

Diversity in Social Intelligence

Winter 2021 Update

We hope that you're keeping safe & well. It's been a busy year for us – the ongoing pandemic has meant that the way we do research has had to change for the time being. We've been working on the [Diversity in Social Intelligence](#) and associated projects and have a few updates to share with you. Below is a summary of what we've been up to over the past year since our [last update](#) and details of where you can find more information about our research.

New Diversity in Social Intelligence Replication!

We were absolutely delighted to be awarded funding by the Templeton World Charity Foundation to carry out a multi-site replication of the [Diversity in Social Intelligence Project!](#)

This means that we will re-do the study in a larger, more diverse, and international sample. It's important to do replications of research findings to provide solid foundations for advocating for changes in policy and practice – and because we'll be recruiting more participants, we'll be able to look more closely at the different ways that people interact and the factors that might drive this.

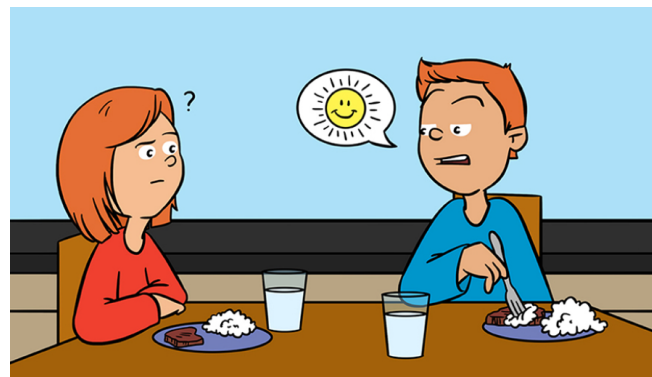
The team will include [Catherine Crompton](#) & [Sue Fletcher-Watson](#) who led the original study, along with [Noah Sasson](#) from the University of Texas at Dallas, and [Danielle Ropar](#) from the University of Nottingham. For this project, we're currently recruiting a [Research Assistant at the University of Edinburgh](#) (deadline 7th January), a [Post-Doctoral Researcher based at the University of Nottingham](#) (deadline 9th January), and a [Post-Doctoral Researcher based at the University of Texas at Dallas](#) (deadline 31st January). If you're into autism research, neurodiversity and communication and are interested in one of these posts, please do consider applying. You can click the links for more information & please do share this with anyone who may be interested! Informal queries can be sent to catherine.crompton@ed.ac.uk.

In 2022 and 2023, we'll be looking for autistic & non-autistic participants in Dallas, Nottingham & Edinburgh. If you would like to register your interest to take part, please email us at dart@ed.ac.uk. Please feel free to pass on this email address to other people who may be interested – we're happy to answer any questions!

Helping young people understand double empathy

We were very excited to create an article about the double empathy problem specifically for young people!

Along with [Kilee Debrabander](#) & [Noah Sasson](#) in the USA and [Damian Milton](#) and [Brett Heasman](#) in the UK, we wrote [Double Empathy: Why Autistic People Are Often Misunderstood](#) for [Frontiers for Young Minds](#), an open access scientific journal for young people between 8-15 years old. We explained some of the research about how



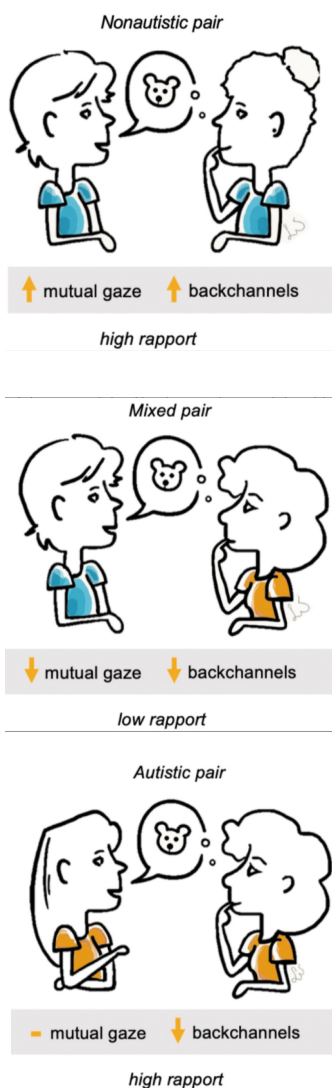
autistic and non-autistic people communicate, and how this fits with the double empathy theory. We hope that understanding what makes interaction comfortable for different people can help us understand each other better, and were very happy to be able to share this specifically with a younger audience.

