

A labour process analysis of the exclusion of adults with Asperger syndrome from the workplace

Dr. James Richards
Lecturer in HRM
Heriot-Watt University
School of Management & Languages
Mary Burton Building
Edinburgh
EH14 4AS

Telephone: 0131 451 3043
Email: J.Richards@hw.ac.uk

A paper presented to the 27th International Labour Process Conference – Edinburgh 6-8 April 2009

Abstract: By comparison with the general employment experiences of adults with a recognised disability, adults with Asperger syndrome – a ‘social’ disability – have been found to have extreme problems when seeking and holding down long-term employment opportunities. The eclectic literature that explores this emergent problem suggests the widespread exclusion of individuals with Asperger syndrome from the workplace is a multi-dimensional and highly complex problem, and the ‘problem’ is unlikely to be resolved without input from many professional fields of practice. However, a key dimension to the problem is that until now problems of exclusion have been examined without drawing on a mass of social science literature based on the critical examination of work organisations. As such, this paper investigates the problem from a labour process perspective – that is, how a labour process based on prioritising profits and targets is likely to conflict with attempts to make necessary and ongoing adjustments for such individuals. The main approach and method used in the paper involves analysis of secondary qualitative data. Particular attention is given to the role that socially organised resistance to organisational control, associated with informal groups rather than trade unions, plays in the exclusion of individuals with Asperger syndrome from the workplace. The key findings suggest the benefits of specialist intervention practices, usually provided by external consultants, is quickly neutralised where employers knowingly or unknowingly marginalise or undermine day-to-day socially organised attempts to support such employees. Recommendations are made on the character and direction by which future research in this area should progress.

Introduction

According to the National Autistic Society, Asperger syndrome is a form of autism, which is a lifelong disability that affects how a person makes sense of the world, processes information and relates to other people (National Autistic Society, 2009). Asperger syndrome is a 'hidden disability' in that it is impossible to tell that someone has the condition from outward appearances. A person with Asperger syndrome, moreover, is likely to have varying levels of difficulties with social interaction – widely known as a 'triad of impairments' (Wing and Gould, 1979). Compared to other forms of autism, however, people with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence, and it is argued that with the right support and encouragement, adults with Asperger syndrome can live full and independent lives (National Autistic Society, 2009).

More specifically, given the right support and encouragement, it is believed that adults with Asperger syndrome are capable of negotiating key employment-related social situations, such as job interviews, teamworking, and the broader social conventions of work organisations (Attwood, 2007). However, while it is estimated that the average unemployment rate for adults with a recognised disability is around 50 per cent, more than 80 per cent of adults with 'higher functioning' forms of autism are out of work (full or part-time) at anyone time (Barnard *et al.*, 2001). The main consequence of neglecting the needs of adults with Asperger syndrome when seeking employment is not just felt in terms of missing out on a pool of particular talent (National Autistic Society, 2005), it is the far higher costs of treating secondary mental health problems due to exclusion (Meyer, 2001; Jarbrink *et al.*, 2007). Estimates suggest there are around 300,000 adults in the UK with high functioning forms of autism, such as Asperger syndrome (Barnard *et al.*, 2001), and in this sense, represents a disproportionate burden on society. In trying to respond to this problem, a wide-range of writers has proposed solutions to a very much neglected feature of work and employment.

Solutions put forward so far include entrepreneurial approaches (Austin *et al.*, 2008), self-help and employer guidance manuals (Meyer, 2001; Fast *et al.*, 2004; Grandin and Duffy, 2004; Hawkins, 2004; Johnston, 2005; National Autistic Society, 2004; National Autistic Society, 2005), lobbyist reports and awareness raising texts (Barnard *et al.*, 2001; Beardon and Edmonds, 2007; Bliss and Edmonds, 2008; Hendrickx, 2008), and employment support programmes (Gilson, 1998; Mawhood and Howlin, 1999; Nesbitt, 2000; Howlin *et al.*, 2004; Schaller and Yang, 2005; Lattimore *et al.*, 2006; Garcia-

Villamizar and Hughes, 2007; Jarbrink *et al.*, 2007). Yet, the extant literature has been broadly criticised for having one common failing – a failure to engage with a mass of social science literature on the realities of employment and work organisations (Roulstone, 2005). In effect, the problem is commonly examined without recognising the nature of work organisations, or when work organisations are recognised, problems are described rather than understood in a critical organisational analytical framework. The view taken in this paper is that a social science-based critical analysis of the problem is urgently required as a means to strengthening and balancing the extant knowledge on Asperger syndrome and employment. The main aim, therefore, of the current research is to ask the following question: what can labour process analysis add to our understandings of why adults with Asperger syndrome face an abnormally high level of exclusion from employment?

To conduct such a study, the paper is organised as follows. Immediately following is a brief discussion of labour process analysis. In the second section the existing literature is more broadly appraised in relation to the problems adults with Asperger syndrome face when seeking or attempting to hold down long-tenured employment. The third section sets out and discusses the methodological approach taken in the current study. The analysis is presented in the final two sections, divided into a presentation of the data, followed by an overall discussion of the findings.

The suitability of labour process analysis

Many texts about work organisations have a heavy emphasis on providing a stream of advice and solutions to managers, a process that tends to undermine the generation of valid and realistic knowledge of organisational processes (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). One particular outcome from the plethora of ‘how to’ texts has been the development of a range of analytical perspectives designed to see through the ‘common sense’ and parochial interests of management theorists. One means to analysing organisations that goes beyond marginalising the role and interests of the employee is labour process analysis. Labour process analysis sets out to develop an understanding of the work organisation, and employee responses to it, by placing it in the context of institutionalised structures of domination and control (Bolton, 2005: 29). Marxian principles are central to labour process analysis in that, even under sophisticated human relations regimes, it is presupposed that the employers who operate in capitalistic economies retain a propensity

to constrain the employee's potential for self-realisation (Watson, 2003). As such, central to the current study is an examination of the ongoing social organisation of conflict and order between employer and employee (Edwards and Scullion, 1982) as a key, yet neglected factor in the exclusion of adults with Asperger syndrome from the workplace. However, what is meant by 'socially organised resistance' in this research paper should be taken to mean alliances between colleagues and managers to support vulnerable individuals on a day-to-day basis, rather than alliances and broader 'struggles' associated with trade unionism. Therefore, the view taken in the current research is that labour process analysis should be particularly adept at examining this emergent problem.

