



Self-presentation in children and adolescents with high-functioning ASD

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Background

- Impression management is a vital part of everyday social interactions.
- Individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may lack cognitive skills (e.g., perspective taking) and/or social motivation that are fundamental to a successful self-presentation.
- Impression management by adults with ASD appears less sensitive to others' social evaluation (Izuma et al., 2011).

Objective

Examining self-presentation skills in children and adolescents with high-functioning ASD (HFASD) compared to typically developing (TD) peers.

Research question

Are children and adolescents with HFASD less strategic in the way they present themselves compared to TD peers?

Participants

- 203 participants with HFASD (174 boys; 29 girls)
- 65 TD participants (55 boys, 10 girls)
- Mean age: 13.7 years (HFASD); 12.1 years (TD)
- Age range: 6.0 - 20.5 years
- Mean receptive verbal IQ: 104 (HFASD); 107 (TD)
- Verbal IQ range: 72 - 132

Measures

Self-presentation

- **Baseline Condition:** Self-presenting to an interviewer, while no incentive or goal is provided
- **Self-promotion Condition:** Self-presenting to an interviewer, while incentive and goal (prize-winning game) is provided
- **Hypothetical self-promotion condition:** Self-presenting in a hypothetical situation; incentive and goal is provided

1.) Baseline condition



My name is Anke. I am 31 years old. I live in Amsterdam. Can you tell me something about yourself?

2.) Self-promotion condition



Based on what you tell me, you may be selected for a PRIZE-WINNING GAME. Can you tell me something about yourself?

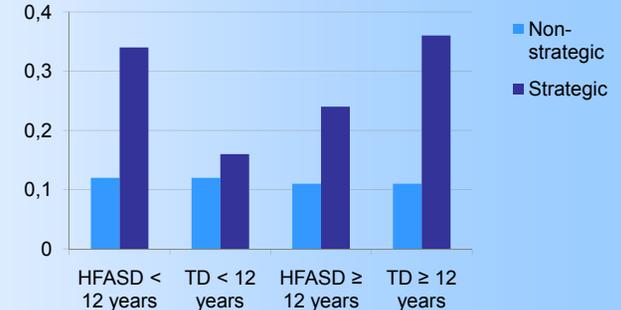
3.) Hypothetical self-promotion condition

You could earn a nice sum of money doing chores for the neighbors. Your new neighbor introduces him/herself to you. What would you tell him/her about yourself?

Coding

- **Positive self-statement** = self-statement including a positive affect, abilities, or socially desirable attributes.
- **Strategic self-statement** = positive self-statement that increases the chance of being selected for a prize-winning game (or doing chores for money in hypothetical self-promotion condition).
 - Example: 'I enjoy playing with other children'
- **Non-strategic self-statement** = positive self-statement that does not increase the chance of being selected for a prize-winning game (or doing chores for money).
 - Example: 'I like trains'

Proportion positive self-statements in self-promotion conditions



Results

- A MANOVA showed a **Condition effect**: Participants used more positive self-statements in the self-promotion condition compared to baseline.
- A MANOVA showed a **Group x Age x Strategy effect**: Children with HFASD used significantly *more* strategic self-statements compared to TD children, yet adolescents with HFASD used significantly *fewer* strategic self-statements compared to TD adolescents (see figure).

Conclusions

1. Condition manipulation was successful: When an incentive and goal was added, participants gave a more positive self-presentation.
2. Counter to our expectations, children with HFASD were able to present themselves strategically. Thus, when sufficiently motivated, they can present themselves quite favorably.
3. A less strategic self-presentation in adolescents compared to children with HFASD may be the product of reduced social motivation in adolescence.
4. Future research should focus on developmental changes in social motivation in HFASD.

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