

CULTURE AND INCLUSION IN PRODUCT DESIGN FOR AUTISTIC WOMEN: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n2-068>

Submitted on: 01/07/2025

Publication date: 02/07/2025

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes inclusive design for autistic women from a critical anthropological perspective. It is argued that universalist approaches often disregard gender and cultural specificities, resulting in exclusions that perpetuate structural inequalities. Based on authors such as Geertz (2008), Lévi-Strauss (2008) and Moore (1989), it is highlighted that products are not only functional tools, but carry symbolic meanings that shape belongings and identities. The work suggests that culturally conscious and intersectional practices are essential to reconfigure symbolic systems and promote inclusion in an ethical and effective way. In addition, it proposes participatory methodologies as a way to develop solutions sensitive to the experiences and needs of autistic women, transcending technical adaptations and dialoguing with the social and cultural experiences of the group.

Keywords: Anthropology. Culture. Inclusive Design. Intersectionality. Autistic Women.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive design has been consolidated as a fundamental approach to ensure accessibility and equity in the development of products and services. This concept, which arises as a response to the demands for a fairer society, seeks to promote the inclusion of all individuals, regardless of their physical, cognitive or social conditions. However, although this practice has advanced significantly in several fields, there is still a long way to go to achieve effective inclusion, especially in relation to historically marginalized groups, such as autistic women.

The concept of inclusive design is directly linked to the movement for the rights of people with disabilities and the need to adapt products and services to meet their specificities. However, what is observed is that most of these initiatives adopt a universalist perspective, without considering the cultural and gender nuances that influence the way different groups interact with products and technologies. This perspective ends up disregarding the diversity of experiences, which compromises the effectiveness of inclusive proposals.

This approach is particularly problematic when it comes to the autistic public. Historically, studies on autism have focused mostly on male patterns, resulting in diagnostic criteria that do not reflect female experiences. According to Hull et al. (2017) and Lai et al. (2015), autistic women often have behavioral characteristics that are different from those of men, which leads to a late or incorrect diagnosis. This diagnostic invisibility directly impacts public policies, the creation of products and the provision of services aimed at this population.

The DSM-5-TR manual (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) reinforces that diagnostic standardization has historically favored criteria that emphasize traits that are more observable in men, neglecting the more subtle expressions of the disorder present in women. This bias influences not only how autism is diagnosed, but also how design solutions are developed for autistic people. In this context, autistic women remain marginalized in projects that are supposed to meet their needs.

From an anthropological perspective, it is possible to question this homogenizing approach to inclusive design. As Clifford Geertz (2008) argues, culture should be seen as a system of shared meanings that guides the human experience. Products and technologies are not neutral; They carry cultural values, which influence the way people relate to the

world around them. Therefore, for a design to be truly inclusive, it must consider the cultural and social specificities of the groups it intends to serve.

Mary Douglas (1996), when discussing consumption as a cultural practice, points out that material goods are used to mark social identities and cultural positions. Thus, products aimed at autistic women should be conceived not only as functional tools, but as objects that recognize and respect their cultural and gender identities. This approach broadens the scope of inclusive design, taking into account not only technical aspects but also the social practices surrounding the use of the products.

Henrietta L. Moore (1988) points out that feminist criticism within anthropology should not be limited to the inclusion of women in existing narratives, but needs to restructure the analytical categories used to understand societies. Applied to design, this critique implies the need to abandon universalist paradigms that disregard gender differences and adopt a more intersectional and culturally conscious approach.

Finally, Lélia Gonzales (1984) reinforces that social and cultural structures are built from a logic that marginalizes certain groups, such as women and racialized people. In this sense, inclusive design needs to be rethought from a critical perspective, considering how social and cultural inequalities affect the experience of different groups in their interaction with products and services.

This article proposes an anthropological analysis of inclusive design aimed at autistic women, considering the cultural and symbolic dimensions that shape their interactions with products and services. From a critical review of the literature and case studies, it is intended to discuss how design can cease to be a merely functional practice to become a field sensitive to cultural and gender differences, promoting inclusion in an effective and ethical way.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this article is qualitative and interdisciplinary, based on a bibliographic review that integrates contributions from cultural anthropology, gender studies and the psychology of autism. This methodological approach aims to articulate anthropological theories on culture and consumption with contemporary discussions on inclusive design, considering the specificities of autistic women.

