

Autistic spectrum disorder: a lifespan perspective

To be published, Jessica Kingsley, 2010

Digby Tantam,
Universities of Cambridge and Sheffield
Dilemma Consultancy

Learning points;

Impaired nonverbal communication (expression and interpretation)

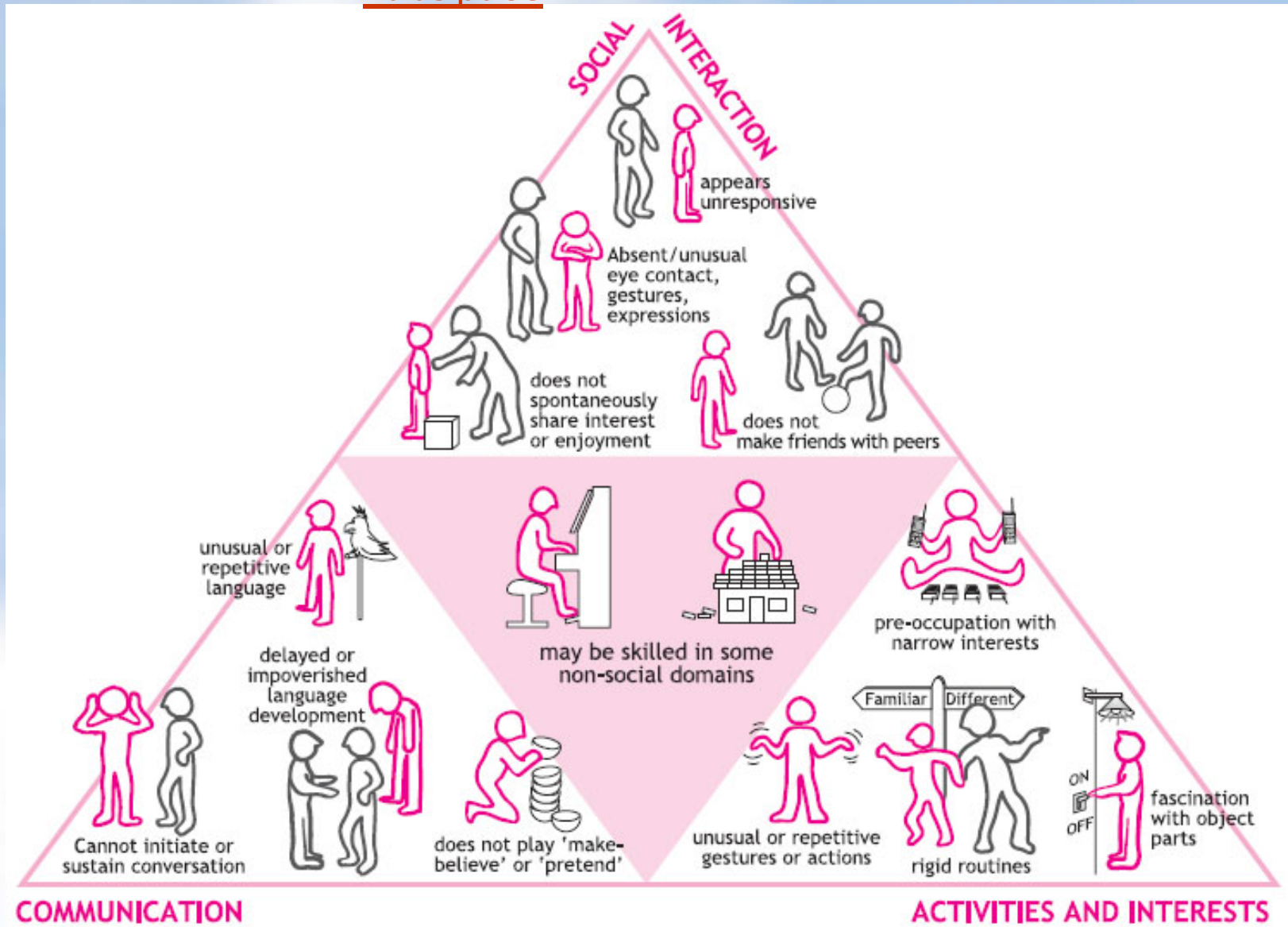
Often associated with other learning difficulties

People with AS are more susceptible to bullying, to emotional disorder, and therefore have worse quality of life than others with ASD

Understanding the experience of having ASD is key to transition

WHAT IS AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?

