

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR MENTALISTS & MAGICIANS

VOODOO

THE MAIL ON JANUARY 2019



Anca & LUCCA

THE MIND-READING
RE^{LO}VOLUTION

Facilitated
Communication
Training

VOODOO

COPYRIGHT

All rights reserved. None of this magazine can be reprinted electronically OR in hard form without the permission of the editor.

- 02 WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD DICTIONARY
- 03 KUDOS TO YOU
- 04 MAGICAL STORIES & MINDWAYS

07 **ANCA**
 **LUCCA**

11 **MAIN FEATURE**
 -----**FACILITATED**
COMMUNICATION

30 **TRICK OF THE MONTH-** **1.5**

32 **BUY ME ONCE**
**ENERGY**
BILL

Inside this
 edition 12

EDITOR'S
NOTE >

saji vijayan

Hi everyone,

I'd just like to say a big thank you to everyone who has commented and the fact that this digital VODOO magazine is still getting some fairly high visitor stats I'm incredibly thank you!

In the meantime, there are plenty of articles on this VODOO magazine that you can read to hopefully improve or at least understand Mentalism in a little more detail! Again, a huge thank you to everyone!

Sajivijayan

—Saji Vijayan, on behalf of the team Voodoo
 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (MASTHEAD)

MAGAZINE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (MASTHEAD)
 Saji Vijayan

FEATURES EDITOR / MULTIMEDIA & CREATIVE DIRECTOR
 Veena Saji

SME / CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
 Joe

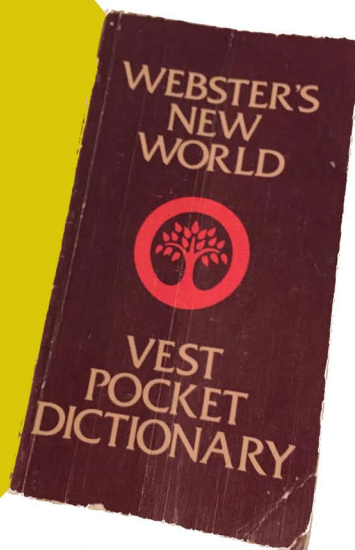
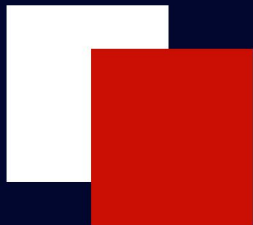
PR & CUSTOMER SUPPORT DIRECTOR
 Siru Malar

CREATIVE DESIGNING & LAYOUT
 Retro Group

PUBLISHER & MARKETING
 VODOO SCHOOL

ADDRESS
VOODOO SCHOOL
SRA-183,PTP NAGAR,ELIPPODU,
TRIVANDRUM, KERALA, S.INDIA
Email: voodooschool.info@gmail.com

WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD VEST POCKET DICTIONARY.



CHUCK HICKOK

"If I asked you to mention a vegetable," begins the Mentalist, your response would likely be 'carrot'. More often than not, your first choice of a playing card is apt to be the Queen of Hearts." The performer continues, "Studies show that 'rose' is the flower most often mentioned, while 'seven' is the favorite single digit number. As you might imagine then, were I to ask you to give me a single word, there might very well be a predictable response."

The Mentalist pulls from his pocket the new Webster's NewWorld Vest Pocket Dictionary. "A word at random from a dictionary of over 15,000 entries, however, will ensure a fair selection." A participant from the audience is asked to help. The performer instructs, "Use your thumb to push open the dictionary at the top and peek at the first word on the page. Don't open the pages too far; no one else should see your choice. Do you have the word in your mind? Is it one you recognize?"



Chuck Hickok is a successful corporate training consultant who insists on making his presentations strong and believable.

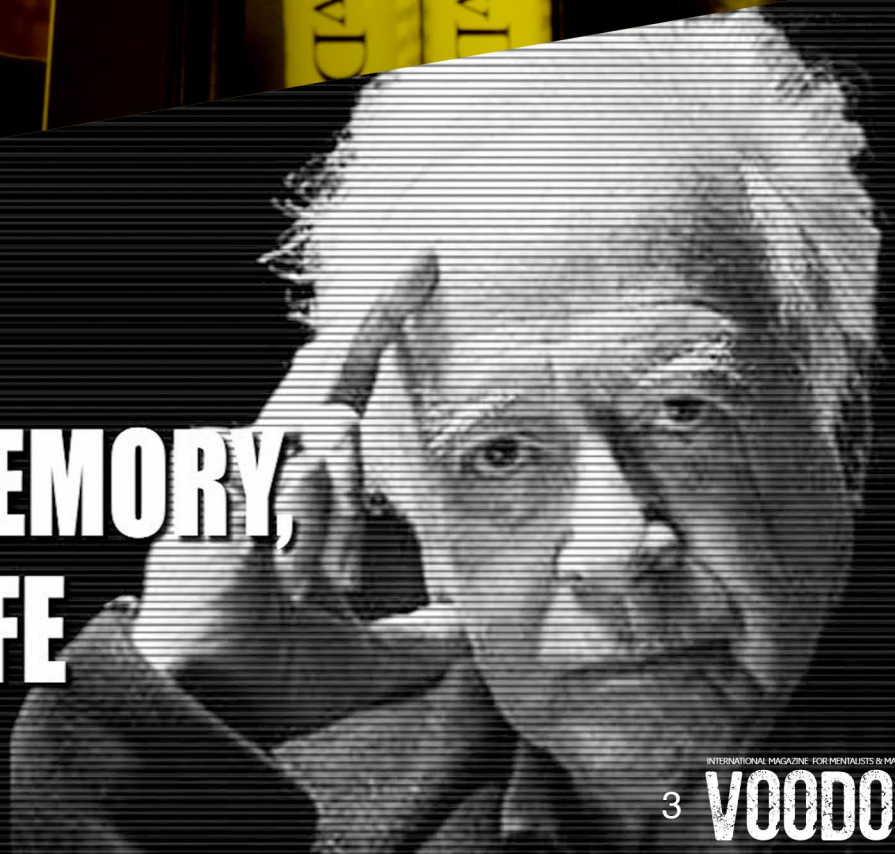
W

hen the helper answers in the affirmative, the performer picks up a sketch pad and crayon. He says, "Place your hand on my wrist, close your eyes, and concentrate on the word in your mind. Do nothing to restrict my movement; just focus on the word." The Mentalist's hand, wrist held by the participant, begins to slice back and forth over the page. The crayon touches the page here and on the return stroke, there. Line by line, an image begins to form. "What," asks the performer, "is the word in your mind?" When the participant says the word aloud, the sketch pad is turned toward the audience; it bears the very same word!