To carry out the bibliographic review, works by authors who discuss the relations between culture, identity and consumption were selected, such as Geertz (2008), Douglas

and Isherwood (1996) and Lévi-Strauss (2008). Contributions from authors who highlight critical perspectives on gender, race, and intersectionality, such as Gonzales (1984) and Lugones (2014), were also considered.

In the field of studies on autism, the works of Hull et al. (2017), Frazier et al. (2014) and Lai et al. (2015), which address behavioral and cognitive differences between genders on the autism spectrum, were used, in addition to the DSM-5-TR manual (American Psychiatric Association, 2022), which establishes diagnostic criteria that influence public policies and inclusive practices.

In the context of inclusive design, the studies of Singer et al. (2014) on the limits of Universal Design and Sanchez et al. (2023) were used, which highlight the importance of considering the cultural and social experiences of users in the creation of inclusive solutions. Finally, the eBook Design and Gender (SOUZA et al., 2024) reinforces the need for design that respects users' identities and preferences, promoting inclusion in an ethical and culturally conscious way.

The methodological proposal is based on the assumption that inclusive design is a culturally situated process, requiring a critical analysis of the normative practices that shape the development of products and services. In this sense, the methodology involves the interpretation of cultural theories as systems of shared meanings, as suggested by Geertz (2008), and the analysis of consumption practices described by Douglas and Isherwood (1996).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework is based on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates concepts from cultural anthropology, gender studies, and the psychology of autism. The theories presented by authors such as Geertz (2008), Gonzales (1984), Douglas and Isherwood (1996) and Moore (1989) bring fundamental contributions to the understanding of the relationships between culture, consumption and gender identity. Through this perspective, it is intended to highlight that inclusive design should not be understood only as a technical practice, but as a field deeply influenced by social and cultural values.

The analysis also considers contemporary studies on autism, such as the works of Hull et al. (2017), which address behavioral and cognitive differences between genders on the autism spectrum, and Lai et al. (2015), which discuss the challenges of diagnosing autism in women. In addition, the DSM-5-TR manual (American Psychiatric Association,

2022) is used to highlight how diagnostic criteria have historically privileged male patterns, neglecting the more subtle expressions of the disorder present in women.

In addition to the diagnostic questions, the theoretical framework incorporates discussions about consumption and cultural identity in the context of design, based on the ideas of Lévi-Strauss (2008) and the analyses of Singer et al. (2014) on inclusive design and accessibility. The work of Sanches et al. (2023) provides practical examples of inclusive design projects and how they can be adapted to address gender issues. Furthermore, the studies by FRAZIER et al. (2014), in Behavioral and cognitive characteristics of females and males with autism in the Simons Simplex Collection, highlight the importance of considering specific characteristics of autistic women in the development of public policies and accessible products.

Finally, the article by Gonzales (1984) and the essay by Lugones (2014) reinforce the need for a critical approach that considers the intersectionalities between gender, race, and culture in the construction of inclusive products and services. The combination of these theoretical references aims to build a critical and innovative look at inclusive design, proposing a model that respects cultural differences and promotes equity in an effective way.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIAGNOSIS OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN FOR AUTISTIC WOMEN

The diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has historically been constructed based on predominant studies on boys and men, which has resulted in biased diagnostic criteria that ignore characteristics more common in women (HULL et al., 2017). According to the authors, this difference generates a structural problem in the health and education systems, since many autistic women remain invisible in the diagnosis process.

Frazier et al. (2014) state that women on the spectrum have behavioral traits that are different from men, such as a greater tendency to social camouflage, which consists of masking social difficulties to adapt to normative social expectations. This ability to disguise symptoms can make diagnosis difficult, especially in contexts where the criteria used are based on typically masculine behaviors. This factor generates serious consequences, such as late or incorrect diagnoses and lack of access to adequate services.

According to Lai et al. (2015), the diagnostic standardization that privileges the male profile in autism reflects a broader problem, related to the way gender differences are understood. The authors point out that autistic women tend to have interests and behaviors

aligned with the social norms expected of women, which means that symptoms are often ignored or attributed to other conditions, such as anxiety or depression.

This issue is reinforced in the DSM-5-TR (AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION, 2022), which presents diagnostic criteria that emphasize social communication deficits and repetitive and restricted behaviors, which are often more visible in boys. However, as highlighted by Hull et al. (2017), these criteria do not adequately address the more subtle expressions of the disorder, which are more common in women. This results in a diagnostic invisibility, which directly impacts the inclusion of these women in public policies and in the development of products and services.

