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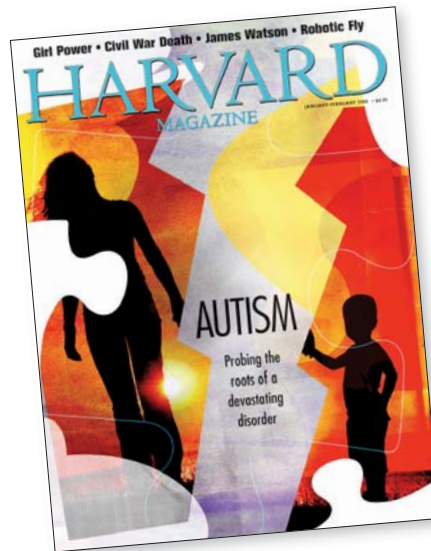
Alpha girls, repressed memories, Undergraduate insights

SPECTRUM OF AUTISM OPINIONS

AS THE PARENT of a child with autism and a writer on the subject for About.Com, I enjoyed reading "A Spectrum of Disorders" (by Ashley Pettus, January-February, page 27). I would like to comment on one point. The author, in describing intensive behavioral therapy for very young children, says "Although ABA [applied behavioral analysis] strikes some parents as an unnatural and excessively regimented treatment, many researchers now agree that, for the most severely affected children, it is necessary to apply the most intensive strategy at the youngest possible age....The exposure of a young child who may not be autistic to intensive behavioral, speech, and language therapies will certainly not harm the child's development."

ABA is generally recommended for 40 hours a week. In addition, as the article notes, most parents don't stop with ABA. They add in a range of additional therapies, some quite intensive and carrying significant risks for the child (chelation therapy, megavitamin supplements, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, and so forth). That means that a two-year-old could be experiencing 50 to 60 hours per week of intensive therapy—leaving no time for typical interaction with peers or with the world around him. It's hard to believe that such intervention "will not harm the child's development," particularly if the autism diagnosis turns out to be incorrect.

There are other options for treatment, not discussed in this article, such as "Floortime" and Relationship Development Intervention (RDI), which are far more developmentally appropriate than ABA. For a child with a "borderline" diagnosis, these offer both the intensity of ABA and far broader, more naturalistic oppor-



tunities for engagement with parents, siblings, peers, and the world. They are not as intensively studied, but research so far shows very positive outcomes.

In addition, while researchers *do* recommend intensive early intervention, I have yet to find any research that compares that type of intervention with later treatment. It is, of course, easier for parents and teachers to work intensively with younger, smaller children—but I can find no evidence that it's actually more effective. The push to early-as-possible intervention leads to panic—with parents rushing to provide every possible treatment prior to an imaginary "deadline" when the "window of opportunity" will slam shut. This phenomenon creates all the problems the author notes (financial and marital stress, to name a few)—and encourages parents to seek out and implement every possible treatment, no matter how unresearched or potentially dangerous, before it's "too late."

With so much emphasis on early diagnosis and intensive treatment, combined

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with a panicked rush to the finish line, it's easy to forget some very basic truths.

A child with autism is still a child—and despite all mythology to the contrary, is almost certainly capable of love, joy, and engagement with other human beings.

There is no “window of opportunity.” Your child can benefit from therapy throughout his or her lifespan.

It may never be possible to “fix” your child with autism—even if you start early and work hard. But the truth is that many, many people with autism can and do live creative, fulfilled lives.

LISA JO RUDY
Falmouth, Mass.

I WAS DISAPPOINTED to read the article and to learn nothing new about autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). I found Pettus's article both shallow and misleading. Pettus dismisses the possible thimerosal (ethylmercury) connection to autism, despite the fact that the latest research demonstrates a definitive link between higher levels of mercury in the blood and autism.

Pettus also misuses the term “recover” when she applies it to training such as Applied Behavioral Analysis, which is a therapy. “Recovery” is properly used to describe the process by which autistic children are healed by therapies such as chelation (removal of heavy metals from the body) and diet modifications. I was shocked not to see any mention of the gluten-free, casein-free diet that has helped many parents to recover their autistic children. For an article that claims to discuss the “biological basis of autism” to ignore basic body chemistry is unforgivable.