"Please keep the dictionary with my compliments," says the Mentalist to the participant, "as a souvenir both of this moment and of this tremendous round of applause you've earned." File this method in your "the airline lost my props" file. Only the dictionary, pad, crayon, and a few moments' time are required. The size of the dictionary, at only 190 pages, limits the word selection to one of 95 possible choices. Restrict the selection to the center section and the range is narrowed further. When the participant thumbs open a page to look at the top the index word on the following page is there for you to glimpse. It supplies the key which unlocks the memorized association you've made between the two words. Because each set is an alliterative word-pair such as "stoop-stain," "mystery-mood," and "chord-chalk" the associative process is made simpler still. A mnemonic (memory) system, such as those found in Harry Lorayne's books, is a priceless asset for the contemporary Mentalist and is surprisingly easy to learn. Used in secret support of your efforts, it's a powerful tool. Yes, you can make a hidden crib sheet with the words in tabular form. Written is fine; mnemonic is better.

**A BETTER MEMORY,
A BETTER LIFE**

Harry Lorayne



Kudos to You

T

he International Touring Talent Weekly Newspaper recently published its ballot for the top five touring variety/family shows for 1994. Sharing the spotlight with Copperfield, Barney, Disney's World on Ice, and Campbell Soup's Figure Skating Tour was Mentalist, good friend Craig Karges! As many of you know, Craig has also been twice named Entertainer of the Year by the National Association of Campus Activities. Well done, Craig. Jack Dean writes to remind that if you liked "Vested Interest" from Chuck Hickok, you will love "Miracle Pocket Dictionary Test" from Phantini's Greatest Mental Secrets by Gene Grant. I can wholeheartedly recommend any of the Phantini titles. They all reside in my library and there's some very good stuff in those pages, even if I don't remember it all when I should. This Jungian Universal Consciousness stuff is driving me nuts!

"Linguistic Deception," from Kenton Knepper in QS# 1, brought to mind for Germany's Ted Lesley "Psycho-Bell," one of many excellent pieces in Fourth Dimensional Mysteries by Punx. That book's publisher, Craige Snader (Alex Redans) turned his final page November 26th, at age 65, due to heart failure. Anyone familiar with the quality which Ted Lesley's Wonder Workshop builds into its props won't be disappointed with his latest offering: an improved version of Himber's Slaty Sensational. One of the chief benefits is that the slate, at 16 x 20 inches, is large enough for any stage. One side of the slate is covered with paper; the other side is used to record a series of random choices. The paper is torn off and on the previously covered side of the slate, written in a different color of chalk, is the Mentalist's matching prediction!



MAGICAL STORIES & MINDSWAYS

This is the subject we've been working with for the past 6 years:

How do you use flexible mentalism when helping people?

How do you use powerful stories in business and personal development?

How do you consistently engage with an audience on an emotional level?

Marc Spelmann did an amazing job at showing all of this and so much more. We're incredibly grateful for all the work that he's done, on both Britain's Got Talent and outside of it. This is the key that we want to teach you:

The skills he clearly demonstrates and how you can apply them in your day to day life:

whether working with individuals, teams, organisations or just working to improve yourself.

We're running two days to help you explore these ideas more and help you apply them to your day to day life:

If you would like to learn how to give the appearance of being able to read minds, predict the future,

move objects without touching them and influence people's choices,

as well as tell powerful stories and create emotional engagement, we'd love to see you there!

"The brain is a place with a mind of its own."

BILLY REID

– STORYTELLER

In Storyteller, Billy Reid structures his performance around stories from his childhood, using magic to illustrate them and bring them to life. “Illustrate” is perhaps the key word here, as aside from being incredibly well performed, Reid’s magic tricks are more often than not exceptionally aesthetically pleasing.

Reid sets this tone from his first card trick. He starts it classically enough, with an audience participant picking a card that Reid then shuffles back in to his deck, but when the cards start changing to match the story that Reid tells, the fact that in the end he successfully finds the right card is actually the least exciting part of the act. The artistic trend continues in Reid’s mentalist tricks, as he reads a volunteer’s mind by painting the scene that she is thinking of on a canvas on stage, his firm and decisive brush strokes keeping the audience engaged in trying to work out the final image.

Like all of this year’s solo shows at MagicFest, Storyteller is performed at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, and one of Reid’s tricks in particular would not look out of place in one of their exhibitions. Reid uses a blank card deck that he has illustrated himself to tell the story of his love for Scotland in a trick that showcases both his magical and artistic skills. This is a particularly inventive highlight of Reid’s beautifully creative show.

Reid’s tricks rely on audience participation just as much as any other magician’s, but Reid is notable in that he invites volunteers to step forward before randomly selecting a participant himself. While both approaches have their merits, Reid’s worked for him in that his volunteers were visibly excited to participate, and the shyer members of his audience were presumably a little bit less stressed. It is certainly more enjoyable to watch audience participants who participate enthusiastically.

Storyteller is a gorgeous production. One of the personal details that Reid shares is that as a child he was passionate about his art classes, which is no surprise to his audience after seeing this show. Reid smoothly combines his illustrative and performance skills into a remarkable experience.

Anca & LUCCA

THE MIND-READING
RE^{VO}LUTION



7 VOODOO

WHERE OTHER MIND-READING ACTS END,
"THE MIND-READING REVOLUTION" ONLY BEGINS

New mind-blowing demonstrations



The married couple, Anca & Lucca, are second to none. After studying magicians and self-proclaimed mediums, they started to develop their own methods for their demonstrations of mind-reading, clairvoyance and premonition.

Using little more than their awareness, sharpened perception and power of their mind, no simple explanations could be given. Their vow not to use cheap tricks such as prearrangements, actors, or hidden electronic communication devices makes it hard to believe their claim of not having supernatural powers.



The Austrian Lucca has been performing magic for 20 years and became a professional illusionist and speaker in 2008.

THEATER SHOW

Are mind-reading and clairvoyance real? Or is it just an illusion and can be explained? In their theater show, Anca & Lucca reveal the secrets of mental magic and leave you speechless and amazed nonetheless. The spectators become part of the newest and unsurpassed illusions of mental magic.

"Your show was absolutely remarkable and extraordinary, the guests were mesmerized and amazed. I will definitely recommend you guys to any of our sister hotels around the world. I have got incredible comments from our guests as well as our hotel team, I felt proud choosing your show for such an important event. It will be very hard to top this next year. Thanks a lot!"

Romanian-born Anca was not introduced to magic before marrying Lucca, but had a comprehensive stage experience as a ballroom dancer since her earliest childhood. In 2012 Anca & Lucca started re-designing and re-inventing the illusion of mind-reading and clairvoyance. Ever since, they've been constantly pushing the boundaries of their art and try to make their performances more entertaining and intriguing even for those who didn't like magic before.

