

# **Social emotions in infancy and toddler hood**

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# **What are social emotions?**

**Guilt, shame, pride, empathy...**

- motivate to behave appropriately within the social context**

- show you acknowledge the dominant norms and values and want to submit to those**

- regulate and contribute to social relationships and are important for being accepted as a group member**

# **Function of social emotions**

- 1. Empathy: strengthens collaboration**
- 2. Pride: motivates to meet group norms (again)**
- 3. Guilt: causing harm to others - correction of socially inappropriate behaviours**
- 4. Shame (embarrassment): negative self evaluation - submitting to group norms**

# **Requirements for social emotions**

- 1. Sense of self (Barrett (2005): unrelated to guilt, only for boys in embarrassment tasks)**
- 2. Sense of social standards**
- 3. Self-regulation: ability to regulate one's behaviour in order to meet social standards**

**(Barrett showed 2 + 3 in 17m old babies)**

# **Two studies with children between 12 and 60 months old**

**Study 1, n = 97**

- Pilot to test empathy questionnaire and tasks with children**

**Study 2, aiming at 100 children in each group: typical, CI and ASD**

- Today: preliminary data with ASD children**

# **Who are tested**

## **Pilot: multi informants**

- 43 children: 12 – 30 mnth, mean 20**
- 54 children: 30 – 60 mnth, mean 45**
  
- 73 parents**
- 24 classroom teachers**

# **Mothers....**

**Mean 36 years old (24 – 43)**

**62 with Bachelors degree**

**64 work more than 20 hrs a week**

**Almost all read a book with their child at  
least once a day (mean 12.5 over the last  
2 weeks)**

# **How did we test: multi methods**

- **Parents: online questionnaires (1 hr)**
- **Teachers: one questionnaire (5 min)**
- **Testleader: observations during session**
- **Children: structured tasks**

# Empathy

- **Ability to respond affectively to emotions in others;**
- **Aiming at reacting adaptively to another's needs, e.g. to console, support or spare the other person**
- **Function: to strengthen group-cohesion and cooperation**

# **Levels of empathy**

**(e.g. Hoffmann, 1987)**

- 1. Emotion contagion: children attend to others' emotions and get also upset...**
- 2. Attention to others' emotions: understanding that the other is upset**
- 3. Prosocial behaviours: interventions to comfort**

# **Empathy, parent questionnaire**

## **Emotion contagion:**

**“When other children argue, my child gets upset ”**

**“When another child is upset, my child needs to be comforted too”**

## **Attention to others’ emotions:**

**“When another child is angry, my child stops his own play to watch”**

## **Prosocial Actions:**

**“When another child starts to cry, my child tries to comfort him/her”**

**EmQue scales and  
other parent questionnaires (n = 73)**

	<b>Empathy Questionnaire</b>		
	<b>Contagion</b>	<b>Attention</b>	<b>Prosocial</b>
<b>SDQ, Peer Problems</b>	<b>-.11</b>	<b>-.38**</b>	<b>-.32**</b>
<b>SDQ, Prosocial Behaviour</b>	<b>.27*</b>	<b>.46**</b>	<b>.74**</b>
<b>Vineland, Social skills</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>.34*</b>	<b>.62**</b>
<b>Expression Emotions, Recognition Others' Emotions</b>	<b>.25*</b>	<b>.42**</b>	<b>.48**</b>