Diversity in Social Intelligence

Winter 2021 Update

Rapport in autistic and non-autistic interactions

In our Diversity in Social Intelligence study, we were interested in the ways that autistic and non-autistic people communicate, share information, and build rapport. Our recent paper looks more closely at the rapport that people experience within autistic pairs, non-autistic pairs, and mixed pairs. We explored both self-rated rapport (the rapport that someone feels during an interaction) and observer-rated rapport (by asking someone to watch a video of an interaction and rating how well they thought the people got on). We found that autistic people experience high rapport when interacting with other autistic people, and this is also detected by external observers. [You can read the paper by clicking here.](#)



We also wanted to find out if there were specific markers of rapport in autistic and non-autistic interactions. In this study, we explored whether there were differences in the social signals of mutual gaze (looking at each other) and backchanneling (for example nodding, or making sounds like “mhm”) in autistic, non-autistic & mixed pairs and whether this helped or hurt the interactions in terms of rapport. We found that in mixed interactions, there was less of both mutual gaze and backchanneling than in non-autistic interactions, combined with lower rapport scores. Autistic interactions also contained less backchanneling, though also had showed high rapport scores.

Previous research suggests that differences in social signals exist between autistic and non-autistic people that may contribute to social difficulties between neurotypes. This study shows that there may be differences in social signals between autistic and non-autistic people that contribute to social difficulties between them. This paper was led by Olivia Rifai, a PhD student who collaborated with Sue and Catherine. [You can read the full paper by clicking here.](#)

We are still analysing data from the Diversity in Social Intelligence project and hope to have more results over the next year. [All our papers are open-access and available on our website.](#)

Diversity in Social Intelligence

Winter 2021 Update

Autistic peer support

Peer support in schools

Last year, we ran a study where young autistic adults were interviewed about their school experiences and asked about peer support frameworks within mainstream secondary schools: would this be useful and wanted, and what might some challenges be?

Our paper from the original project is currently under review but will hopefully be out early next year & we will share it then. [You can see a poster summarising our results here,](#) and a [talk about our findings here](#). This research also formed the basis of a webinar in the [Neurodiversity in Mental Health webinar series](#), a collaboration between the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre, Selkirk High School, and The Harris Trust, and [a policy brief about autistic communication and peer engagement](#).

Following on from this project, we'll be launching [the Neurodiversity Alliance project](#) in Spring 2022. This will involve co-designing a neurodiversity-informed peer support model for use in mainstream secondary schools. It will be trialled in three schools, and evaluated to investigate its impact on neurodivergent pupils' educational engagement, inclusion, and wellbeing.

If you know a school who might be interested in taking part in the trial, please email catherine.crompton@ed.ac.uk. We'll be advertising a post-doc role on this project in January too!

Post-diagnostic peer support

We've also been running a study on post-diagnostic peer support. We know that post-diagnostic support often doesn't meet the needs of autistic people, and many people don't get any support at all. We've been interviewing autistic people who received a diagnosis in adulthood about whether peer support may be helpful for them.

We've submitted a paper on this which we hope will be out next year and we can share with you then. [In the meantime, you can see a poster summarising our results here.](#)

Other new papers

What do new findings about social interaction mean for neurodevelopmental research?

With [Rachael Davis](#), we published a paper that explores what [new findings about social interaction in autism means for the future of neurodevelopmental research](#). In this paper, we talk about how future research might include examining autistic social styles over the lifespan, and how bridging the gap between different interaction styles can reduce stigma and increase understanding.

Inclusive practice for neurodevelopmental research

Along with Sonny Hallett, Fergus Murray, Kabie Brook, and Sue-Fletcher-Watson, we published a review of inclusive research methods for neurodevelopmental research in particular, briefly describing a range of inclusive research models and justifying their use. [You can find the paper here.](#)

Social prescribing for autistic people

We collaborated with colleagues in the [Autistica Physical Health and Ageing Study Group](#) on a paper examining the factors that should be considered when offering social prescribing to autistic adults to optimise outcomes for physical and mental well-being. [You can read the paper here.](#)

Diversity in Social Intelligence

Winter 2021 Update

PhD Student Projects

Autistic-autistic communication

Holly Sutherland started her PhD on autistic communication with Sue Fletcher-Watson, Catherine Crompton, and Joe Long (Scottish Autism) last September. The team was awarded funding from Medical Research Scotland for a PhD studentship. Holly's work aims to help us understand more about the ways autistic and non-autistic people communicate in different settings. [You can read more about Holly's project here.](#)

Understanding experiences of the autistic community for all autistic adults

[Eilidh Cage](#) (University of Stirling), [Joe Long](#) (Scottish Autism) and Catherine Crompton were awarded funding from the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences for a PhD studentship about autistic community. This studentship was awarded to George Watts, who started in September 2021.

The Patrick Wild Centre Database

The [Patrick Wild Centre](#) at the University of Edinburgh has a new Participant Database. Joining the database means that you will receive news about research projects looking for participants who match your personal profile. You can read more about the Participant Database on our website on the ["Register with the PWC" page](#), and on the ["Frequently Asked Questions" page](#). If you want to stay in touch with us and join the Participant Database, then [please click here to complete a short online consent form](#).

The Patrick Wild Centre appreciates you supporting our research. Participating in research really helps to increase the chance we can make a positive difference in people's lives.

Keeping in touch

If you would like to hear more about the work of the [Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre](#) at the University of Edinburgh, [please join our mailing list](#). We send newsletters twice a year with news, events and research updates and opportunities.

You can join the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre mailing list by [clicking here](#).