

Implementing a Least-Restrictive Environment in a Movement-Education Camp for Children and Youth with Autism/PDD

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Our paper describes a practical and theoretically viable and rigorous approach to working with children and youth with autism/pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) which demonstrates not only how separatism can be a positive experience, but also how it can contribute to the development of least-restricted, inclusive, and infused environments. The two authors have directed the Movement Education Camp for Children and Youth with Autism/PDD for the last three summers and will direct a fourth summer camp in August 1999.

The camp's activities and programming are based in Rudolf Laban's theory and practice of meaningful movement. Movement Education emphasizes the development of conceptual understanding of functional and expressive movement. The meaningfulness of the movement experiences is not premised on presumed levels of psychomotor, cognitive, and affective integration and proficiency. Rather, persons with diverse and complex profiles are as likely to respond favorably (and beneficially) within Movement Education contexts as persons with elite or more straightforward profiles. We will provide a robust description of the camp experience, including staff training, activity programming, individualized profiles, activity area configurations, liaising with parents, consultants, workers, community agencies, and everyday events.

Theoretical Framework

Our project addresses a curiously taken-for-granted dimension of what phenomenologists have called lifeworlds which unfortunately, often have been presumed to be an undeniably concordant process of sensory integration in which normal bodies function as primarily stable, healthy, productive entities in the world. While such an undisclosed assumption of automatically integrated processing informs a lot of the understanding and theorizing of much phenomenological work, it does not allow for the living experience of persons with autism or other disabilities with difficulties in sensory integration. We will ask what becomes visible and threatening with the acknowledgment of radically different ways of experiencing the world. How much of the perceptions of shared understanding, perceiving, and sensing are based on pre-reflective ideals of a stable, healthy, productive - i.e., normally functioning - body that both produces and consumes in culturally sanctioned ways? What is being presumed in such cultural codes? Who benefits from enforcing them? To what purpose?

We propose taking the readers on a journey into what many phenomenologists, researchers, and educators have deemed the metaphysical impossibility of ongoing discordance - a world of wild disintegration where waking up everyday might present a different array of bodily variables, decisions, and survival choices which play themselves out in complexities and embodied politics of lived body, space, time, and relation. We invite readers to walk through the everyday worlds of autism and examine what the embodied "nots" of such wild experience make visible in the more culturally permissible world of stable, healthy, productive body ideals.

Background on the Autism/movement Education Camp

In 1994 we began a disability outreach project as a class assignment within a third year disability course on assessment and activity programming. We named our outreach project the Special Needs Activity Program (SNAP). SNAPS are half-day activity intensives - children, youth and adults with disabilities from community and agencies attend a morning or afternoon of closely supervised and structured movement education experiences. The students in the class (approx-

mately forty five senior students) are responsible for the gymnasium and activity area setup and for the supervised activity program. Teachers and workers accompanying the children, youth and adults may participate, observe, or both.

Our SNAPs were - and remain - very successful because they fill an activity-based need largely missing from ongoing programming in disability. Thirty to forty percent of our SNAP participants are autistic/PDD. The parents of these participants and the local Autism Society approached us at the end of the 1996 academic year and asked whether SNAPs would run in the summer and be week-long rather half-day programs. This interest, coupled with modest funding from the local Autism Society, provided the impetus for our first camp in August 1996. Thirteen children and youth and their workers attended this first camp, staffed by five senior students and two coordinators, plus the ongoing support and presence of the CR, the local autism consultant.

The first camp ran for one week and attracted the attention of another disability-based agency and SS, the ministry of Social Services representative. SS, from the ministry, and the other disability-based agency were impressed enough to sponsor the camp for the summers of 1997 and 1998. With additional funding we were able to hire more staff, handle more participants, and offer an additional week of camp (for a total of two weeks). Our numbers in 1997 were twenty six per week, ranging in ages from three to sixteen, with seven staff and two coordinators. Our numbers in 1998 were twenty six in week one and twenty two in week two, ranging in ages from three to seventeen, with eleven staff and two coordinators. In 1998 we also offered a parents program. Parents, staff, and the consultant participated in a post-camp evaluation and feedback process in each of the three years.

