

**Title of Project:** Achieving true inclusion: how personality and labels affect behaviors toward autistic individuals

**Anticipated number of participants:** 150 participants

**Approximate ages:** 18-22

**Submission date:** XX/XX/XXXX

**Anticipated start date:** XX/XX/XXXX

\_\_\_ **Expedited Review:** for research that does **not** manipulate participants' behavior, use deception, threaten privacy, or cause stress to participants (e.g. observational studies, studies of archival data, some questionnaire and interview studies). Review takes approximately 5 days.

X **Full Review:** for all research that is not eligible for expedited review. Reviews occur once each semester.

### **Purpose of Investigation and Procedures:**

Autism-spectrum disorders, including High Functioning Autism and Asperger's Disorder, are extremely prevalent in American society; approximately one in every 150 individuals is thought to lie somewhere on the autism spectrum (Center for Disease Control, 2009). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates that children with disabilities are educated with their typically- developing peers to the maximum extent possible, but even when children with autism are placed in mainstream settings, they are often rejected by their peers due to their atypical social behaviors (VanBergeijk, Klin, & Volkmar, 2008; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004). The current study is intended to contribute to disability-related literature by determining how personal and contextual factors influence not only attitudes toward individuals with autism, but also the tendency to befriend or display pro-social behaviors toward such individuals.

All participants will begin by filling out a questionnaire to determine whether they have an "eco-system perspective" (a focus on the well-being of others) or an "ego-system perspective" (a focus on creating and maintaining a positive image of themselves) (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Previous research has shown that people with eco-system perspectives tend to feel a genuine connection with less-fortunate others, and as a result turn their empathy into pro-social actions (Wayment & O'Mara, 2008). However, people with ego-system perspectives tend to react defensively toward less- fortunate others. Though they may want to help because they are grateful that they themselves are not in the same position, and they tend to distance themselves from the less-fortunate others through downward social comparisons that highlight how different they are from those they are helping (Wayment & O'Mara, 2008). Although this research has not focused on disability or autism in particular, it serves as a model for the way that social orientation predicts attitudes and actions toward individuals with autism.

Participants will then view four brief videos (all of which are publicly available for use, and are described in the appendix): one of a typically developing male, one of a typically developing female, one of a male displaying autistic tendencies, and one of a female displaying autistic tendencies. Depending on which experimental condition participants are randomly assigned to, they will either be told nothing about the latter two videos, be told only that the people in the latter two videos have autism, or be told that the people in the latter two videos have autism and be given a brief explanation about autism. After each video, the participants will fill out a questionnaire that will measure their attitudes toward the people in the videos, as well as the level of pro-social and friendship behaviors that they would display toward the people in the videos.

**Note to researchers:** Verbatim materials including the videos are required to be submitted for IRB review; however, they have been excluded from this example proposal.

### **Anticipated Risk and Potential Benefits to Participants:**

There are no potential benefits to participants. Although this procedure is low-risk, there may be a slight risk for some participants. It is possible that some participants may have autism or may have a close friend or family member who has autism. Watching these videos depicting others with autism and rating whether or not they would partake in certain activities with the people shown may be uncomfortable for such participants. This chance of risk is somewhat increased because we cannot warn participants in advance that some of the people shown may have disabilities, as this would interfere with our labeling manipulation. We will take steps to ensure the psychological well-being of every participant. Furthermore, we feel that the potential benefit of understanding the effects of labeling on social acceptance outweighs the risk associated with the procedure.

### **Steps Taken to Protect the Participants:**

We will take several steps to ensure the psychological well-being of every participant. No participant will ever be asked whether he or she has an autism-spectrum disorder. Furthermore, in the label-plus-description condition, value-neutral words will be used to describe autism; it will not be labeled a “disorder,” but will instead describe the cognitive-behavioral style common to individuals with autism. The participants will all be made aware that they may choose to leave the study at any time without negative repercussions. Finally, we will include the contact information for the counseling center in the debriefing statement, so that participants can receive professional intervention if they do experience any negative reactions to the research procedure.

To preserve anonymity, the Certificate of Informed Consent and Debriefing Form will not be linked in any way to the participants’ pre-screening or study data. The participants’ responses to the research questions will be coded numerically so that the participant’s name is never used for identification purposes. All data and forms related to this study will be stored in a locked cabinet that is only available to the primary researchers. During the research procedure, participants will be located in a private corridor, alone in an enclosed room to ensure the confidentiality of all participants.

### **Manner of Obtaining Participants:**

This study will be open to everyone in the Psychology 150 class. The study will be advertised to students enrolled in the Psychology 150 course as an opportunity to help complete the research-participation portion of the class. All participants will read and sign The Certificate of Informed Consent when they arrive at the designated testing site, prior to their participation in the research procedure. After the participants have finished their participation in the study, or once they have decided to withdraw from the study, they will be given a verbal and written debriefing statement. Participants from Psychology 150 will have their cards signed to confirm their participation in the experiment.

