



**Richard Woods** @Richard\_Autism

Mar 23 · 22 tweets · [Richard\\_Autism/status/1506738838907068419](https://twitter.com/Richard_Autism/status/1506738838907068419)

I am going to reflect upon if I should use a different definition for Critical Autism Studies, instead of Waltz (2014).

So when, I, [@milton\\_damian](#) [@stevethehydra](#) [@laurentiosaurus](#) [@CatrionaSScot](#) Hanna, & Nick Chown were discussing this article, about what CAS definition we should. I was in favour of Davidson & Orsini (2013) CAS definition, over Waltz (2014).



I got out voted.

"The 'criticality' comes from investigating power dynamics that operate in Discourses around autism, questioning deficit-based definitions of autism, and being willing to consider the ways in which biology and culture intersect to produce 'disability'. ([@mitziwaltz](#) 2014, 1337)"

I like Mitzi's Critical Autism Studies definition, I have no issues with it. I think the Davidson & Orsini (2013) definition is stronger. Mitzi CAS definition is based on Davidson & Orsini (2013), definition, it is from Mitzi's book review.

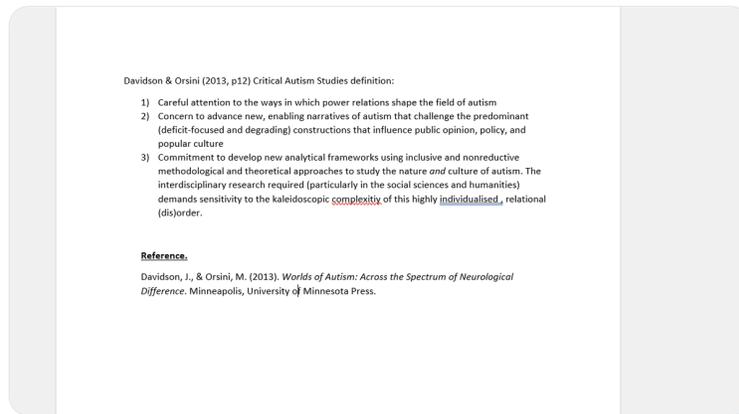


There are many similarities between Mitzi's definition & Davidson & Orsini. The main reason I prefer the latter definition to Mitzi's is that it explicitly mentions being inclusive, therefore recognising autistic perspectives. In Mitzi's definition, it is implied, not explicit.

If Re-Thinking Autism book, by [@k\\_runswick\\_cole](#), & others used Davidson & Orsini (2013) CAS definition, it is a lot harder for them to minimally engage with autistic CAS scholarship, because they would be contradicting the definition they would be working to.

That is an advantage of Worlds of Autism (Davidson & Orsini 2013) Critical Autism Studies definition, over Mitzi's, is the explicitly mention of using inclusive methodologies & theoretical approaches.

The below image of Davidson & Orsini (2013, p12) Critical Autism Studies definition. It is more detailed & explicit than Waltz's. To be fair Mitzi's definition, it is from a 1000 word book review, it is going to be constrained by the word count.



There is quite a bit to unpick with Davidson & Orsini's definition. It also quite clearly is not messing around.

From point 2:

"enabling narratives of autism that challenge the predominant (deficit-focused and degrading) constructions that influence public opinion, policy, and popular culture"

Note focus on medical model based language & narratives, stating they are degrading!

First point is to directly interrogate power relations, & how they shape our field. An example, why do so much autism research/ clinical practice use the AQ, despite there being more informative 50 questions to ask autistic persons?

Part 2:

"Commitment to develop new analytical frameworks using inclusive and nonreductive methodological and theoretical approaches to study the nature and ("and" is italicised) culture of autism..."

... You have to commit to be inclusive, to create new frameworks, be nonreductive, consider biology & cultural intersections.

Rest of part 3:

"The interdisciplinary research required (particularly in the social sciences and humanities) demands sensitivity to the kaleidoscopic complexity of this highly individualised, relational (dis)order."

...

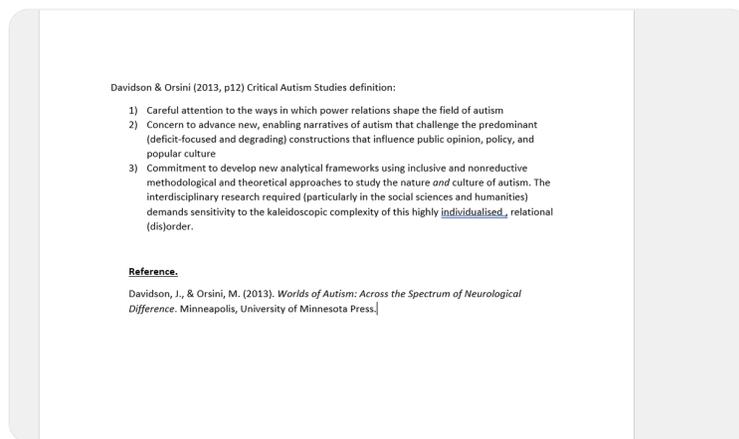
It literally requires interdisciplinary research, calling for it in the social sciences & humanities. Demands being sensitive to highly personal & relational nature of being autistic. Autism does not exist in a vacuum, within a person.

This definition is political as much anything else. It is arguably fundamentally based upon social model neurodiversity principles.

I think this is what Monique Botha means, when she asks to lean in to our autism research, to question how our values shape our research & views on autism. To be proactive in recognising how are biases shape our autism theories, research, & practice.

I having nothing against Mitzi's Critical Autism Studies definition, I just think Davidson & Orsini (2013, p12), CAS definition is stronger & more explicitly aligned to the values which shape my autism theory, research, & practice.

Screenshot of Davidson & Orsini CAS definition, without a typo.



[@Shona\\_Mu](#) [@SheffieldLuke](#) [@milton\\_damian](#) [@Neurodiversit19](#)  
[@Allison66746425](#) [@k\\_runswick\\_cole](#) [@DanGoodley](#) [@Goodchap62](#) I would welcome your thoughts on this topic.

[@threadreaderapp](#) please can you unroll?

Thank you in advance.

• • •