The analysis of Claude Lévi-Strauss (2008) contributes to understanding the impact of this diagnostic invisibility based on the idea that societies construct classificatory systems that organize the social world through cultural categories, which define who belongs to a certain group and who is excluded. In the case of autism, the predominant diagnostic criteria can be seen as classificatory categories, which end up excluding autistic women by disregarding their specific experiences. This classification system is not neutral; It reflects cultural and social norms that, over time, have reinforced the perception that autism is a predominantly male disorder.

In the context of inclusive design, this classificatory logic is also reproduced in the practices of creating products and services. As Frazier et al. (2014) point out, the lack of data on female experiences on the autistic spectrum means that many design initiatives are based on male profiles, disregarding the specific needs and preferences of autistic women. This exclusion can be interpreted as part of a classificatory system that, according to Lévi-Strauss (2008), contributes to reinforcing social and cultural hierarchies.

Lévi-Strauss argues that social classifications are used to organize the human experience and define what is considered normal or deviant in a society. In the case of autistic women, diagnostic invisibility can be seen as a form of classification that marginalizes their experiences, by not recognizing them as a legitimate part of the autistic spectrum. This implies that inclusive design must break with these normative classifications, proposing solutions that recognize diversity within the spectrum and value cultural and gender specificities.

Finally, Lai et al. (2015) emphasize that the diagnosis of autism should be seen as a continuous and culturally situated process, which needs to take into account the specificities of gender and social context. Applied to inclusive design, this perspective

reinforces that the solutions developed need to be based on cultural evidence that considers the multiple ways of being in the world, breaking with homogenizing practices that perpetuate the exclusion of minority groups.

CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS INCLUSIVE DESIGN PROPOSAL

The concept of inclusive design is widely disseminated as an approach that aims to ensure access to products and services for all individuals, regardless of their physical, cognitive, or social conditions (SINGER et al., 2014). However, this practice often disregards cultural and gender differences, adopting a universalist model that may be insufficient to meet the specific needs of historically marginalized groups, such as autistic women (SANCHES et al., 2023).

Sanches et al. (2023) highlight that inclusive design, in order to be effective, must go beyond functionality and also consider the cultural and symbolic aspects that influence the user experience. In the case of autistic women, it is essential that design recognizes their cultural identities and gender specificities, in order to avoid generalist solutions that reinforce exclusionary practices.

Singer et al. (2014) argue that the Universal Design model, although important to increase accessibility, has limitations by disregarding the particularities of different social groups. According to the authors, for inclusive design to be truly effective, it must be culturally conscious, that is, it must consider the social, cultural, and gender relations that shape individuals' interaction with products and technologies.

In the context of product design for autistic women, this approach is particularly important. As noted by Souza et al. (2024) in the eBook *Design and Gender*, the creation of inclusive solutions must take into account the subjective experiences of users, respecting their preferences and cultural values. The authors state that a design that ignores these specificities runs the risk of perpetuating gender stereotypes and exclusionary practices, which compromises the effectiveness of inclusive proposals.

A culturally conscious inclusive design proposal is based on the principle that solutions should be developed in dialogue with the cultural and social experiences of users, respecting their specific identities and needs. This approach implies a revision of universalist paradigms that, although they seek inclusion, often disregard the individual differences present in diverse groups.

Singer et al. (2014) also emphasize the importance of considering the symbolic values attributed to objects. In the case of autistic women, products and services that take into account their cultural and social experiences have a greater potential to promote real inclusion, by offering solutions that not only meet their functional needs, but also respect their personal identities and preferences.

Sanches et al. (2023) suggest that effective inclusive design for autistic women should consider sensory aspects, aesthetic preferences, and modes of use, which often differ from those considered in conventional designs. This implies a change in perspective, in which design is no longer just a technical practice and starts to be seen as a culturally situated practice.

Finally, Souza et al. (2024) state that culturally aware inclusive design requires a constant dialogue with users and an acknowledgment of the power relations that influence the way products and services are created and used. This proposal seeks to break with universalist paradigms, promoting design that values cultural, social, and gender differences, ensuring that autistic women are represented and included effectively and ethically.

DISCUSSION: BETWEEN CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION

The relationship between culture and consumption is a widely discussed topic in anthropology, especially with regard to the way material goods are used to communicate social identities and mark cultural distinctions. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1996) state that consumption goes beyond the functional use of products; It carries symbolic meanings that reflect the social structures and power relations within a society. In the context of inclusive design, this approach implies that products aimed at autistic women should not be seen only as accessibility tools, but as cultural objects that communicate values and identities.

