

Mothering, care practices and the global autism "crisis": New stories from interpretive disability studies ^[1]

29 Jan 2014 - 10:00am to 12:00pm

Event Website: [Register online](#) ^[2]

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Region: Ontario ^[4]

Details

Speaker: Patty Douglas, Lupina Fellow in Comparative Program on Health and Society PhD candidate - Department of Humanities, Social Science & Social Justice Education University of Toronto

Description: Drawing on interpretive sociology and feminist post-structuralism, this talk utilizes a disability studies approach to re-examine the meaning and significance of care practices within today's ever-expanding global autism "crisis". I first offer a brief critical analysis of popular accounts of autism and care. This serves to reveal the dominant meaning of autism as an undesirable biomedical difference that poses a rising threat to the happiness, health and economic well-being of individuals, families, communities, and indeed, the world. Despite researchers' historic shift away from psychoanalytic and towards genetic or environmental understandings of autism, mothers' care practices remain implicated as a central cause of and cure for the rising global threat of autism. It is the governance of mothers' care practices that is often the focus. Indeed, most research on autism has operated from a biomedical framework concerned with mothers' care practices, autism's causes and prevention as well as capacity building within developing countries. Very little has been written about what it means to live a good and just life together with autistic persons. However, following disability studies, autism is not merely a problem to be solved or an illness to be cured, but something capable of enriching life together, thus having pedagogical value. I share preliminary findings from two focus groups with Toronto autism mothers who tell stories that point to this pedagogical possibility of new understandings of autism and care practices where autistic life is not only a problem to be prevented, normalized or cured. Mothers' narratives suggest an alternative paradigm in which autism is but one of the many possibilities of a richly diverse landscape of embodiment and sociality that opens up multiple ways of being together outside of the sway of the autonomous individual and biomedical paradigms. New stories told from this interpretive disability studies approach challenge prevailing paradigms and can potentially shift media representations, enhance care practices and shape new research directions in autism.

Tags: [special needs](#) ^[5]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/resources/events/14/01/mothering-care-practices-and-global-autism-%E2%80%9Ccrisis%E2%80%9D-new-stories-interpretive>

[2] <http://webapp.mcis.utoronto.ca/Events.aspx>

[3] <mailto:cphs.munk@utoronto.ca>

[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>

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