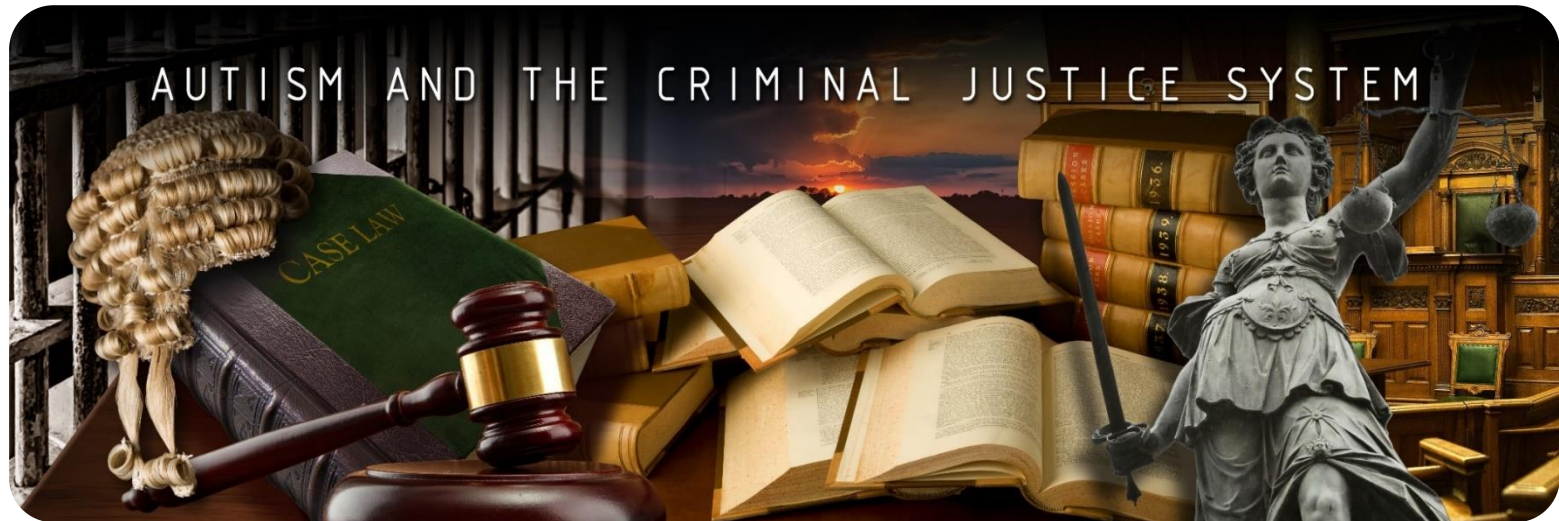




**Criminal Justice Advocacy Program**  
Equal Justice Talks Webinar Series



# Autism Spectrum Disorder and Offending Behaviors



**Equal Justice Talks Webinar Series #9**  
**Dr Clare Allely**

# + Autism Spectrum Disorder

## DSM -IV TR

- **Formerly** (DSM-IV-TR):  
Required Deficits in **3** Areas:
  - Social Interaction
  - Communication
  - Restricted, Repetitive and Stereotyped Behavior

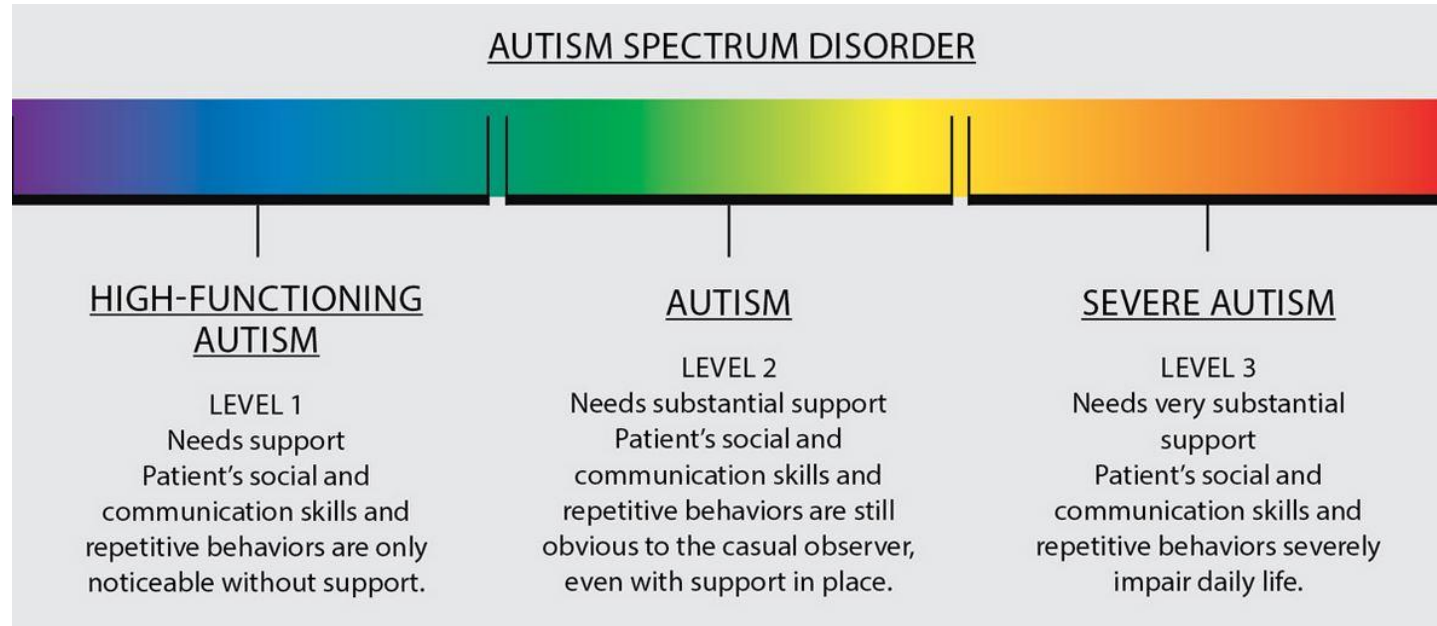
## DSM-5

- DSM-V:** Characterized by  
Deficits in **2** CORE Domains:
- Social Communication and Interaction
  - Restricted & Repetitive Behavior, Interests, and Activities

**Deficits in communication are related to social interaction deficits. DSM-5 fixes this double counting.**

**Dr Lorna Wing [a leading expert in autism] said: “Once you have met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”**