Although such an approach is unprecedented in this particular domain, there is little doubt that labour process analysis retains a central place in organisation studies (Delbridge, 2006). For instance, in recent years, labour process analysis has been applied, almost exclusively via qualitative methods, to work organisations in the study of ageism (Glover and Branine, 1997), middle managers and organisational re-structuring (McCann *et al.*, 2008), call centre employment and globalisation (Taylor and Bain, 2005), insecure work in the film industry (Blair, 2001), knowledge workers put to work under new government initiatives (Smith *et al.*, 2008), increased institutionalisation of academic labour under public sector reform (Syman *et al.*, 2008), hidden restrictions placed upon software developers (Barrett, 2001), and, the design of physical environments for the purpose of increasing organisational efficiency (Barnes, 2007). A central feature of such studies is the exercise of control by the employer, or that employers must constantly control how labour is put to work in order to respond to market pressures (Thompson, 1989). As such, there is clear reason to presuppose that employer attempts to control the labour process, even if unintended, will conflict with the needs and adjustments required when employing an individual with Asperger syndrome. However, it is uncertain exactly how the employer-employee dynamic works given that many employees with Asperger syndrome have a social disability and often poorly supported by internal and external employment specialists. Therefore, labour process analysis is likely to be strong in this area because a key feature of this approach is role that the social organisation of employee opposition plays in the employer accommodation of employee interests. Labour process analysis is also all the more an appropriate perspective given that the key empirical studies that exists in this domain are typically based on the application of rich and colourful qualitative data.

Existing explanations for the exclusion of adults with Asperger Syndrome from the workplace

Key writers would be the first to admit that far more research needs to be conducted across all sub-fields of this domain (Attwood, 2007). The literature that has emerged in this domain, despite being eclectic and varying in scholarly tone, is fairly expansive and collectively presents a broad, yet typically uncritical account of the reasons why many adults with Asperger syndrome are excluded from the workplace. A review of the literature, as such, reveals a wide-range of related and loosely related dimensions to the problem and each factor has a particular effect on the problem as a whole. The factors discussed are not weighted in any particular way, although some factors are clearly more difficult to resolve than others. Moreover, as will be plain to see, the exclusion of adults with Asperger syndrome from the workplace should be seen as a series of loosely connected failures, rather than one problem that can be resolved by one particular type of approach or expertise.

There is little doubt that the most telling factor that relates to the main problem is the *underlying condition of Asperger syndrome*. Problems that are likely to occur in the working environment, as a result of Asperger syndrome, are discussed in detail across the eclectic range of literature specifically dedicated to this subject. Examples of the problems include higher than usual propensity for the employee with Asperger syndrome to lose his or her temper, to be viewed by colleagues as arrogant, have difficulties asking for help and being assertive (Meyer, 2001). Moreover, many individuals with Asperger syndrome have a sensory system that makes it difficult to cope with everyday workplace sensations, such as office chatter or flickering strip-lighting (Grandin and Duffy, 2004; Beardon and Edmonds, 2007). Employees with Asperger syndrome are also likely to require very clear, comprehensive and linear instructions (Fast *et al.*, 2004), or take a literal view of the contract of employment (National Autistic Society, 2005). Further problems include being ‘virtually oblivious of office politics’ (Johnston, 2005), being teased and blaming others in conflict situations (Attwood, 2007), and, the taking of extreme measures, such as absence or resigning, when overly stressed and sensitised on work time (Hendrickx, 2008). The condition itself is therefore a very real barrier to successful employment.

Non-clinical problems faced by adults with Asperger syndrome in workplace are said to begin with the *transition period between school and employment*. The key difficulty involves a shift from a steady and familiar routine set around achieving clear educational-based goals to one that involves suddenly competing in far from predictable labour markets and workplace routines. A specific factor to the problem at this stage is the widespread failure of mainstream schools to adjust generic models that prepare adolescents for employment to account for adolescents who have Asperger syndrome (Patterson and Rafferty, 2001). Furthermore, while adolescents and young adults with Asperger syndrome are likely to perform at a level at school comparable with their non-Asperger syndrome peers, on leaving school and college the quality of life for young adults with Asperger syndrome can quickly diminish (Jennes-Coussens *et al.*, 2006). Leaving school, as such, tends to lead to the abrupt end of a particular type of specialist and social support, and a new era typically defined by individuals with Asperger syndrome becoming isolated and overly dependent on family and friends. In other words, significant and perhaps intractable employment problems can be created before the individual has even entered the workplace for the first time.

Once seeking or in employment a further key problem typically emerges in that there is a *low availability and under-funding for specialist employment support*. While research suggests there is significant economic and therapeutic gain to be had from national and local governments investing in specialist employment support (Jarbrink *et al.*, 2007), employment support programmes increase the cognitive functions in adults with autism (Garcia-Villamizar and Hughes, 2007), and typical employment levels of adults with Asperger syndrome increase to around 70 per cent (Mawhood and Howlin, 1999; Howlin *et al.*, 2005), the reality outwith artificial control group experiments is somewhat different. For instance, the National Autistic Society (2005) reports that *Prospects*, its employment support service, can only deal with a minority of the many of thousands of adults with Asperger syndrome. Indeed, it is estimated that only 10 per cent of adults with Asperger syndrome receive support at the interview stage and around 20 per cent receive some sort of specialist support when in employment (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007). In general, it tends to be the case that adults with Asperger syndrome suffer from a lack of understanding, support, respect and appropriate services in the employment domain (Bliss and Edmonds, 2008).

Even when support *per se* is available to the adult with Asperger syndrome, the provision of specialist support is far from guaranteed. For instance, it has been argued that *people with Asperger syndrome fit very uncomfortably with the usual disability population* (Fast *et al.*, 2004). As a consequence, early and some current practices designed to support adults with Asperger syndrome in the workplace reflect what, for many, is a ‘new’ disability. The main outcome of support evolving from more common disabilities is that such practices are often insufficiently designed to meet the needs of people with high intellectual ability (Mawhood and Howlin, 1999; Schaller and Young, 2005). What is more, even where specialist employment services exist, *adults with Asperger syndrome are often treated as a homogenous group* and end up with services that are not tailored to individual needs (Hendrickx, 2008). Similar criticisms are also aimed at employment or career specialists. Crucially, current research suggests matching adults with Asperger syndrome to a particular career path is often undermined by the *prejudices and ignorance of employment specialists* (Fast *et al.*, 2004). Further, even state employment agencies, which typically have far more resources than charities or other voluntary organisations, have been found to be equally ill-equipped to cope with the needs of adults with Asperger syndrome (Hawkins, 2004; Hendrickx, 2008). Even when appropriate support is provided to help adults with Asperger syndrome secure employment, attention is rarely given to fact that such individuals have *different on-the-job training needs* (Lattimore *et al.*, 2006). The lack of external specialist experience in dealing with such problems is also made more difficult as it has been noted that many work organisations have never employed a person with Asperger syndrome. In reality, there are *few precedents in most organisations for employing people with Asperger syndrome* (Austin *et al.*, 2008). As such, without precedence there are likely to be few workplace supports in place to help with the transition (Hawkins, 2004). What follows in such situations is that organisations without a history of supported employment are more likely to place the burden of making employment successful on the individual with Asperger syndrome (Nesbitt, 2000). Generally, the findings seem to suggest that managing employees with very special and individual needs, such as Asperger syndrome, is yet to emerge as a central or primary feature of human resource management.