LUCCA

PRESENTS

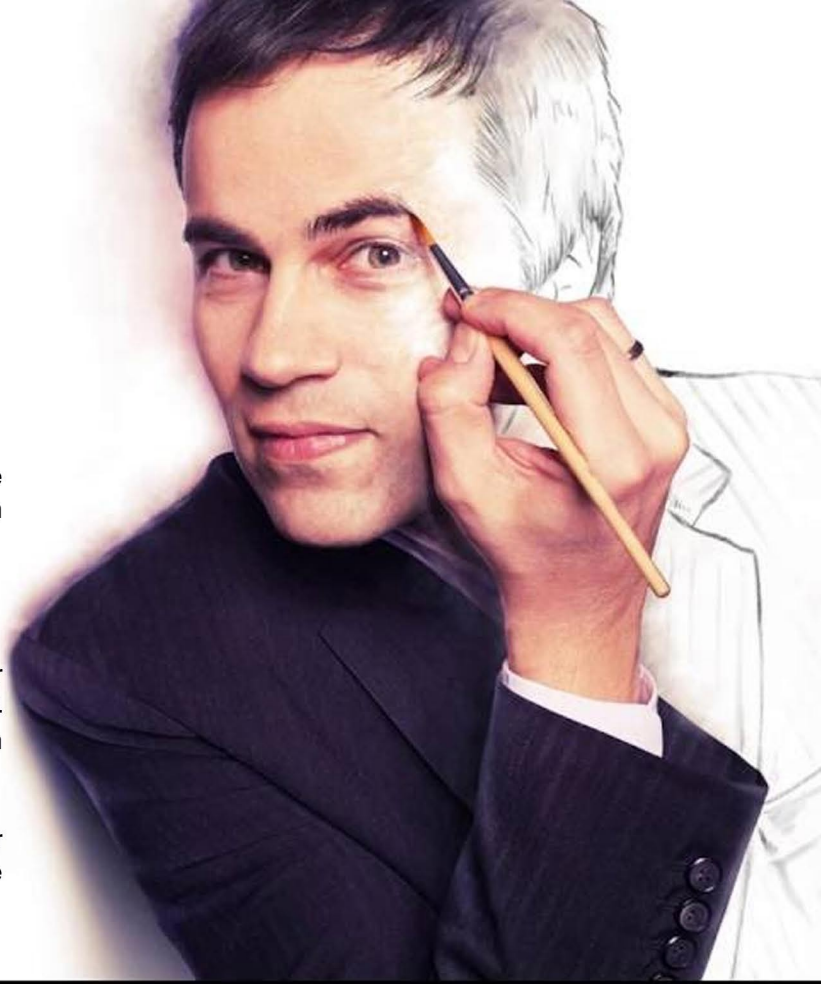
THE MIND-READING NOITULOVERЯ

For weddings he developed the WeddingTainer, a unique show dealing with the topic of marriage and matrimony in 2010.

In 2011 his motivational speech was introduced.

Also in 2011 he invented a new dinner-show concept for high luxury hotels. The Salon of Wonder (originally "The 4 Seasons of Magic") has been successfully running at high luxury hotels around the world.

In 2016 his full-evening show The Art of Wonder premiered at the Vienna Imperial Hotel and later at the MuTh Theatre in Vienna.



The Viennese Illusionist LUCCA is a full-time professional entertainer and speaker. Since he started performing, his aim has been to re-establish magic as a first-class, entertaining art form. Detached from the old clichés of magic, LUCCA deals with very diverse topics in his illusions such as lying, reincarnation, quantum entanglement, love, music or legendary football games. His performances and illusions, partly invented by LUCCA himself, almost exclusively involve the audience. He thereby solely performs magic with everyday items or simply creates illusions in the minds of his guests. Since 1999, LUCCA has been a member of the Vienna Magic Cercle and since then he has provided exquisite magic entertainment for numerous corporate and exclusive events.

Lucca discovered his passion for magic only at the age of nineteen, when he also started his first business in a completely different field. It took another twelve years before he decided to give up his life as a business manager, in order to fully dedicate himself to magic. Since 2008 he is a full-time professional illusionist.

His most important awards are:

3 x Austrian Champion of Mental Magic 2012, 2014 & 2016

Special Award for the "Improvement of a magic principle" 2014

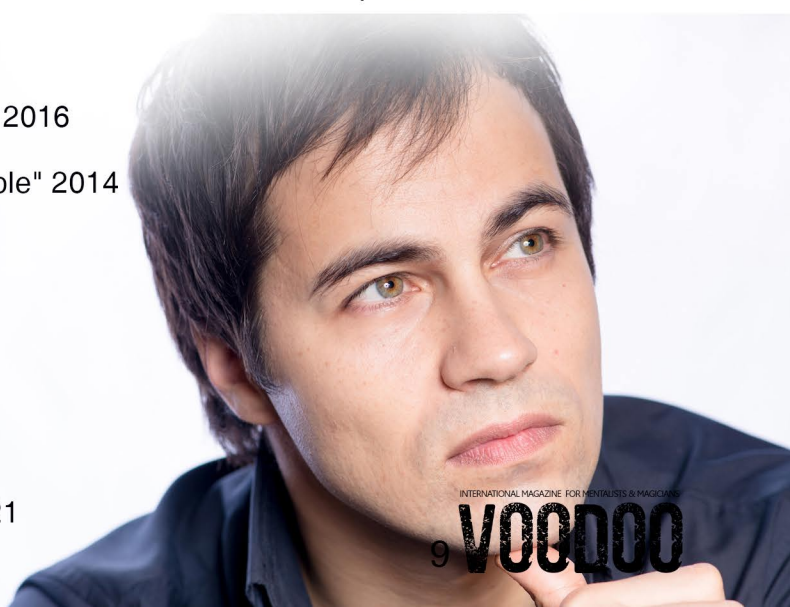
German Vice-Champion of Mental Magic 2014

Vice-World Champion of Mental Magic 2015-2018

European Champion of Mental Magic 2017-2020

Vice-World Champion of Mental Magic 2018-2021

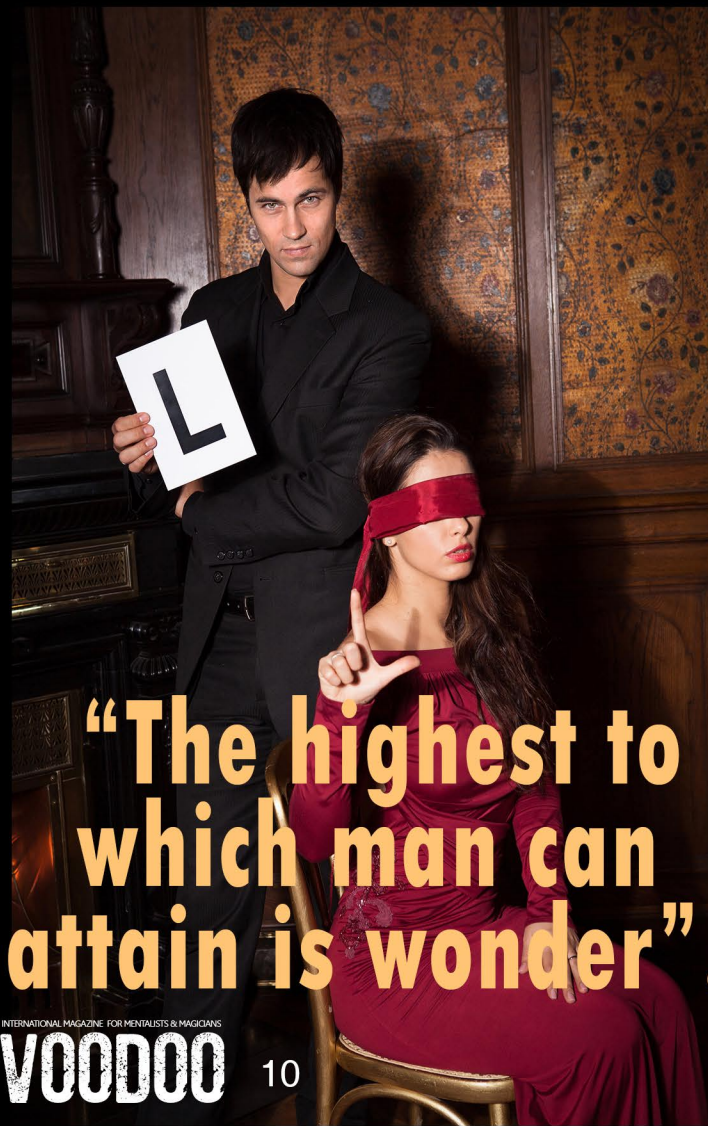
Nostradamus d'Or -Europe's Best Mentalist 2019-2021



INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR MENTALISTS & MAGICIANS
VOODOO

Paradoxically, nothing is more natural for a child than to stand and wonder. But, as we grow up, we all too easily lose this sense for the magical moments in our everyday lives.

More and more I find my thoughts preoccupied with the search for this lost magic – which I discover in nature, in foreign cultures, in religions, in music and in human relationships. Later I work the magic into my illusions, in which I like to involve my guests. This way I want to remind my guests of the unique experience of wonderment and encourage them to find and embrace it in their everyday life. Although I don't make a difference between amazement for life and for a magic illusion, I never try to make my audience believe that what I'm doing is anything else than illusions for entertainment. An artist should inspire and enlighten others, not pretend to have supernatural powers beyond his performance on stage.



“The highest to which man can attain is wonder”.

INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE FOR MENTALISTS & MAGICIANS

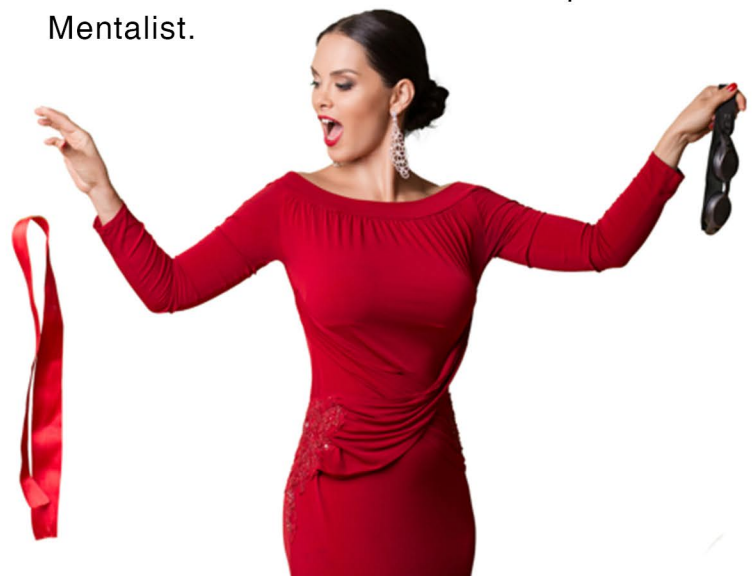
VOODOO

10

Anca didn't know that "magic exists" before she had met Lucca. Just married, she attended her first magic convention with him. The concept of mind-reading intrigued her right away but she didn't like the assisting role of women in magic. Ever since she is challenging her husband to prove who the better mentalist is.

Anca has a double degree in International Relations and Business Administration and has suspended her almost ten-year-long career in the corporate world in order to become a professional magician. She had been on stage all her life, starting with ballet and ballroom dancing already at the age of 6. Hence the transition to performing magic on stage came naturally. At the recent World Championships of Magic neither thousands of magicians nor the jury could believe that she was not using any secret helpers or gimmicks. Only later in a separate meeting with the President and Chairman she convinced them of her unique skills.

Anca and Lucca are still giving their best performance together. With their signature act The Mind-Reading Revolution they've already become Austrian Champions in Mental Magic twice in 2014 and 2016, Vice-World Champions in 2015 and 2018 and European Champions in 2017. In 2019 Anca and Lucca received the O.E.D.M. Nostradamus d'Or for Europe's Best Mentalist.



facilitated communication

FACILITATED COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN CALLED AN ABUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

WHY IS IT STILL AROUND?



FACILITATED COMMUNICATION: SIFTING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

If psychological research does not always give us hoped-for answers, it does help us sift potent reality from wishful thinking and focus our energy on real solutions.

In the early 1990s, an educational treatment program was spreading like wildfire all over the U.S. and Canada. This program, known as facilitated communication, promised to revolutionize the way people treated debilitating conditions such as autism and profound mental retardation. The idea behind facilitated communication was that many people with autism or severe mental retardation actually possess normal levels of intelligence. The problem, advocates of facilitated communication argued, is that these conditions simply prevent people from expressing themselves (because of verbal or motor deficits). If you could read the mind of a person with severe autism, the argument went, you would discover a person who could read at a high level, express sophisticated emotions, and even write a touching essay about the pain and isolation of living with autism.

Could this be true? Advocates of facilitated communication thought so, and they produced what initially appeared to be remarkable evidence in favor of their position. Autistic and mentally retarded children began to express themselves in profound ways. They did so with the assistance of facilitators - whose job it was to steady the hands of the disabled communicators while they typed or pointed to keys on a letter board. Story after story emerged about mentally disabled persons who, with the aid of a facilitator, began to express themselves in amazing ways. People diagnosed as autistic or retarded scored well on standard IQ tests, wrote brilliant essays, and even composed poetry.

Unfortunately there was a problem. Researchers who observed the facilitation process sometimes observed that those who were presumably being facilitated often answered questions when they were not looking at their typewriters or letter boards. Controlled scientific studies also revealed that if one posed a simple question to a child with severe autism, the child could only answer the question when the facilitator knew the answer. For example, if the facilitator could not see a simple object that the child was asked to name, the child could not name it. Highly trained facilitators who had elicited sophisticated answers from their patients in the past could no longer do so when they were prevented from knowing what the patients were being asked.

The short version of this long story is that study after study showed that facilitated communication didn't really work. Apparently, the positive results that had generated so much enthusiasm were the results of a subtle process in which well-intended facilitators were answering questions themselves - without any awareness that they were doing so. Based on the findings of carefully controlled studies of facilitated communication, the American Psychological Association issued a resolution in 1994 that there was "no scientifically demonstrated support for its efficacy."