From The autistic spectrum [OpenLearn LabSpace](#)



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2009

SOCIAL INTERACTION



appears unresponsive

Absent/unusual eye contact, gestures, expressions

does not spontaneously share interest or enjoyment

does not make friends with peers



Features of nonverbal inexpressiveness

- Reduction of expression or occasionally idiosyncratic expressions such as unusual prosody, facial mannerisms
- Affects all channels
- Voluntary signals e.g. social smiles unaffected
- Is not the commonest cause of gaze avoidance, in fact may result in staring

Feature of nonverbal inexpressiveness

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Atypical Asperger syndrome: a disorder of nonverbal interpretation

- Primary abnormality is lack of empathy, partly due to failure of non-verbal interpretation ('face blindness')
- Ability to make relationships but not to keep them
- Lack of empathy may lead to antisocial behaviour, but greater problem is lack of persuasiveness and 'social influencing power'

Picture from the film, "Ripley's game" starring Matt Damon as Ripley



Knowing about the world using non-verbal cues



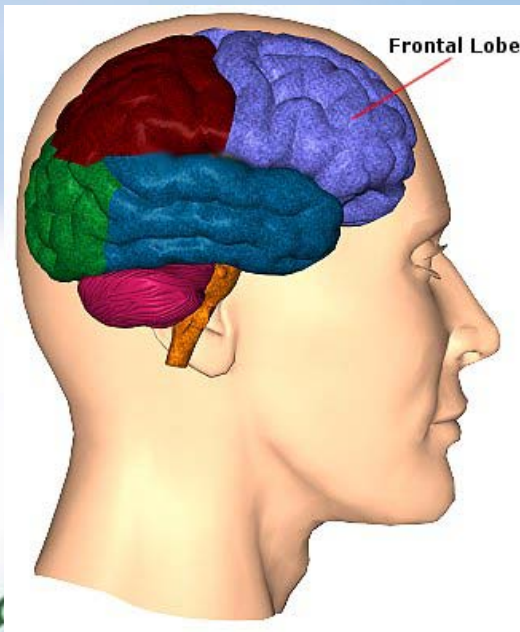
Who is being shot?

Terrorists or partisans?