A further distinct yet broad problematic area in the literature concerns the extent to which the employee can cope with the *nature of most work organisations*. As discussed previously, literature in this domain is limited, yet it should not be ignored as it provides

vital insights into the problem of exclusion. For instance, one view of the problem is that it involves putting people to work who otherwise might not be employable (Austin *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, as Meyer (2001) observes, adults with Asperger syndrome are in many ways unanticipated and uninvited guests in most work organisations. Fast *et al.* (2004), moreover, highlights how in many cases it is extremely difficult to find a fit between the individual and the organisation. Further problems identified in extant literature reveal evidence of intolerant bosses (Grandin and Duffy, 2004) and employees with Asperger syndrome having difficulties understanding the ‘unwritten rules’ of the organisation (National Autistic Society, 2005; Wilkinson, 2008). As a consequence, employees with Asperger syndrome are said to have great difficulties securing long-term employment (Barnard *et al.*, 2001). Intolerance *per se* may just be the outcome of organisations not allowing employees with Asperger syndrome sufficient time to process information in a manner that makes sense to them (Bliss and Edmonds, 2008). Organisations are also said to let adults with Asperger syndrome down because of a tendency to recruit and select on the basis of qualifications and not on a preview of how work is actually carried out in the work organisation (Hendrickx, 2008). Generally, chaotic working environments and hidden aspects of organisations, coupled with a lack of tolerance for individual idiosyncrasies and a lack of clarity in communications, appear to be key organisational factors in the exclusion of adults with Asperger syndrome from the workplace (Bliss and Edmonds, 2008). Indeed, empirical research suggests such difficulties are likely to be far more common when an organisation does not factor into its broader strategy previous experiences of employing adults with Asperger syndrome (Nesbitt, 2000). The value of such insights, therefore, is to suggest employers are in the habit of setting up adults with Asperger syndrome to fail in the jobs they are recruited into.

Further problems apparent in the employment of people with Asperger syndrome involve *dilemmas concerning disclosure*. Indeed, it is far from certain what would be best advice to give to an adult with Asperger syndrome in terms of who to inform, how much should be revealed, and what are the likely consequences of disclosure (Meyer, 2001). Moreover, it is *unclear how the employee with Asperger syndrome stands in terms of labour law*. In terms of the legalities of employing a person with Asperger syndrome, ‘reasonable adjustments’ are, of course, required, yet what is reasonable in this situation is not clear (Bliss and Edmonds, 2008). Taken together, these particular findings suggest

unreasonable burdens of uncertainty are too readily placed on the shoulders of vulnerable individuals.

Summary

The problem of adults with Asperger syndrome being widely excluded from employment is complex, yet even the lay person should be able to see that many of the factors that make up the main problem are almost certainly surmountable. Moreover, it is also likely to be the case that several of the identified factors may well be overcome or significantly diluted with the passage of time. However, other key factors are unlikely to be overcome in the near future, causing significant hindrance to the longer term employment prospects of adults with Asperger syndrome. Clearly, one aspect of the condition of Asperger syndrome is a matter for clinicians to contemplate. Similarly, further aspects of the problem are a concern for educationalists and awareness writers. As things stand currently, the problem is yet to be fully explored in context in which it occurs. Following the discussion of methodology, attempts are made at closing this gap in the research by using a labour process approach to analyse data previously gathered on Asperger syndrome and employment.

Methodology

The method adopted for the current research involves further analysis of existing qualitative datasets, or, interpretations, conclusions, or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first inquiries (Hakim, 1982). Data used in this paper comes from two key sources – a national report on the broader needs of adults with Asperger syndrome (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007 – see figure 1 and appendix 1), and, the findings of a smaller scale study on the same subject (Hendrickx, 2008 – see figure 1 and appendix 1). More specifically, data is recycled from qualitative research where adults with Asperger syndrome are, amongst many things, allowed to report and reflect on a range of both positive and negative experiences of key employment processes.

The preference for adopting this methodological approach is based on a simple premise – a convenient, sufficiently large, wide-ranging and reliable amount of data has already been compiled by several researchers and it is plainly evident, even from a cursory consultation of just a few key texts referenced in the current research, that the data in question can be used to investigate new and additional research questions (Heaton, 2004).

Author(s)	Data format
Beardon and Edmonds (2007: 124-149)	237 questionnaires (see appendix 1 for detail of questionnaire) on a range of issues, including employment (also education, friendship, accessing health services, public transport, accommodation)
Hendrickx (2008)	25 completed questionnaires or interviews on a range of issues (see appendix 1 for details), including employment

Figure 1: Details of datasets applied in this paper

There are many advantages associated with taking a secondary analysis approach in social research. Many of the advantages associated with secondary analysis of datasets, such as low costs, time saving, minimal or no ancillary support required (Kieckcolt and Nathan, 1985), or using secondary data to verify findings already obtained in primary research by the investigator (Black and Champion, 1976), were not relevant in this instance. Instead, key factors far more salient include the fact that that primary data can be reanalysed from a different theoretical perspective (Dale *et al.*, 1988 cited in Burton, 2000), the data available is characterised by being closely related to the theme of the current research (Proctor, 1996), and, it allows access to individuals who are normally fairly inaccessible to conventional approaches (Bryman, 1989). However, there is a range of factors that require some degree of attention when using secondary analysis of primary datasets. Relevant limiting factors in this situation include unique ethical issues raised when using secondary analysis in that there is a continuing and perhaps more intense need to maintain anonymity of the research participants (Proctor, 1996), datasets do not usually survive the passage of time (Bryman, 1989), not all datasets are of the same quality in terms of reliability and validity (Burton, 2000), datasets should not be used just because of availability (Black and Champion, 1976), and, the secondary analyst often has to analyse larger volumes of data than the primary analyst (Hakin, 1982). As a response to the limiting factors, the data presented in the following section has been selected and manipulated on the basis of retaining the high levels of anonymity afforded at the initial data collection stage, datasets used are taken from current studies, datasets are of similar quality and reliability, and, working with the two datasets requires only modest amounts of effort compared to what primary analysis could involve.

