THE RELIABILITY OF CONFESSION IN PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY OR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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Hey, I have never EVER heard of lying in relation to Asperger's. If anything, Aspies are more likely to tell the truth about everything. That is the way I live my life anyway - Never lying. I would like to hear the views of other members here though because I am not completely certain on the relationship between lying and Asperger's. Kevin.

• 1/3\textsuperscript{rd} with IQs between 50 and 59 did not understand difference between truth and lie

• None with IQs less than 50 did

• Understanding the oath does not imply knowing the difference between truth and lie
Situations in which the capacity to provide an accurate report may be questioned
Reports of abuse or harm
Witness statements
Future intentions and predictors of risk
Virtue
What is truth?

• Correspondence theories of truth

• One simple version:
x is true iff x corresponds to some fact;
x is false iff x does not correspond to any fact;

TRUE

“The cat sat on the mat”
What is truth?

• Correspondence theories of truth
• One simple version:
  \( x \) is true iff \( x \) corresponds to some fact;
  \( x \) is false iff \( x \) does not correspond to any fact;

FALSE
What is truth?

- Correspondence theories of truth
- One simple version:
  \( x \) is true iff \( x \) corresponds to some fact;
  \( x \) is false iff \( x \) does not correspond to any fact;

*PARTLY TRUE—INACCURATE*
Wittgenstein, Philosophical investigations:
..think of the following use of language: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip marked 'five red apples'. He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked 'apples', then he looks up the word 'red' in a table and finds a colour sample opposite it; then he says the series of cardinal numbers—I assume that he knows them by heart—up to the word 'five' and for each number he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer.—It is in this and similar ways that one operates with words—"But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word 'red' and what he is to do with the word 'five'?" Well, I assume that he 'acts' as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere.—But what is the meaning of the word 'five'? No such thing was in question here, only how the word 'five' is used.[2]

The meaning of a word is its use eg. ‘5’

One use is a language game: instances of a game have a family resemblance to each other.
‘Red’ as in redhead

Using ‘red’ is a language game

Which people with an ASD or ID may not be good at
Family resemblance

People with an ASD may not be good at this either

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TELLING THE TRUTH VS. KNOWING THE TRUTH

Narrative
‘There is a view of life which conceives that where the crowd is, there is also the truth, and that in truth itself there is need of having the crowd on its side. There is another view of life which conceives that wherever there is a crowd there is untruth, so that (to consider for a moment the extreme case), even if every individual, each for himself in private, were to be in possession of the truth, yet in case they were all to get together in a crowd - a crowd to which any decisive significance is attributed, a voting, noisy, audible crowd - untruth would at once be in evidence’ (Kierkegaard, 1846; Dedication).
Group Independence (or its lack among medical students)
Implications for witness

• As witnesses they may correctly memorize and report facts.

Implications for witness statements

• People with AS do see, memorize, and report facts.

• May not report the story of what happened, including the intentions of or provocations to the trees for the wood.

• And may reliably apply a different theory of truth.

• But they may not have a narrative theory.


Questions should focus on facts and not interpretation.

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• An aspect of cognitive functioning in autistic children was investigated by comparing their performance on the Children’s Embedded Figures Test with that of MA-matched normal and MA- and CA-matched mentally retarded non-autistic children. The autistic children were significantly more competent at this task than autistic children were significantly more competent at this task than either group of control children, and also showed qualitatively different strategies. Since the performance of the autistic children was better than predicted from MA and commensurate with CA, it can be regarded as an islet of ability. This finding is discussed in terms of orientation and visualization factors involved in visuo-spatial abilities and is also related to cognitive deficit.
Superior performance on embedded figures test
Some kinds of truth are about seeing the trees for the wood
Being more truthful is to be field independent
….Being more truthful is to be group independent
Iff, non-narrative truth or facts rather than rightness, causes rather than reasons
But, we don’t have to be complete social constructionists to accept that truth is partly socially constructed
There has, for example, to be a commitment to the community of truth tellers
telling your Aunt that her husband has died in a car (he hasn’t)
telling the police that you killed a man in a park and chopped up his body (you did chop up the body, but someone else killed the man)
telling your school mates that your father was dead (he was alive and well, but at work)
Why is that woman so fat?
LACK OF REHEARSAL OF CONSEQUENCES: OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

Orbitofrontal deficit
Consequences are immaterial
The McDonalds murder
Can any of these factors increase inconsequentiality?

