

NEWS

Community Newsletter: Double empathy over time, 38 ways to camouflage, measuring stimming's brain effects

BY CHELSEY B. COOMBS

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Hello, and welcome to this week's Community Newsletter! I'm your host, **Chelsey B. Coombs**, *Spectrum's* engagement editor.

This week, we're starting with a thread by **Yu-Lun Chen** on *Autism's* Twitter account. Chen is a graduate student and adjunct faculty member in occupational therapy at New York University in New York City.

New **#OpenAccess** paper by **@YuLunChen_OT** & **@Kpk3P** examining the role of neurotype match in peer interactions in inclusive education <https://t.co/KWI36wcKVV>

A thread ?????:

— Autism Journal (@journalautism) **June 29, 2021**

Chen unpacked a paper, **based on her dissertation**, that looked at peer interactions among autistic and non-autistic students over five months. Previous research suggests two people with different life experiences can have difficulty relating to each other, described as the 'double empathy problem.' In the new work, autistic and non-autistic people were indeed more likely to interact with those who matched their neurotype — a preference that strengthened over time. And those same-group interactions were more about "sharing thoughts and experiences rather than requesting help or objects."

“These findings suggest that peer interaction is determined by more than just a student’s autism diagnosis, but by a combination of student and peer neurotypes,” the authors wrote.

Autistic students interacted with their autistic peers in similar patterns as non-autistic students did with their fellow non-autistic students. Thus, autism may not be a personal social impairment, but rather a communication challenge between individuals.

— Autism Journal (@journalautism) **June 29, 2021**

Noah Sasson, associate professor of behavioral and brain sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas, called the paper “really impressive.”

This is a really impressive paper! It studies natural peer interactions among autistic and non-autistic adolescents over a 5 month period. Within-neurotype interactions grew over time and were more relational and included more sharing of experiences than cross-neurotype ones. <https://t.co/uns12mbEUk>

— Noah Sasson (@Noahsasson) **June 25, 2021**

The next tweet comes from **Laura Crane**, associate professor of psychology and human development at University College London and deputy director of the Centre for Research in Autism and Education in the United Kingdom. She and her colleagues reviewed **autistic people’s self-reports** on **camouflaging**, or masking to hide their autism traits.

New **@journalautism** article led by **@DrJuliaCook** (with **@WillClinPsy @lauralhull @lauraeabourne** and me): Self-reported camouflaging behaviours used by autistic adults during everyday social interactions <https://t.co/4mhy5IEQPJ> **#openaccess**

— Laura Crane (@LauraMayCrane) **June 28, 2021**

The study identified 38 different camouflaging behaviors and earned high praise on social media.

Lily Levy, a child and adolescent mental health services clinician in the U.K., said she was “certain this is going to be my paper of the year for 2021.”

This may be a bold shout with half the year remaining, but I’m certain this is going to be my paper of the year for 2021. pic.twitter.com/dh4HhIQSnT

— Lily Levy #BLM (@lilyhannahlevy) **June 28, 2021**

Ann Memmott, an associate and ‘expert by experience’ at the **National Development Team for Inclusion** in the U.K., wrote that it was a “[very] useful list of some of the ways we hide that we’re autistic, and commentary on why we have to, or choose to, do this. “

<https://t.co/LbaPquE5Gp> Lovely new research about autistic people who camouflage/mask, and why. V useful list of some of the ways we hide that we're autistic, and commentary on why we have to, or choose to, do this. Exhausting, frankly.

— Ann Memmott PGC???? (@AnnMemmott) **June 30, 2021**

Our final paper comes from **Audrey Brumback**, assistant professor of neurology and pediatrics at the University of Texas at Austin, and **Meredith McCarty**, a graduate student at the university.

Beyond excited to share my first first-author paper, in collaboration with **@BrumbackLab!** <https://t.co/hlsv7o9Eut>

— Meredith McCarty (@Neuro_Meredith) **June 14, 2021**

The pair investigated stereotypies, or stereotyped repetitive movements in autism, also known as **stimming**. Stimming may change brain rhythms to enhance both sensory processing and attention, they say, and they propose ways to experimentally examine this — something that hasn’t been done, despite autistic people having said that stimming improves their sensory processing.

“We hope that by understanding the anatomy and physiology of motor stereotypies, we can make them less stigmatizing and develop ways to harness their benefits to help people with and without autism,” the authors wrote.

Thanks, [@Neuro_Meredith](#)! It was a real honor to work on this with you. I hope it helps destigmatize [#stimming](#) in [#autism](#) and helps us think in new & different ways about how our brains are wired up. <https://t.co/ZpyDTviXJb>

— Audrey C. Brumback, MD, PhD (@BrumbackLab) **June 15, 2021**

That’s it for this week’s Community Newsletter from *Spectrum*! If you have any suggestions for interesting social posts you saw in the autism research sphere, feel free to send an email to me at chelsey@spectrumnews.org. See you next week!

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