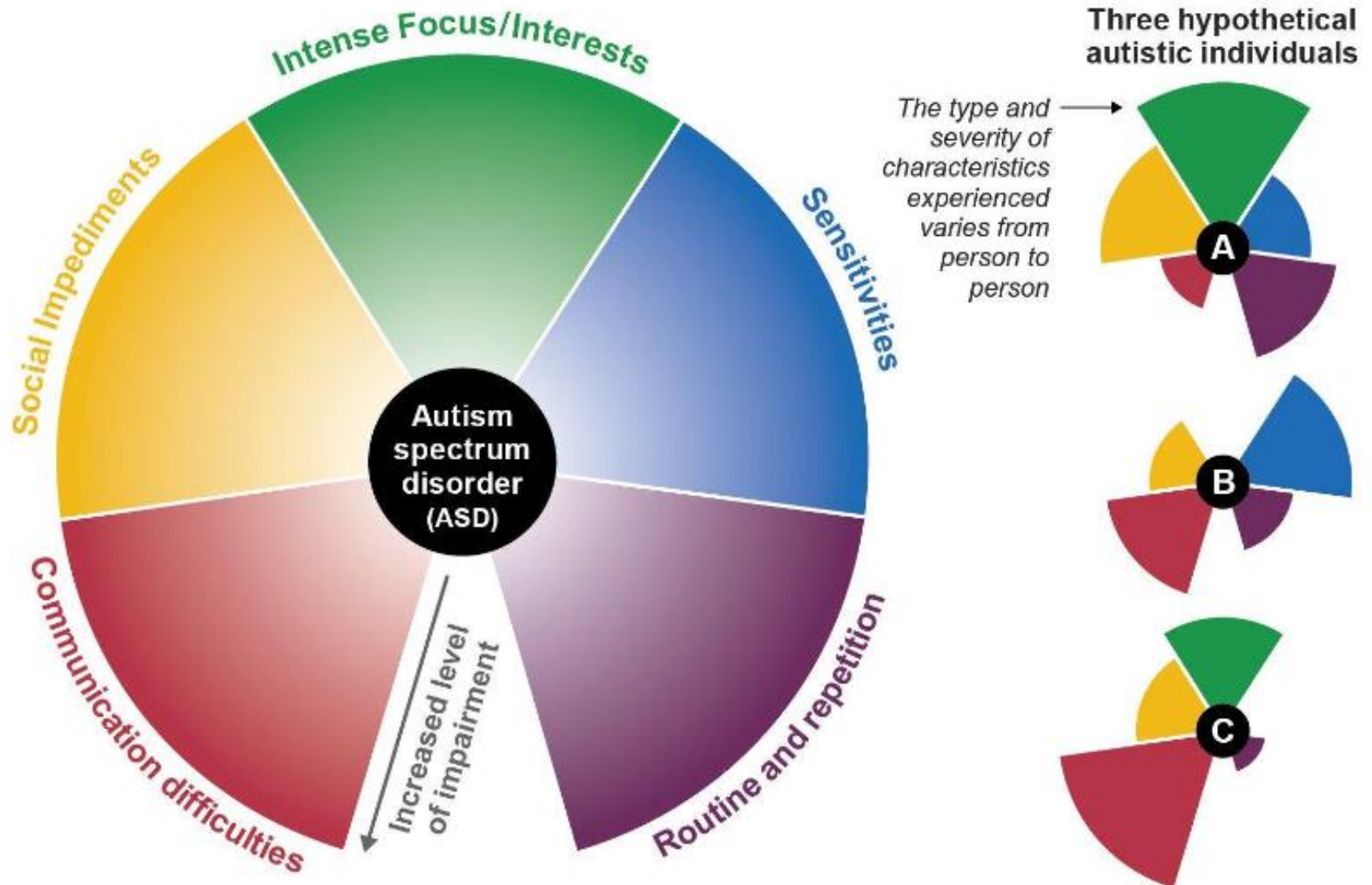




It is important to highlight that to think of someone with ASD as being on a spectrum (ranging from severely impaired to mildly impaired) is inaccurate. Rather, it is more appropriate and accurate to consider each person with ASD separately and their particular profile of strengths and weaknesses – in other words, that individual's particular variation in ASD characteristics or features/traits.

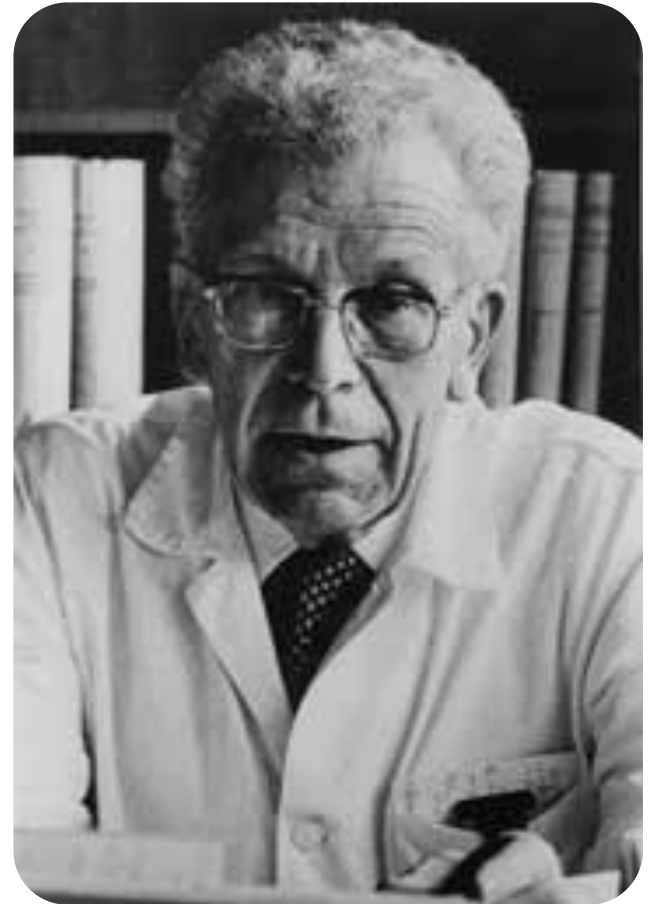


GAO grouped the characteristics associated with autism into five broad categories, with some overlap between categories.



# ASD and Offending

- Study of penal register data regarding Hans Asperger's original group of 177 patients (Hippler et al., 2010).
  - rate & nature of crimes committed by these individuals no different from the general population.
  - In the case records spanning 22 years & 33 convictions, there were only 3 cases of bodily injury, 1 case of robbery and 1 case of violent and threatening behaviour.
- Despite this, media and academic reporting of violent crime committed by offenders with ASDs has served to generate a speculative association between ASDs and offending behaviour.



# Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities

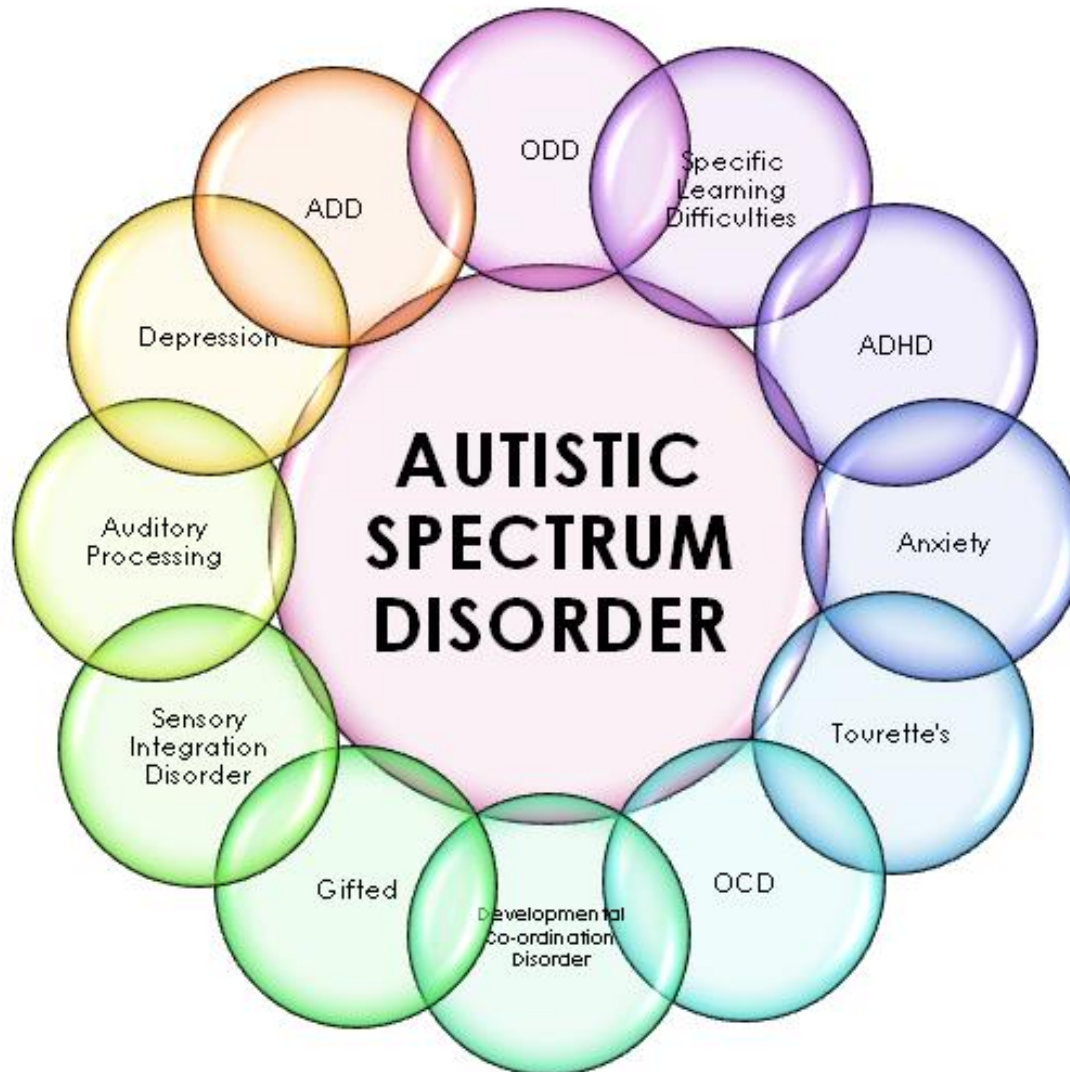
- A range of reviews (e.g., Gomez de la Cuesta, 2010, Im, 2016; Lerner et al., 2012) also suggest that most individuals with an ASD who offend do so because of a combination of reasons.
- Typically, these reasons are linked to personal circumstances, such as dealing with periods of transition or change, and the difficulties associated with having an ASD including: social naivety, pursuing a preoccupation or failing to appreciate the consequences of one's actions, theory of mind difficulties, emotional regulation difficulties, as well as co-morbidity with another psychiatric disorder (e.g., Newman & Ghaziuddin, 2008) (Murphy, 2018).

# Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities

- Psychiatric Comorbidities
- Social Naivety
- Sociodemographic factors
- Intellectual functioning and Intelligence Quotient (IQ)
- Intense, restricted interests (Circumscribed Interests)
- Sensory Sensitivities
- Social-Cognition Deficits
- Social and Communication Impairments



# Co-occurring Disorders (Psychiatric Comorbidities)



# Psychiatric Comorbidities

The prediction of comorbidities on violence in ASD has been substantiated by Langstrom, Grann, Ruchkin, Sjostedt and Fazel, 2008) who found that comorbid substance use disorders and personality disorders were risk factors for violent offending behaviours in ASD.

- Quek, Sofronoff, Sheffield, White and Kelly (2012) found that depression was a significant predictor of anger in young people with ASD.
- Kerns and colleagues (2015) found that comorbid anxiety disorders were associated with increased patient-reported self-harm in youths with ASD.
- Some reviews suggest that individuals with an ASD who commit violent offenses and who are admitted to forensic psychiatric units often display high rates of psychiatric co-morbidity (e.g., King & Murphy, 2014; Im, 2016).
- Some authors have suggested that individuals with an ASD and a co-morbid psychosis may be especially vulnerable to acting on any psychotic impulses (e.g., Wachtel & Shorter, 2013).

# Psychiatric Comorbidities

- Newman and Ghaziuddin (2008) reviewed all published articles reporting an association of AS with violence.
- Of 37 cases that met inclusion criteria, 31 (83.7%) had evidence of a definite or probable psychiatric disorder, including ADHD, depression and other mood disorders, “obsessional neurosis,” & disorders resulting in maximum-security hospitalisation.
- Most violent individuals with AS suffer from comorbid psychiatric disorders that raise their risk of offending, as they do in the general population.



# Prevalence of Autism in the Intellectual Disability (ID) Literature

- Prevalence of autism among those living with ID of between 8.8 and 30 % has been reported (e.g., Morgan et al., 2002; Hermans & Evenhuis, 2014; Turygin, Matson, & Adams, 2014).
- A UK study involving 571 adults in contact with an ID service suggested that prevalence decreases with age, reporting 36 % identified among those aged 16–25 years compared with only 13 % who were aged 65 years and older (Morgan et al., 2002).