Finally, Pettus succumbs to rhetoric popular with Big Pharma and shallowly researched mainstream press articles when she claims that “it is not possible to get an accurate count of real cases prior to the early 1990s.” Certainly, any diagnosis of a mental disorder is at some level a judgment call, and there has likely been some mislabeling of autism. However, to imply that the increase in autism diagnoses is purely a shift in semantics is to be intentionally ignorant. ASDs did not exist at all prior to the 1930s; environmental factors (possibly combined with a genetic predisposition) are the most likely explanation for the skyrocketing diagnoses of these devastating disorders. To focus only

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on possible genetic causes of ASDs is to ignore a whole universe of prevention and therapy. I expected more from Harvard.

Theresa V. (Makin) O'Brien '00
New York City

Editor's note: Other correspondents suggested as causes for autism exposure to plastics, ear infections that compromise language development, aggressive management of childbirth and resulting fetal distress, miscellaneous toxins, other ingredients in vaccines, and use of fetal ultrasound during pregnancy.

Ashley Pettus's thoughtful cover story does an excellent job of calling attention to "the urgent search to understand the biological basis of autism," and the importance of early intervention and treatment in providing the best possible outcome for the 1 in 166 children who suffer from autistic spectrum disorders.

We are learning more than ever about the inner workings of the brain, yet that which we do not know is still painfully

evident. Pettus's comment that "solving the puzzle of autism will require close collaboration between those in the laboratory and those on the front lines of patient care" is right on the money, and is consistent with the National Institutes of Health's recent focus on translating scientific discoveries into practical applications.

Similarly to autism, mood disorders such as bipolar disorder and depression are biologically based brain disorders, and there is growing evidence that these neuropsychiatric disorders may be clinically and genetically linked. As is the case with autism, there has been a dramatic increase in recent years in the number of children being diagnosed with bipolar disorder and related conditions. There remains, however, much disagreement among clinicians over the appropriate criteria for diagnosing, as well as treating, mood disorders in children. What is clear is that early and accurate diagnosis and treatment, for both autism and mood disorders, are paramount if we hope to

Contents and Changes

On pages 30 and 36 in this issue, two faculty members contribute essays on mat-

ters of public interest, domestic and international, during this American presidential election year. The articles offer a double dose of the magazine's Forum: extended, analytical versions of the familiar newspaper op-ed, sharing both information and opinion with readers. Throughout the year, the magazine will present more such essays, based on our approach to faculty members with especially stimulating arguments to share, and their approach to us. We welcome suggested topics.

At various points in the pages that follow, you will also encounter a new icon (right), which made its first appearance alongside "Tinker, Tailor, Robot, Fly" in our January-February issue (page 8). It lets you know that the magazine's website, www.harvard-magazine.com, contains multimedia content complementary to the text: in the prior issue, a video recording the first flight of a robotic fly, and this time around, using a recipe to accompany a portrait of an accomplished baker, page 19; commentary by a stage designer, page 26; and a visit with an eclectic mathematician, page 46.

Also new on the website are "Alumni Writers" and "Harvard in the News": selected, annotated links to articles by Harvard graduates and to news stories involving the Crimson community, respectively. Both features are updated continuously, along with the staff's "Breaking News" dispatches: on-line stories filed as news occurs, between the bimonthly appearances of your printed *Harvard Magazine*. In most cases, such topical accounts are reported further for the published magazine—as is the case with the December 10 and 12 on-line accounts of the College financial-aid initiative and the appointment of the new Graduate School of Arts and Sciences dean, appearing here, on pages 54 and 63, with more detail and perspective.

Finally, although his work appears as usual throughout this issue, deputy editor Craig Lambert on January 1 began a year-long leave to work on a book and other projects. In his absence, Paul Gleason has signed on as a staff writer. —The Editors



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achieve the best possible outcomes and quality of life for these children.