# **Preliminary outcomes**

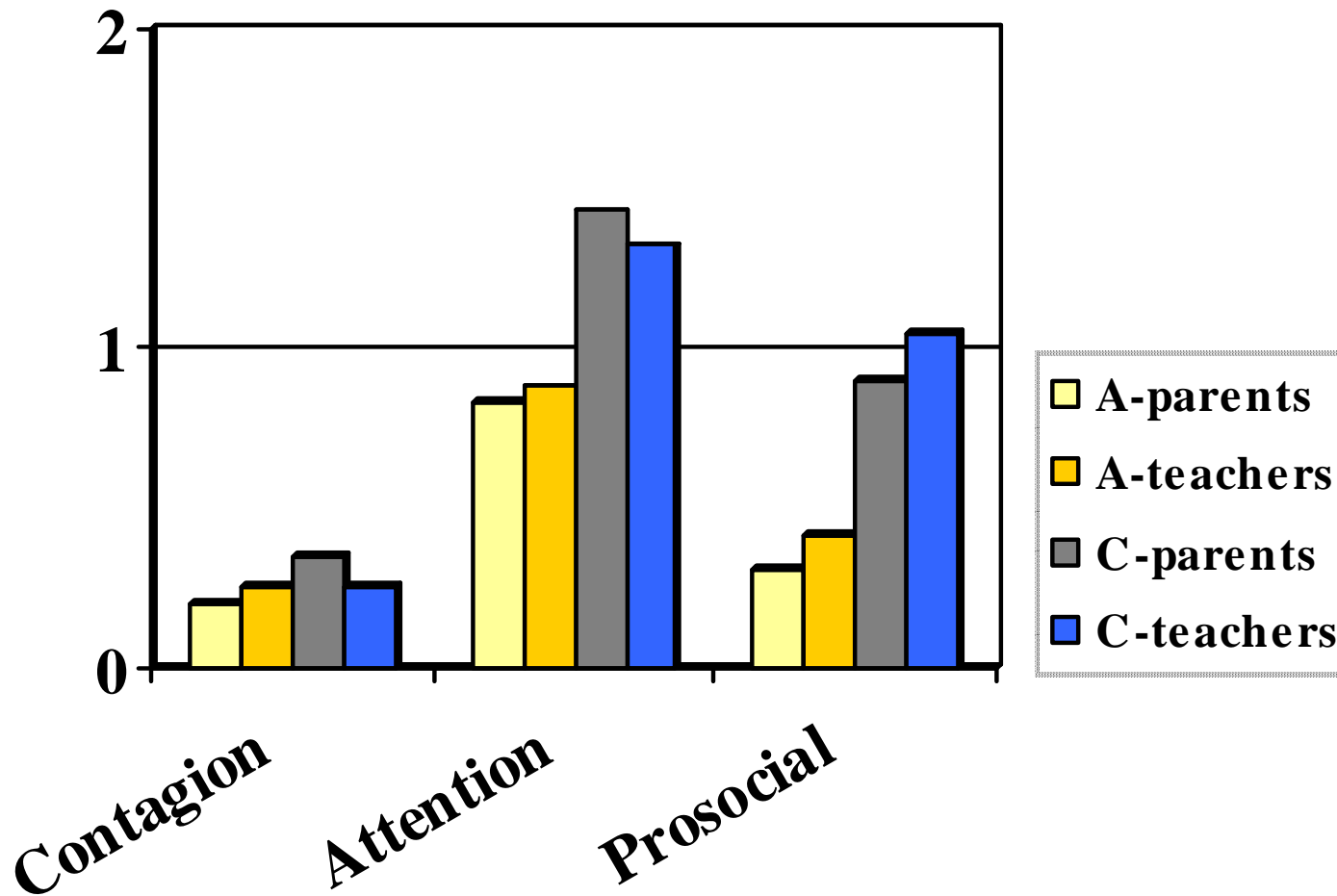
## **ASD and control children**

**25 ASD boys (18 parents; 23 teachers)**  
**19 control boys (7 parents; 18 teachers)**

**Mean age = 56 months**

**Age range 12 – 60 months**

# Empathy Questionnaire parents and teachers



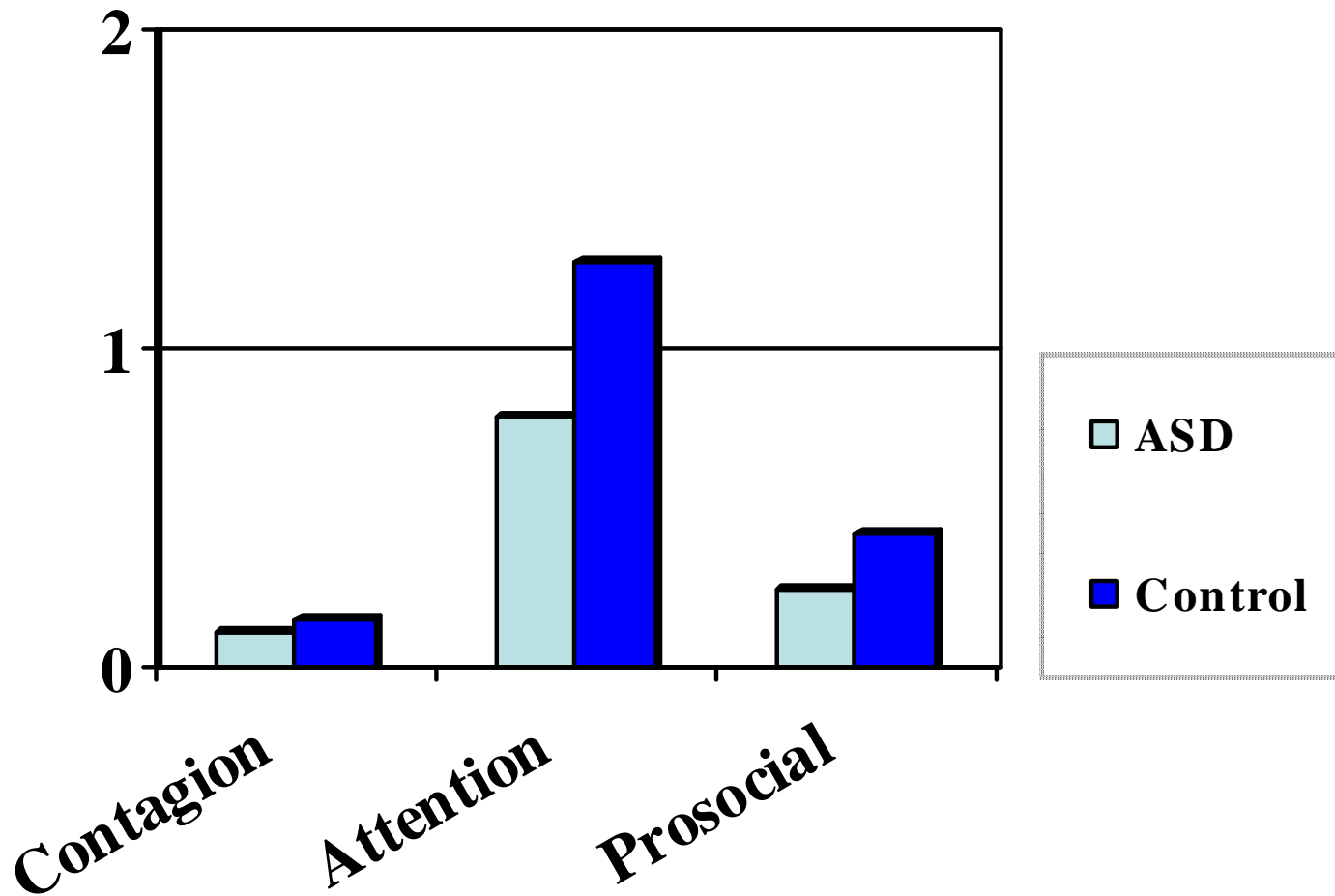
# **Empathy, task with child**

**Based on Zahn-Waxler et al. (1992)**

## **3 acting-out performances by experimenter**

- 1. happiness with a pen**
- 2. anger with a pen that fails to write**
- 3. pain/sadness while hurting one's finger**

# Empathy observations



# **Shame and Guilt**

**(Barrett, 2005)**

## **Guilt**

**Having caused harm or disadvantage to another person**

## **Shame**

**Sense that entire self is bad and others are evaluating one negatively**

# **Guilt behaviour**

**Trying to repair those misdeeds**

**Confession**

**Punishment**

**Adaptive function:**

- **Repair of damage**
- **Signal to others of realisation  
misbehaviour**

# **Shame behaviour (evaluative)**

**Avoidant behaviours (withdrawal,  
covering face)**

**Gaze aversion**

**Nervous touching behaviours**

**Smiling**

**Blushing**

# Shame in car / bottle task

(adapted from Lewis, Allessandri, Sullivan, 1992; Barrett, 2005)