Associated developmental disorders

Predominantly fronto-striatal or fronto-cerebellar

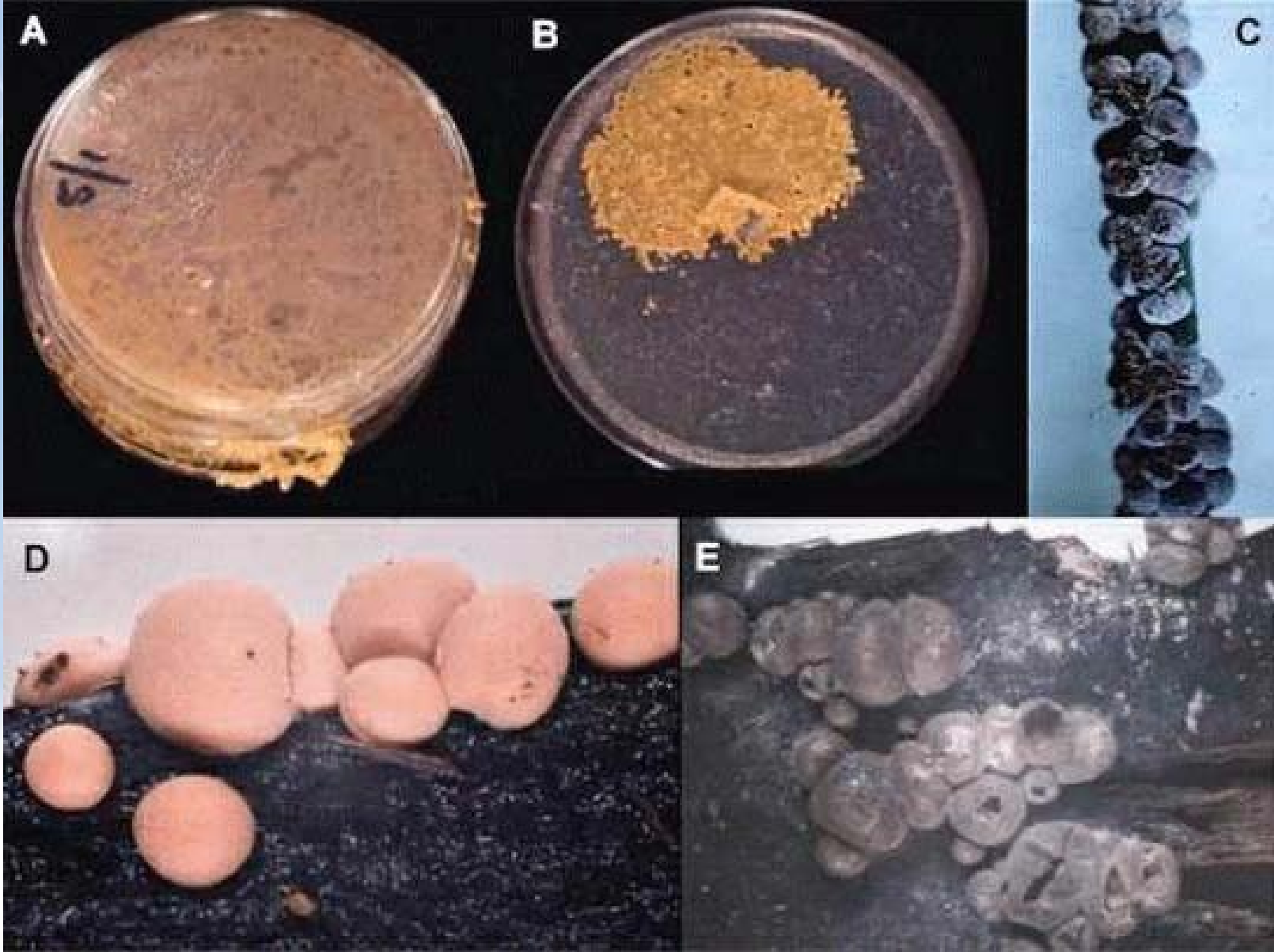
- Dysexecutive syndrome (planning)
- Dyslexia (writing and spelling)
- **Dyspraxia (coordination) with typical AS**
- Attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (impulsivity, executive functions, task persistence)
- Also links with
 - Tourette syndrome
 - Expressive dysphasia (may lead to elective mutism)
 - Dysgraphia
 - Dyscalculia
 - Topographical disorientation



	Impaired NVE ++	Peer friends	Unusual interests ++	Self-aware
Typical autism	Y	N	Y/lack	N
Asperger syndrom e	Y	N/few	Y	Y
Atypical AS	N	N/brief	Y/hidden	Y