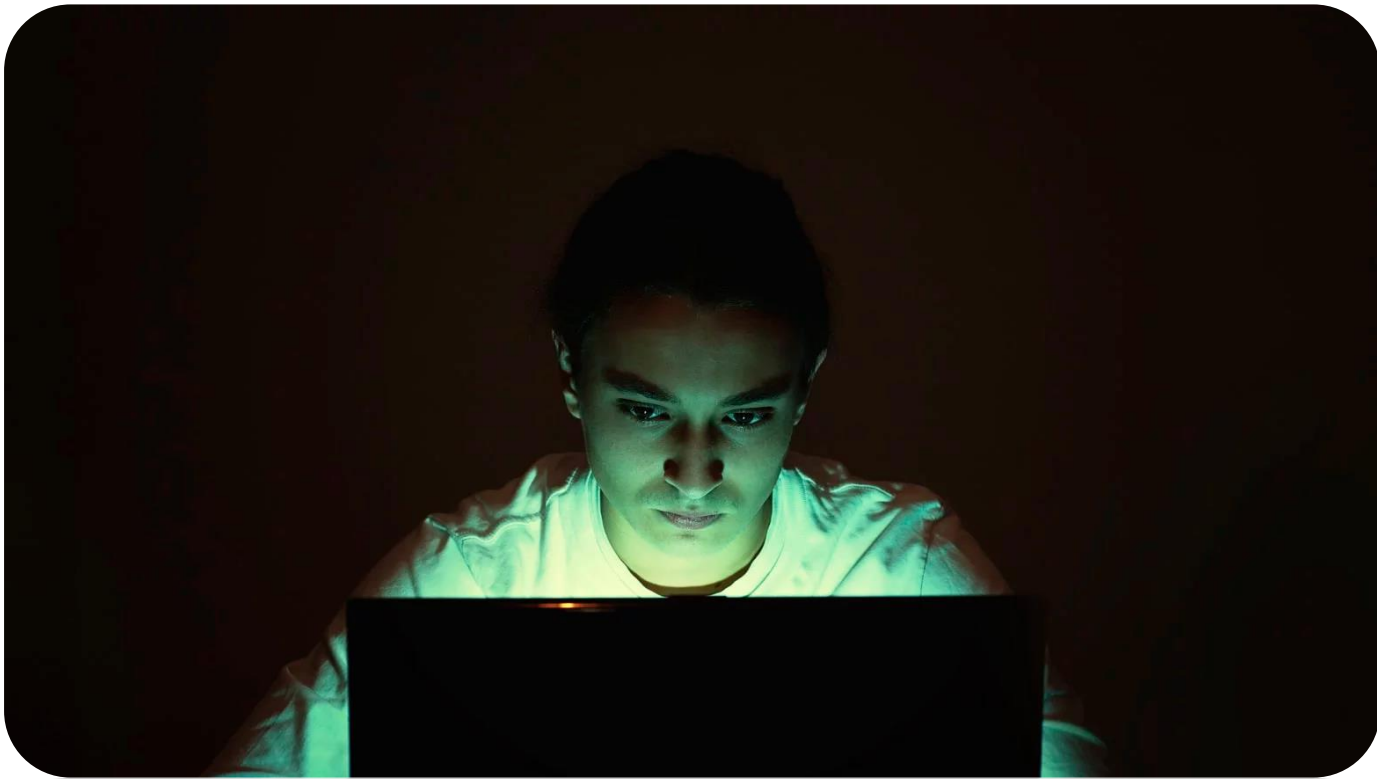


# Prevalence of ID in the Autism Literature

- The ASD literature presents similarly disparate estimates of co-morbid ASD and intellectual disability (ID), with methodological differences relating to age and sources of sample, and variation across study country of origin.
- In a review of over 30 epidemiological surveys of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders, Fombonne (2003) found that ID is associated with ~70 % of individuals on the spectrum (among whom 30 % experienced mild to moderate intellectual impairment, with relevant disorders including fragile X, Down syndrome and tuberous sclerosis).
- Mannion et al. (2013) presented a review of comorbid psychiatric and medical disorders across the lifespan, estimating that among children and adolescents, the prevalence of comorbid disorders (defined as the co-occurrence of two or more disorders) was 46.1 % (excluding ID) or 78.7 % when ID was included as a comorbid disorder.



# Social Naivety



Their increased social naivety may leave people with an ASD open to manipulation by others.

# Intense, restricted interests (Circumscribed Interests)

- Obsessive pursuit or engagement in circumscribed interest.
- Relationship between circumscribed interests in individuals with ASDs and behaviour that leads to contact with the CJS is poorly understood (Woodbury-Smith et al., 2010 ).
- Convictions for arson were preceded by an interest in fires (e.g., Barry-Walsh & Mullen, 2004)
- Tantam (1988) describes an individual with a fascination with National Socialism, who dressed in Nazi uniform before assaulting a soldier.
- Attempts to discourage certain repetitive behaviours could trigger reactive aggression from individuals with ASD, accounting for the association between repetitive behaviours and aggression.

# Sensory Sensitivities

- Individuals with an ASD can present with a range of unusual sensory hypersensitivities or hyposensitivities across several sensory areas (Bogdashina, 2003).
- This is now recognised within the diagnostic criteria as defined in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013).
- In Bjorkly (2008)'s literature review, sensory hypersensitivity was the second largest cause of violence towards others.
- Many individuals with ASD report sensory hypersensitivities as their main cause of stress (Robertson & Simmons, 2015) and in some circumstances offending has been linked to a specific sensory hypersensitivity (Mawson, Grounds, & Tantam, 1985).

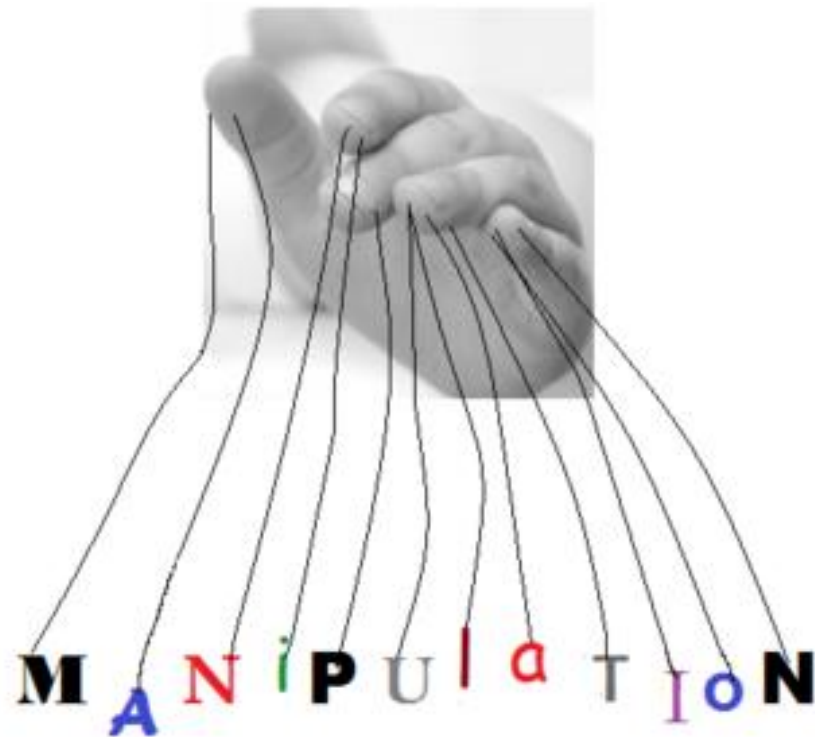


# Social-Cognition Deficits

- In Bjorkly (2008)'s literature review of risk factors for violence in Asperger's Syndrome (AS), 35% of violence towards others was reportedly attributed to social misinterpretations of the victims' intentions.
- Burdon and Dickens (2009) have highlighted that impairment in understanding social cues may influence criminal behaviour, in individuals with AS.



# Social Naivety



[www.whatiscodependency.com](http://www.whatiscodependency.com) ©

- Their increase social naivety may leave people with an ASD open to manipulation by others.