As we plan for camp in August, 1999, we have no funding and very modest sponsorship. However, volunteer staff and more realistic camp fees will make it possible for us to run the camp again this summer. In spite of ongoing funding challenges, it is inconceivable to us to shut down a viable program that is meeting a unique need for so many parents and children with autism/PDD.

Liaising with Parents, Consultants, Workers, and Community Agencies

In this section we shall describe the processes and challenges associated with liaising with several interest groups. Parents of children and youth with autism/PDD are remarkable, textured, and complicated people. Fierce protectors and aggressive advocates, they are simultaneously hopeful and suspicious regarding any program affecting their children. Our experiences and conversations with parents, workers and CR, our consultant, have convinced us that a "no parents" policy, at least early in the camp experience, is in the best interests of the children involved in the camp. Children and youth with autism/PDD are particularly susceptible to over stimulation within environments which are crowded, noisy, and busy.

Rather than leaving the potential for over stimulation (and its serious consequences) to chance by allowing parents and siblings to exercise their own judgment as to an appropriate time to depart after the morning drop-off routines, we have developed a staggered drop-off schedule policy which allows us to establish smooth transition patterns in the morning for our participants by minimizing over-stimulation by having too many bodies, too many contrasting voices, and too many differing agendas, and the consequent anxiety and confusion associated with which authority figure is dominant. At the end of the week - after routines are established - parents and siblings may visit and observe on Friday of each session.

It also has been our experience that many parents are so wrapped up in the programming and protecting of their children, that they are somewhat at a loss over how to handle their own free time with the absence of high stress. Together with our consultant, we have developed parent programs based in self-care, stress management, and home activity programming (to do with their children) so that positive new habits from the camp experience have the potential to transfer to other daily contexts. Overall, our experience with parents has been positive as we continue to negotiate together. The policies we develop are in a process of continuous refinement based in the

fluctuating contingencies of lived relation and disability.

Likewise, our relationships with community agencies have been largely positive. Many of our camp participants are sponsored by various associations of Community Living (PDDs) and the staffs of the PDDs are regular contributors to and participants in camp staff training and individualized programming consultations. There was some defensiveness and territoriality during the first two summers of our camp. We believe this to be a direct consequence of many agencies within a region competing for government and corporate funding. Our camp was viewed by some as just one more unwelcome competitor on an already crowded field.

In addition, interagency communication and collaboration are practically nonexistent in our region, so our motives, policies, and competence were also very much under scrutiny. The early ferment which accompanied our arrival and the initial grudging acceptance of the necessity of our program (i.e., the only physical activity-based program in the region) led to a crisis, of sorts, among our regional agencies who realized that organizational redundancy and competitiveness were not in the best interests of the children and youth we are attempting to serve.

While funding competitiveness still exists, there is, nonetheless, a marked improvement in interagency communication and collaboration, particularly in the area of shared clients. In October, 1998, sixty five representatives from the various regional and local agencies met for a Futures Conference to plan for collaboration across the agencies in our region. We are not so presumptuous as to suggest that our camp was responsible for the interagency shift to collaboration, but it is not unreasonable to believe that our emergence on the scene brought interagency tensions to a visible, critical, saturation point where the alternatives were limited indeed: bow to self-interest groups or work for the best interests of the clients. Were it not for the necessity of cross-agency communication which our camp required (i.e., many of our participants were shared by several agencies), it is unlikely that tensions would have escalated as quickly as they did.