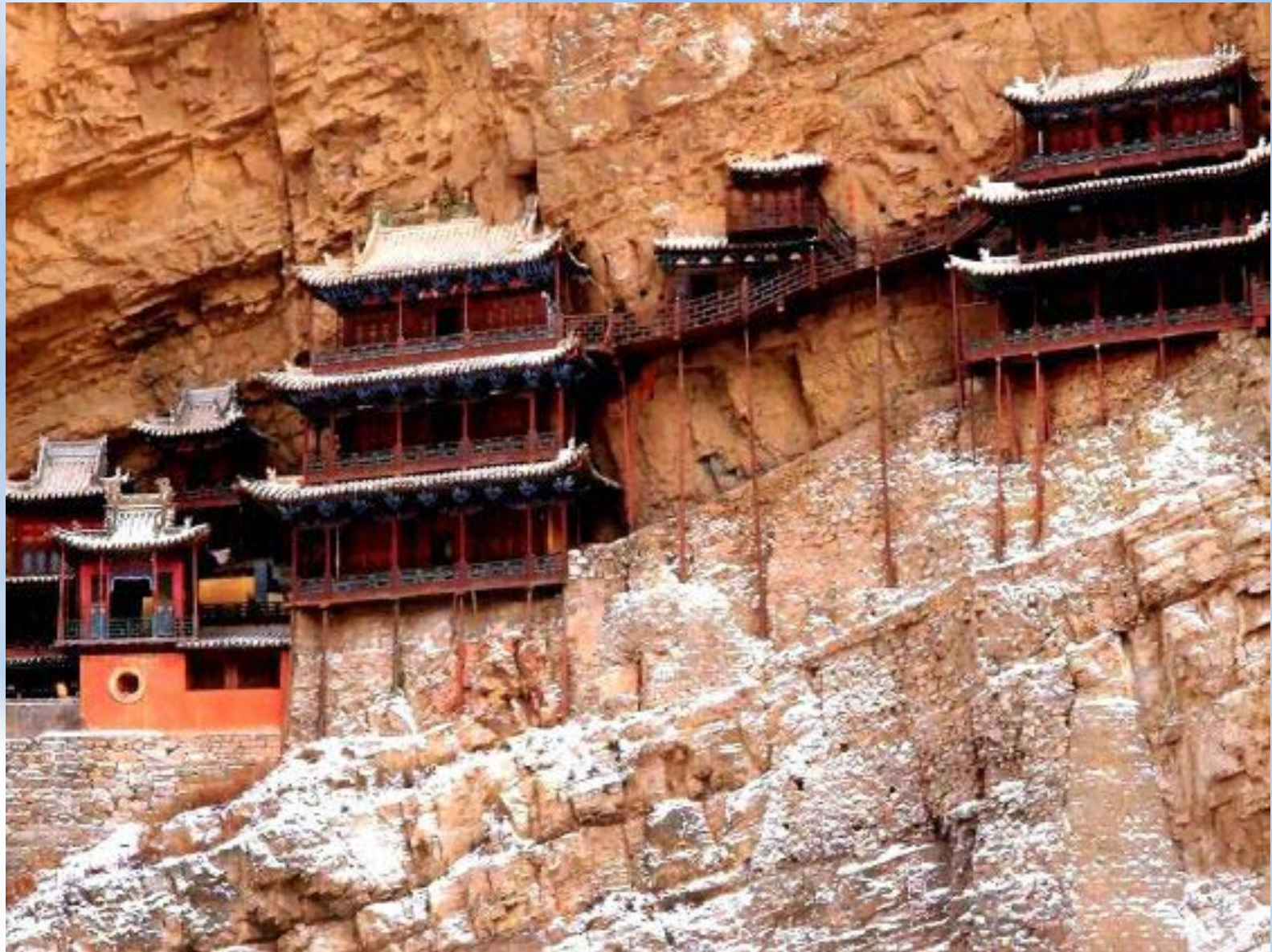
- 'Aspies' may be different, but not disordered or disabled
- Society fails to enable
- They should speak for themselves
- Changing them—or helping them—is patronizing and presumptuous





Slime mould *Physarum polycephalum* metamorphosing in response to starvation to from plasmodium to sporangiophore in response to starvation