JOCELYN SCRIBANO, M.B.A. '86
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New Albany, Ohio

ALPHA GIRLS, AWOL BOYS

THANKS TO Harbour Fraser Hodder's exposé "Girl Power" (January-February, page 34), it's wonderful to see Harvard's social scientists charging valiantly toward the trailing edge of social research. Dan Kindlon's high-risk survey of 928 sixth- to twelfth-graders says it all. The 228 males are relegated to control group status. Hello, Harvard! Girls' success hasn't been news for half a generation. What needs research is not the expanded self-esteem and competence of young women but the depression, dropping-out, and lethargy of males. Has feminism succeeded when 69 percent of my eldest's college class is female? The rough intellectual equivalence of the genders but huge disparity in outcomes suggests something bizarre and worth investigating. Is the disconnect caused by the maternalistic fascism of American public education? Perhaps it's in the use of pesticides. Whatever it is, I guess the answer won't come from The Cloister on the Charles.

EVAN M. DUDIK, M.B.A. '84
Vancouver, Wash.

AS THE FATHER of three sons and grandfather of two grandsons, I am troubled by academic (and national) attention continuing to be lavished on the 50 percent of our children who, by virtually every statistical measure, are doing better. Talk to a group of parents of sons and you will hear pride, yes, but just as often, if not more, worry about the directionlessness of their lives.

Yes, as the article points out, there is reason to be concerned about how today's "alpha girls" will, as alpha women, be able to combine work and family; but to continue, in 2008, to focus on girls when, as Kindlon says, "Girls are doing the work and boys aren't—boys are playing Grand Theft Auto" does a disservice to half of our children, the half falling farther and farther behind.

When it comes to ambition, boys and young men are in a uniquely difficult position. The "girls' movement" grew out of the women's movement. Today, mothers

and fathers can enjoy their daughters' achievements.

But with a generation of women excited by the success of girls and young women, and men who never themselves experienced gender discrimination, boys are left in the lurch. Girls didn't start the girls' movement; women (and many men) did. Boys, sitting in front of Grand Theft Auto, aren't about to say, "Enough!" Adults have to encourage them the way we encouraged our daughters.

MARK A. SHERMAN, Ph.D. '69
Associate professor of psychology emeritus
State University of New York
New Paltz, N.Y.

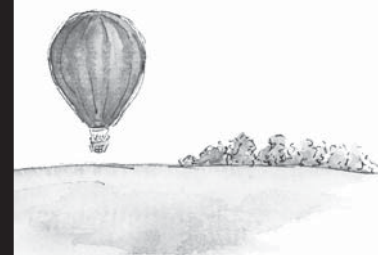
"GIRL POWER" overall painted a well-rounded picture of the strengths and challenges of what it means to be female in today's world, but I do have to take issue with the contention that unwanted pregnancy is no longer a factor in girls' lives. How ironic to read that "For the first time in history, females have complete fertility control, which means they aren't getting pregnant, dropping out, having babies," only weeks after the United States learned that our teen birth rate increased in 2006 for the first time in 14 years.

Unfortunately, unintended pregnancy still presents many young women with an enormous challenge. The United States has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the industrialized world. Pregnancy and parenting obligations are leading causes of dropout for high-school girls, and only a third of teen moms finish high school. "Complete fertility control" is not yet a reality, least of all to the two million women who face an unintended pregnancy each year.

ERICA A. FLETCHER, Ed.M. '04
Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy
Roslindale, Mass.

AS THE FATHER of two daughters, I enjoyed Hodder's article. But the author's description of "Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the 1964 Civil Rights Act" needs to be corrected. Title IX is in fact part of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965.

DONALD E. HELLER, Ed.M. '92, Ed.D. '97
Professor of education and senior scientist
Director, Center for the Study of Higher Education
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LETTERS

THERE IS a wonderfully ambiguous sentence near the bottom of page 37: “[B]oys... spend less time on schoolwork than girls.” Indeed, I knew a number of boys who spent more time on girls than on schoolwork!

DAVID OWENS '61
Ann Arbor, Mich.