According to Douglas and Isherwood (1996), material goods are used to reinforce social belongings and to distinguish groups within a society. This means that product design for autistic women must consider the cultural particularities of this group, creating solutions that respect their experiences and recognize their social identities. Ignoring this cultural dimension can lead to the creation of products that, although technically accessible, do not meet the symbolic and identity needs of users.

The perspective of Claude Lévi-Strauss (2008) complements this discussion by arguing that material objects are not neutral, but function as classificatory categories that help organize the social world. According to Lévi-Strauss, societies build systems of cultural classification, in which material goods are used to define who belongs to a certain group and who is excluded. In the context of consumption, products carry meanings that reinforce cultural norms and can both include and marginalize certain groups. Applied to inclusive design, this implies that products aimed at autistic women need to be thought of as tools that break with normative classifications that perpetuate exclusion.

This approach highlights that consumption practices are not universal, but are deeply influenced by the cultural and social experiences of individuals. In the case of autistic women, it is important to recognize that their interactions with products may be different from those of other groups, since many of these women face sensory and social challenges that influence their preferences for certain products. According to Frazier et al. (2014), autistic women tend to have specific interests and sensory sensitivities that impact their consumption choices. These aspects need to be considered in product development, so that the proposed solutions really meet the specific needs of this group.

Clifford Geertz (2008) reinforces this perspective by arguing that culture is a system of shared meanings, and that cultural practices should be seen as texts that can be interpreted. Applied to inclusive design, this approach suggests that products developed for autistic women should be analyzed as cultural texts, which communicate specific meanings and reflect social values. In this sense, a design that does not take into account the cultural experiences of autistic women can end up reproducing normative values that exclude these identities.

Mary Douglas (1996) highlights that consumption is a form of social communication, used to mark differences and to reinforce belongings. This implies that products aimed at autistic women should be conceived not only as functional tools, but as objects that communicate belonging and identity. For example, an inclusive design product for autistic women that considers their aesthetic and sensory preferences can help reinforce a sense of belonging and social acceptance, while a product that ignores these specifics can reinforce a sense of isolation and exclusion.

On the other hand, Lugones (2014) contributes to this discussion by stating that cultural practices are intrinsically linked to power relations. According to the author, the products and technologies developed within a social context reflect the power structures

and predominant values of that society. In the case of inclusive design, it is necessary to question what values and norms are being reproduced in products aimed at autistic women, to ensure that these solutions do not perpetuate exclusionary practices.

Finally, both Douglas and Isherwood (1996) and Lévi-Strauss (2008) suggest that product design should take into account the social and cultural practices that involve the use of these products, including the way they are perceived and interpreted by users. This reinforces the need for culturally conscious design, which goes beyond technical accessibility and considers the cultural and identity experiences of the groups served. As observed by Lévi-Strauss, objects can function as classificatory categories that, when used in a way that is sensitive to social experiences, can promote belonging and inclusion.

DISCUSSION: BETWEEN CULTURE, GENDER AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN

The relationship between culture, gender, and inclusive design is multifaceted and requires an analysis that considers the social and symbolic aspects involved in the process of creating products and services. From an anthropological perspective, design cannot be understood only as a technical practice that aims at functionality, but as a culturally situated field, loaded with values, meanings, and social norms that shape the human experience.

According to Clifford Geertz (2008), culture should be seen as a system of shared meanings, in which objects and social practices are interpreted by individuals based on their cultural contexts. In the case of inclusive design, this implies that products aimed at marginalized groups, such as autistic women, must be developed with a deep understanding of the specific cultural experiences of these groups. Geertz suggests that design can be analyzed as a cultural text, which communicates messages about inclusion, belonging, and identity.

However, as Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1996) point out, material goods are not only functional tools, but also markers of social status and identity. The consumption of products is a form of communication that reflects the social relations within a society. For inclusive design to be truly effective, it must take into account the cultural and gender differences that shape how individuals interact with products and technologies. This means that products aimed at autistic women need to respect their cultural and identity specificities, offering solutions that go beyond technical accessibility.