# Characteristics of Offences

More common

Among High functioning:

- Threats to kill
- Arson
- Sexual offending
- Criminal damage
- Stalking



Bowler and Worley (1994), Murrie et al (2002), O' Brien and Bell (2004), Barry-Walsh & Mullen (2004), Berney (2004), Woodbury-Smith et al (2005)

# Firesetting and arson in individuals with autism spectrum disorder: a systematic PRISMA review

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Clare Sarah Allely

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to identify studies which have investigated arson or firesetting in individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *A systematic PRISMA review was conducted.*

**Findings** – *The present review highlighted the relatively little research that has been conducted to date exploring firesetting or arson in individuals with ASD. In sum, 11 papers were identified in the present review study: 6 were case studies and 5 were empirical studies. The case studies identified in the review highlighted some of the ASD symptomology which may contribute to this type of criminal behaviour. Also, the empirical studies indicate that there is a higher prevalence of individuals with ASD who engage in such criminal behaviours.*

**Research limitations/implications** – *There is an urgent need for further empirical research in this area and for there to be an increased awareness and understanding of how ASD can contribute to arson and firesetting in both a legal and clinical context.*

**Originality/value** – *This is the first review, to the author's knowledge, to explore the literature on firesetting or arson in individuals with ASD.*

**Keywords** *Autism spectrum disorder, ASD, Asperger's, Arson, Firesetting, Firesetters*

**Paper type** *Literature review*

Clare Sarah Allely is based at the School of Health Sciences, The University of Salford, Salford, UK.

# Firesetting or Arson in ASD

Some of the key symptoms inherent in this type of behaviour in the individuals with ASD included:

- a lack of understanding and appreciation of the potential consequences or harm of firesetting
- considering firesetting as being a way to solve problems
- impaired victim empathy
- an obsessive preoccupation and interest with 'flames, cinders, colours, and heat' as opposed to any malicious intention to cause damage to property or put the lives of others in any danger.



## Sexual offending and autism spectrum disorders

Clare Sarah Allely and Ann Creaby-Attwood

Clare Sarah Allely is based at Department of Psychology, School of Health Sciences, University of Salford, Salford, UK and Gillberg Neuropsychiatry Centre, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden.  
Ann Creaby-Attwood is based at Department of Law, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

### Abstract

**Purpose** – Studies have found innate vulnerabilities which potentially may increase the risk of an individual with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) finding themselves involved with the criminal justice system as a result of being charged with a sexual offence. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the literature which has explored sexual offending in individuals with ASD.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A systematic PRISMA review (PRISMA, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was conducted using internet-based bibliographic databases (PsycINFO, MEDLINE, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection and PsycARTICLES) in order to access studies which investigated to any degree the association between ASD and sexual offending.

**Findings** – Only a small number of case reports ( $n = 7$ ) on sexual offending in individuals with ASD and a small number of prevalence studies ( $n = 7$ ) were identified.

**Research limitations/implications** – Research is urgently required to identify the specific requirements and needs of sexual offenders with ASD in order to inform an appropriate treatment strategy for successful outcomes.

**Originality/value** – Relatively few studies and reviews have investigated the area of ASD and sexual offending specifically.

**Keywords** Sexual offending, Sexual offences, ASD, Autism spectrum disorder, Asperger, AS

**Paper type** Literature Review

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## A psycho-legal perspective on sexual offending in individuals with autism Spectrum disorder

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### ABSTRACT

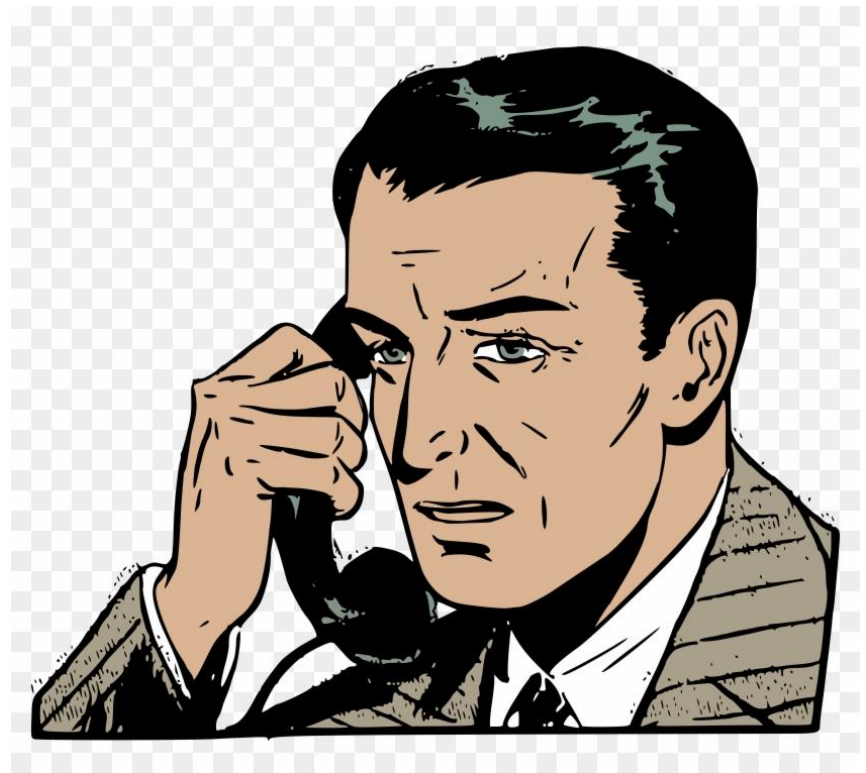
It is important to consider whether there are innate vulnerabilities that increase the risk of an individual with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), predominantly those defendants with a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, being charged and convicted of a sexual offence. The significance of such can be readily seen in recent English case law, with judgments on appeal finding convictions unsafe where there have been a number of failings in the Judge's summing up. In this article, we will consider the gravity of judges omitting to highlight a defendant's diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and the necessity of detailed explanations to jury members regarding the condition and its effect upon thoughts and behaviour. Consideration will be specifically given to the necessity to prove sexual motivation in such offences and the judicial direction required in relation to whether the appellant's actions had been sexually motivated. Recognition of the social impairments inherent in ASDs are vital to this work and we shall consider whether the difficulty with the capacity to develop appropriate, consenting sexual relationships as a result of impaired social cognition may be one of the factors which increases the risk of sexual offending in individuals with ASD (Higgs & Carter, 2015).

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# Case Study

Milton, Duggan, Latham & Tantam (2002)

- Case of a Caucasian male in his early thirties with AS. His convictions can be categorised in 3 main types (acquisitive offences, direct sexual assaults & indirect sexual assaults).
- Long history of being fascinated with women's genitalia. Focus of this fascination was the image of a woman being gynaecologically examined by a doctor.
- He would pose as a medical researcher and go on telephone 'chatlines' to ask the women he spoke to for details of their gynaecological examinations while he frequently masturbated.





# Case Study

**Murrie, Warren, Kistiansson & Dietz (2002)**

- **KL** was arrested following an assault on two women in the female toilets at the local zoo where he was a weekend volunteer and was subsequently referred for forensic evaluation.
- Was open and exhibited no embarrassment or hesitation when revealing intimate details about his life and his significantly active and aggressive sexual fantasies. KL reported feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- He had crushes on numerous women at work and would follow them when they moved around the building.
- His masturbatory fantasies involved following strange women, binding them using rope and climaxing while he used a knife to cut into their breasts.