- Lack of a shared social contract
- Lack of social influencing power

Uproar among neurotypicals is united, and they deserve empathy.
Common factors with other behaviours might be:

- A desire to conform
- A desire for what Gilbert would call ‘social influencing power’
- Arson as well as tall stories
‘Weak minded’

Suggestibility probably no greater in people with AS


Unconfounded by inconsistency
NARRATIVE COHERENCE

Inability to hold up against persuasion:
A lack of an internal narrative “I could have done that”
Acceptance of strongest narrative, or authority’s narrative, of most recently repeated narrative

Link with theory of mind


Autobiographical memory

LACK OF FORETHOUGHT MAKES PEOPLE UNGUARDED

The world champion who lost everything because he collected photographs of his school friends (and it is true, other children on the beach)

“Just add your name to the sex offenders’ register on your way out, would you?”

Effectively a false confession since no offence had been committed
Coercion may play a role

- Police use closed questions
  - Cederborg et al, 2008
- One study shows a link with negative life events
- Experience of bullying may be a factor
- Lack of conflict resolution, and use of easy compliance may be another
- Easy because a lack of forethought
Does lacking a narrative truth make people with AS vulnerable witnesses?

- If diagnosed, should be considered ‘vulnerable adults’ under 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act code C criteria
- Children and vulnerable adults should only be interviewed in the presence of an appropriate adult, wherever possible this being a person with knowledge of the particular condition of the interviewee.
- As defendants, do not currently receive support
A neurological reason for honesty:

More processing required with greater ACC and VL PFC activation (or VM PFC activation): slide from Sean Spence

Or at least a reason for being a transparent liar

- VL PFC is language based
- Lies require extra processing, because they provoke conflict between brain circuits
- Is this because one has to find a way of integrating them into a variety of conversations?
Lying might just be too much like hard work: the case of Susan Hamilton

• Munchausen's syndrome by proxy’ or a ‘miscarriage of justice’? An initial application of functional neuroimaging to the question of guilt versus innocence

Sean A. Spence, Catherine J. Kaylor-Hughes, Martin L. Brook, Sudheer T. Lankappa and Iain D. Wilkinson

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ATYPICAL ASPERGER SYNDROME

Dysexecutive syndrome (planning)
Dyslexia (writing and spelling)
Attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (impulsivity, executive functions, task persistence)


Also links with

- Tourette syndrome
- Expressive speech and language disorder (may lead to elective mutism)
- Dysgraphia
- Dyscalculia
- Topographical disorientation
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 on left from Pelphrey et al, 2002 and on right from the film, “Ripley’s game” starring Matt Damon as Ripley
Thanks for listening
For the next talk… (at next annual meeting of the RCPsych Learning Disability Faculty

- Self-deception
- White lies
- But, enough for today…

And thank you for listening
Slides available on slide share
Links with ToM
Due to ToM ("Why is that woman so fat?") Requires ToM
Self-deception and depression
Self-deception a kind of impulsivity or lack of reflection

Links with Malice
Lies to reduce blaming and minimize shaming
To maintain a coherent sense of self (Dorothy Rowe), self-esteem
Lies to gain advantage e.g. money, aggrandizement
Knowing the truth requires narrative capacity
Narrative capacity also linked with ToM and too much truth
Due to ToM ("Why is that woman so fat?")
In fact, sometimes said that lying also requires ToM, which is true
Consider successful self-deception and depression
But self-deception a kind of impulsivity or lack of reflection
So not lying that is impossible in AS, but successful lying
What is truth?
The view of the crowd (Kierkegaard)
People with AS can’t know this
Narrative truth: people with AS can’t know this
Reporting to doctor, reporting on physical symptom
Witness statements: who is asking most recently
Do people always tell the truth about motive: can they be self-deceived? Have broken narratives: example of man who hit his nephew, people who mis-value other people’s judgement of them esp. in paranoia litigants way
Do people with AS lie?
Two groups: many who do, some who are described as always honest
Lies in one group are ‘blatant’ or pathological (atypical group)
Who are they—slide of atypical AS
Honesty in the other group may involve a lack of guardedness either of own interest’s or of other people’s feelings
Why do we lie
Self presentation (Dorothy Rowe)
Greasing the wheels of social interaction (empathy hypothesis)
Lying as cognitive challenge esp. involving frontal lobes
Correspondence theory clarifies what we want to know

- There is no picture that corresponds to a statement (the statement is false)
  - Deliberate (deception)
    - Malicious (lying)
    - Kindly
  - Not deliberate
    - Self-deception
    - Problem with memorizing (inaccuracy)
Correspondence theory clarifies what we want to know

- There is a picture that roughly corresponds to a statement (the statement is inaccurate)
  - Perceptual errors
  - Language errors
  - Memorizing errors