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CONSTRUCTIONS OF ASBERGERS SYNDROME IDENTITY IN PUBLIC SPACES: EXPLORATIONS IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE INTERACTIONS

The crafting of identity is a complex endeavour, and one that is frequently performed in a host of public spaces. The exploration of Aspbergers syndrome (AS) identity for this paper will draw on work in separate public spaces, exemplified in online and off-line talk. The ways in which some people with AS conceptualise these different spaces will be explored and particular consideration will be given to the ways in which these different kinds of public spaces are used by people with AS in crafting and presenting their identity. Online and offline talk can be linked with particular forms of AS advocacy, where an enabling environment may facilitate the crafting of more empowering AS identities. This can pose challenges to some of the dominant identities constructed for people with AS by others in offline worlds dominated by NTs and norms of Neurotypicalness (NT-worlds). The crafting of 'alternative' AS identities in both the offline and the online AS-world, as well as the potential impact of such online and offline identities in the NT-worlds, will be examined. In the paper we present talk from both online and offline exchanges to explore the concept of an 'AS world', the ways in which people with AS shift between the 'autistic' and 'neurologically typical' worlds, and how spaces are being patrolled by either NTs or people with AS. We argue that different spaces are subject to gate keeping to maintain the boundaries of the NT/AS worlds: by NTs patrolling the borders of NT space, and by people with AS patrolling the borders of different kinds of AS space both on and offline.