In terms of the re-analysis process, themes within core labour process analysis – such as, employer control and accommodation, and employee resistance and consent – were used to code the data, and provide an overall structure for the findings section. The findings section is based on assessing how such labour process variables affect the employment experiences of employees with Asperger syndrome.

The social organisation and erosion of support

Based on the data gathered by others (see figure 1 and appendix 1), the aim of this section is to present an account of how employers accommodate and oppose the needs of adults with Asperger syndrome experience in the workplace. The section also looks at the social dynamics at the heart of the employment relationship. The opening sub-section begins with positive employment experiences as told by adults with Asperger syndrome. However, by virtue of the data itself, the greatest apportion of space is given over to insights into how the primary features of the labour process adversely affects the employment experiences of adults with Asperger syndrome.

The social accommodation of the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome

Even though the vast majority of adults with Asperger syndrome have negative and ongoing negative experiences of employment and employers, there is evidence to suggest that this problem can be greatly minimised, if not fully surmounted in exceptional circumstances. In effect, many of the limited social abilities of adults with Asperger syndrome can be compensated for by employer accommodation. How such needs can be accommodated requires attention to the many aspects of how organisations manage people who are requiring special arrangements or adjustments to their working practices. The following extract demonstrates how employers can, at the very least, commit to accommodating the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome:

AS [Asperger syndrome] was taken into account – organisation (County Council) has robust Equal Ops policies/positive about disabled people policy (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 126).

It is at the recruitment and selection stage where such policies and commitments clearly come in to action. The following two comments demonstrate efforts taken by employers

to make sure, as best as possible, that allowances are made at the selection interview to accommodate the many social difficulties associated with Asperger syndrome:

[My problems diminish when I have] someone to accompany me to the interview and explain to the interviewer my weaknesses in interviews and to make allowances for these (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 145).

When I apply for promotions and get selected for interview, I often ask if I can see a copy of the questions to be asked by the panel, so that I can structure responses, as I have difficulty putting together responses in a verbal situation without a script (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 146).

Once beyond the selection stage, the process of accommodating the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome is less precise. However, it is evident that a range of employers have a capacity to make sufficient adjustments and accommodate the social limitations of employees with Asperger syndrome:

I work mostly alone and my boss doesn't bother me. He just wants results, and I can deliver, I also have a place next to the window, so the light doesn't bother me (male, 30s, Hendrickx, 2008: p. 65).

The company always asks my opinion before giving me a new work assignment. If I don't like a particularly type of work they usually find me something else to do. I test programmes and manuals and describe what flaws I find (male, 30s, Hendrickx, 2008: 83).

...my new boss is very understanding and I have told a few friends so they can try and involve me in stuff, or at least understand when I withdraw (male, 30s, Hendrickx, 2008: 129).

Accommodation of such needs, however, appears to be undertaken in a semi if not completely autonomous fashion, in that the problem, in this situation, is managed without any direct support or directive from higher levels of management. Indeed, beyond the selection stage, the data did not reveal an explicit role for the human resource professional in the management of employees with Asperger syndrome. Further examples of how Asperger syndrome can be managed in relation to the labour process also emerged from the data. The following accounts reveal how formal and informal organisational culture can play an important part in the accommodation process:

There was a notable culture of facilitation and empowerment, which was very comforting and meaningful for me and gave opportunities for learning to facilitate and support others. We all had a great deal of autonomy and a minimum of supervision. Thus I was able to be obsessive about my own perspective, and to work in very small, self-selected collaborations with very able and skilful peers (male, 60s, Hendrickx, 2008: 66).

Nothing specific, but allowances are made for my weirdness, and I'm allowed to wear earphones or earplugs to block out the noise. I am understood by my colleagues and they are all supportive (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 127).

One of the best jobs I've had was working as a government research scientist for a rail company, doing maths research bringing university PhD work into practical applications. People almost expect you to be a bit 'odd' and I was left alone for almost five years just getting on with things that I wanted to do. What a great job (male, 40s, Hendrickx, 2008: 64).

Further social support for adults with Asperger syndrome in the workplace, moreover, is provided by the accommodation of such difficulties through the goodwill, discretionary and often one-way effort of colleagues. The following quotes demonstrate how kind and considerate fellow employees represents a further means to cement the accommodation process:

Staff have been very supportive to me in my job and I have real praise for the charity I work for (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 127).

One trusted friend in my office knows and supports me that way (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 129).

While the data provides limited evidence of employers taking steps to accommodate the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome, it is evident that many of the problems associated with this disability can be successfully dealt with by work organisations. Indeed, it would appear that successful experiences would not be possible without a level of understanding of the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome, yet what holds it all together is the social organisation of resistance to management control. As such, it is appropriate to conclude that social accommodation of the problem is likely to require a level of commit that must permeate both formal and informal organisational practices. As a consequence, it is also fair to say that accommodating the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome is likely to be fraught with difficulties. For instance, the fragility of the commitment is likely to be exposed should there be a breakdown in any part of the process, but especially if there is a turnover in key positions that cement the process. There is, it appears, little room for error when managing this problem. What typically happens when the work organisation fails to act in this manner, or what happens when supportive practices breakdown, is now discussed in detail.

The failure of socially organised resistance

It has been established that solving the problems that adults with Asperger syndrome face in relation to employment requires the input of a wide-range of expertise. It was also established that the problem arises out of a multitude of factors. One of the key factors, and perhaps the least understood of these key factors, is the part the work organisation plays in the problem. In this part of the paper the emphasis is directed towards how labour process analysis can tease out valuable and unique insights from appropriate existing datasets. The process of re-analysis continues first of all by considering how primary employer prerogatives permeate human resource practices and weaken the social alliances deemed necessary in preventing the exclusion process. More specifically, the first focus of analysis, the apparent institutionalised rejection of prospective candidates who typically, often unbeknown to themselves, pre-select themselves for rejection, can also be viewed as prospective employees overly consenting to practices that are opposed to their interests:

I would love to get back to work, but all the application forms ask if I have a disability. I NEVER even get interviews now since diagnosis. Before I used to get a job within days, never mind an interview, since I have such a good CV! (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 137).

...I've declared Asperger's on application forms and one the ones I have, I've never heard back from. I have also been bullied out of jobs, and subsequently, I'm afraid of applying for new jobs, lest I'm either bullied, or fired again. I don't seem to be able to get a job where I have mentioned Asperger's, so I feel I've no choice but to hide it (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 139).

Employers DO discriminate. Before diagnosis I had no problem getting an interview/job, since I have an excellent CV. After diagnosis I have been struggling for 6 months now, and have not even had replies in most cases! (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 147).