Claude Lévi-Strauss's (2008) analysis of classificatory systems is especially relevant in this context. According to the author, societies organize the world through cultural

categories that determine who belongs to a certain group and who is excluded. In the case of autism, diagnostic criteria and design practices often function as classificatory systems that marginalize autistic women by ignoring their specific experiences. The challenge of inclusive design, therefore, is to break with these exclusionary categories and create solutions that recognize the diversity of human experiences.

According to Sanchez et al. (2023), inclusive design initiatives need to go beyond technical functionality and adopt an approach that considers users' cultural and social differences. In the case of autistic women, this implies creating products that recognize their cultural and gender-specific identities, avoiding generalist solutions that reinforce exclusionary practices. This perspective reinforces the importance of culturally conscious design, which goes beyond technical adaptations and considers the symbolic and social aspects that influence the way users interact with products and services.

In the field of gender studies, Henrietta L. Moore (1989) reinforces that the analytical categories used to understand society need to be restructured to include the experiences of women, especially autistic women. Moore argues that feminist critique must question universalist narratives that disregard gender differences and adopt an approach that values intersectionality—that is, one that considers how factors such as gender, race, and class interact to shape the experience of different social groups.

As Souza et al. (2024) point out, inclusive design should be a dialogical process, which involves the users themselves in the creation of solutions. This is especially important for autistic women, whose subjective experiences are often overlooked in design processes. The inclusion of these experiences contributes to a design that not only promotes accessibility, but also respects and reinforces the cultural identities of the users. Such a proposal is in line with the need to break with homogenizing practices that disregard the specificities of different groups.

Finally, María Lugones (2014) contributes with an important reflection on intersectionality and power. According to the author, cultural practices are intrinsically linked to power relations, and inclusive design is no exception. Products and technologies developed within a specific cultural context carry values and social norms that can both promote inclusion and perpetuate exclusion. In the case of autistic women, it is essential that design recognizes the power relations that influence their experiences, creating solutions that break with exclusionary practices.

Thus, the discussion between culture, gender, and inclusive design highlights that design is not neutral, but a field deeply influenced by cultural and social norms. For inclusive design to meet the needs of autistic women, it needs to be culturally aware, recognizing gender specificities and breaking with normative categories that perpetuate social exclusion.

CULTURE AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Inclusive design, from an anthropological perspective, cannot be seen only as a technical practice aimed at ensuring functional accessibility. As Clifford Geertz (2008) argues, culture is a system of shared meanings that guides the way individuals interpret and interact with the world around them. Applying this perspective to design implies understanding that products developed in a given social context carry cultural and symbolic values that shape users' experiences.

For Lévi-Strauss (2008), human societies build classificatory systems that organize the social world based on cultural categories. In the field of inclusive design, these classificatory systems are often reproduced in the practices of creating products and services, establishing norms that end up reinforcing exclusions. In the case of autistic women, for example, the categories used in diagnostic criteria or design projects tend to ignore their specific experiences, perpetuating a normative logic that privileges the male as the standard.

According to Douglas and Isherwood (1996), material objects are not neutral; they communicate meanings and reinforce social belongings. In the case of inclusive design, this means that products aimed at autistic women should be thought of as cultural tools that recognize and respect their social and gender identities. Creating solutions that disregard these cultural aspects can result in initiatives that, although technically accessible, fail to promote effective inclusion.

Finally, Moore (1989) argues that the analytical categories used to understand societies need to be restructured to include women's experiences. This feminist critique applied to design suggests that it is necessary to abandon universalist paradigms that disregard gender differences, promoting design that values cultural diversity and the specificities of different social groups.

DIAGNOSTIC INVISIBILITY AND GENDER ISSUES IN AUTISM

The diagnostic invisibility of autistic women is a phenomenon that reflects a structural problem in medical and social practices, largely influenced by cultural categories that shape the way autism is perceived and identified. Historically, the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was developed based on predominant studies on boys and men, which generated biased diagnostic criteria that disregard female experiences (HULL et al., 2017). This male bias has profound social implications, since many autistic women remain invisible in health systems, education, and public inclusion policies.

According to Frazier et al. (2014), autistic women exhibit behaviors that often go unnoticed in traditional diagnostic criteria, such as the ability to "social camouflage", which consists of masking social difficulties to conform to established social norms. This ability to disguise symptoms is culturally reinforced by gender expectations that require women to demonstrate more sophisticated social skills compared to men. The result is that many autistic women are diagnosed late or misdiagnosed with disorders such as depression or anxiety, which reinforces their exclusion from appropriate services.