### **References:**

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). *Autism spectrum disorders (ASD’s)*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html>
- Crocker, J., & Canevello, A. (2008). Creating and undermining social support in communal relationships: the role of compassionate and self-image goals. *Journal of Personality*

- and Social Psychology*, 95(3), 555-575.
- Orsmond, G. I., Krauss, M. W., & Seltzer, M. M. (2004). Peer relationships and social and recreational activities among adolescents and adults with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 34(3), 245-255.
- VanBergeijk, E., Klin, A., & Volkmar, F. (2008). Supporting more able students on the autism spectrum: college and beyond. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38, 1359-1370.
- Wayment, H. A., & O'Mara, E. M. (2008). The collective and compassionate consequences of downward social comparisons. In H. A. Wayment & J. J. Bauer (Eds.), *Decade of Behavior* (159-169). Washington: American Psychological Association.

## Certificate of Informed Consent

**Overview and Procedure:** This is a study on personality characteristics and friendships. As a participant you will view four short video clips and be asked to respond to a few questions about each clip. The study should take approximately one hour to complete.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no direct benefits to you as a participant. This is a low-risk procedure, but if at any point you feel uncomfortable watching the video clips or answering any questions, you may choose to withdraw from the study with no penalties or negative ramifications.

**Confidentiality:** Your privacy will be protected. At no time will identifying information be attached to your responses. Any information obtained during the course of your participation will remain confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. All data collected will be stored on password-protected computers.

**Compensation:** You will receive 1 research credit for your participation as long as you are taking a course that involves research participation credit in the PBSC department.

**Your Rights:** As with any research project, your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, or decline to answer any questions with no penalty and still receive course credit.

**Contact Information:** If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, please contact the principal investigator of this project XXX, their faculty supervisor, XXX, or the Chair of Colgate's Institutional Review Board, [IRB\\_chair@colgate.edu](mailto:IRB_chair@colgate.edu).

By signing below, you are agreeing 1) to participate in this study, 2) that you have read and understand all of the information provided on this form, and 3) that you are 18 years old or older. You will also be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Name (please print)	Researcher Name (please print)
Participant Signature	Researcher Signature
Date	Date

**Note to Researchers:** If your consent form will be provided electronically, such as via Qualtrics, the signature lines above should be replaced with something like as follows:

### For Your Records:

If you would like a copy of this consent form, please print this page now for your records and before continuing. You may also email the researchers working on this project to request an electronic copy of this consent form.

**By providing electronic agreement below you are confirming that 1) you have read this**

**consent form 2) that you agree to participate and 3) that you are 18 years old or older.**

## Debriefing Form

This study examines differences in attitudes and behaviors toward individuals with autism. We were looking to see if contextual factors would predict how similar an individual would feel to a peer with autism and how close a friendship they would be willing to forge. Autism is extremely prevalent in today's society, yet little research has focused on the factors that influence the social acceptance and integration of individuals with autism. Your participation in this study helps contribute to the literature on this topic.

In the video clips that you saw, two of the individuals had autism. There were three different conditions in which you could have been placed. In the first condition, participants were told that these individuals had autism and were given a description of what that means. In the second condition, participants were told only that these individuals had autism. In the third condition, participants were told nothing about their diagnoses. We hypothesized that participants in the first condition would be more likely to relate to individuals with autism than participants in the second or third condition.

We also believed that participants' orientations toward others would predict the level to which they related to individuals with autism. Specifically, we hypothesized that people with eco-system orientations would be more likely to relate to individuals with autism than people with ego-system orientations. An eco-system orientation refers to a focus on the well-being of others, whereas an ego-system orientation refers to a focus on one's own well-being. Both orientations are normal and serve different important purposes. However, we predicted that people with eco-system orientations would feel a more genuine connection with individuals with autism, and as a result turn their empathy into pro-social actions, as opposed to people with ego-system orientations, who would feel less of a connection with individuals with autism, even if they did feel sympathy for them.

If you are in a psychology course that involves research participation credit, you will be granted 1 credit on SONA for your participation in this study.

If this study was in any way distressing to you, we encourage you to contact the Counseling and Psychological Services at Conant House. To speak with a counselor, email office manager XXX or call the office at extension XXX. If you are interested in learning the findings of the study, reports will be made available upon completion of the research. For the results of this study, or if you have any additional questions, contact the principal investigator XXX.

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Participant Name (please print)

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Researcher Name (please print)

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Participant Signature

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Researcher Signature

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Date

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Date

**Note to Researchers:** If your debrief form will be provided electronically, such as via Qualtrics, the signature lines above should be replaced with something like as follows:

**For Your Records:**

If you would like a copy of this debrief form, please print this page now for your records and before continuing. Importantly, we ask that you do not share this debriefing form with anyone who might participate in the study, so as to preserve the integrity of the study. You may also email the researchers working on this project to request an electronic copy of this debrief form.

**By providing electronic agreement below you are confirming that 1) you have read this debrief form.**