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Understanding, expressing, and interacting: the development of emotional functioning in young children with autism

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Propositions

Understanding, expressing and interacting:

The development of emotional functioning in young children with autism

Boya Li

1. Emotion is inherently informative and communicative. Towards the self, it signals that something important is at stake. Towards others, it conveys what we aim to achieve.
2. Emotion is like language: children need to learn and practice it. Observing and participating in social interactions provide the optimal learning environment. However, many autistic children have limited access to this environment.
3. Autism is a life-long condition, which can affect how people experience and relate to the world around them. Autistic people are “different but not less” compared to non-autistic people.
4. For autistic children, reading the emotions of others, reacting to them and keeping their own emotions in control can be a challenge (this thesis).
5. Autistic people have affective empathy but experience difficulties in cognitive empathy. Note, however, cognitive empathy can also be challenging for non-autistic people when they have to read the emotions of autistic people (this thesis).
6. Autistic and non-autistic children follow similar developmental trajectories in the emotional domain during early childhood (this thesis).
7. Better emotional functioning is associated with better psychosocial outcomes. This is true for both autistic and non-autistic children (this thesis).
8. Longitudinal research has the unique potential to inform us on the dynamic processes of child development and to help us understand the drivers and determinants of developmental outcomes.
9. When autistic people are making efforts to integrate into the predominantly non-autistic world, non-autistic people should open the gate and strive to understand the autistic mindset.
10. Although the third time’s a charm, it’s good enough to do two PhDs during one lifetime.