This issue is reinforced by the DSM-5-TR (AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION, 2022), which presents diagnostic criteria that emphasize more visible characteristics in boys, such as social communication deficits and repetitive behaviors. However, these criteria do not adequately consider the more subtle expressions of the disorder observed in women, such as social interests more aligned with normative gender expectations. This diagnostic bias is not neutral; It reflects cultural norms that reinforce a gender hierarchy that positions masculine as the standard.

Claude Lévi-Strauss's (2008) anthropological perspective on classificatory systems helps to understand how these diagnostic categories function as forms of exclusion. According to the author, societies create cultural classifications that organize the social world and define who belongs to a certain group and who is marginalized. In the case of autistic women, the diagnostic criteria function as classificatory systems that exclude them, by disregarding their specificities. This process is not only technical, but also cultural, and reproduces structural inequalities based on gender.

Lai et al. (2015) highlight that the diagnostic standardization that favors the male profile in autism needs to be revised to contemplate gender differences. According to the authors, autistic women have interests and behaviors that are more aligned with the social norms expected of women, which causes their symptoms to be often ignored or minimized.

This diagnostic invisibility has practical consequences, not only for access to health services, but also for the development of inclusive design solutions that meet the specific needs of autistic women.

The feminist critique brought by Henrietta L. Moore (1989) reinforces the need to restructure the analytical categories used to understand autism and gender. Moore argues that it is necessary to abandon universalist narratives that disregard gender differences and adopt an intersectional approach, which takes into account multiple forms of social exclusion. Applied to inclusive design, this means that products and services developed for autistic people must recognize the diversity of experiences within the autistic spectrum and, above all, respect gender specificities.

Finally, Sanches et al. (2023) highlight that inclusive design needs to recognize that social exclusion is culturally constructed. According to the authors, design projects that do not consider gender differences tend to perpetuate exclusionary practices. In the case of autistic women, this exclusion is reinforced by diagnostic invisibility, which limits their access to appropriate services and products. Therefore, inclusive design must be culturally aware, breaking with the normative categories that perpetuate the marginalization of autistic women.

Thus, the diagnostic invisibility of autistic women should be understood not only as a medical problem, but as a social and cultural issue that reflects deeply ingrained gender norms. A critical anthropological approach can contribute to breaking with these norms, proposing inclusive solutions that respect the diversity of experiences within the autism spectrum and that promote gender equality in all spheres of society.

CONSUMPTION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Consumption is a cultural practice that goes beyond the functional use of products, serving as a means of communication that reinforces social and cultural identities (DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 1996). In the context of inclusive design, this anthropological perspective implies that products aimed at marginalized groups, such as autistic women, should not be conceived solely as accessibility tools, but as objects that recognize and reinforce their cultural identities. A design that ignores cultural and gender specificities tends to reproduce normative practices that perpetuate exclusion.

According to Lévi-Strauss (2008), material objects function as classificatory categories that help organize the social world. In the case of autistic women, consumption

practices may differ from the experiences of other groups, as many of them have specific sensory sensitivities and preferences that are not considered in design projects based on male profiles (Frazier et al. 2014). These products, by not contemplating these experiences, reinforce a classificatory system that positions them as "deviants" from social norms, reinforcing their exclusion.

Douglas and Isherwood (1996) point out that the consumption of material goods is not a neutral act, but a symbolic process that communicates belonging and identity. Products aimed at autistic women must therefore take into account their subjective experiences, so that they can feel represented and socially included. For example, everyday objects that respect your sensory and aesthetic sensibilities can help reinforce your belonging to a community, while products that ignore these specificities can reinforce the feeling of isolation.

Clifford Geertz (2008) suggests that consumer objects can be analyzed as cultural texts, which communicate meanings about who belongs to a social group and what values are privileged in a given society. In the case of autistic women, a design that respects their cultural identities can be seen as an act of symbolic inclusion, which recognizes their legitimacy as part of a broader social community. Geertz argues that culture is a system of shared meanings, and that for a product to be truly inclusive, it needs to reflect the cultural meanings of its users.

The relationship between consumption and identity also involves issues of power and exclusion. Lugones (2014) argues that cultural practices are intrinsically linked to power relations, and that consumption can be used as a tool to reinforce social inequalities. In the case of autistic women, products that do not respect their cultural experiences can perpetuate social exclusion, by reinforcing norms that position them as "non-standard". Inclusive design that considers these issues can help break with exclusionary practices, creating products that promote belonging and recognition.