ROSEMARY CROSSLEY

SIGNIFICANCE & PRACTICAL APPLICATION

As a result of the APA statement (and similar statements from many other scientific organizations), most schools and treatment centers stopped using the technique in the mid 1990s. Perhaps the saddest part of this story is that the most vocal advocates of this technique continue to use it and insist that it is effective — despite the disconfirming evidence. As one parent said, even if the technique is merely an illusion, it is an illusion that they wish to continue.

This scientific episode offers a positive lesson: If psychological research does not always give us hoped-for answers, it does help us sift potent reality from wishful thinking, and thus to focus our energy on real solutions. There is no magic wand that one can wave to make profound disabilities disappear. However, as researchers continue to investigate why serious disabilities occur, and how they can best be treated, there is good reason to be hopeful for better prevention and treatment in the future.

Sometimes you think you've settled an issue, and you can move on. Demonstrating that a health practice is useless and sometimes harmful should be enough to squash it—but not always.

This week the University of Northern Iowa is hosting a conference on "facilitated communication," a thoroughly debunked practice that harms patients and their families and that has been called unethical by leading medical societies.

For those who haven't heard of it, facilitated communication, or FC, is a method where a person (the "facilitator") sits next to someone and guides their hand over a keyboard. For example, a facilitator will hold the hand of a nonspeaking autistic child and guide her as she types out messages.

The problem is, scientific evidence going back 25 years shows that it doesn't work at all. All of the messages come from the facilitator—who might not even be aware that s/he is doing the actual communicating. Even worse, there are multiple documented instances where FC led to false charges of sexual abuse, invented by the facilitator, that severely damaged families and even led to imprisonment of innocent parents. Nonetheless, FC is still used today, and it is easy to find websites claiming that it can help parents communicate with their autistic children. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has recently written that

"FC is not an effective form of communication and does not provide access to communication... [it] has been associated with significant preventable harms arising through false allegations of sexual abuse and mistreatment." (Boynton, 2012; Chan and Nankervis, 2014; Wombles, 2014)



In this 2016 photo, a father assists his son during a math language class at Tulane University in New Orleans. The son, 22, has nonverbal autism, a condition that became apparent when he was 2 years old. His parents guide him through all of his college assignments using what is known as "facilitated communication," a method in which another person supports the hand of the autistic person so he or she can communicate through typing. (AP Photo/Jonathan Bachman)

Others have been even more blunt,
writing that "FC is an abuse of human rights."
And yet it has not disappeared.

Others have been even more blunt,
writing that "Why do people still practice facilitated communication?
Are they even aware that what they're doing is deeply harmful?"

A compelling case is made in this lengthy expose, published in 2012
by a former facilitator, Janyce Boynton, who admits that she was responsible
for "graphic depictions of rape and sexual assault that had no bearing in
reality." Her actions led to a family being split apart and the parents being
charged with child abuse.

Yet Boynton believed at the time that what she was doing was
real—as she puts it, she simply "did not want to believe that FC was a hoax."
She also makes it clear that many of the people she learned from
sincerely believed that FC was real. Boynton herself was crushed
when she realized that she—and not the severely autistic child who
had been entrusted to her care—was typing all the messages.
FC is an abuse of human rights."
And yet it has not disappeared.

As Boynton eventually discovered:

"By the mid-1990s, the scientific community had proved over and over again that it was the facilitator—not the disabled communication partner—who was typing the messages. Every time. Full stop."

Ms. Boynton is now leading the effort to try to convince the University of Northern Iowa to cancel its workshop promoting Facilitated Communication. She helped put together a letter, signed by dozens of doctors, scientists, and speech pathologists, urging the dean of the UNI's School of Education not to host the conference. I wrote to the UNI dean as well, and she forwarded my questions to Christine Ashby, a faculty member at Syracuse University which is co-sponsoring the conference. Prof. Ashby declined to answer my questions, and instead sent me a document that "provides additional information about the method and the research pertaining to its use," as she wrote. I read the document and looked at the references, but I could find nothing that refuted the earlier double-blind studies (or other, more recent studies such as this one) that have shown that FC is ineffective. The fight against dangerous pseudoscience never ends. As five professors of speech pathology and psychology wrote just a few weeks ago:

"It's time to stop exposing people to the dangers of Facilitated Communication."

And yet it is nearly certain that the University of Northern Iowa will go ahead with its workshop (co-sponsored by Syracuse University) on June 18-19, where attendees will not only get college credit, but they may emerge with the mistaken belief that they can unlock hidden thoughts in children who are unable to communicate. This can only cause harm.

Facilitated communication (FC), supported typing, or hand over hand, is a scientifically discredited technique[1] that attempts to aid communication by people with autism or other communication disabilities. The facilitator holds the disabled person's arm or hand during this process and attempts to help them move to type on a keyboard or other device. There is widespread agreement within the scientific community and multiple disability advocacy organizations that FC is not a valid technique for communicating with those with autism spectrum disorder. Research indicates that the facilitator is the source of the messages obtained through FC (involving ideomotor effect guidance of the arm of the patient by the facilitator). Studies have consistently found that FC is unable to provide the correct response to even simple questions when the facilitator does not know the answers to the questions (e.g., showing the patient but not the facilitator an object).[6] In addition, in numerous cases disabled persons have been assumed by facilitators to be typing a coherent message while the patient's eyes were closed or while they were looking away from or showing no particular interest in the letter board.

Facilitated communication has been called "the single most scientifically discredited intervention in all of developmental disabilities". Some promoters of the technique have claimed that FC cannot be clearly disproven because a testing environment might cause the subject to lose confidence. However, there is a scientific consensus that facilitated communication is invalid and a pseudoscience, and its use is strongly discouraged by most speech and language disability professional organizations.

The person with disabilities, who is often unable to rely on speech to communicate, is called the communication partner, while the person holding their arm is called the facilitator. The facilitator holds or touches the communication partner's elbow, wrist, hand, sleeve or other parts of the body while the communication partner points to letters of the alphabet on a keyboard or other device. One device popular with early FC users was the Canon Communicator, which printed a tape of letters when activated. However, two American companies were later charged by the Federal Trade Commission for making "false and unsubstantiated claims" that the device could enable disabled people to communicate using FC. The companies settled and stopped mentioning FC in their advertising campaigns.

RPM

Rapid prompting method

Facilitated communication is closely related to the rapid prompting method (RPM), in which the facilitator holds the letter board instead of touching the patient. Proponents of RPM deny similarities with FC and state that the prompts are "nonspecific." However, RPM contains subtle cuing that makes it highly susceptible to influence from the facilitator.