In this instance, prospective employees with Asperger syndrome believe employer resistance to their disability is clearly heightened by the disclosure dimension to the selection process. Further, compared to the previous sub-section, the quotes demonstrate contrasting organisational attitudes to individuals with Asperger syndrome. More importantly, though, it is evident that adults with Asperger syndrome appear to have a tendency to consent to employer demand for disclosure, even though their experience tells them otherwise.

The general failure of most employers to accommodate the needs of prospective employees with Asperger syndrome is also exhibited at a more advanced stage of the selection process. The following data extracts demonstrate how selection tools, designed to allow purposeful discrimination between candidates, conflicts markedly with the core disabling features of Asperger syndrome:

...I have real difficulty in 'competence based' interviews. This is where interviewers demand instances of situations in which you have done 'x' and exactly what you have done to achieve 'x'. I find that my memory simply does not keep records in this way... (male, 60s, Hendrickx, 2008: 106-107).

The job interview is the worst, because you're expected to put on this song and dance to garner their favour. I have to be VERY VERY VERY careful not to correct the interviewer's mistakes or misconceptions, because doing that always guarantees that they don't like me, and I won't get the job. It's always 'Yes, sir, ye sir, three bags full sir', i.e. lying. And lying grates on me like nails on a chalkboard... (male 30s, Hendrickx, 2008: 108).

I have problems when questions aren't well defined and are really broad. Don't know how to narrow it down. I have ten thoughts at once and don't know which one is appropriate. I tend to say 'I don't know' (male 20s, Hendrickx, 2008: 108).

The bottom line is that many jobs deliberately screen out Asperger's unwittingly. Personality tests ought to be illegal, it is a form of discrimination. We are not by nature suited to the sort of personality many unskilled and low skilled [employers] are looking for (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 147).

However, aside from the organisational control angle of selection testing and interviewing, it is also important to note the lack of socially organised resistance to such practices. As such, the research subjects are just as much expressing their frustration with not being able to change the practices they are subject to as they are with themselves. It would appear, therefore, that prospective employees with Asperger syndrome have very limited opportunities and abilities when seeking to make employers aware of their discontent with such practices. Further, without discontent being registered and opportunities for organised resistance, many employers are likely to take this as permission to carry on using such practices. Yet, tools to match prospective candidates with the nature of the organisation's labour process are just the start in terms of creating problems for employees with Asperger syndrome in the workplace.

Exclusion is just if not more likely to relate to the dismissal or the resignation of the employee with Asperger syndrome. In one sense this could be seen as a failure on behalf of the employee to cope with the nature and demands of the labour process. This particular aspect of problem can also be seen as the employer failing in their duty of care

and failing to prevent the unnecessary overload of vulnerable employees. The ability to cope, however, is something that employees without Asperger syndrome often take for granted; as such employees have perhaps a much wider capacity to resist employer demands than their less socially able counterparts. Examples of such failures come into sight when pressures to adjust to tight or arbitrary deadlines emerge. In these situations employer goals take clear precedence over practices put in place to shelter employees with Asperger syndrome from potentially demoralising and damaging experiences. What is more, the failure to cope in typical situations appears to reinforce less than positive supervisory views of such personnel:

[I became] very confused and distressed by bullying, sarcasm and similar 'management' techniques (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 134).

Employers could be more understanding, and more [accepting]. We NEED support workers, but as soon as you mention this, employers get put off (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 136).

My Manager knew of my disability but bullied me. She said people like me don't deserve to work. I was late sometimes because I was scared of her. I spoke to various employment advisors, but no-one would intervene to make her stop. I needed her to leave me alone, to not be so loud and to give me better lighting (there was not proper lighting in the room at all) and to not be 'in my face' all the time. (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 137).

I don't always understand and I know people sometimes think I am being a bit too forward, so my boss said he did not like my attitude, so I got sacked. I was never late and the other people all said I did a good job (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 141).

I've been fired from every job I've had so far. In my first job, it was because they agreed the deal on me. I said I wouldn't do sales, and they agreed. Later when things got tough, they wanted me to go up to people and sell stuff to them. When I failed to do it to their satisfaction, they fired me. My boss was always hovering near me, checking to make sure I did no wrong...He fired me when I refused to sign a new contract that severely limited my rights, for less compensation (male 30s, Hendrickx, 2008: 36).

The consequence of being expected to cope without adequate allowances or adjustments in ongoing high-pressured situations is clearly the undoing of many employer-employees with Asperger syndrome relationships. Yet, it would appear that the breakdown is not just the responsibility of the employee. In effect, the problem is a much a failure of management to enshrine protective practise within a resilient and negotiated social order. Without a robust socially organised order, it seems that there are numerous ways in which

a supervisor/manager can crush, advertently or inadvertently, the confidence of an employee with Asperger syndrome.

To add to this burden of social-based stress, there is also the physical dimension of the problem to consider. While the physical working environment is usually of minimal significance to 'typical' employees, or that typical employees are far more adept at raising ongoing concerns about working conditions, this is not the case for the employees with Asperger syndrome. Indeed, the physical characteristics of the modern workplace, designed primarily with management prerogatives in mind, can make employment intolerable unless special consideration is given to the sensory demands of such employees:

Fluorescent lights make me ill, also too much sounds, can't follow conversations easy (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 131).

[I] hate noise, but endured 10 years in an open plan staffroom, to my acute discomfort (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 132).

I can't stand inane tittle-tattle – I had some bad luck as we moved to open plan 18 months ago from individual (Dickensian) rooms to have asked for a small cell in away from the maddening crowd; I concentrate on the computer screen and thankfully much use of e-mails mean I often get away with not 'phoning people – I can't stand being overheard and the open plan makes this difficult (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 133-134).

I prefer to work away from other people and noise distracts me. However I tend to work from home a lot. I wouldn't mention my requirements as I don't think anyone would take them seriously (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 133).

It would seem that the contemporary employer trend of expressing a preference for brightly lit open plan working environments, typically on the basis of how an open plan office facilitates a vital level of organisational control, is also capable of creating a rather under-explored dimension of worker alienation. However, the problems are aggravated by the absence of various social alliances designed to support formal and informal group interests. Yet, the difficulty of reconciling the labour process with the needs of employees with Asperger syndrome does not stop there. Indeed, a further incongruous dimension of the labour process involves a range of non-specific and amorphous practices typically thrust upon all employees with little regard as to whether the employee should have an option to opt in or out, or be marginal to such activities. The following examples demonstrate how typically ambiguous and ad hoc employer attempts to colonise employee identity, for organisational gain, conflicts directly with the condition of Asperger syndrome:

My job involves a lot of social entertaining, team events, large parties, noisy events, and I often find myself drifting to the edge and melting away, feeling very tired/drained (male, 40s, Hendrickx, 2008: 35).