# Case Studies

Haskins & Silva (2006)

## Mr B

- Middle-aged substitute teacher accused of touching a number of adolescent female students. Mr B was unable to develop friendships or relationships.
- Failed to recognise how his actions might be perceived by the students and others. The compulsive nature of his touching behaviour is consistent with repetitive and stereotyped behavioural patterns.

## Mr C

- Deaf man referred for outpatient psychotherapy primarily because of his display of inappropriate sexual behaviour. Compulsively solicited male strangers for sex contact. History of impaired social skills, lacked friends and was unable to maintain a job.
- Exhibited impaired ToM as he compulsively approached males for sexual contact with no recognition of the potential hostile reaction he might receive from heterosexual males.

# The contributory role of autism symptomology in child pornography offending: why there is an urgent need for empirical research in this area

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Clare Sarah Allely and Larry Dubin

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – *As recently highlighted by Creaby-Attwood and Allely (2017), it is crucial that the possible innate vulnerabilities that contributed to sexual offending behaviour in an individual with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are taken into consideration for the application of a diversion programme to avoid the stigma of a criminal conviction or during sentencing for a non-custodial outcome. Specifically, in those defendants with a diagnosis of what used to be referred to as Asperger's syndrome (AS) and now is recognised as an ASD and who are charged and convicted of a non-contact sexual offense, education and mental health intervention will best serve the interests of justice. The paper aims to discuss this issue.*

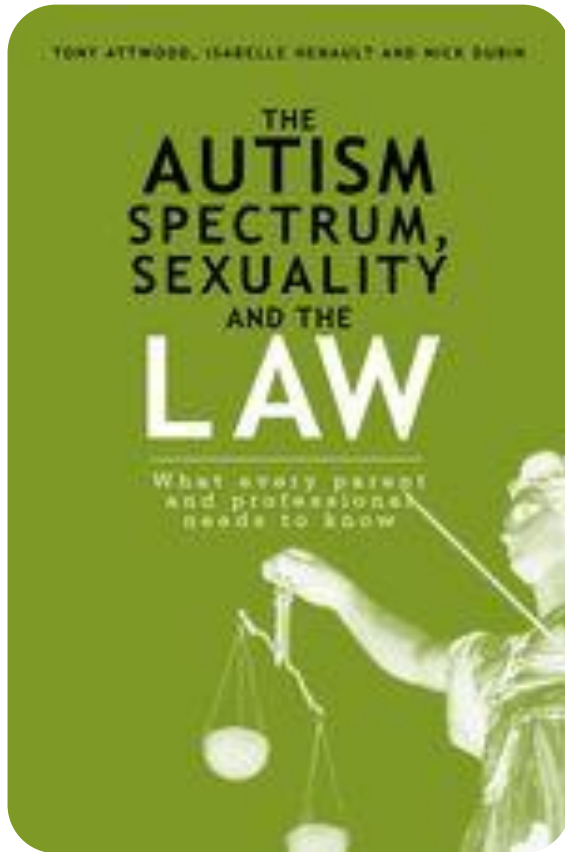
**Design/methodology/approach** – *This paper focusses on one particular type of sexual offending behaviour, namely, possession of child pornography. A systematic PRISMA review was conducted.*

**Findings** – *The authors linked examples of child pornography in the research literature to the ASD symptomology and describe how the symptomology explains such behaviour as not reflecting actual sexual deviance.*

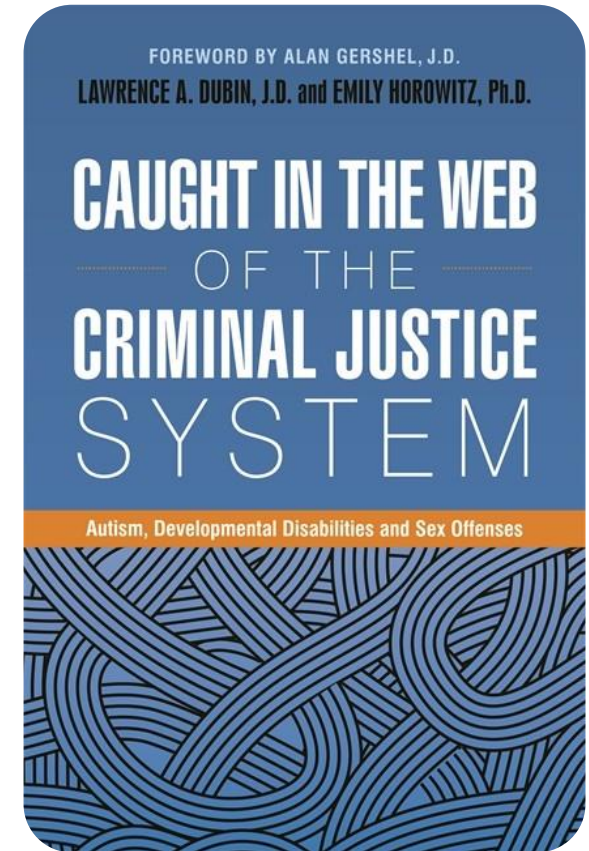
Clare Sarah Allely is Reader in Forensic Psychology at the University of Salford, Salford, UK.

Larry Dubin is based at Mercy School of Law, University of Detroit, Detroit, Michigan, USA.

# Autism and Child Pornography



**Case of Nick Dubin**



# Internet as a Sexual Outlet

- When considering ASD and sexuality, “we are often talking about people with strong sexual impulses, little or no information about healthy sexual behavior, and few suitable outlets for sexual gratification” (Sugrue, 2017, p. 177).
- Given this, many adolescents and adults with ASD turn to the internet for information and for a sexual outlet. The internet becomes the ideal solution because it has already established itself as being their “preferred conduit to the outside world” (Sugrue, 2017, p. 117).





# ASD and Child Pornography

- May explore the internet for sexual education or to satisfy sexual needs due to a lack of sexual outlets with peers/friends (Dubin et al., 2014).
- Many individuals with ASD will have average or above average intelligence while their social maturity is that of someone much younger. This frequently results in them being more interested in befriending people who are much younger than themselves but who are socially and emotionally at the same level (Cutler, 2013).
- Regarding the viewing of child pornography, issues occur when individuals with ASD are unaware that what they have done is a criminal offense. One explanation for the lack of awareness that they have committed a crime is their inability to recognise the facial expressions in the images of the children.
- Such an inability to recognise facial expressions (such as fear) is supported by a large amount of studies (e.g. Woodbury-Smith et al., 2005; Uljarevic & Hamilton, 2013).

# ASD and Child Pornography

- As with many things that interest them, the desire for this material can end up being particularly excessive and compulsive in individuals with ASD (Mesibov and Sreckovic, 2017).
- Numerous cases where the individual with ASD has been found to have large collections of pornographic material (e.g. involving children) (as part of the ritualistic nature of ASD) with thousands of files not even opened.