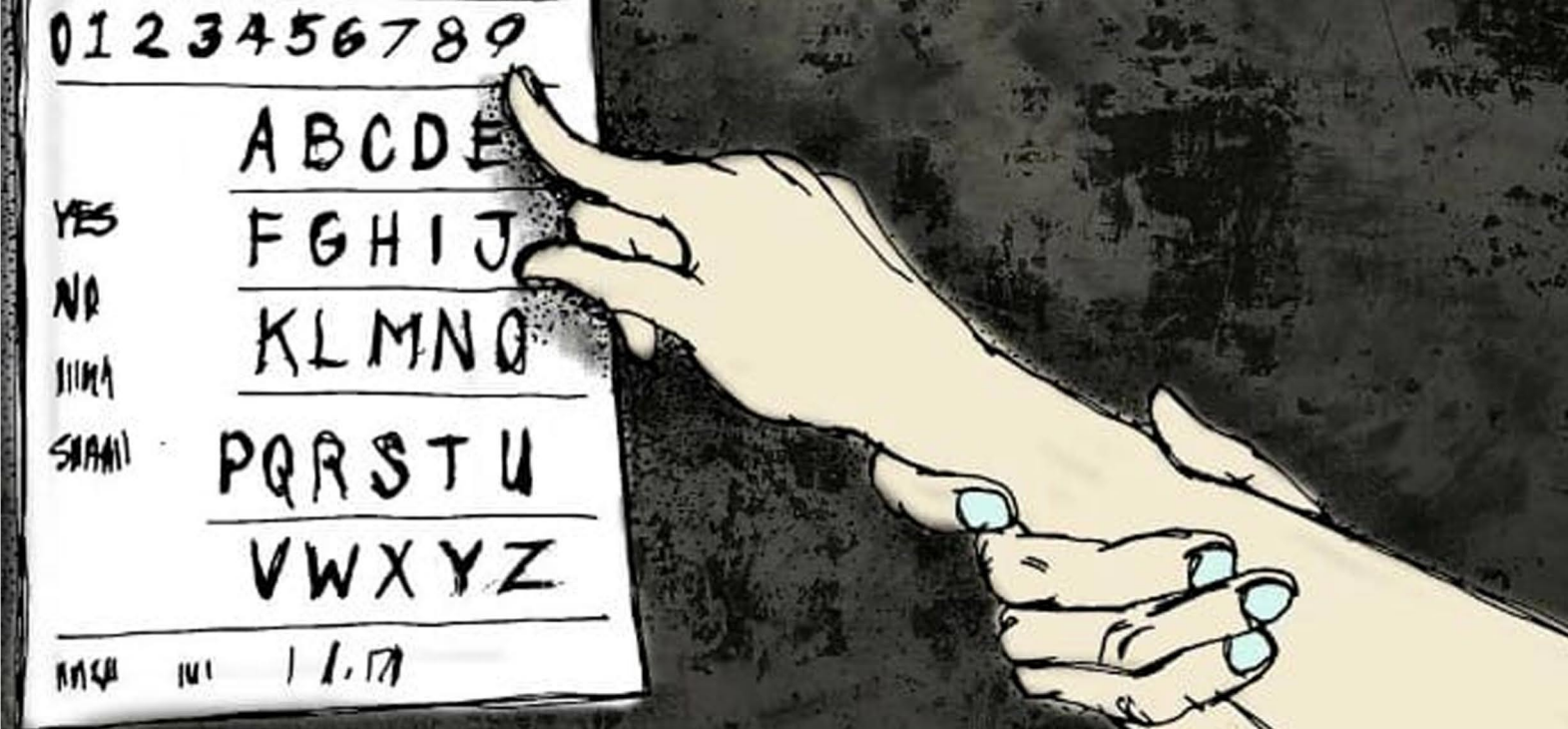
Other similarities between RPM and FC include: reluctance or refusal to test their claims in controlled settings (purportedly because the process breaks the trust between facilitator and client), presumed competence, reliance on anecdotal accounts as proof of efficacy, maintenance of practices, techniques and claims that are inconsistent with the known research, claims of extraordinary literacy or intellectual breakthroughs, unconscious verbal or physical cuing by facilitators to obtain the expected responses, and inadequate or non-existent protocols to account for the effects of the facilitator

Facilitated communication is promoted as a means to assist people with severe communication disabilities in pointing to letters on an alphabet board, keyboard or other device so that they can communicate independently. It has also been called "supported typing", "progressive kinesthetic feedback", and "written output communication enhancement". It is related to the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM), also known as "informative pointing", which also has no evidence of efficacy.

Proponents of FC claim that the reason people with autism cannot communicate effectively involves motor issues such as apraxia, and that they "lack confidence in their abilities" but physical support helps them overcome this limitation. However, this claim is unsubstantiated, and many people with autism have no difficulty with independently performing other physical tasks such as pointing to or picking up objects.

The facilitator is depicted as helping the patient with pointing to letters, controlling involuntary arm movements, avoiding mistakes, initiating movement, verbal prompts, and moral support. It is also claimed that the facilitator must believe in the patient's ability to communicate. Former facilitator Janyce Boynton, who came to reject the technique after taking part in double-blind trials, later reported that her training took for granted that the process worked, and that the complexity of facilitation made it hard to realise that messages were coming from her expectations and not from her patients:

"When you're facilitating, you're so distracted by other things. You're carrying on conversations, you're asking and answering questions, you're trying to look at the person to see if they're looking at the keyboard...Your brain is so engaged that you lose sight of what's happening with your hand...that's what makes it feel like it's working because the more you practice it, the more the movements feel really fluid."



The FC movement can be traced back to the 1960s in Denmark, where it failed to take hold because of a lack of scientific evidence. It became popular in Australia during the 1970s, largely due to the efforts of special educator Rosemary Crossley. It was popularized in the United States beginning in the late 1980s by Arthur Schawlow and Douglas Biklen. FC has also received attention in Asia and Europe. Early users of facilitated communication praised it for its apparent simplicity. It was promoted as a "teaching strategy" that did not require objective evaluation or close monitoring. However, as early as 1991, more than 40 peer-reviewed studies had not only failed to demonstrate FC's efficacy, but indicated that any successes reported were due to facilitator influence. This influence is usually attributed to non-conscious movements, and it is thought that facilitators are genuinely unaware that they are controlling the communications.

In 1994, the American Psychological Association (APA) passed a resolution cautioning against the use of facilitated communication, citing the lack of scientific evidence. They also stated that information obtained via FC should not be used to confirm or deny allegations of abuse or to make diagnostic or treatment decisions. In recognition of the continued scientific evidence against the technique, this was followed by similar statements from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), and the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC). In 1998, a British government report concluded that "the phenomenon fails to materialise once facilitator effects have been controlled. It would be hard to justify further research on this". By 2001, it was reported in a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed literature that "Facilitated Communication (FC) had largely been empirically discredited as an effective intervention for previously uncommunicative persons with disabilities, especially those with autism and related disorders. Key empirical findings consistently showed that the facilitator and not the client initiated communication." Many people believed FC had passed its peak, characterizing it as a fad and pseudoscientific. However, promotion of the technique continued, with supporters dismissing empirical investigations as irrelevant, flawed, or unnecessary, and calling FC an "effective and legitimate intervention". As of 2014, the facilitated communication movement remained popular and it continued to be used in many countries. Mostert writes: All the newer pro-FC studies operate from the premise that FC works and is a legitimate practice to be used in investigating any number of other phenomena related to people with autism and other related severe communication problems. Such assumptions increasingly morph FC into a valid intervention among readers who are unaware of the empirical dismissal of the intervention and who might not be skilled in distinguishing solid from suspect research. In this regard, it is likely that FC will continue to reinforce the assumptions of efficacy among parents and practitioners. These perceptions will continue to be reinforced by professional organizations such as the Facilitated Communication Institute at Syracuse University, a fairly wide acceptance of FC internationally, and the vacuum created by few if any future solid empirical studies that are likely to dissuade the faithful.