WAR AND SUFFERING

WHILE the excerpt from Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* (January-February, page 44) makes for a fascinating and profoundly moving read, I question some of the parallels between that era and ours drawn explicitly by the editors and implied by Faust. Today we are a nation rather divided than united by suffering, with the majority of enlistments—and therefore deaths and disfigurements, and other damages to body and soul—borne by a small percentage of American families. I was disappointed to find the last word in the piece given to the “elegiac” view of the Civil War voiced by Ambrose Bierce and Oliver Wendell Holmes. The outcome of the Civil War transcended the individual motives of the men who fought

SPEAK UP, PLEASE

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for either side: it brought an end to slavery and kept our nation from being torn in two. The purpose of today's conflict is nowhere near so clear. I suspect that a century from now thoughts of those fallen in Iraq will bring to mind lines from a different poet about a different war—Rudyard Kipling's wrenching confession after his son's death in 1915 at the Battle of Loos: “If any question why we died/Tell them, because our fathers lied.”

CASSANDRA NELSON
Brookline, Mass.

REPPRESSED MEMORY REVISITED

STARTING WITH my training at Harvard and continuing through graduate school

and into my professional life, I have always been taught the value of rigorous empirical research. Unfortunately, Harrison Pope's research appears to be sadly lacking in any kind of solid empirical grounding (see “Repressed Memory,” January-February, page 7). It moves from a highly questionable hypothesis through even more questionable research methodology, and reaches far-ranging conclusions that ignore the vast body of research in traumatic memory carried out during the past two decades. Based on the fact that respondents failed to meet the criteria of the experimenters (which apparently were never openly stated), the authors conclude that traumatic memory is basically a construction of society in the past two centuries. Not only is their methodology highly irregular, their conclusions ignore a huge body of empirical research. To say that something did not exist until recently because no one wrote about it before that is a conclusion that cannot be scientifically justified.

DAVID L. SHAPIRO '65
Professor of psychology
Nova Southeastern University
Hollywood, Fla.



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LETTERS

ERRATA

THE WOMAN on the cover of the Pink Martini CD *Hey Eugene!* (January-February, page 19), is *not* lead singer China Forbes '92, but Mildred Eichler, photographed in Queens in 1962. Thanks to fans Jeff Tryens, M.P.A. '95, of Seattle and Wilbert C. Anderson, LL.B. '54, of Portland, Oregon, for the correction.

Lawrence G. Duggan, Ph.D. '71, professor of history at the University of Delaware, and another correspondent point out that the Revolutionary War and Vietnam War lasted longer than the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, correcting a misstatement about the nation's "longest war" (January-February, page 45). It should have said that the current wars were now longer than the Civil War and World War II.

Finally, Jim Harrison, not Stu Rosner, took the photograph of Bruce Western on page 55 of that issue.

AT OPHELIA'S FUNERAL, Hamlet has apparently forgotten he killed her father.

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UNDERGRADUATE APPRECIATION

THANKS SO MUCH to Liz Goodwin for generously sharing her inner journey from self-doubt to greater trust in her own personhood (The Undergraduate, "Applying Yourself," January-February, page 69). I, too, wrestle with this same bad habit: restlessly seeking approval through outer achievement and validation from others. Perhaps this is universal, though I suspect that it might weigh frequently on many who wind up at Harvard. I am so glad that Goodwin developed the courage to trust both her relationships with friends, and her own gut, heart, and mind, as places she can talk about and mull over what feels right for her, regardless of what others are doing or saying. May we all be so courageous, and help one another to keep growing back to this vital human truth.

BENJAMIN HALL '90, M.Div. '99
Providence, R.I.

THANK YOU for printing Liz Goodwin's wonderful essay. Having been a dean at Stanford, Dart- (please turn to page 84)

LETTERS

(continued from page 10)

mouth, and Swarthmore for nearly 25 years, I've had the opportunity to read many student essays about college life. I consider "Applying Yourself" to be one of the most insightful statements yet about the personal academic journey at such highly selective schools. I believe that Goodwin's essay should be circulated to high-school and college-age students across the country, and I plan to do my part by sharing the essay (with her gracious permission) with students here at Swarthmore.

JIM LARIMORE

Dean of students, Swarthmore College
Swarthmore, Pa.