Your social acceptance in the workplace can be a more significant factor in your progression through the ranks than your ability to do the job required of you (male, 40s, Hendrickx, 2008: 41).

Generally, I struggle with in-office friendly banter, and as a result have always tended to distance myself from people, often becoming friends only after I or they move on (if then). Tend to skip niceties and just jump in with my work focus discussion (male, 40s, Hendrickx, 2008: 44).

...I have had warnings in work for not being sociable and dealing with people via email instead of face to face (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 147).

It is clear that employees with Asperger syndrome wish to broadly consent to employer demands that includes being sociable and amicable towards customers and fellow employees. However, one way of coping with such demands appears to see employees with Asperger syndrome adopting resistance strategies that not only infringe upon employer expectations, they also alienate and corrode all but the most patient, militant and understanding of social and resistance-based alliances. The real issue, it would appear, is that in the one domain where employees with Asperger syndrome are capable of resisting employer demands, it is not met by broader collegial support. Indeed, the employee with Asperger syndrome is at risk of damaging social isolation due to inappropriate resistance strategies, and without social support there is the further probability of socially organised supportive practices breaking down irreparably.

Generally, the analysis so far indicates that even if managers, supervisors and peers have a working knowledge of Asperger syndrome, such practices will be severely blunted if they are applied in the absence of a socially orchestrated supportive order. Indeed, it appears that in the absence of an overt socially orchestrated support we see a downward spiral involving dismissals and resignations, and ultimately long-term and permanent exclusion. Moreover, within this relationship there is a poor capacity on behalf of the employee to resist employer demands and ensure a level of accommodation. As such, a lack of social skills required navigating tricky asymmetrical employment relationships and further organisational control situations is typically taken by the employer to be consent to a range of damaging practices. In some situations this is almost certainly due to the absence or failure of specialist support to set in motion socially organised defence and support mechanisms, or these support mechanisms fail to emerge in the absence of

specialist intervention. The result is employees with limited social abilities are left to fend for themselves in a situation where only the most socially astute survive. Further examples from the data help clarify these points:

[I require] some reasonable adjustments, e.g. a technical buddy, a task list broken down into smaller steps, and awareness training for colleagues. It's been a bit patchy: a bit here, then nothing more for several months (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 128).

I told my boss about the AS at my last annual review (c 1 year ago). He agreed to explain things in more detail for me if needed. This has happened only once in the year. Sadly, since I told him, he has stopped talking to me about promotion (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 128-129).

My Manager knew of my disability but bullied me. She said people like me don't deserve to work. I was late sometimes because I was scared of her. I spoke to various employment advisors, but no-one would intervene to make her stop. I needed her to leave me alone, to not be so loud and to give me better lighting (there was not proper lighting in the room at all) and to not be 'in my face' all the time (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 137).

I haven't tried to find work since I left my last job six years ago due to misunderstandings by the employer and the stress it caused to explain to them (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 139).

Support from a suitable agency which understands the nature of the disabilities I live with and the possible misunderstandings that can occur with employers. Then lots of patience and a listening ear when things go wrong! The ability to negotiate with me and the employer in this case (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 142).

Employment advisors need powers to be able to intervene where there is bullying! (Beardon and Edmonds, 2007: 142).

As such, the analytical process highlights a general failure of work organisations to facilitate a sustainable and supportive social order. Further, even when a supportive social order emerges, with or without specialist intervention, it is likely to disintegrate when pressure mounts to meet primary organisational objectives. If a social order is considered to be vital in such situations it would seem that the following needs to be considered. First, management styles need to be adapted to encourage various socially organised alliances that represent the interests of the organisation's most vulnerable employees. However, this would be particularly difficult if there are high levels of labour turnover in positions that directly link with the position held by the employee with Asperger syndrome. Second, the analysis so far suggests it would be worthwhile for employment specialists in this area to consider coaching individuals with Asperger syndrome on more

socially acceptable forms of resistance, with such interventions, ideally, beginning before employment age. Thirdly, it would probably be appropriate to encourage young adults with Asperger syndrome to consider employment in organisations where there is an open and ongoing culture of local and organisational level resistance to management prerogatives. Employers with these characteristics are evidently in long term decline, yet close relationships could still be built between such organisations and the National Autistic Society's *Prospects* employment service.

Summary

Based on one established critical analytical perspective, further factors to the exclusion of adults with Asperger syndrome from the workplace have been considered. In effect, employees with the condition are likely to have positive employment experiences if their special needs are assimilated into a broader overtly supportive socially negotiated order, rather than specialist practices simply introduced into a workplace characterised by individualistic and 'divide and rule' tactics of contemporary human resource management. In contrast, employees with Asperger syndrome are likely to have negative and damaging experiences of employment where an autocratic and non-negotiable style of management control continually erodes socially organised forms of resistance. Furthermore, employment experiences are also likely to be negative if employee resistance to management control is minimal or hidden to people who struggle with abstract social and organisational conventions. In total, the analysis of the findings by way of labour process analysis represents sharpened sociological understandings of how the work organisation play a pivotal role in the exclusion of adults with Asperger syndrome from the workplace. In the final section the findings and details of the current study will be discussed at a broader level.

Discussion and conclusions

The main aim of this paper was to begin to fill a research gap first identified by Roulstone (2005). To recap, the research gap involves the possibilities of mobilising critical organisational analysis to add to and perhaps challenge existent understandings of why there is such a chronic problem when attempts are made to reconcile the needs of adults with Asperger syndrome in relation to the main aims and objectives of work organisations. In this paper labour process analysis, a distinct critical perspective founded

on Marxian principles, was used to re-examine existing datasets on this very subject. It would appear that the application of labour process analysis to examine the problem is quite defensible. At the very least, it further demonstrates the strengths of and adaptability of labour process analysis (Delbridge, 2006). Yet, in emphasising the importance of institutionalised structures of control and domination and employee responses to organisational control (Bolton, 2005), the relevance of social organisation in relation to the conflict that arises from organisational control (Edwards and Scullion, 1982), the greater contribution by far should be seen in how a previously hidden dimension to the problem emerges without the need for further empirical investigations. Generally, the key findings from this study conflict with popular ‘how to’ approaches to the problem. In other words, it is only with realistic knowledge of organisational processes (Thompson and McHugh, 2002) that we can begin to see how previously hidden dimensions of organisational processes – in this case the socially organised responses to organisational control – are central to whether adults with Asperger syndrome have or do not have successful experiences of employment. As such, both the theoretical lens and methodological approach taken in the current research are clearly an appropriate choice and may well generate a broader wave of critical interest in this emergent and chronic problem.