# ASD and Child Pornography

- Unaware of the broader issues like where and how they got those files, who else might be able to access them and what the consequences (and impact on) are for the minors in the images they are viewing.
- Because of their literal view of the world, they would not consider that something that is illegal could be so freely available on the internet.
- Media fraught with marketing materials with risky images of teenage models or images where they have made the older models look “barely legal”. Such images can be confusing for the individual with ASD, making it more difficult to determine what is illegal pornography (Mesibov & Sreckovic, 2017).







# Clinical Utility of Risk Assessments for Individuals with ASD

- Sex offender risk assessments are crucial for informing appropriate and effective strategies for individual offender management (e.g. community management) (Grubin, 2008).
- These risk assessments have not been normed for individuals with ASD. They also have not been normed for people whose only offense is viewing child pornography (Sugrue, 2017).
- Forces clinicians to rely on published literature which is limited in relation to ASD and child pornography in particular. Research based on neurotypicals frequently has to be extrapolated based on clinicians' and other health professionals' knowledge and understanding of ASD (Sugrue, 2017).





# Considerations when Assessing Risk in this Group

- There is an assumption that the level of risk is associated with the number of images that the individual has accumulated or the nature of the content. This is because it is believed by some that the more images, the greater the obsession, and they are more at risk of acting on these urges as a result (Sugrue, 2017).
- **However, studies do not support this** (Stabenow, 2011).
- They do not take into consideration the relationship between the volume of collected pornography and the compulsive and obsessive features of ASD.
- Looking at extreme sexual material is not always a reflection of the presence of deviant sexuality. No research which indicates that extreme sexual content is predictive of dangerousness (Osborn et al., 2010). It can be what is referred to as “counterfeit deviance” (e.g. naïve curiosity) in individuals with ASD Their curiosity, unrestrained by social or legal taboos, of which they are unaware, leads them to view images of “underage” (i.e. younger than 18-years old) girls who are nearly their own age and years older than the level of their own social adaptation skills (Mahoney, 2009, p. 1).

# Conventional Sex Offender Treatment and ASD

- Conventional sex offender treatment focuses predominantly on group therapy. There is a focus on the offender's understanding of his offending pattern, learning about thinking errors, practicing empathic responses to the victims and stopping deviant thoughts and fantasies. Sugrue (2017) argues that this style of treatment (which can be effective with neurotypicals) is not suitable for individuals with ASD.
- A specialised treatment which includes very explicit sex education with a focus on learning “specific responses to specific situations” is needed for individuals with ASD (Griffiths et al., 2009).
- Repetition is also important in treatment for individuals with ASD due to their difficulty in understanding abstract concepts (Klin et al., 1995).
- Urgent need for autism-specific training in this field. For instance, for individuals with ASD on diversion programmes, there would need to be explicit training on the consequences of child pornography (Mesibov and Sreckovic, 2017).

# Access to Sex and Sexuality Education

- Lack of support and services (in schools, etc) to help autistic adults with ASD develop the necessary skills to help them understand the social nuances of dating, intimacy and relationships further exacerbate these difficulties faced by individuals with ASD (MacKenzie, 2018).
- Adolescents with ASD frequently do not have links with extensive peer groups where informal discussions relating to sex occur (Mehzabin & Stokes, 2011).
- Less likely to gain knowledge about sex from their parents or teachers. (Gougeon, 2010).





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## A legal analysis of Australian criminal cases involving defendants with autism spectrum disorder charged with online sexual offending



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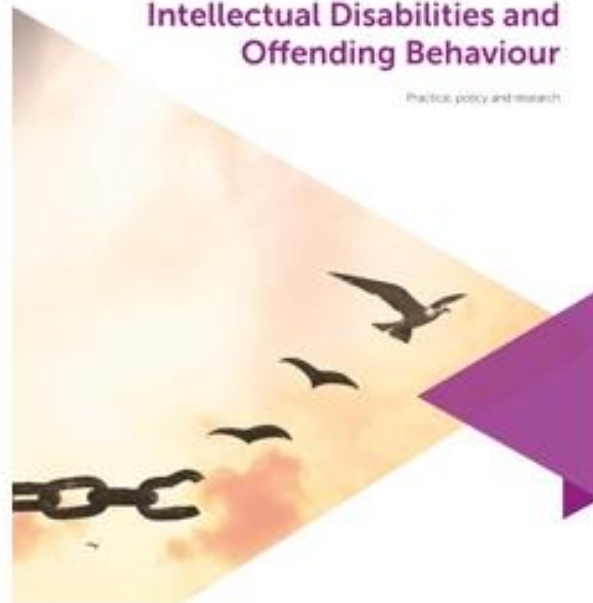
### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Autism spectrum disorders  
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Sexual offending  
Child exploitation material  
Legal discourse  
Judicial decisions

### ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the symptomology of the small number of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) charged with online sexual offenses in Australia is established during legal arguments and conceived by the judiciary to impact legal liability and offending behavior. This study aims to provide empirical support for the proposition that judicial discourses regarding the connection between ASD and online sexual offending, including conduct related to child exploitation material (CEM), have little bearing on overall questions of criminal liability or the use of alternative penal dispositions. It does so by exploring a sample of nine recent Australian criminal cases, involving ten rulings, that examine how evidence of ASD is raised in legal arguments in ways that suggest a diagnosed condition may have contributed significantly to the alleged wrongdoing. We conclude by suggesting current Australian judicial practice requires more sensitivity to the impact of clinical factors associated with ASD in shaping alternative supervisory and non-custodial dispositions for individuals convicted of online sexual offenses.



## Case Report: Autism Spectrum Disorder Symptomology and Child Pornography

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Manuscript ID	JIDOB-11-2019-0026.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Child pornography, Indecent child images, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's syndrome, Criminal Justice System, Online-offending



# Rare instances of individuals with autism supporting or engaging in terrorism

---

Lino Faccini and Clare S. Allely

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Clare S. Allely is a Lecturer in Psychology at the School of Health Sciences, University of Salford, Manchester, UK and an Affiliate Member of the Gillberg Neuropsychiatry Centre, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden.