Workers are a significant human resource at our camp. Workers are those individuals hired by parents and/or supplied by the agencies to provide one-on-one programming and support for the child or youth with autism/PDD. Workers are usually trained in the specific disability area and in the programming features and emphases particular to the needs of the child or youth. In some cases, workers are also trained in aggression management and restraint (for extreme situations). In many cases, the worker develops a close relationship with the child or youth over a prolonged period of time, and knows the tendencies of the child/youth and the appropriate interventions very well. In very infrequent cases, workers are poorly trained and apathetic.

Overall, we have had remarkable relationships with the workers who accompany our participants. After our first camp experience, we realized that it was necessary for workers to attend our staff training - they need to learn our movement education programming and interventions and they need to be involved in the individualized programming for their particular child/youth so that all of us working at the camp are coordinated in our efforts to provide consistent feedback to the participants. At the staff training and during the camp itself, the workers also contribute invaluable relation-based knowledge about the child/youth which we can use in our ongoing refinement of curriculum and programming strategies.

Finally, our relationship with the regional autism consultant has been collaborative and mutually supportive, educative, and proactive. CR is a pragmatist with a refined sense of the absurd - she functions well within paradoxical situations and she is completely focused on the needs of the children and youth. She has not allowed the politics of agencies, educational institutions, funding, parents, and competing loyalties to influence negatively her relationship with her clients.

Sensory Integration and Perceptual-motor Learning: Setting a Context

In order to understand the significance of our pedagogy as it is implemented within our camp, it is necessary to provide some background information on the salient features of autism/

PDD. In these next two sections, we will briefly describe Sensory Integration and perceptual-motor learning and autism/PDD.

Sensory or sensorimotor integration is defined in the cognitive science and disability/rehabilitation literature as the organization of sensory information for practical use (Ayres 1972, 1980). This organization occurs within the brain and spinal cord (the central nervous system - CNS) and is often referred to as central processing. Intrasensory and intersensory integration are outcomes of both sensorimotor and perceptual motor training. Intrasensory integration refers to improved function between sensory systems.

Ten modalities provide sensory input that must be organized and processed by human subjects. These are touch and pressure, kinesthetic, the vestibular system, temperature, pain, smell, taste, vision, audition, and the common chemical senses.¹ Each modality has a special type of sensory receptor (end organ) that is sensitive only to certain stimuli, and each has a separate pathway from the sensory receptor up the spinal cord to the brain. Sensory systems especially important to motor learning are tactile and deep pressure, kinesthetic, vestibular and visual. When these systems exhibit delayed or atypical functioning, motor development and/or learning is affected.

Perceptual-motor (P-m) learning is acquiring knowledge about the self and the environment through the integrated processes of sensation, perception, and action that occur during spontaneous or teacher/parent-guided movement exploration. P-m learning includes processes of memory, cognition, perceptual-motor skills, sensorimotor integration, perception/decoding, and attention. These processes overlap and blend together to constitute central processing. During the first two years of life, sensory integration usually develops automatically and invisibly. It appears without the conscious involvement of the developing child and, for most human beings, it is experienced as a taken for granted feature of being in the world as a concordant (stable, healthy) entity. Likewise with perceptual-motor development, it is invisible between the ages of two to seven and the gifts it brings are taken to be normal and natural.

Autism/PDD

The term, pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) is a broad diagnostic category for severe impairment in reciprocal social interaction or communication skills and/or the presence of highly stereotyped behavior, interests and activities. This category includes conditions such as autism. In any PDD, infants develop normally for several months, after which time delays or atypical function become pervasive affecting every aspect of life and seriously limiting the children's ability to learn in the same ways as their so-called normal peers.

Autistic disorder is a severe, lifelong developmental disability that is diagnosed by abnormal/atypical functioning (with onset before age three years) in social interaction, language as used in interpersonal communication, imaginative or social imitative play, and repetitive stereotyped patterns of behavior. The degree of autism varies from person to person, but is usually manifested in the following features:

- * social interaction and social learning impairments (including impulse control challenges),
- * language impairments, difficulty thinking in words and responding appropriately, motor planning and executive control problems, unusual responses to sensory input, including stimming behavior,
- * pathological resistance to change,
- * stimulus over-selectivity and attention problems.