The findings themselves, as such, do not slot easily into the extant literature that discusses both solutions and problems associated with the employment of adults with Asperger syndrome. For instance, to suggest a neglected dimension of the problem involves the social organisation of conflict and co-operation would no doubt complicate and perhaps create both theory and practical based dilemmas for researchers who see work organisations as the potential solution to the problem and not central to the problem itself (e.g. see Austin *et al.*, 2008), and researchers and practitioners seeking to address the problem, for good reason, by using prescriptive, minimalist and low abstract terminology (e.g. see Meyer, 2001; Fast *et al.*, 2004; Grandin and Duffy, 2004; Hawkins, 2004; Johnston, 2005; National Autistic Society, 2004; National Autistic Society, 2005). The injection of critical perspectives, moreover, may not initially be welcomed by theorists and empiricists who believe they have discovered a winning formula for inclusion (e.g. see Gilson, 1998; Mawhood and Howlin, 1999; Nesbitt, 2000; Howlin *et al.*, 2004; Schaller and Yang, 2005; Lattimore *et al.*, 2006; Garcia-Villamizar and Hughes, 2007; Jarbrink *et al.*, 2007), even though such initiatives are unlikely to ever command the level

of financial support required for universal application. What this means is that the initial injection of a radical sociological approach is a problem in itself and represents a broader challenge that goes beyond the remit of the current research.

Where there appears to be greatest potential for the findings of critical research relates to the recent proliferation of texts designed to lobby for greater awareness of the problem (e.g. see Barnard *et al.*, 2001; Beardon and Edmonds, 2007; Bliss and Edmonds, 2008; Hendrickx, 2008). Indeed, perhaps the suggested link should come as no surprise as data delivered by such studies – almost entirely grounded in the typically harsh realities of those who have first-hand and personal experience of exclusion from employment – have very similar characteristics with the agenda of most labour process theorists. As such, there appears to be clear collaborative potential to exist between awareness orientated researchers and critical labour researchers. In turn, such an amalgamation of expertise based on the important principle of wishing to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in our society, may give rise to more abstract ‘how to’ guides, a more realistic take on the potential for employers to provide their own ‘solutions’ to the problem, and, additional insights that can be used to inform supported employment programmes and guide the practice of employment specialists.

It would therefore be appropriate in the final words of this paper to offer an opinion on the direction and character of future research in this emergent field. Based on the first level of analysis conducted via the literature review, it has been demonstrated that the problem has been approached until now in a fragmented manner. As such, future research in this area must demonstrate a tangible movement towards multi-disciplinary research projects. In this case this should entail clinicians, educationalists, awareness raisers and social scientists working much closer together than ever before. Based on the second level of analysis that took the form of a critical approach to existing datasets, it would also be appropriate to suggest the following. The main priority, it would seem, is to use ethnographic methodologies to investigate the problem on a multiple case study basis. The reason for this is that it is evident that more work is required to develop claims made in this paper concerning how the absence or invisibility of socially organised resistance is as much of a factor in the exclusion process as anything else discussed in the wider literature so far.

References

- Attwood, T. (2007), *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*, JKP: London.
- Austin, R., Wareham, J. and Busquest, J. (2008), *Specialisterne: Sense and Details*, Harvard Business School Paper: 9-608-109.
- Barnard, J., Harvey, V., Potter, D. and Prior, A. (2001), *The Reality for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, National Autistic Society: London.
- Barnes, A. (2007), "The construction of control: The physical environment and the development of resistance and accommodation within call centres", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 246-259.
- Barrett, R. (2001), "Labouring under an illusion? The labour process of software development in the Australian information industry", *New Technology, Work and Employment*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 18-34.
- Beardon, L. and Edmonds, G. (2007), *ASpect Consultancy Report: A National Report on the Needs of Adults with Asperger Syndrome*, ASpect, <http://www.aspectaction.org.uk/ASPECT%20Consultancy%20report.pdf> [accessed 15 March 2009].
- Black, J. and Champion, D. (1976), *Methods and Issues in Social Research*, John Wiley and Sons: London.
- Blair, H. (2001), "'You're only as good as your last job': The labour process and labour market in the British film industry", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 149-169.
- Bliss, E and Edmonds, G. (2008), *A Self-determined Future With Asperger Syndrome*, JKP: London.
- Bolton, S. (2005), *Emotion Management in the Workplace*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.
- Bryman, A. (1989), *Research Methods and Organisation Studies*, Routledge: London.
- Burton, D. (2000), "Secondary data analysis", In Burton, D. (ed.), *Research Training for Social Scientists*, pp. 347-360, Sage: London.
- Delbridge, R. (2006), "Extended review: The vitality of labour process analysis", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 8, pp. 1209-1219.
- Edwards, P. and Scullion, H. (1982), *The Social Organisation of Industrial Control: Control and Resistance in the Workplace*, Basil Blackwell: London.
- Fast, Y. (2004), *Employment for Individuals with Asperger's Syndrome or Non-verbal Learning Disability: Stories and Strategies*, JKP: London.
- García-Villamisar, D. and Hughes, C. (2007), "Supported employment improves cognitive performance in adults with Autism", *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 142-150.

- Gilson, F. (1998), "Case management and supported employment: a good fit", *Journal of Case Management*, Vol. 7, No.1, pp. 10-17.
- Glover, I. and Branine, M. (1997), "Ageism and the labour process: Towards a research agenda", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 274-292.
- Grandin, T. and Duffy, K. (2004), *Developing Talents: Careers for Individuals with Asperger Syndrome and High-functioning Autism*, Autism Asperger Publishing Co: Shawnee Mission, KS.
- Hakim, C. (1982), *Secondary Analysis in Social Research: A Guide to Data Sources and Methods With Examples*, Allen and Unwin: London.
- Hawkins, G. (2004), *How to Find Work That Works for People with Asperger Syndrome: The Ultimate Guide for Getting People with Asperger Syndrome into the Workplace (and Keeping Them There!)*, JKP: London.
- Heaton, J. (2004), *Reworking Qualitative Data: The Possibilities of Secondary Analysis*, Sage: London.
- Hendrickx, S. (2008), *Asperger Syndrome And Employment: What People with Asperger Syndrome Really Really Want*, JKP: London.
- Howlin, P., Alcock, J. and Burkin, J. (2005), "An eight year follow-up of a specialist supported employment service for high ability adults with autism or Asperger Syndrome", *Autism*, Vol. 9, No. 5, pp. 533-549.
- Jarbrink, K., McCrone, P., Fombonne, E., Zanden, H. and Knapp, M. (2007), "Cost-impact of young adults with high-functioning autistic spectrum disorder", *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 94-104.
- Jennes-Coussens, M., Magill-Evans, J and Koning, C. (2006), "The quality of life of young men with Asperger syndrome: A brief report", *Autism*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 403-414.
- Johnson, M. (2005), *Managing with Asperger Syndrome: A Practical Guide for White Collar Professionals*, JKP: London.
- Kiecolt, J. and Nathan, L. (1985), *Secondary Analysis of Survey Data*, Sage: London.
- Lattimore, P. Parsons, M. (2006), "Enhancing job-site training of supported workers with autism: A reemphasis on simulation", *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, Vol. 39, pp. 91-102.
- McCann, L., Morris, J. and Hassard, J. (2008), "Normalized intensity: The new labour process of middle management", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 343-371.
- Mawhood, L and Howlin, P. (1999), "The Outcome of a Supported Employment Scheme for High-Functioning Adults with Autism or Asperger Syndrome", *Autism*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 229-254.
- Myer, R. (2001), *Asperger Syndrome Employment Workbook: An Employment Workbook for Adults with Asperger Syndrome: A Workbook for Individuals on the Autistic Spectrum, Their Families and Helping Professionals*, JKP: London.

