
- There is **HOPE**, we have the **CHOICE** to **REIMAGINE**

My story

- Invisible in literature
- Difficulties accessing diagnosis
- No access to culturally relevant support



- The assessment tools used for diagnosis and research in the field of autism have almost always been developed from research using predominantly male samples.
- Girls and women need to be struggling more than male peers to get a diagnosis, and on average it takes 2-3 years longer (Russell et al, 2021).
- More women are referred for diagnosis as adults than men, which implies that more girls are being missed (Happé et al, 2016).

- Intersectionality should not be invoked without any serious and specific discussion of oppressive systems or erasure. (Crenshaw, Kimberlé , 1989)
- Acknowledge that Autistic Black people exist
- Understand how interlocking Intersections impact their experiences -
Race & disability intensify each other

- Negative narratives & stereotypes about cultural stigma being a barrier to identification are not helpful
- Instead of essentialising groups into fixed racial/cultural traits
- Explicitly confront the systems of power that have shaped our current services

- Those who are racialised and pathologised have a unique lived experience, their needs are not adequately addressed by either community (Yu, Betty, 2021)
- Ableism and Racism work in tandem to create systematic barriers



"Maybe Autism in Black girls manifests how it manifests in white girls but you do not see us."

Warda Farah

www.autisticgirlsnetwork.org/autism/autism-in-black-girls/

When examined critically, we see that disproportionate representation is not a glitch in the system but a predictable outcome of the way in which disability is racialized and race is disabled by design and through collusive force. Ableism and racism work in concert to create students who are “abnormal.”

Some immediate practical ideas

Subvert from current theory & models of practice

Reject abysmal thinking (Ofelia García, et al, 2021)

Centre lived experience

Understand the effect of interlocking oppressions on racialised autistic people

www.autisticgirlsnetwork.org/autism/autism-in-black-girls/

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

Ofelia García, Nelson Flores, Kate Seltzer, Li Wei, Ricardo Otheguy & Jonathan Rosa (2021) Rejecting abyssal thinking in the language and education of racialized bilinguals: A manifesto, *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 18:3, 203-228, DOI: [10.1080/15427587.2021.1935957](https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2021.1935957)

Yu, B., Horton, R., Munson, B., Newkirk-Turner Brandi, L., Johnson Valerie, E., Khamis-Dakwar, R., . . . Hyter Yvette, D. (2022). Making Race Visible in the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences: A Critical Discourse Analysis. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*. doi:10.1044/2021_AJSLP-20-00384