Before we move into discussing the pre-camp administration and staff training, we would like to walk you through an everyday example of rupture and what we believe to be ingenious (and somatically honorable) ways of dwelling in the world of embodied discordance.

Example: Autism and Nudity. Many children and adults who live with autism/PDD engage in what is often perceived as inappropriate nudity. Typical examples included going outside in cold weather wearing only underwear or nothing at all, or removing clothing and pressing the naked

body against a hard or definitive surface, such as a wall or floor.

This behavior arises in response to a tactile integration dysfunction around body image and object awareness problems related to bodily boundaries, feeling the difference between self and not-self, and processing information that comes from touch.

If a person with autism/PDD does not know where his/her body-self ends and the world begins, one could imagine without too much difficulty that one way to "get a feel" for the tangible presence of the body-in-the-world is to present the skin (as a boundary) to an intense environmental sensation such as cold air or the hardness of a surface. In our own observation of various manifestations of such behavior, we surmise that such encounters with the world help to ground the body-subject as a container with kinesthetically felt boundaries rather than perceiving oneself as a porous entity through which the world flows indiscriminately.

Pre-camp Administration and Staff Training

Somewhere around mid to late May - just before school gets out for the summer - we usually begin to get phone calls from parents asking if and when our camp is running. We have not had to market our camp - the parents not only call in but spread the word to others in similar situations. Registration forms go to the parents, agencies, PDDs, schools, the local Autism Society, and the consultant. The forms provide information on the child/youth and establish the premises for our individualized programming.

Staff are solicited from senior students with aptitude and the appropriate sensibility for disability. We also usually have several returning staff, so there is a blend of veterans and rookies. Likewise, we usually have a similar blend of new and returning participants. Staff training lasts for a week and involves becoming extremely familiar with the files of the camp participants, planning programs for new participants and building on the programs and movement profiles developed and returning participants.

Each participant will have individualized "social stories"² and movement profiles developed according to his/her particularities and needs, and the activities which are then planned for the two weeks must be elastic enough to incorporate and accommodate high levels of heterogeneity and unexpected contingencies. At our training we also configure the 1:3 staff-participant ratios. We script morning routines and transition routines and we design our work stations and a schedule so that everyone visits every station during the morning session. Afternoons usually involve aquatics and out-trips to local sites.³

Scripting, structure, and consistency are critical factors for safe and effective programming. Also, we build in rest periods, bathroom routines, snacks, and adequate time for lunches. Staff are trained in first aid, aggression management, restraint, toileting routines as well as implementation of movement education themes (body, space, quality of movement, and relation awareness). So far, we have not had to use any restraint on our participants. Our movement profiles and prolonged engagement across contexts with the children/youth have allowed us to develop attuned observation skills, so we are able to detect the bodily signals of distress and anxiety, and provide interventions before a situation develops which requires restraint. As mentioned earlier, workers, as well as the consultant, and sometimes parents and associated agencies are also invited to participate in various aspects of staff training and pre-camp administration.

The Gymnasium Space and Pedagogic Intentionality

Each participant in our camp has an individualized program, and this program is housed in the larger context of gymnasium spaces and activity areas designed specifically to address the tendencies within autism/PDD which seem to cut across the heterogeneity of each individual living with autism/PDD. We believe our groundedness in a phenomenological orientation enables us to design spaces which are insider-driven and autism-friendly. Further, it allows us to suspend our assumptions and codes of normalcy and preconceptions of what ought to happen so that we can

imagine what needs to happen in order to provide a healthy camp environment as we move towards expanding the movement and social repertoires of our participants.

