

The value of labelling autism

Stuart Neilson

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It's a Boy!



“What is it?”

Some incorrect answers:

- A human
- 3 ½ kg
- Healthy
- Stuart

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Right Interphallic Pain



N_{ormal} F_{or} N_{orfolk}
F_{unny-L}ooking K_{id}
N_{on-A}ttender
N_{on-C}ompliant

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Different

- Freak, weirdo
- Egg-head, boffin, Mr Bean
- Queer, homo, pervert, paedo
- “Go back to your own country”

... not
one of us

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Non-national



“Non-national is a term used to describe a person who is not from Ireland, though they may have Irish citizenship. It regularly features in the media when discussing people from outside Ireland.”

(Wikipedia)

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Psychiatric patient (in– and out–)

- Anxiety, depression, paranoid, traits of OCD, signs of psychosis
- Treatment-resistant, refractive, difficult
- “Sabotaging your own recovery”, “not trying”, “not wanting to get better”

Psychiatry blames the patient for failure – any other medical discipline would seek out a better label and a meaningful intervention

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Autism spectrum disorder (Asperger syndrome)

ASD characterised by deficits in:

- Social interaction
- Social communication
- Social imagination
- A loner, aloof, snobbish, arrogant, emotionally cold
- Pedantic, talking out of turn, poor taste and judgement
- Obsessive, rigid thinking, fixed routines, upset by change

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Not guilty



Punshon, C., Skirrow, P. and Murphy, G. (2009)

The 'not guilty verdict': Psychological reactions to a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome in adulthood.
Autism, 13(3):265–283.

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“Autistic person” – or a “person with autism”

- Disability is a process of systematic social exclusion based on impairment
- Disability is a political, rights-based perspective of the effect of impairment
- The neurodiverse continuum encompasses both autism and so-called 'normality'
- Including Asperger syndrome within the autism spectrum in DSM-5 may promote rights

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Disabled

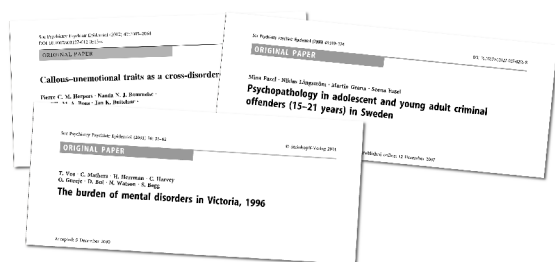


- Disability Act 2005
- Equal Status Act, 2000
- Equality Act 2004
- Employment Equality Act, 1998

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Burden, callous-unemotional, criminal...



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Sufferer

“[Lionel] Messi suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, 'a mild form of Autism' that allows him to concentrate and focus more than most people ... Messi's affliction has shown the same traits seen in Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton, and have all been positive in a footballing sense and has brought a lot of joy to the fans.” (*Inside Spanish Football*)

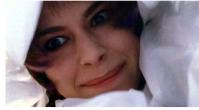
“Many parents are unaware that their child suffers from autism.” (*Saudi Gazette*)

“The man, 27, suffered with a fixation for blue flashing lights and would buy a new SIM card or use the local payphone to summon emergency service vehicles.” (*Metropolitan Police*)

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Snow Cake (2006) – Linda and Vivienne 'suffering' from a fixation with flashing lights



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Self-identification (the UK census)

In a survey respondents are invited to select, from a list of categories, the ethnic group to which they consider they belong. There appear to be two factors determining the ethnic group that is recorded for each respondent:

- their own choice of how they view their own ethnicity, and
- the list of options are presented to them.

The first consideration is the most straightforward: the ethnic group that each person chooses as his or her own is intrinsically the ethnic group of self-identity, rather than being ascribed by anyone else.

The second consideration is apparently not so clear-cut. The ethnic group options presented to the respondent are not completely ones of self-identity, since the respondent is likely to have had no say in the names or the number of the different alternative ethnic groups presented to them. Therefore, the freedom the respondent has to select their own group is constrained and influenced by the options presented to them.

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“I am not ethnic” (census, 1991)

Ireland, 2011: What is your ethnic or cultural background (Choose ONE section from A to D, then the appropriate box.)

- A White
 - 1 Irish
 - 2 Irish Traveller
 - 3 Any other White background
- B Black or Black Irish
 - 4 African
 - 5 Any other Black background
- C Asian or Asia
 - 6 Chinese
 - 7 Any other Asian background
- D Other, including mixed background
 - 8 Other, write in description

UK, 2001: What is your ethnic group? (Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background)

- White
 - 1 English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
 - 2 Irish
 - 3 Any other White background, please describe
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
 - 4 Any other White background, please describe
 - 5 White and Black Caribbean
 - 6 White and Black African
 - 7 White and Asian
 - 8 Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe
- Asian/Asian British
 - 9 Indian
 - 10 Pakistani
 - 11 Bangladeshi
 - 12 Chinese
 - 13 Any other Asian background, please describe
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
 - 14 African
 - 15 Caribbean
 - 16 Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe
- Other ethnic group
 - 17 Arab
 - 18 Any other ethnic group, please describe

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“The drugs are just the same”

Amitriptyline, Anafranil, Anxicalm, Buscopan, Clonactil, Diazepam, Effexor, Gamanil, Largactil, Librium, Lithium carbonate, L-Tryptophan, Lustral, Lyrica, Mefenamic acid, Mobic, Priadel, Sertraline, Spasmonal, Stilnoct, Tradol, Venlafaxine, Xanax, Zimovane

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Dominion



- **Genesis 1:26** And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and **let them have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
- **Genesis 2:19-20** And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and **whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was its name.** And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.

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A Sculptor of Lions



Sir, as a census enumerator in the 1981 Census we received in my area this response to **Q12 - Occupation?** The reply was **“I am a sculptor of lions”**. To the next question: **Please describe the nature of the work done**, the respondent wrote **“I chip away all the bits of stone that are not lion”**.

Roderick Hunt, Abingdon, Oxon. (*Letters to the Editor, The Times, 31 March 2011*)

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