

Investigating the Experiences of Autistic Women of Color: Does the Spectrum Include Women of Color?

For many years, Autism research has focused on developing a cure with hopes to eradicate the condition. Moving forward, more research is being conducted on how to best support Autistic individuals. Although research has found disparities regarding different sectors of Autism such as within systems involving services, healthcare, and education, minimal research has examined the reasons that have led to disparities Autistic women of color experience such as later diagnosis rates on average, higher anxiety and depression levels, and misdiagnosis that leads to unsatisfactory support. Given the gap in the literature, this exploratory study is guided by the following question: What are the experiences of adult Autistic women of color during their school ages and how does it affect them into adulthood? This study hypothesizes that cultural, economic, and racial disadvantages are in place that impede Autistic women of color and does not allow them to reach their full potential into adulthood. This study utilizes mixed methods such as surveys and semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of ASD women, above the age of 18. They will be recruited from social media sites frequented by ASD women of color, UCLA's Center for Accessible Education and nonprofits specifically for ASD women of color. These methods will be used to unearth and document the experiences of ASD women of color when they reflect back on their school-age experiences and understand why these disparities exist. The reason for this research is to reveal the important points that are likely to contribute to disparities ASD women of color experience. By illuminating specific environments or institutions that contribute to these disparities, they can then be addressed and remedied.

2021 Undergraduate Research Week Presentation: <https://youtu.be/ftrFcCBew3A>