

Open Call for Proposals

Journal of Social Issues

Journal of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI)

Using Neurodiversity-Affirming Intersectional Approaches to Build More Equitable Societies and Shape Public Policy

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Autism research and practice have traditionally focused on purported individual “deficits.” Even as researchers and practitioners increasingly acknowledge the degree to which the difficulties experienced by neurodivergent people (Asasumasu, 2016) are caused by societal inequalities (e.g., Milton, 2012), attempts to combat discrimination toward neurodivergent people often focus on individual-level beliefs rather than structural changes, e.g., in public policy and resource allocation. Many of the most marginalized neurodivergent people also remain overlooked within existing research and advocacy networks. Therefore, neurodiversity theory and practice remain largely uninformed by the central insight of intersectionality theory, that we must address interlocking systems of power and oppression directly rather than focusing solely on individual-level identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

This pervasive omission is particularly striking given that it has been almost a quarter of a century since the term neurodiversity, or the uniqueness of all brains, emerged in the late 1990s with the explicit intention of situating disability as a previously overlooked dimension of intersectionality. By providing a framework to critique discrimination based on neurological differences, the term neurodiversity called forth a new social justice movement, the neurodiversity movement, which recognizes neurological diversity as a valuable source of both strengths and difficulties for individuals and communities (Bailin, 2019; Baker, 2011; Ballou, 2018; Kapp, 2020; Kapp et al., 2013). Although it has sparked an ongoing paradigm shift in autism research and practice that has quickly expanded to include many conditions besides autism (e.g., Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2020; Happé & Frith, 2020), the neurodiversity movement has yet to lead to justice for neurodivergent people, especially those with multiple marginalized identities, such as people with co-occurring disabilities and/or racial, ethnic, sexual, and/or gender minorities (e.g., Jones & Mandell, 2020; Mallipeddi & VanDaalen, 2021; Peña, 2019; Singh & Bunyhak, 2019). Justice includes full representation in, equitable access to, and participation in all aspects of society, including education, employment, and health care, as well as ongoing advocacy to reenvision, critique, and transform existing systems. This conception of

justice is rooted in Liberation Psychology's recognition that psychology must prioritize people who have been most harmed by existing systems (Martin-Baró, 1994; Tate et al., 2013). By helping people from oppressed communities share their perspectives about the historical and everyday roots of oppression, we can collectively enact justice by transforming systems of power. This special issue aims to nurture the intersectional roots of neurodiversity theory by highlighting the perspectives of neurodivergent people who have often been overlooked in existing research, advocacy, and practice and by using neurodiversity theory to improve the structures that constrain or enhance quality of life, wellbeing, and other critical outcomes, e.g., by fostering neurodiversity-affirmative public policies.

Proposal topics might include:

- **Grounding neurodiversity theory in a broader intersectional framework to improve policies and practices**
 - Applying an intersectional framework to address policies and practices, with recommended prioritization of the Global South
 - Critiques of the neurodiversity movement including variations in acceptance of intersectional identities across cultural contexts
 - Amplifying intersectional critiques through varied forms of public outreach (e.g., social media, art): possibilities, pitfalls, and promising practices
 - Strategies for addressing interlocking systems of power directly, not staying focused only on the individual-level of intersecting identities.
- **Strategies to understand and address limited representation in neurodiversity research, advocacy, and publishing**
 - Tensions surrounding autistic representation in research, including trust and concerns about tokenism
 - Fostering truly inclusive research and publishing: strategies and challenges
 - Autistic-led and/or participatory research efforts to improve opportunities for neurodivergent people, including in academia and the workplace
- **Systems-level and grassroots approaches to promoting wellbeing and reducing discrimination towards neurominorities**
 - Paradigm shifts in conceptions of neurodivergence: known or potential impacts on public policy
 - Strategies to promote equitable access to alternative and augmentative communication
 - Ableism and regression toward the status quo in the post-pandemic workplace, and possible solutions including applications of universal design
 - Enhancing mental and physical health and reducing educational and employment disparities in neurodivergent communities via neurodiversity-affirmative trainings and practices

We welcome a broad range of empirical methods, including but not limited to **ethnography, autoethnography, counter-storytelling, community-based participatory action research, experimentation, survey research, systematic reviews, and more**. Collectively, articles in the special issue will serve as a catalyst to stimulate further theorizing, research, interventions, and policy reform.

We invite contributions from scholars, researchers, and individuals and organizations who do not regularly submit to academic or empirical journals, e.g., those doing relevant advocacy work. We are interested in representing as broad a neurodiversity community as possible. *This includes people who are traditionally excluded from autism research, including people for whom English might not be their first language and non-speaking people.* For all contributions, we encourage authors to draw implications from the findings to social issues and social policies.

Interested contributors should submit a proposal that contains the following:

- Title
- Estimated page length or word count of proposed final manuscript.
- Current status of the work and estimated timeline for completion of manuscript
- Detailed abstract of 3-4 double-spaced pages (conforming to 7th Edition, APA Style).

Timeline:

~~**Original deadline:** Proposals should be submitted by October 15, 2023~~

Updated deadline for recruited submissions and requested revisions submitted for the original deadline: February 1st, 2024

Submitted abstracts will be screened for acceptance by the Issue Editors. Issue Editors and the JSI editorial board will provide feedback on accepted abstracts to support development of manuscripts (for more information on the editorial review process, see <https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/15404560/about/issue-editor-guidelines>).

We anticipate making preliminary selection decisions and submitting the Formal Proposal to the JSI editorial board by **May 1st, 2024**; authors will be notified of the tentative status of their proposals at this time. **Final invitations for full manuscripts will be issued by late June. Full-length manuscripts will be due December 1st, 2024.** Manuscripts submitted after this date may not be eligible for inclusion in the issue. All manuscripts will undergo a rigorous review process. Thus, an invitation to submit a manuscript does not guarantee inclusion in the special issue. Approximately 15 to 20 papers will be selected for the special issue. **Our target date for publication of this special issue is September 2025.**

Send proposals and correspondence to all 6 special issue editors (please copy all of us):

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For reference when planning: Final articles should be no longer than 40 double-spaced pages including references.

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