Mindshaping & Autistic Sexual Experience

Empirical research on autistic sexual experiences consistently reports a striking tension: autistic individuals experience sexual desires comparable to those of neurotypical individuals, yet report lower sexual satisfaction and more negative encounters. These outcomes are typically explained in deficit-based terms, such as sensory sensitivities, difficulties interpreting cues, or challenges navigating consent. Such explanations presuppose neurotypical sexual norms and risk pathologizing autistic sexual experiences. This paper argues that these accounts mislocate the source of the problem by treating structural normative constraints as individual deficits. The central question is: how do neurotypical mindshaping practices structure autistic sexual experience, and how might pluralistic mindshaping practices transform it? Drawing on the mindshaping hypothesis, I argue that dominant sexual scripts function as neurotypical mindshaping mechanisms that shape habits of attention, interpretation, and embodied response. These norms systematically disadvantage autistic individuals by constraining their field of sexual affordances and limiting shared interpretative resources, often resulting in hermeneutical injustice. Rather than locating sexual difficulties in autistic traits, the paper shifts the explanatory burden to the normative structures governing sexual interaction. It then defends pluralistic mindshaping as a constructive framework for redesigning sexual norms, illustrating its potential through neuro-inclusive sex education and BDSM communities as socio-cognitive niches. The paper contributes to existing literature by extending mindshaping theory to the sexual domain and by developing a structural, solution-oriented account of autistic sexual injustice.