Hunyuan hanging temple, Mt. Hengshan, Shanxi

The interbrain

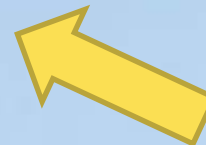
- Extended cognition
- Automatic processing
- Reflexive vs. reflective processing
- 'The borg'



Jerry Ryan, 7 of 9 StarTrek



Neurotypical



Aspie

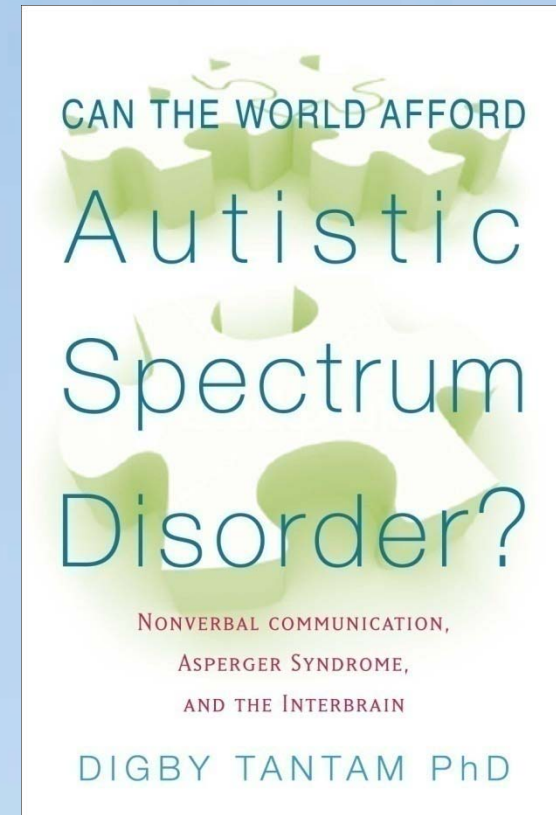
Consequences of being off the interbrain: Positives

"Can society afford people with Asperger syndrome"



Jessica Kingsley *Publishers*
21 years of independent publishing 1987-2008

- People with Asperger syndrome may get infected by fewer informational viruses
- They are often unusually good at interfacing with machines especially digital technology
- Fairness is a passion
- They are not in chains



Consequences of bullying

- Passive failure to be included
 - Reduced use of community resources (social exclusion)
 - Experience of being unwanted/marginalized
- Active rejection , blaming, scapegoating
 - Stigma as a means of keeping threatening Other at a distance



Painted Bird by Edward Gafford, inspired by the novel 'Painted Bird' by Jerzy Kosiński, itself based on what has been claimed is a fictive war-time experience of the author in Poland



www.LovingTouchb.com

- Attending to social cues
- Knowing when others are responding
- Following other's gaze, structuring attention
- Becoming socially integrated, joining the 'Chain Gang'

“l’homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers. J.-J. Rousseau





- Play
 - Reciprocity
 - Self-hood with sharing
 - Theory of mind and pretence
- Adjusting to a social organization
 - Implicit 'rules': social intelligence
- Leaving mother
 - New routines
- Relating to peers
 - Challenges to affordance
- The beginnings of mind
- The honing of the interbrain e.g. by the suppression of empathy



- Structured social interaction
- Educational attainment
- Best friends and fitting in whilst getting what one wants
- Interbrain: empathizing
- Mind: prosocial competence including establishing one's own beliefs, interests