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – *The prevalence of individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) being associated with terroristic threats, lone wolf terrorism or affiliating with terroristic groups is rare. This paper aims to discuss this issue.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *However, several cases are presented, where individuals with autism are involved in making a naïve, empty terroristic threat or uttering serious serial terroristic threats. Other cases are also presented of individuals being at risk for an abduction or being used by a terrorist group, and finally committing an act of domestic lone wolf terrorism.*

**Findings** – *Essential to the analysis was establishing a functional connection between autism-based deficits and the terroristic threats, terrorism, and when to not criminalize naïve, empty terroristic threats or acts.*

**Originality/value** – *Currently, tools available to law enforcement and prosecutors exploit the vulnerabilities and liabilities which arise as a result of group interactions, a “preventive” approach to terrorism that is not applicable to the solitary, “lone wolf” terrorist. There has been relatively little research (including case studies) examining individuals with ASD who engage in terrorism. For instance, when dealing with an individual with ASD who is charged with terrorism, it is crucial to consider how the diagnosis of autism may have presented as a contextual vulnerability, and to make sure that justice, rehabilitation and management, are informed by an understanding of the person’s diagnosis of ASD.*

**Keywords** *Asperger’s syndrome, Autism spectrum disorder, Terrorism, Domestic lone wolf terrorism, Lone wolf terrorism, Path to intended and terroristic violence*

**Paper type** *Case study*

# Suicide Bomber or Directed Lone Wolf Attacker: Case of Nicky Reilly

- Nicky Reilly (18), diagnosed with AS. Liked to collect memorabilia regarding James Bond, and preferred to surf the internet rather than socialize with others.
- In 2002, he became a practicing Muslim, & would attend local mosques and events by Exeter University's Islamic Society.
- After his girlfriend left him, he befriended a group of Muslim men.
- Became obsessed with martyrdom and with the Twin Tower attacks; he had posters of the attacks on his wall, and as wallpaper on his computer.
- History of suicide attempts including a drug overdose, the slitting of his wrists, and cutting his arms at the age of 16.



COMMENTARY

# The Need for a Structured Approach to Violence Risk Assessment in Autism

Alexander Westphal, MD, PhD, and Clare Allely, PhD

The relationship between autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and violence is poorly understood. Several violence risk factors are either modified by or are unique to ASD; clinicians conducting violence risk assessment of people with ASD must consider these factors. An ASD-specific risk assessment tool is clearly needed. In the absence of this, clinicians often use risk assessment tools designed for other populations, highlighting the importance of establishing their predictive validity in people with ASD. Girardi and colleagues have taken a very important step in this process in their paper, "Assessing the Risk of Inpatient Violence in Autism Spectrum Disorder," by examining whether the Historical Clinical Risk Management-20, Version 3, can predict violence in male patients with ASD in a forensic setting. Further research is needed to design a risk assessment tool specific to ASD and its unique features.

**J Am Acad Psychiatry Law 47(4) online, 2019. DOI:10.29158/JAAPL.003896-19**

# The need to adapt risk assessment tools for offenders with ASD

- Urgent need for good practice guidelines in order to assess risk in individuals with a diagnosis of ASD (Murphy, 2013).
- Such an “ASD sensitive risk assessment guide” would comprise of both the factors which may increase the vulnerability of individuals with ASD to engage in offending behaviour (e.g. communication; cognitive and sensory impairments; social awareness, vulnerability, sensitivities, POs, unusual interests, anxiety provoking situations and obsessions or compulsions) and the factors that may be protective (e.g. an immediate environment which is well structured and unambiguous). (Murphy, 2010a; Gunasekaran, 2012).
- Majority of risk assessments explore a number of factors which are not relevant for offenders with ASD (e.g. presence of delusions, hallucinations, compliance with medication, use of illicit drugs and exacerbating psychotic symptoms) (Gunasekaran, 2012).

# Conclusion

- The internet coupled with sexuality can result in what Mark Mahoney calls a “lethal combination” for individuals with ASD (Mahoney, 2009).
- There is a general consensus that adolescents with ASD need to be able to access education about sexuality and relationships needs.
- The education would consist of the core topics covered in standard sex education programmes (e.g., sexual development, safe sex, contraception, and sexually-transmitted infections) in addition to topics such as: social skills development (e.g., empathy, perspective-taking) and social conventions relating to flirting and dating (Gilmour, Smith, & Schalomon, 2014).
- It is possible for individuals with ASD to learn that child pornography is illegal. However, they need to be explicitly taught this. To the authors’ knowledge, there is currently no sexual education curriculum which is designed for individuals with ASD which includes the issue of child pornography (Mesibov & Sreckovic, 2017).



# Experiences of prison inmates with autism spectrum disorders and the knowledge and understanding of the spectrum amongst prison staff: a review

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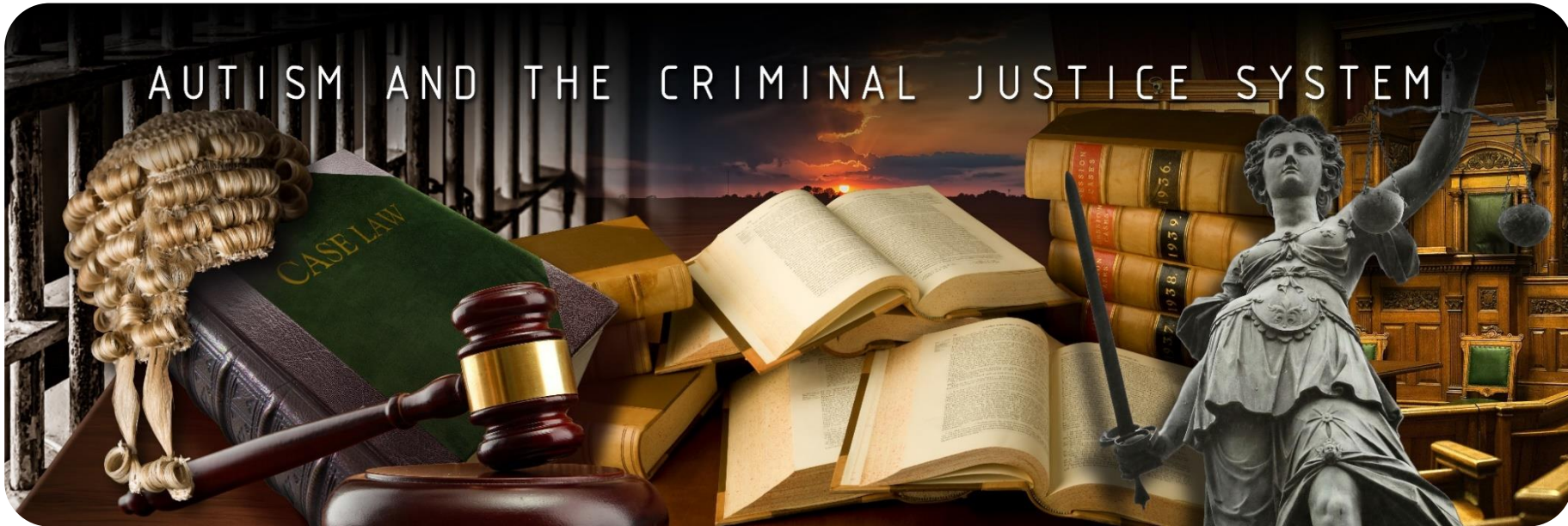
## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to explore the research which has examined the link between autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and offending behaviour and the impact of prison on individuals with ASDs. Studies suggest that inmates with ASDs may be at an increased risk of bullying, confrontations, exploitation, anxiety and social isolation as a result of their ASD traits such as obsessions, social naivety and impaired empathy.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *An extensive review of the literature.*

**Findings** – *The review identifies a modest amount of studies (n = 4) which have explored the experience of individuals with ASD in prison and highlights that inmates with ASDs face a multitude of problems when they enter prison. Despite an extensive literature search only one study was identified which investigated the*

# AUTISM AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



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