Stanford



Paras Arora

Ph.D. Student in Anthropology, admitted Autumn 2021

Bio

BIO

I am interested in ethnographically following how ostensibly opposed categories – self/other, care/violence, child/adult, voice/silence, stigma/pride – spill into each other in the intersubjective space between cognitively impaired individuals and their primary caregivers. And assessing how institutional efforts (from neurodiversity movements to occupational expertise) that seek to democratize this space acknowledge, contest, and police this spillage.

Particularly, I wish to attend to the ways in which adults on the autism spectrum in India stake a claim to their voice and personhood when they are culturally cognized as “children who will never grow up” in their local ecologies of care, embedded in relations that are simultaneously marked with both care and violence. In exploring adult autism as a site of social, moral, and political transformation in India, then, I hope to study both, how cognitive disability displaces kinship values and domestic demands of care, and how it is itself transformed by them. Central to my research are ethical concerns about the subjectivity of my autistic adult interlocutors and how ethnography might help me to draw to the fore its contours and characteristics, or how ethnography might itself be remade in an encounter with cognitive disability.

Prior to joining Stanford, I secured my M.A. degree in Anthropology & Sociology from the Graduate Institute of International & Development Studies, Geneva. There, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork with mothers of autistic adults based in different neighborhoods of Delhi to study the emotional and embodied labor performed by the mothers to sustain, reimagine, and repair the relations that autistic adults shared with the neurotypical world around them. From my undergraduate training, I hold a B.A. degree with Honors in Political Science from Hindu College, University of Delhi.

Before undertaking my current project, I have worked on various issues through an anthropological vantage point and ethnographic immersion – political activism of youth and feminist collectives around the figure of ‘Mother India’ in Delhi; ethical and aesthetic dilemmas of feminist archivists working with the stories of women political prisoners in India; queer Muslim experiences of migration and cultural integration in the ‘West’; Dalit reimagination of the Indian nation through a (re)production of visual archives; etcetera.

As somebody interested in both visual and medical anthropology, then, I also wish to explore how drawing and painting can be used as ethnographic tools to better represent the messiness and precarity of everyday chronic caregiving.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Department of Anthropology Doctoral Fellowship Award, Stanford University (2021)
- Queer Disability Studies Network Award, Queer Disability Studies Network, U.K. (2021)
- Smuts International Doctoral Scholarship Award (declined), University of Cambridge (2021)

- Women in Asia Conference Postgraduate Bursary Award, Asian Studies Association, Australia (2021)
- Project Aladdin Youth Award, UNESCO (2020)
- Graduate Institute Full Tuition Scholarship Award, The Graduate Institute Geneva (2019)
- Hans Wilsdorf Foundation Scholarship Award, The Graduate Institute Geneva (2019)
- Fondation pour l'Étude des Relations Internationales en Suisse Award, The Graduate Institute Geneva (2018)
- Graduate Institute Full Tuition Scholarship Award, The Graduate Institute Geneva (2018)
- Inclusive Research Award, Asian Undergraduate Summit, National University of Singapore (2018)
- Best Research Paper Award, Hindu College, University of Delhi (2017)

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

- M.A., The Graduate Institute of International & Development Studies , Anthropology & Sociology (2020)
- B.A., Hindu College, University of Delhi , Political Science (2018)

SERVICE, VOLUNTEER, AND COMMUNITY WORK

- Youth Ambassador for Peace & Intercultural Dialogue (2019)
- Research Assistant (2019)
- Project Manager, Asian Undergraduate Summit (2018)
- Gender Equity & Sensitization Student Representative (2018)
- Student President, Gender & Sexuality Studies Cell (2018)
- Research & Advocacy Intern (2017)
- Research & Development Intern (2016)
- Classroom Teaching Assistant (2016)

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Socio-Cultural Anthropology, Medical Anthropology, Psychological Anthropology, Ethnography, Care, Cognitive Disability, Autism, Gender, Family, Kinship, Ethics, Occupational Therapy, Neurodiversity, Voice, Intuition, Emotions, Everyday Life, & South Asia

Publications

PRESENTATIONS

- Queering Integration in Higher Education! How can LGBTQ+ Migrants Access Higher Education? - Maurice Chalumeau Centre for Sexual Sciences & Department for Integration, Geneva (2021)
- Caring for a Child Who Never Grows Up? Towards an Ethnography of Care & Autism - Direction des études, IHEID (2020)
- Queering Integration: Listening to Queer Muslim Migrants' Voices - International Summer University for Intercultural Leadership (2019)
- Mothering the Nation: Motherhood, Nationalism, & Visual Culture in India - Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. (2019)
- "We Won't Mother India": Nationalist Motherhood & the Politics of Feminist Mobilization - Amsterdam Research Centre for Gender & Sexuality, University of Amsterdam (2019)
- Ethical Questions in Disability-Care Ethnographic Research - Swiss Anthropological Association, IHEID (2019)
- Creating the Subaltern Intellectual: Pedagogic Innovations & Aesthetic Education in India - Hindu College, University of Delhi (2018)
- Conflicts & Canvases: Motherhood, Nationalism, & the Visual Arts in India - Hindu College, University of Delhi (2019)
- Creating Gender & Sexuality Sensitization Cells Across Educational Spaces: Towards Inclusion - National University of Singapore (2018)

- Politics of Textual Subversion: Reading a Dalit Woman’s Memoir in Contemporary India - Department of Sociology, Jamia Milia Islamia University (2017)