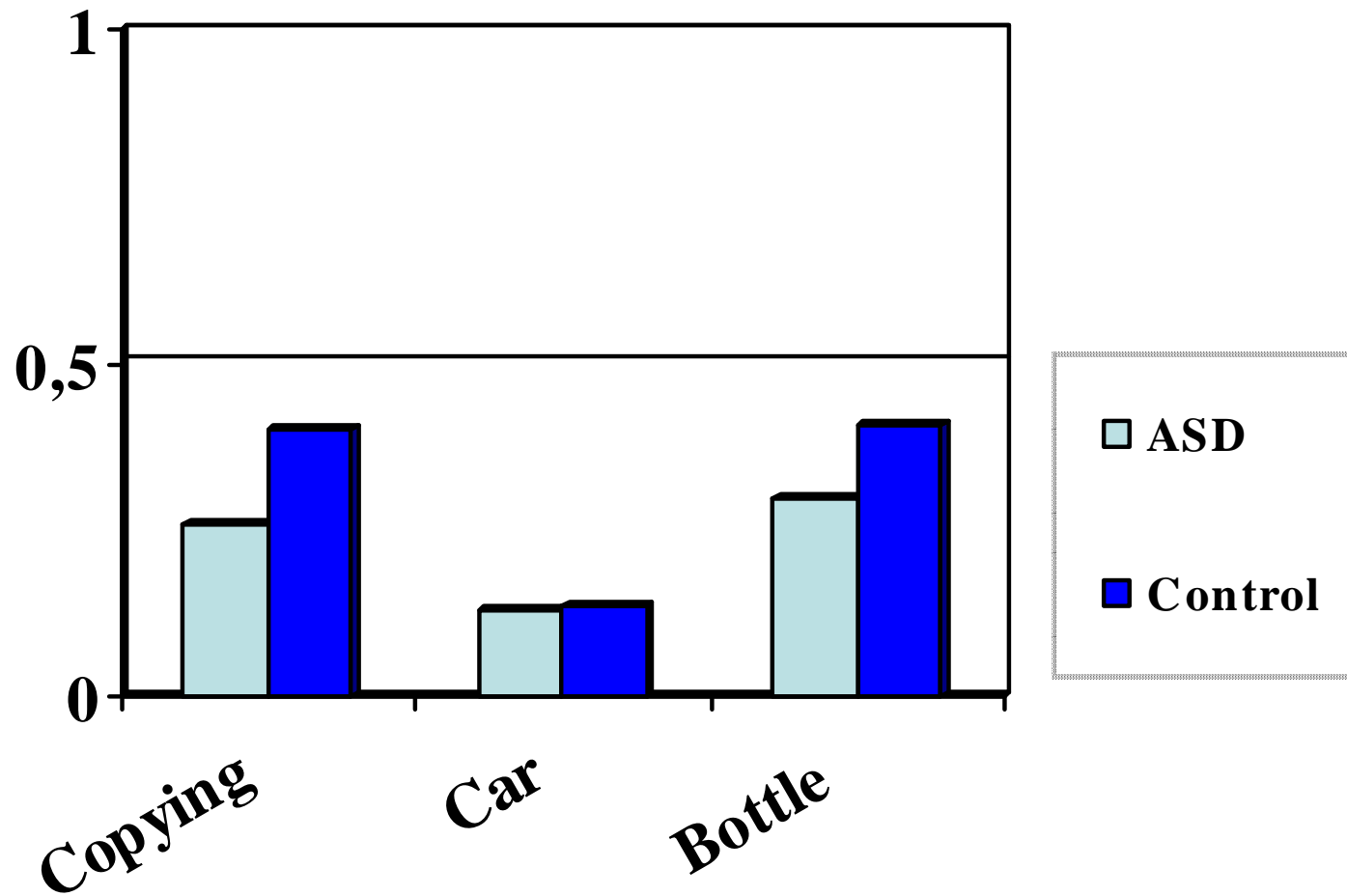
- **Negative reaction overall**
- **Gaze aversion, looking down or posture turned away**
- **Making oneself smaller**
- **Corners of mouth downwards**

**Ceiling or bottom effect,  
thus removed:**

- **Nervous touching**
- **Smiling or grimace**
- **Repair behaviour**
- **Confession**