FACILITATED COMMUNICATION, OR FC, IS A DISCREDITED AND CONTROVERSIAL COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUE.

It involves a tutor “aiding” a person with communication (often someone with autism or a developmental disability). During facilitated communication, a “facilitator” acts as a physical writing aid. They support users by guiding their movements to help them point at pictures or type on a keyboard. The support ranges from guiding someone from the wrist, elbow or arm to guiding their hand or finger.



**BUT STUDY AFTER STUDY SHOWS
IT JUST DOESN'T WORK.**

However, despite being discredited and highly controversial, FC has survived. There's a small but vocal section of society who are behind the resurgence of FC in disability and education settings. Using a deliberate and strategic rebranding, these advocates renamed FC under guises like “supported typing” and the “Rapid Prompting Method”. This was an attempt to make the practice appear more scientific and to escape the controversy.

It's an ethical duty to end FC and push for access to genuine methods of communication.



When did the FC controversy begin?

In the 1990's, FC was at the height of its popularity. The movement gained traction amongst educators in Australia in the 1970's and 80's. And it soon spread to America and other parts of the world such as Canada, France, Austria, the UK and Finland. Suddenly, autistic people who had never spoken were communicating in fluent and creative ways. It was a miracle for educators and families.

Why is it so controversial?

The big problem with FC is that the facilitator becomes a ventriloquist. Study after study shows that facilitators influence and control what their users say. And this makes facilitated communication all the more dangerous. Despite the irrefutable evidence, professionals and so-called "FC experts" refuse to accept that they're influencing the person they want to help. This is understandable; the heart of FC supporters is often in the right place, but their advocacy is unethical and dangerous. It's not just that FC doesn't work, it facilitates abuse. For example, FC has enabled the abuse and manipulation of many vulnerable people by facilitators. The high profile cases of Anna Stubblefield and the Wendrow Family demonstrate how FC ruins lives.

Case Study: The Wendrow Family

In 2007, the Wendrow family were wrongfully prosecuted for sexual abuse allegations made via FC. Aislinn Wendrow was diagnosed with non-communicative autism at age two and began using FC at school with a teaching assistant. At 14, Aislinn typed out messages that claimed her father had repeatedly raped her while her mother ignored the abuse. The case was dropped months later. During the trial, it was repeatedly shown that Aislinn could not type correct answers if her facilitator had not heard the question that she was asked. During this time, her father spent 80 days in jail, and the family was devastated by the case and allegations.

Case Study: Anna Stubblefield

Anna Stubblefield is a former chairwoman of the philosophy department at Rutgers University, a mother of two, and a disability rights activist. Last year she was found guilty of raping a 31-year-old man called DJ with cerebral palsy and severe cognitive disabilities. DJ's brother had been taught by Stubblefield at university. With good intentions, he arranged a series of meetings to see if Anna could help DJ communicate through FC. DJ's family wanted facilitated communication to work, and their desire was a powerful force. In 2011, Anna told DJ's family that they were in love and that he had consented to a sexual relationship through facilitated communication. DJ's family were distraught. When they found out what happened, their desire to see DJ communicate was overtaken by a protective desire to stand up for his voice and rights, and the very ugly side of FC came to light.

ANNA HAD MANIPULATED THEIR TRUST AND THEIR HOPES.

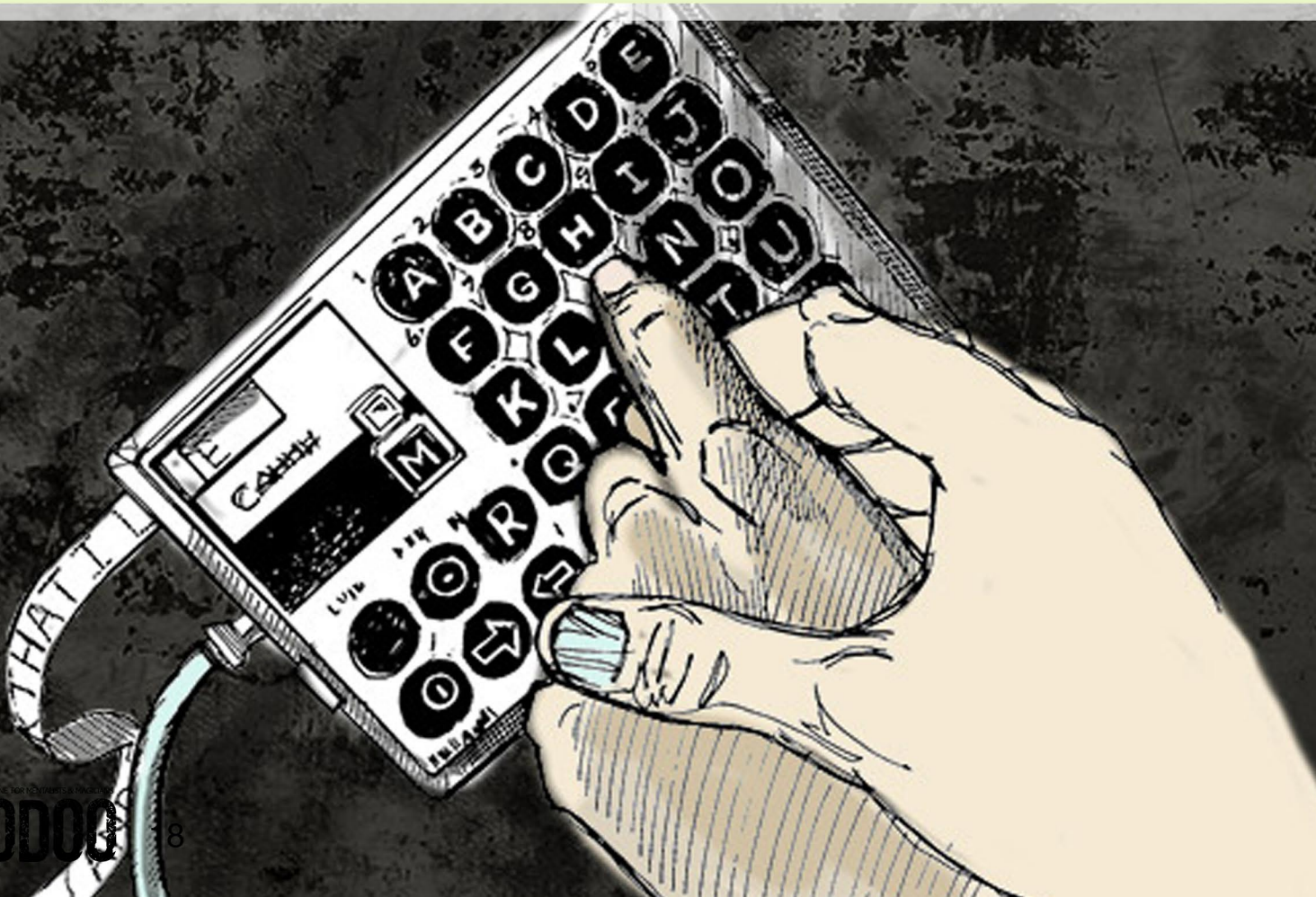
The judge sentenced Anna to 12 years in prison for the rape of DJ. But debate still thrives over the sentencing and whether the trial was fair. Some of this is from FC supporters, who claim FC remains valid and that it's unfair to expect users to perform under trial pressure. But most of the debates arise because DJ was left out of the trial; his cognitive abilities were not reassessed, and he was presumed to be incompetent. He was also denied access to other legitimate and valid forms of communication that could have helped him testify if it was determined he had sufficient cognitive ability. These debates assert DJ was overlooked and that adequate measures were not taken to understand DJ's abilities.