The gymnasium looks deceptively regular - an inviting activity space for young children - yet it is a strategic space with a deliberate pedagogy specifically arranged for the developmental needs of the children who will dwell there for the two weeks of camp. The equipment and small apparatus are configured and used in ways which acknowledge the lived experience of autism and which provide opportunities to expand the movement repertoires (or limit horizons). Several distinctive features include:

- * Mats on the floor to soften the noises made by balls, small apparatus, and feet. Noise can be a frightening stimulus for many children with autism/PDD and can progress to a level of making participants literally sick or moving to various degrees of panic.

- * Minimal perpendicular/vertical structures which tend to be overly compelling for children who are over-selective with vertical and horizontal tracking.

- * Practically no flat surfaces - mostly inclines, declines, and changes in level and texture of surfaces so that vestibular, tactile, and kinesthetic systems can be stimulated simultaneously.

- * Ropes, bean bags, and squeezable objects compel firm, sustained gripping action - a necessary contrast to the fine, sudden, flicking actions which tend to dominate the movement repertoires of many children with autism/PDD.

- * Heavier than usual balls and other objects to stimulate large muscle activity. Sustained action against a resistance involves the neuromuscular system in ways which contrast the usual movement patterns of the activities of daily living in autism/PDD. Also, many of the children were either hypotonic or hypertonic and needed intense and consistent neuromuscular stimulation.

- * Variety and open space within the larger space allows for motion to be spread out over a larger surface area. Too much motion or busy-work in one area can be overstimulating and distressing for children with autism/PDD

- * Portable movement tasks - i.e., no matter where the children were working, the focus was on developing sustained time and firm weight qualities, kinesthetic awareness of body parts relative to each other and the body core, tactile awareness of deep pressure and body boundaries, vestibular activities which compel balance regain and turning, and large muscle activity which called upon consistent neuromuscular involvement.

Outcomes and Consequences

The camp has incalculable human and professional development benefits, but its more specific outcomes are offered below:

- * continued provision of a necessary service based on physical activity,

- * opportunities to study and increase understanding of the person with autism/PDD,

- * opportunity for interagency liaison,

- * heightened profile of autism/PDD in the community,

- * expanded movement and social skills repertoires in camp participants,

- * movement profiles are portable to schools and specialized programs as benchmarks for evaluation of progress, and

- * increased exposure to autism/PDD for young professionals in training.

In our next section, we will make a shift to discussing the intersections of theory and reflection which working with Autism/PDD makes possible.

Theoretical Reflections

We ask what autistic/PDD behaviors reveal about the lived worlds of the persons involved and how those worlds are meaningful for those experience them. What do the worlds of autism/PDD reveal about the cultural expectations of an ideally stable, healthy, and productive body? How do ongoing ruptures of such expectations compel a more rigorous reflexivity on the

embodied commitments within our own conduct of inquiry?

The apparently bizarre behaviors associated with persons living with autism/PDD - nudity, rocking, shifting, unsteady gait, retreat into repetitive patterns, and so forth - could just as easily be categorized as ingenious if we take into account the wildly embodied filtering of the world as it is experienced by the person with autism/PDD. For example, if the ground under my feet is perceived as constantly moving (according to my own vestibular processing), then I will adjust my gait to it. If my body feels like it is dissolving into the stream of the world, I will find a way to make myself present in a way that is felt and tangible for me.

Pain, gesture, gait, posture, sensation, perception are bodily modes which are expected to be managed in socially appropriate ways if the social and political agendas of stability and productivity are to be maintained. Accordingly, much of the treatment associated with autism/PDD is aimed at management and control of socially unacceptable bodies rather than understanding the lived experiences as credible from which to begin strategizing honorably around the body that is lived. Most pedagogic models are similar to colonizing treatment that works toward body management in schools, classrooms, gymnasiums, and institutional spaces which are not body-friendly environments for anyone, much less a person who lives with wild, ongoing embodied contingency.