Who bullies and why? Evidence is limited, but

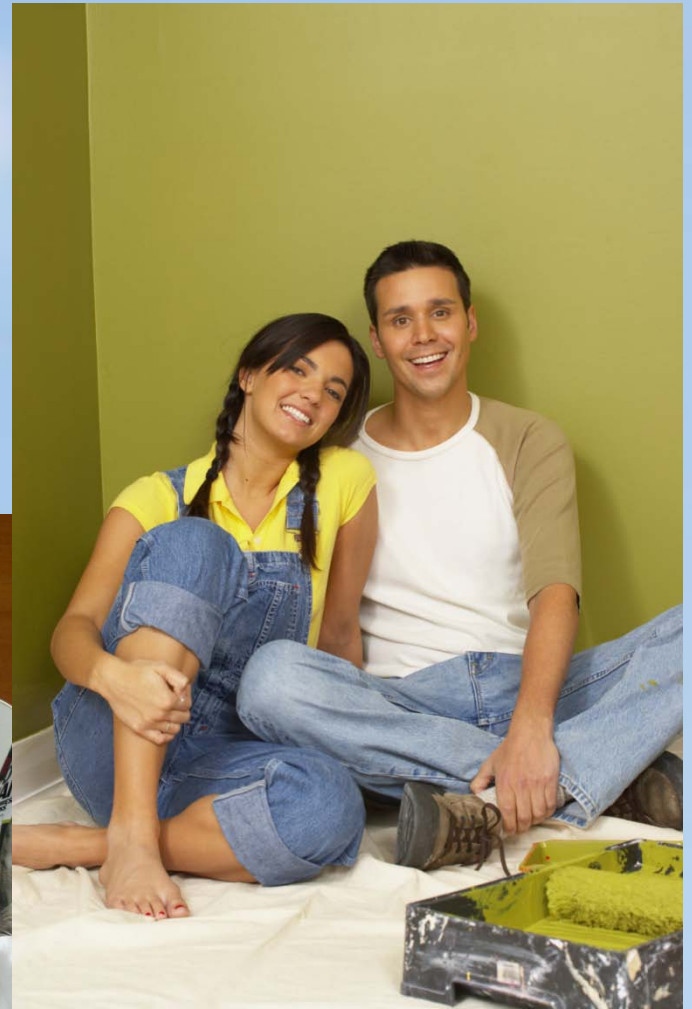
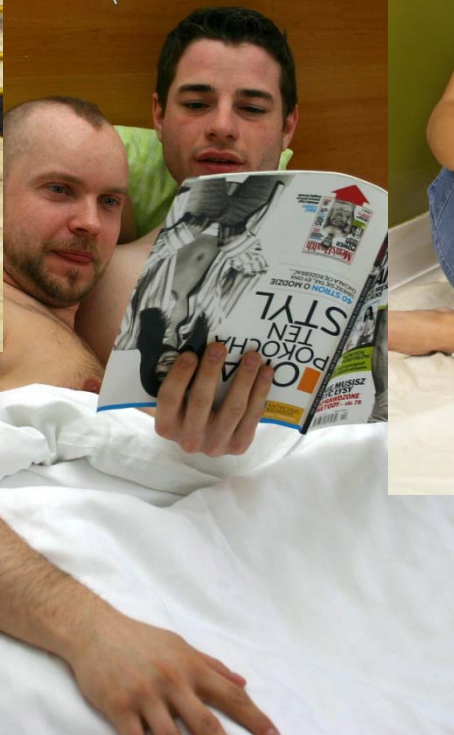
- On behalf of a social group
- Bullies are highly regarded, but not popular
- Bullies' in-group status may be tenuous
- Victims are different
- Victims may be more aggressive than non-victims, and are perceived perhaps as more threatening



Timing of psychological disorders associated with AS (many of these disorders probably greater in more able group)

- Aet 11-13 Surge of anxiety-related problems including OCD, dysmorphophobia, panic disorder
- Aet 16-18 Secondary depression, social phobia
- Aet >16
 - Progressive social withdrawal often attributed to schizophrenia
 - Late adolescence bipolar disorder
 - Brief 'cycloid' psychoses
 - Non-psychotic hallucinoses
- Aet >18 'Catatonia'
- Aet >25 Paranoid states
- Aet >35 Social withdrawal, isolation, relationship disrepair

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Coping with a lack of identity

- Fads
- 'Obsessive' relationships
- Lack of identity in many people with ASD
 - Adopting identity wholesale
 - Joining charismatic groups
 - Moving places and work
- Searching for identity
 - 'Transsexualism'
 - 'Aspie'
- Identities off the peg
 - Gangster
 - Professor
 - Teddy bear



surrey NAS

Where were people with AS in Sheffield?