# Shame observations



# **Pride bottle / copy task**

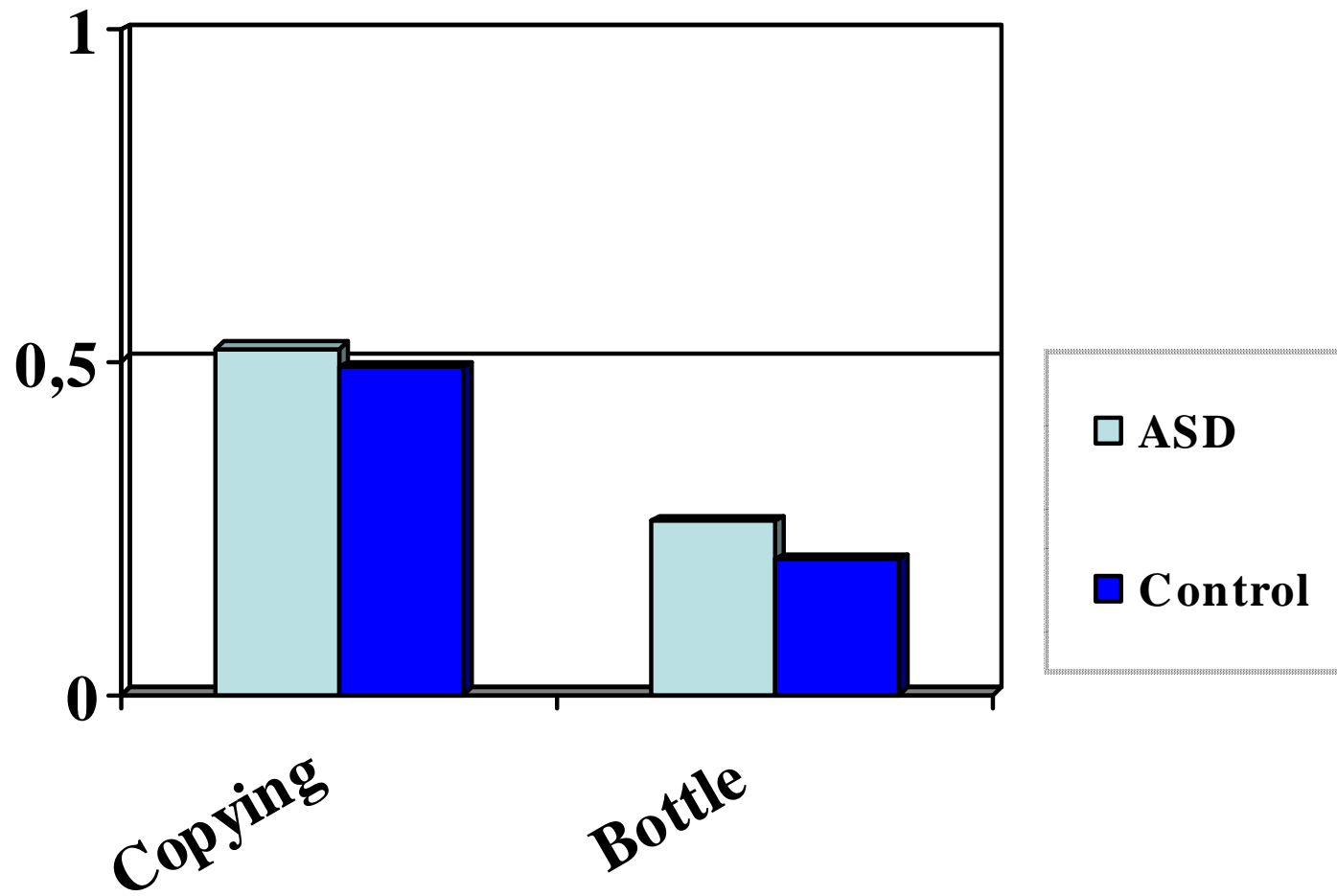
(adapted from Lewis, Allesandri, Sullivan, 1992)

- **Overall positive reaction**
- **Smile**
- **Making eye contact, raising posture**