How would research and the theoretical orientation of the researcher be affected if we took seriously the location of the whole spectrum of embodied speaking subjects? All too often, research practices tend to unfold from unreflectively disembodied orientations which assume a thoroughgoing concordance both within the body and between bodies (i.e., intercorporeally). Taking up the lived experience of autism/PDD phenomenologically compels us to consider what we take for granted in our lifeworlds and in the conduct of inquiry, and how the processes and the outcomes of inquiry are guided (if not governed) by scripts of productivity, commodity exchange, and unrealistic expectations of non-contingent bodies. These habitual presumptions reify Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) notion of the "refusal of deficiency," and repress the contingency always possible in the activities of daily living.

Autism/PDD can present physical risks to persons living with the condition and the persons with whom they dwell and interact in lived relation. Interventions and programming are often necessary and we do not argue against them. Rather, we challenge the premises upon which the interventions and programming are based, the well-intentioned efforts which do not take up the lived experience of insiders as being a necessary component of the strategies which could refine or modify their existing repertoires and strategies for being in the world. When persons' behaviors are considered bizarre, those persons are not usually considered as reliable consultants for possible solutions - if they are considered at all. Yet, if we are to engage in honorable embodied scholarship, we have to be willing to examine those premises which, by virtue of their familiarity (hence invisibility), permit the exclusion and dismissal of particular lived experiences.

The world of idealized, stable, healthy, productive bodies has low tolerance for unpredictable variation, visible rupture, and interpersonally challenging contingency. Business cannot go on as usual when the normative structures no longer apply to cohorts they presume to govern. When we include dys-integration and contingency as possible ways of being in the world, we are forced to examine the intolerance, cruelty, oppression, and colonization within the research practices and theoretical orientations informed by the ideal of a stable, healthy, and productive body. We also have to acknowledge that much has been left untouched in the empirical research of the intentionality of people's lives.

Conclusion

The previous descriptions of our project have led us through the phenomenological and semiotic issues of bodily contingency, personal identity and the social formation of a particular disability - autism/PDD. While we have hinted at the political implications of sensory integration, we have not addressed these issues directly. In this concluding section we suggest that the authentic expression of radically contingent embodiment represents the experience of sometimes unbearable liminality and deeply textured alterity that challenges the cultural ideal of a body that is stable/

healthy/productive. More specifically, we challenge those of us who take for granted the privilege of being "normal subjects" (living within the natural world of ablist perception, habitual movement, and relational expectations of equal commodity exchange) to begin to examine, make visible, and reappraise our own unreflectively embodied ideals.

As we might imagine, lived bodies can become not only personal sites of ontological rupture, but also social sites of radical disruption for those who insist on holding tightly to the privilege of differential power relations based on an eidetically possible ideal (of stability, health, and productivity), but faced with an empirically unattainable body. When allowed the open space for existential possibility, however, primordially grounded expression can cut through the sedimented patina of institutional indifference. In the clearing left open through the ruptures of disembodied public perception, we may discover the untapped capacity to take up "discourse practice as a phenomenological transformation"⁴ of emerging identity and open community where the so-called normal subject (with its natural movement and habitual processes) may be exposed as a pre-reflective bodily orientation designed to maintain habits of productivity that deny the varieties and contingencies of human experience.

Working with children/youth with autism/PDD in a movement setting has allowed us to develop pedagogical competencies that would have been unavailable to us had we maintained the conventional, behaviorist interventions into behavior perceived as unintelligible and bizarre. Our commitment to developing movement profiles on each participant gives us a way of describing behaviors and habits of body which is phenomenologically based and nonjudgmental. The movement profile presents a description which honors the lived reality of the particular child as he/she negotiates the world through the filters of autism/PDD. This approach has allowed us to recognize the ingenious and courageous aspects of behaviors and responses which typically would be labeled deviant. Further, teachers and other professionals have begun acknowledging the utility and transferability of movement profiles and are requesting workshops and professional development in their implementation. We and they are creating a new discourse grounded in the bodies of children and youth with autism/PDD - many of whom are nonverbal. Body-honoring language gives rise to body-honoring practices such as lower student-teacher ratios, individualized programming, group and team teaching, curricula based in everyday life and community ethos. This kind of pedagogical transformation is not possible unless we are able to base teaching and assessment on the actual bodies within the teaching-learning environment.