- National Autistic Society (2004), *The Undiscovered Workforce*, National Autistic Society: London.
- National Autistic Society (2005), *Employing People With Asperger Syndrome: A Practical Guide*, National Autistic Society: London.
- National Autistic Society (2009), *What is Asperger syndrome?*, National Autistic Society, <http://www.nas.or.uk/asperger> [Accessed 9/3/09].
- Nesbitt, S. (2000), "Why and why not? Factors Influencing Employment for Individuals with Asperger Syndrome", *Autism*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 357-369.
- Patterson, A. and Rafferty, A. (2001), "Making it to work: towards employment for the young adult with autism", *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorder*, Vol. 36 Suppl, pp. 475-480.
- Proctor, M. (1996), "Analysing other researchers' data", In Gilbert, N., *Researching Social Life*, pp. 255-269, Sage: London.
- Roulstone, A. (2005), "Employment for individuals with Asperger or non verbal learning disability: Stories and strategies", *Disability and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 485-488.
- Schaller, J. and Yang, N. (2005), "Competitive Employment for People With Autism: Correlates of Successful Closure in Competitive and Supported Employment", *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp. 4-16.
- Smith, C., Valsecchi, R., Mueller, F. and Gabe, J. (2008), "Knowledge and the discourse of labour process transformation: Nurses and the case of NHS Direct for England", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 581-599.
- Syman, G., Buehring, A., Johnson, P. and Cassell, C. (2008), "Positioning qualitative research as resistance to the institutionalization of the academic labour process", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 10, pp. 1315-1336.
- Taylor, P. and Bain, P. (2005), "'India calling to the far away towns': The call centre labour process and globalization", *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 261-282.
- Thompson, P. (1989), *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to the Debates on the Labour Process* (2nd ed.), Macmillan: London.
- Thompson, P. and McHugh, D. (2002), *Work Organizations* (3rd ed.), Palgrave Macmillan: London.
- Watson, T. (2003), *Sociology and Work* (3rd ed.), Routledge: London.
- Wilkinson, L. (2008), "A childhood disorder grows up", *The Psychologist*, Vol. 21, No. 9, pp. 768-770.
- Wing, L. and Gould, J. (1979), "Severe impairments of social interaction and associated abnormalities in children Epidemiology and classification", *Journal of Autism and Childhood Schizophrenia*, Vol. 9, pp. 11-29.

Appendix 1: Details of datasets

Details of questionnaire used by Beardon and Edmonds (2007):

1. Did you get any support in applying for a job? Yes/No or N/A
2. If so, who provided the support?
3. Did you get any support at interview? Yes/No or N/A
4. If so, what type of support?
5. Do you / did you have support whilst in employment? Yes/No or N/A
6. If so, what type of support?
7. Do you have sensory needs at work? Yes/No or N/A
8. If so, please list them:
9. How could work better support your sensory needs?
10. List the reasons you feel have contributed to you not having been employed:
11. Please list the ways in which you could be best supported in finding a job:
12. Please list the ways in which you could be best supported in interviews:
13. Additional comments – employment

Details of questionnaire used by Hendrickx (2008):

1. Please give examples of work that has been successful for you.
Please explain the factors that enabled this (e.g. low stress, working alone, low sensory overload etc.)
2. Please give examples of jobs that have been difficult with regard to your AS.
Please explain what it was about this work that made it difficult.
If you were able to overcome this, please explain how you did so.
3. Does travelling to/from work cause you any difficulties?
Please describe what these are and how you have overcome them
Have you ever experienced any issues regarding break-times and social relationships in the workplace?
Please describe these and any ways you have found to deal with them
4. Do you have any issues with the physical environment of the workplace (sensory sensitivity)?
Please describe these and how you have managed to deal with them
5. What have been the outcomes of stressful situations at work? The following are examples to help:
Absence from work; Stress-related illness; Increased alcohol consumption;
Difficulty coping with other areas of life

Please give details

6. How have you decided what type of work/career to pursue? The following are examples to help you:
Personal interest in subject; Suggestion of someone else; Lack of choice of available work due to location or qualifications
7. If you did not have to work, would you continue to do so?
If not, how would you choose to spend your time?
If you would choose to continue to work, please specify why
8. What are your motivations for going to work? Please list all that apply. The following are just examples to help you:
Money for sustenance; Social status; Interest in the work; To learn new skills; Desire for wealth; Socialising at work; To please someone else (family etc); To prevent boredom of unemployment
9. Do you receive any support for AS in your job? Please give details?
If not, what type of support would help you within the workplace? The following are suggestions to help you:
Having a buddy / mentor; AS awareness training for colleagues and managers; Written instructions; Schedules / timetables; Predictable workload
Please list any others
10. If you could design your own perfect job, please describe your ideal work environment, working conditions, hours, pay and tasks.
Please give as much detail as possible.
Have you disclosed AS to your current or any previous employer?
Please explain your reasons for your decision
Would you disclose AS in future?
Please give reasons for your answer
11. Have you found any difficulty in selecting jobs to apply for?
What criteria have you used to decide which jobs to apply for?
Have you ever received any job search support?
Do you think this would be helpful?
12. Interviews are said to be typically difficult for those with AS due to the social and language expectations. What is your experience of interviews?
How has AS affected your performance?
13. Do you find it easy to motivate yourself to make apply for jobs, make telephone calls and move your life forward?