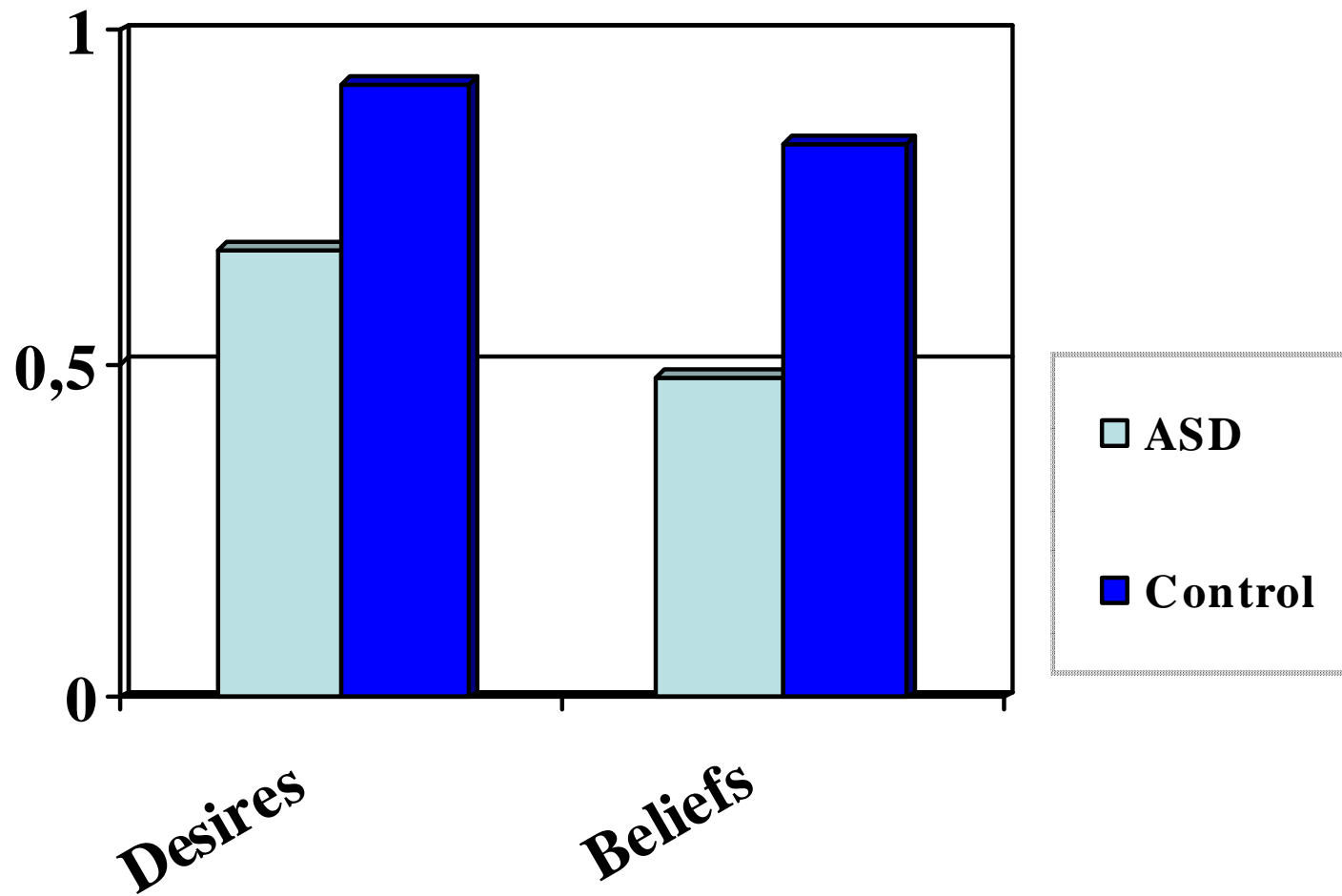
**Ceiling or bottom effect, thus not included:**

- **Pointing at outcome, applauding**
- **Positive self evaluation**

# Pride observations



# ToM tasks



# **Preliminary Conclusion**

- **It seems we can reliably measure social emotions at this young age**
- **Three levels of empathy**
- **Difficult distinguishing between shame and guilt behavior**
  
- **Parents and teachers acknowledge difference in ASD children regarding empathy**
- **Observation studies less clear yet**