RACE AND GENETICS

YOUR STORY ON "Lucky Jim" Watson ("Chairman of the Bored," a book review, January-February, page 24) could at best be considered ill-timed. Apparently Watson admires the University of Chicago as a place that produced graduates "capable of critical thought and morally compelled to use those critical capacities—damn the consequences," and where he "learned the

need to be forthright and call crap crap." Well, speaking of crap, what about Watson's views on race and genetics? Shouldn't you have been forthright about that?

JEFFREY F. HAMBURGER

Francke professor of German art and culture
Cambridge

Editor's note: Steven Shapin's review was written before James D. Watson's widely publicized, and criticized, comments on race, made during his book tour. Shapin and the magazine's staff discussed making note of the controversy, but decided that his original text was sufficient as a critical review of the memoir—and of its author.

CARBONIFEROUS INSECTS

IN HIS FASCINATING article on Robert Wood's robotic fly ("Tinker, Tailor, Robot, Fly," January-February, page 8), Dan Morrell asks, "Why did all the four-winged arthropod flyers of the Late Carboniferous Period evolve to have two wings?" Well, they didn't. Four-winged insects, descendants of Late Carboniferous ancestors, still dominate the insect world; think of beetles and butterflies. Only a single major order of

insects, the flies Wood's robots emulate, have reduced their wings to two. Flies appear many millions of years after the Late Carboniferous; there is not a single Carboniferous or Permian flying-insect fossil with only two wings.

I suspect Morrell is confused about wing numbers and the numbers of wing pairs. So really Morrell's question should be: "Why did all the six-winged arthropod fliers of the Late Carboniferous Period evolve to have two pairs of wings?" And just as interestingly, why did one large group later evolve to have a single pair?

WILLIAM SHEAR, PH.D. '71

Hampden-Sydney College
Hampden-Sydney, Va.

TISSUE AT ISSUE?

YOU QUOTE Dean Harry R. Lewis as saying the Harvard College Toilet Paper Commission of 1998 "met weekly all fall to consider this important issue" (Yesterday's News, January-February, page 58). I suspect what he really said was, "met...to consider this important tissue."

PEGGY TROUPIN, PH.D. '74

New York City

TOWARD A LIBERAL REALIST FOREIGN POLICY

(continued from page 38)

try in the international system to produce global public or common goods. In the nineteenth century, Britain defined its national interest broadly to include promoting freedom of the seas, an open international economy, and a stable European balance of power. Such common goods helped Britain, but benefited other countries as well. They also contributed to Britain's legitimacy and soft power. In the early twenty-first century, the United States should similarly promote an open global economy and commons (seas, space, Internet), mediate international disputes before they escalate, and develop international rules and institutions. Because globalization will spread technical capabilities, and information technology will allow broader participation in global communications, American economic and cultural preponderance will become less dominant than at the start of this century. That is all the more reason to build institutions that make the world safe for diversity.

Your Vision and Smart Power

THE UNITED STATES needs to rediscover how to be a "smart power." That was the conclusion of a bipartisan commission that I recently co-chaired with Richard Armitage, the former deputy secretary of state in the Bush administration. A group of Republican and Democratic members of Congress, former ambassadors, retired military officers, and heads of nonprofit organizations was convened by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. We concluded that the effects of the Septem-

ber 11 terrorist attacks have thrown America off course.

Since the shock of 9/11, the United States has been exporting fear and anger, rather than our more traditional values of hope and optimism. Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo have become more powerful global icons of America than the Statue of Liberty. Terrorism is a real threat and likely to be with us for decades, but over-responding to the provocations of extremists does us more damage than the terrorists ever could. Success in the struggle against terrorism means finding a new central premise for American foreign policy to replace the current theme of a "war on terror." A commitment to providing for the global good can provide that premise.

The United States can become a smart power by once again investing in global public goods—providing services and policies that people and governments in all quarters of the world want but cannot attain in the absence of leadership by the largest country. That means support for international institutions, aligning our country with international development, promoting public health, increasing interactions of our civil society with others, maintaining an open international economy, and dealing seriously with climate change. By complementing American military and economic might with greater investments in soft power and a broader vision, you can rebuild the framework that we will need to tackle the tough problems ahead. ▢

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