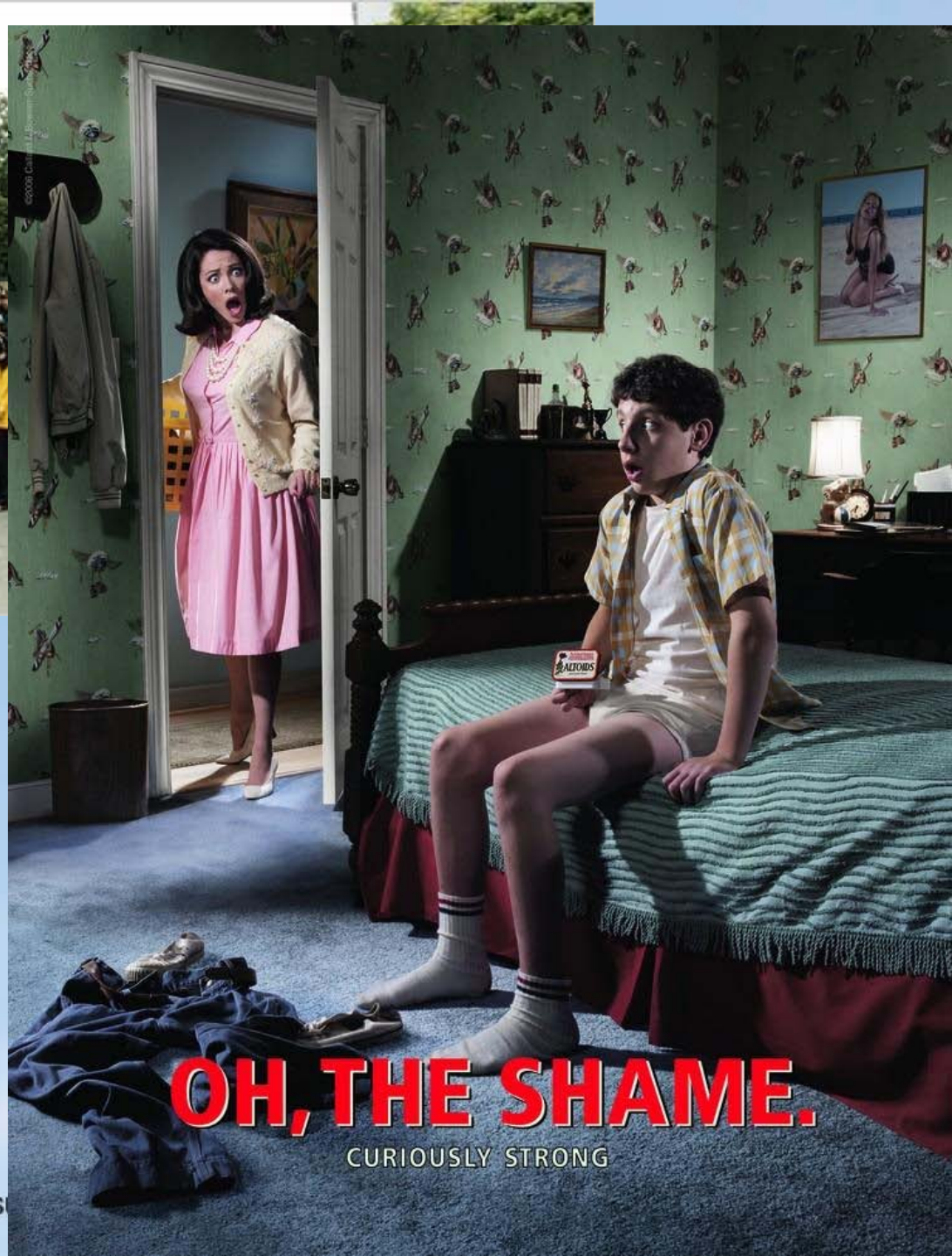
- Most living at home, even above 30.
- Most had difficulties coping with changes in everyday environments
- Difficulties moving between places (for example using public transport)
- Most common places frequented were libraries and cinemas

