

EGGSHELLS AND BODYSONGS:
Rethinking "Together"
Through Embodied Interactions

PROJECT OVERVIEW

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PARTICIPANTS

- Self selected volunteers :

8 Dancers and 10 audience members with and without disabilities)

- Diverse ages: 20yrs-late 50s.
- Diverse performance arts backgrounds: Professional, hobby, no arts background.

INTERACTIONS

- Facilitated through improvised dance.
- 'Connection' & 'disconnection' used as open concepts to develop improvisations.
- Reflection facilitated through dance, focus group discussions & individual interviews.

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MARGINALISATION

Action research develops awareness of social problem and seeks to do something about it (Watson, 2000, Potter, 1996, Moore et. Al, 1998).

- People with disabilities have a history of marginalisation.
- Despite de institutionalisation marginalisation continues(Chenoweth, 2000).

AIMS OF RESEARCH

- Action research response to marginalization of persons with disabilities.
- Appreciation of differences.
- Broaden disability awareness.

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FINDINGS

'Connection' & 'Disconnection' developed:

- Openness to contradictory interrelationships

' When connections had a **flow** & disconnections were allowed...you would get both connections & disconnections'

Letting go of 'trying to connect'.

Appreciation of differences:

'Brainstorm(ing) through the body' developed 'unique' aesthetic appreciation.

'It's about exploring difference and different abilities and it's worked'

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Disability awareness:

- Self reflection into responses to and experiences of disability & marginalisation.
- Disability can be a commonality (Kuppers, 2003).
- Disability and marginalisation were commonalities.

Self-determination:

- Participants determined & met their personal objectives.
- Reasons for participation were emergent through the process.

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**METHODOLOGY AND PRACTICE:
EMOBBIED INTERACTIONS**

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FAMILIARITY

- Longitudinal project (takes time).

INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT

- Dance as 'first of all body-for self' (Fraleigh, 1987, p.14): A concept used to **displace the helper role**.

GROUPS, PAIRS, TRIOS

- Direct (conversational)
- Indirect (the is but isn't space/the space between)
- Simultaneous solos (dance primarily for self but with interactive scope).

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'Empathy' isn't 'superficial friendliness' but being 'open to transformation'
(Reinharz, 1992, p.68)

JOURNAL

- 'Look': Document what is happening
- 'Think': Reflect upon what is happening
- 'Act': Respond in action (DO)
- 'Re Act': Shift/Change (Stringer, 1996)

'CLOSE LISTENING'

All participants said or indicated they were:

- Listened to
- I had 'included aspects of what each person wanted'

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ASSUMPTION AWARENESS

- Want to interact. Not all initially did.
- Comfortable with dance and disability. Not all initially were.

ACKNOWLEDGE IMPAIRMENT

- Cues for memory impairment
- Plain English for information access
- Props for physical support

' See the person not the disability' slogan?

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THEORY:

DISABILITY STUDIES

DANCE STUDIES

ACTION RESEARCH

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DISABILITY MODELS

Medical model:

- Clinical impairment disability focus.

Social model:

- Disability socially constructed.

Both models lack:

- Acknowledgement of embodiment.
- Interpersonal, inter-corporeal experiences of interactions (Price and Shildrick, 2001; Corker and Shakespeare, 2001).

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EMBODIED INTERACTIONS

Price and Shildrick (2001) wrote together

- Corporeal boundaries insecure and shifting.
- Corporeal boundaries experienced differently 'from one side than from the other' (cited in Price and Shildrick, 2001, p. 65).
- Their '**writing together**' emerged as individual writing.

This project:
Corporeal boundaries were insecure and shifting.

Influenced by:

- Familiarity
- Talking personal boundaries
- Reflective awareness

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CHANGING ATTITUDES

- Overcoming 'not wanting to interact' with participants with disabilities - discovering enjoyment and commonalities: 'We gave each other space'.
- 'Let go' of 'labelling people'.
- Challenge age related stereotypes through dance performance.
- Challenged 'Is this with the retards?' attitudes encountered when handing out fliers.
- Confidence: 'I'm allowed to dance again'.

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CONCLUSION

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SCOPE AND SENSITIVITY

- Cultivate choice, interpersonal and inter corporeal inquiry

'DIVERSE' ENSEMBLES

- Facilitate appreciation of 'difference'.

BROADEN DISABILITY AWARENESS

- Through self reflective inquiry, without creating an 'us & them'.

'I know it's a cliché but I didn't feel like I was walking on eggshells'

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THANK YOU!

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 Dr Peter Hiller
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 Dr Sally Gardener
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