While we can agree with Merleau-Ponty (1945, 96; 1962, 81) that the "normal subject has no need to set out: . . . a distinct and articulate perception of his [or her] body," for those of us whose embodied reflections expose (at least for ourselves) the spurious fantasy of health, stability, normality and ongoing productivity, and who have lived through ontological rupture and beyond, the habitual luxuries of disembodied perception can no longer appeal to us in the same way.

To extend the earlier example, we can no longer justify or engage in practices based in fixing deviant behavior with meaningless (at least for this cohort) rewards and punishments. Autism/PDD presents profiles which can appear to be unmanageable and even frightening; but as we come to understand these profiles in the context of embodied chaos, we can view them as starting points for expanding the repertoire, rather than as idiosyncratic problems which have to be extinguished and replaced with practiced (or again, meaningless) formulae of sanitized interactions. In many cases, we arrive at a similar outcome. A social story based in a child's profile can lead to more appropriate social behavior, but it does so through the lived experience of the child, not the elimination of that experience.

Ironically, in coming to experience the concrete essence of chronic disability as a transformation of the meaning of human embodiment, we find ourselves at the heart of the postmodern dialectic of particularity (content or "positivity") and generality (form or "essence") which Merleau-Ponty (1962, 171, n. 1) describes in his early discussions of the existential modality of illness and a social theory of history based not solely ". . . on production and ways of working,

but more generally on ways of existing and coexisting, on human relationships.”⁵

His notion of a particular “style” of being in the world - the sense of direction (“sens”) that embodies both the permanent “power of equivocation” and an ongoing “process of escape” (172) - has guided our own metanarrative dialectic from the implicated objectivity and absent reciprocity of academic inquiry (within the closed cultural system of a stable, healthy, and productive body), to the radical subjectivity of persons speaking (within the open system of disrupted intentionality, interpretive choices of context, and self-transforming reflection).⁶ We return, in sum, to the actual (liminal, unmanageable, dissident) bodies we live, to the open embrace of ontological contingency, and to the unexpectedly volatile and progressive politics of chronic disabling conditions made visible.

We must ask, however, what does embodied scholarship look like? As Merleau-Ponty proposes, it must be based in lived relation, that is, in the actual activities of daily living and the conduct of inquiry in which we exist and coexist. Embodied scholarship must take the risks of slackening the habitual strings which bind us to agendas of capitalist, competitive, consumerist productivity and lead to practicing attunement in the face of difference, strangeness, contingency, and rupture.

Perhaps this goes against the grain of a respectable and tidy rationality that ties up all loose ends. It definitely depends on the bodily reality within which one forges the very meaning of rationality. Autism/PDD - and other conditions which embody a wild heterogeneity - open up worlds and realities which challenge and enrich conventionality, if we are willing to work on coexisting with others in the style of attentive wonder and deep regard.

Notes

1. The common chemical sense controls the complex reaction to, e.g., peeling an onion - eyes burning - or eating a hot pepper.

2. A social story is a script which articulates a specific plan for appropriate behavior in everyday social situations, e.g., keeping your hands to yourself when waiting in line, keeping your clothes on until you get to the bathroom, etc.

3. These have involved pre-planned trips to public pools, an amusement park, a petting zoo, and the beach.

4. See Lanigan 1997, 2.

5. See also Merleau-Ponty (1962, 363, n. 1; 126, n. 1) on “the problem of the existential modality of the social” and its connection to the content and form of both “history” and pathological “disturbances.”

6. See Merleau-Ponty (1962, 131) on the interruption of “familiarity and communication with the object,” whose meaning the patient Schneider must mediate by “a veritable act of interpretation.”

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