Associated psychiatric disorders (213 adults with HFA/AS in personal clinic series)

Schizophrenia	0.5%
Cycloid psychoses	
Depression	17.8%
Mania	1.4%
Anxiety	43.2%
OCD	7.8%
Substance abuse	6.6%



The limitless potential of social control by shaming



Vulnerability in legal processes

- Interview by police and false confessions
 - Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Fitness to plead
 - Ability to instruct solicitor, to respond to false evidence, to understand court proceedings
 - May vary depending on anxiety, co-morbid disorder, information provided about trial
- Diminished responsibility
 - Only a defence against homicide
 - Planning and intent are factors as is profit
- Mitigation and possible effects of sentence
 - Some people with AS may prefer prison to

Is Asperger syndrome the future?

Owen Thor Walker appointed to TelstraClear, who previously wrote code enabling a hacker group to steal £13.9M from bank accounts



New statutory developments

- Private member Autism bill of Cheryl Gillan MP at committee stage

- Improving the quality of services provided to autistic children and their families
 - Children and Young People's Plans
 - increased funding to the Autism Education Trust (NAS, the TreeHouse Trust, the Council for Disabled Children)

- Training and support in mainstream education to raise awareness of autism among teachers and early years practitioners.

- Better support for young people with autism in the transition to adulthood. Wider policy support and investment in children with specialist or complex needs that will also help children with autism, including:
 - CAMHS,
 - services for children with speech, language and communication difficulties
 - et al

- Training and support in mainstream education to raise awareness of autism among teachers and early years practitioners.
- Improving the quality of services provided to adults with autism through:
 - a process to ensure local authorities are able to collect information about the needs of autistic adults in their area
 - prevalence studies
 - Commissioning Guidance for the NHS and local authorities

Sooner or later we all realize we are limited

- People with AS often come up across this problem in transition, long before most others are made to face it
- Many deal with it by courage, and by humility that is exemplary
- They realize before the rest of us that our limits are what form us as well as restrict us
- Transition is when this realization first strikes many

What goes wrong in couples

- Impersistence and lack of organization
- Lack of empathy
- Social avoidance, as a result of secondary social phobia
- Social marginalization, in families and in neighbourhood

What goes right in couples

- Avoidance of high expressed emotion
- Cross-generational similarity
- Enthusiasm about special interests
- Someone willing to take executive role
- Lack of schizoidia in affected partner(s)
- Understanding of problem
- Diagnosis?

Outstanding areas for concern: Sheffield survey

- Reduction of available support in adulthood
- Lack of paid work (36%, 6% of whom supported)
- Lack of independence
 - 60% living with parents
 - 21% living independently
 - 56% thought they could be more independent with support
- Victimization 90% said they had been bullied

Outstanding areas of medical concern: Sheffield survey

- 55% received psychotropic medication, 67% of them with side-effects
- 65% were poor at reading feelings (half described 'family problems'), 31% had received help for this mainly from teachers
- 79% had problems with planning and time management (36% had received help)
- 17% had associated neurological problem and were, unusually, dissatisfied with the help they received

The role of the professional

- Collaboration
- Providing a model or explanation
- Reinforcing the client and the carer's autonomy, even if this means giving them the responsibility for hard choices
- Considering self-help strategies
- Counselling, and relationship counselling
- 'Rehabilitation'
- Medication in limited circumstances