Finally, as Souza et al. (2024) point out, inclusive design needs to be a dialogued process, which involves the users themselves in the development of solutions. This is especially important for autistic women, whose subjective experiences are often ignored in product creation processes. Including their perspectives in design decisions contributes to the development of objects that not only meet functional needs, but also respect and reinforce their cultural identities, promoting an inclusion that goes beyond the technical aspect.

Therefore, the relationship between consumption and cultural identity in inclusive design highlights that products created for autistic women need to be culturally aware, recognizing their gender specificities and breaking with normative categories that perpetuate exclusion.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FROM A CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Inclusive design practices should be understood as culturally situated processes, influenced by social norms, symbolic values, and power relations that shape human experiences. From an anthropological perspective, design transcends its technical function and assumes a central role as a cultural phenomenon that both reflects and reproduces existing social structures. For inclusive design to be effective, it needs to break with the classificatory categories that sustain inequalities and promote solutions that respect the diversity of cultural and social experiences.

According to Lugones (2014), cultural practices are intrinsically linked to power relations, being used to reinforce social hierarchies or, on the contrary, to challenge them. In the field of inclusive design, this perspective implies questioning what norms and values are being reproduced in products and services aimed at historically marginalized groups, such as autistic women. Lugones emphasizes that it is necessary to consider the intersectionalities between gender, race, and class in cultural practices, recognizing that oppressions operate on multiple levels. Thus, an inclusive design that disregards these dimensions runs the risk of perpetuating structural exclusions.

Lévi-Strauss's (2008) analysis of classificatory systems complements this discussion by showing that human societies organize the social world based on cultural categories that determine who belongs to a group and who is excluded. In the case of inclusive design, these categories are reflected in practices that often reproduce universalist norms, ignoring the specific experiences of autistic women. The challenge, according to Lévi-Strauss, is to break with these normative classifications and develop solutions that recognize and respect the diversity of human experiences.

For Moore (1989), it is essential to restructure the analytical categories used to understand societies, in order to include women's experiences. Moore argues that an effective feminist critique needs to question universalist narratives that disregard gender specificities, promoting an intersectional approach that considers how gender, race, and class interact in social experiences. In the context of inclusive design, this means that the

solutions developed must reflect the multiple ways of being in the world, breaking with exclusionary practices and reinforcing cultural diversity.

Douglas and Isherwood (1996) reinforce that material goods are not neutral; They carry symbolic meanings that communicate social belonging and cultural identities. This perspective implies that products aimed at autistic women should be developed considering their cultural and social experiences. Objects that respect these specificities can reinforce the sense of belonging and social recognition, while solutions that ignore these aspects tend to perpetuate the sense of exclusion.

On the other hand, Geertz (2008) suggests that cultural practices should be analyzed as texts that can be interpreted and understood within their social contexts. Applied to inclusive design, this perspective implies recognizing that products developed for autistic women function as cultural texts that communicate messages about inclusion, belonging, and identity. A design that respects these specificities can contribute to effective inclusion, which goes beyond technical adaptation and considers the symbolic and social meanings involved in the user experience.

Singer et al. (2014) argue that inclusive design practices need to go beyond technical functionality, recognizing that developing accessible solutions requires a culturally conscious approach. According to the authors, effective inclusion involves considering the cultural and social differences of users, especially in marginalized groups, such as autistic women. Similarly, Sanches et al. (2023) reinforce the importance of considering sensory, aesthetic, and cultural aspects in the development of inclusive products, highlighting that a design that respects the specificities of users can contribute to broader and more meaningful social inclusion.

Thus, anthropological reflection on inclusive practices shows that design is not just a technical issue, but an ethical and cultural commitment. Truly inclusive solutions must recognize and value the diversity of human experiences, considering the specificities of gender, race, and class in design practices. As Souza et al. (2024) point out, the development of inclusive products should be a dialogical and participatory process, which involves the users themselves in the creation of solutions. Only through culturally aware and intersectional practices will it be possible to break with the normative classifications that perpetuate exclusion and promote effective and equitable inclusion.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Culturally conscious inclusive design faces a number of challenges, many of which reflect broader social and cultural dynamics. Among them, the persistence of universalist paradigms in design stands out, which tend to disregard the specificities of gender, culture and identity of users. As pointed out by Douglas (1996), consumption is a deeply cultural practice, used to communicate belonging and identity. However, products designed under a universalist logic often ignore this dimension, reinforcing social structures that marginalize specific groups, such as autistic women.

