**It was just an honest mistake…**

Misunderstandings are basic part of everyday lives for ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition) individuals. Inherently due to how we think differently to PNTs (predominant neurotype) and vice versa. On the surface some of the misunderstandings between autistic persons and PNTs can be quite funny. When you stop to look into it the misunderstandings between autistic persons and PNTs, it is a huge factor in the frequent misery autistic individuals experience throughout our lives.

During personal interactions between ASC individuals and PNTs, misunderstandings often play havoc with people’s happiness and views of each other. With either ASC individuals accidentally hurting people they care about, by other person misinterpreting our actions. Or often PNTs offend us with their illogical actions.

Far too frequently ASC individuals experience bullying during their lives either from traditional violence to passive forms such as an ASC person being ostracised from a group by PNT members. Often PNTs treat us like that because our actions are largely different and alien to PNT customs and rules. Sadly it is true people often fear what is different to them and ASC individuals typically are different to PNTs.

The global misunderstandings about autism are lamentably, heavily entrenched into PNT culture and society. This is shown in almost every way PNT culture treats us and portrays us.

The PNT misunderstanding of the huge variation in how autism manifests itself in people, PNTs do not fully appreciate the spectrum nature of autism of how every ASC individual is different to each other. PNTs fail to take into account how autism can manifest so differently in men, women, all ages and all “functioning” abilities.

This is particularly evident in the well documented issues around diagnosing ASC in females of all ages. This is due to various factors, with common misunderstandings playing a significant factor. With misunderstandings such as ASC is only found in men (fuelled by 1:4 or 1:8 ratio of ASC females to ASC males) to how ASC manifests in women. Typically with women seeking an ASC diagnoses are referred for other diagnoses instead such as Borderline Personality Disorder instead of ASC.

Even males have issues getting a diagnosis as some NHS Trusts refuse to fund diagnosis in adults. It is shocking to think that even decades after Leo Kanner’s infantile autism and toxic parenting have been discredited some people in authority still treat autism as it in only found children.

A lack of ASC individual’s involvement with all levels of research has undoubtedly impaired the research into ASC and subsequently how PNT culture views us. The common misconception that ASC individuals lack empathy or do not have emotions is arguably the most harmful misconception PNTs have about us. I seriously think Simon Baron-Cohen was not friends with many ASC individuals when he thought up with the Empathy Deficit theory of ASC. In my own experience ASC individuals typically have *too much* emotion compared to PNTs (our emotions tend to be more intense than PNTs, even if some ASC individuals express a smaller range of emotions than PNTs); frequently we cannot control our emotions or our actions due to them. ASC individuals do care for people in their lives, often we simply struggle to express that to our loved ones. When you couple that to the communication barriers between ASC individuals and PNTs, it is all too easy for PNTs to think that we lack empathy. It is very telling about how PNTS view other PNT actions, that they label us as lacking empathy because we accidentally hurt them.

The misunderstanding of a lack of emotions in ASC individuals has also wasted time, energy and resources of even well-meaning organisations like NAS and Autism East Midlands. Such as both organisations supporting PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance). An individual’s actions described as PDA are common among the ASC population to the point that PDA does not officially exist; if you have a PDA diagnosis often you instead have High Functioning Autism (HFA) or Asperger’s Syndrome (I do not approve of terminologies such as “functioning” and “ability” to describe anyone. As I believe primarily it is the environment a person is placed that makes them disabled). PDA is not accepted by the NHS due to this. It means that charities such as NAS and Autism East Midlands are wasting charity funds supporting PDA instead of supporting ASC on whole. With important charities like NAS greatly pushing the awareness of PDA among PNTs, it is further distracting PNTs away from all the myriad manifestations of ASC. NAS are in effect, indirectly making it harder for ASC individuals to get the recognition and support they need because an individual’s actions and traits are not recognised as ASC by PNT clinicians and organisations. These troubles will usually be distressing to the ASC individual.

The PNT belief that ASC individuals are lesser beings than PNTs, as we do not have empathy, emotions or that we are somehow mentally retarded have fuelled the misunderstanding ASC is naturally a disability or disorder. These misconceptions are not only harmful, but also silly as mental retardation is not part of the diagnostic criteria for ASC in both ICD10 and DSM5.

The popular misunderstanding that ASC is a disability dominates the scientific and academic agenda around ASC research with decades and millions of pounds being spent in the Western world trying to find genetic causes for ASC. Despite all this effort the best the PNTs have discovered is the obvious, there are no common genes that cause ASC. This is to be expected when you consider the spectrum nature of ASC and sheer numbers of people with ASC (about 700’000 in the UK). ASC clearly runs in families and in many respects are hereditary.

I find it insulting to be told I am disabled as I think differently to PNTs, largely because of my genes. It is no different to PNTs telling a person they are disabled because they are a woman or their skin colour is black; such actions are illegal now in most Western countries. So why is it acceptable for PNTs to label us as disabled?

These misconceptions are very dangerous to both ASC individuals and PNTs; just look at what happened with the false link of the MMR vaccine causes ASC in vaccinated children.

PNTs use the misunderstanding of ASC causing genes to not invest in support and interventions for ASC individuals as ASC support services typically do not make a profit. Governments funding research into ASC causing genes, use it as smokescreen to avoid taking responsibility of properly supporting the ASC population in their countries; why would they make our lives less stressful when they are going to cure us in 10 years?

All the research into ASC causing genes allows PNTs to get away with the systematic oppression of the ASC population. The problem is with the ASC individual for having faulty genes and not with PNT society for not making enough adjustments for us. If PNT society were making enough adjustments for us; our suicide rates would not be higher than the average suicide rate or our employment rates would not be below the disabled average employment rates.

Despite all the misunderstandings PNTs have about ASC, progress is slowly being made towards dispelling these myths PNTs have about us. For example the ASC prevalence rate in the US has dropped from 1/1000 to 1/68.

We ASC individuals may also be assisting PNTs creating misunderstandings of us. This is as when ASC individuals are involved in research discussing what it is like to be an ASC individual, it is primarily ASC individuals who have HFA or Asperger’s Syndrome who participate in the studies. This is a biased sample of the ASC population, as the sample lacks ASC individuals who are “low functioning”, this is as usually “low functioning” ASC individuals cannot express themselves enough to describe their experiences. This means that there is a lack of evidence describing what it is like to be a “low functioning” ASC individual.

As an ASC individual we simply cannot escape the misery misunderstandings cause in our personal lives or how misunderstandings fuel the systematic oppression of us by PNT culture. This all too frequently has horrible effects on ASC individuals, negatively affecting our mental and physical health and our quality of life.

It was just an honest mistake… Or was it?