

Chronicles of belonging: multi-media stories of autism and inclusion

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iHuman

**Disruptive research into
what it means to be human.**

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- **The objective of my talk**
- Our multimedia storytelling project makes space for new representations of difference that push back against exclusionary practices and dominant conceptions of autism in education as a deficit in need of remedy.

The shape of my talk...

1. Share a little bit about the project
2. Share a couple of videos and reflect on how they make space to rethink autism, inclusion and belonging beyond the biomedical
3. Some concluding thoughts

The Need for a Plurality of Perspectives

The problem with the 'single story' is not that it is untrue, but that it flattens the human experience.

~Adichie 2009

One story – many forms

§ biomedical accounts from Kanner & Asperger (1940s) to Baron-Cohen (present day)

§ ‘refrigerator mothers’ (Kanner)

§ autism moms’ (e.g.: Jenny McCarthy; Jacqui Jackson)

§ ‘autistic savants’ (e.g.: Stephen Wiltshire)

§ intervention stories – Applied Behavioural Analysis; Son-Rise.

§ books and films (Rainman; Temple Grandin; The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime)

Counter narratives

- autistic biographies (Grandin, 1986; Williams, 1992)
- neurodiversity (Singer, 1998)
- critical approaches (Milton, 2015; Runswick-Cole, Mallett and Timimi 2016)

Boundaries of belonging

“the multiple forms of public silencing” (Weis & Fine, 1993 cited in Li Li, 2004: 70) that sustain oppressive cultural and institutional practices and maintain the boundaries of those who belong and those who do not.

The politics of belonging

- Crowley (1999: 15 cited in Yuval-Davis, 2004: 204) describes the politics of belonging as “the dirty work of boundary maintenance” as boundaries separate the population into “us and them”.
- Too often the question of who ‘belongs?’ is used to dismiss the very idea that disabled people might belong (Titchkosky, 2011).
- This has led disability studies scholars to seek to develop alternative theories of belonging that embrace difference (Yuval-Davis, 2004) and to recognize that ‘there are many different ways to order belonging’ (Titchkosky, 2011: 40).

The stories



My story seeks to explore, through poetry, sound, and movement, the ways in which unexpected (disabled) bodies are denied access to education and are instead the objects of intervention and attempts at normalization.

Raya Shields

<http://enactingautisminclusion.ca/storytellers/raya-shields/>

Through reciting a series of moments and memories, I archive my autistic kin's vibrancy and resilience, the spirit of our bond, and how it has persisted in and through both joyful moments and unjust systemic interruptions.

Frances Woods

<http://enactingautisminclusion.ca/storytellers/frances-woods/>

なみ Toronto urban forager, cat stalker, vintage perfumista, tea/coffee/wine buff.

Joan

[http://enactingautisminclusion.ca/storytellers/
joan/](http://enactingautisminclusion.ca/storytellers/joan/)

Finally

- way to tap into marginalized embodied knowledges that have too often been silenced
- proliferation of a multiplicity of diverse stories about ‘autism’ and ‘inclusion’ might begin to loosen the grip of the biomedical story
- there are, indeed, ‘many different ways to order belonging’ (Titchkosky, 2011: 40).