One of the main challenges is overcoming the normative categories that shape both diagnoses and design practices. Lévi-Strauss (2008) argues that human societies construct classificatory systems that, by organizing the social world, also define who belongs to certain groups and who is excluded. In the case of autistic women, the diagnostic invisibility mentioned by Hull et al. (2017) reflects this exclusion, directly impacting access to products and services designed to meet their specific needs.

Another significant obstacle is the recognition of the intersectionalities between gender, race, and class. As Gonzales (1984) argues, social and cultural structures are often constructed from a logic that doubly marginalizes black and autistic women, through an intersectional exclusion that transcends disability. This exclusion underscores the importance of inclusive design that goes beyond mere functional accessibility, incorporating cultural and identity values that challenge hegemonic norms.

Despite these challenges, there are transformative possibilities in developing culturally conscious inclusive design. Geertz (2008) reminds us that culture is a system of shared meanings, and design can be seen as a "text" that communicates inclusion or exclusion. From this perspective, products developed with attention to the cultural specificities of autistic women have the potential to reconfigure symbolic systems and promote social belonging.

Co-creation practices and dialogue with the users themselves emerge as promising possibilities for inclusive design. Souza et al. (2024) highlight that the active participation of users in design processes is essential to develop products that respect their cultural and social experiences. This dialogic approach not only amplifies the effectiveness of the solutions, but also contributes to destabilizing power hierarchies that have historically excluded marginalized groups from the creative process.

Finally, culturally conscious inclusive design can function as a field of cultural resistance, challenging the universalist norms that have traditionally guided creative practices. As Moore (1989) suggests, it is necessary to restructure the analytical categories that sustain these practices, adopting an intersectional perspective that recognizes the multiple forms of exclusion and the complexity of human experiences.

Therefore, while inclusive design faces significant challenges, it also offers the possibility of transforming social and cultural relations through products that recognize and value diversity. By challenging universalist paradigms and incorporating cultural and identity perspectives, design can transcend its technical function and act as an ethical and transformative practice, promoting inclusion in an effective and culturally conscious way.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article critically analyzed inclusive design from an anthropological perspective, emphasizing its relevance for the creation of products aimed at autistic women. It has been argued that, historically, such initiatives have neglected cultural and gender specificities, perpetuating structural exclusions and reinforcing normative categories that make women's experiences on the autism spectrum invisible (HULL et al., 2017; LÉVI-STRAUSS, 2008). From the perspective of Clifford Geertz (2008), products are not only functional tools, but cultural texts that communicate values and identities. Therefore, in order to be truly inclusive, design solutions need to incorporate the sensory, aesthetic, and social experiences of autistic women, promoting belonging and symbolic recognition.

Inspired by authors such as Henrietta L. Moore (1989) and Lélia Gonzales (1984), this study highlighted that inclusive design must transcend universal adaptations and consider the intersectionalities between gender, race, and disability. Culturally aware solutions require the direct involvement of users in the co-creation process, ensuring that their demands are heard and respected (SOUZA et al., 2024; SANCHEZ et al., 2023). In this way, products developed based on their specificities have the potential to reconfigure symbolic systems and transform social practices, promoting effective and equitable inclusion. Design, therefore, ceases to be just a technical practice to consolidate itself as a field of cultural resistance and ethical transformation.

FUTURE STUDIES

From the analysis presented, it is suggested that future investigations deepen the relationship between inclusive design and the specific cultural dimensions of autistic women. Ethnographic studies can reveal how these women interact with products and services in their daily lives, highlighting the gaps between their needs and the solutions available in the market. This type of approach would also make it possible to understand the sensory and aesthetic experiences that influence their consumption preferences, offering concrete data for the development of culturally situated products.

In addition, it is recommended to create participatory methodologies in the field of inclusive design, directly involving autistic women in the creation process. Research that explores the dynamics of co-creation and dialogue can not only enrich the results, but also contribute to destabilizing the hierarchies of power that have historically marginalized this group. This participatory approach has the potential to generate more effective solutions, while promoting symbolic recognition and social inclusion.

Finally, intersectionality emerges as a crucial axis for future research. Studies that integrate the dimensions of gender, race, and class into inclusive product development can contribute to a more critical and equitable field of design. Investigations focused on socialized autistic women, in particular, are essential to understand the specific forms of exclusion faced by this group and to propose solutions that value their cultural and social identities.

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