Facilitated Communication: MENTAL MIRACLE OR SLEIGHT OF HAND?

The cliché that “there is nothing new under the sun” applies more than ever to the mental health profession today. We seem to be experiencing a myriad of new techniques to treat the developmentally disabled, Facilitated Communication being one of the most popular, yet in reality their underlying characteristics have been seen before. These components make up the structure of what might be considered a social movement:

Facilitated Communication requires the “facilitating” hand of the therapist and an alphabet board. The board can be a simple sheet of paper taped to a wall, or it can be a sophisticated electronic keyboard that produces a taped record of the responses.



HOW FC WORKS

Assertions that a new technique produces remarkable effects are made in the absence of solid objective evidence, or what little evidence there is becomes highly overblown.

Excitement about a possible breakthrough sweeps rapidly through the communities of parents, teachers, service providers, and others concerned with the welfare of individuals with disabilities.

Eager, even desperate for something that might help, many invest considerable financial and emotional resources in the new technique.

In the process, effective or potentially effective techniques are ignored.

Few question the basis for the claims about the new treatment or the qualifications of the individuals making them.

Anecdotal reports that seem to confirm the initial claims proliferate rapidly.

Careful scientific evaluation to determine the real effects of the technique are not completed for some time, and can be made more difficult than usual by the well-known and powerful effects of expectancies.

Some of these techniques have small specific positive effects, or at least do minimal harm.

Eventually they fall out of favor, sometimes because they are discredited by sound research, sometimes simply because experience reveals their lack of efficacy, but probably most often because another fad treatment has come on the scene. Each retains some adherents, however, and some go relatively dormant for a while only to emerge again.

Parallel phenomena occur in other areas, such as treatments for AIDS, cancer, and various psychological problems. At present the field of developmental disabilities (especially autism) seems to be experiencing an epidemic of novel techniques, or "interventions," as they are called. Despite its parallels with other techniques, **FACILITATED COMMUNICATION (FC)** has probably had a greater impact than any other novel intervention in the history of treatment for persons with disabilities.

How does FC work? If you have never seen it in action it is quite a phenomenon to observe. Individuals with "severe communication impairments" (e.g., severe mental retardation, autism) are assisted in spelling words by "facilitators" (teachers or parents) who provide physical support, most often (at least initially) by holding their hand, wrist, or forearm while they point to letters on a keyboard or printed letter display. Right before your eyes, a mentally disabled person that just previously had virtually no communication skills, suddenly begins to spell out words, sentences, and whole paragraphs. Stories are told. Answers to questions are given. A child that did not appear to know the difference between a dog and an elephant can now be shown a series of pictures, correctly identifying them one by one, as his or her hand glides deftly over the keyboard, pecking out the correct letters. The assumption, of course, is that most of the words spelled in this fashion actually originate with the disabled partner and not the facilitator. On its face, FC can seem simple and benign, and sometimes looks quite convincing. Its main proponents sometimes characterize FC simply as a strategy for teaching individuals to point in order to access systems like synthetic speech devices and keyboards to augment their communication. At the same time, however, they claim that it is a revolutionary means of unlocking highly developed literacy, numeracy, and communication repertoires in large numbers of individuals previously thought to have severe learning difficulties. For all the world it looks like a mental miracle, the kind of stuff they make movies about, as in *Awakenings*. The theory is that many such individuals do not have cognitive deficits at all, but instead have a presumed neuromotor impairment that prevents them from initiating and controlling vocal expression. Their average or even above average intelligence is locked away, awaiting release. The neuromotor disorder is also presumed to manifest itself in "hand function impairments" that make it necessary for someone else to stabilize the individual's hand and arm for pointing, and to pull the pointing hand back between selections to minimize impulsive or poorly planned responding. Candidates for FC are also presumed to lack confidence in their abilities, and so require the special touch and emotional support of a facilitator to communicate, (i.e., a strap or device to hold the person's arm steady will not work).

FC thus has an almost irresistible appeal for parents, teachers, and other caring persons who struggle mightily to understand and communicate with individuals who often do not respond or communicate in return. But the very features that make FC so seductive, in combination with some other potent factors, have made it a topic of heated debate between believers and skeptics since its "discovery" in Australia nearly two decades ago.

It all began in the 1970s with Rosemary Crossley, a teacher in an institution in Melbourne in the Australian state of Victoria. She suspected that some of her young charges with severe cerebral palsy had far more ability than their physical impairments allowed them to demonstrate. When she gave them hand or arm support to help them point to pictures, letters, and other stimuli, Crossley became convinced that several of the children revealed literacy and math skills that they had somehow developed with little or no instruction, despite having lived most of their lives in an impoverished institutional environment.

BEGINNINGS

DOWN- UNDER

Right away there was controversy about the technique that Crossley called Facilitated Communication Training. Two people were involved in creating the messages, and simple observation could not reveal how much each was contributing. Plus, many of the messages Crossley attributed to these institutionalized individuals defied plausibility. “Facilitated” accusations of abuse and expressions of wishes for major life changes (like leaving the institution) made it imperative to determine whether communications actually originated with the disabled individual or the facilitator. Matters were complicated by Crossley’s emerging status as a heroine to many in the deinstitutionalization movement. Eventually, after a series of legal proceedings, a young woman with cerebral palsy with whom Crossley had developed a special relationship through FC was released from the institution to reside with Crossley. The institution was closed, and in 1986 Crossley started (with government financial support) the DEAL Centre (Dignity through Education and Language) to promote alternative communication approaches—principally FC—for individuals with severe communication impairments. Use of the method spread to programs in Victoria serving persons with various disabilities, accompanied by controversies about communications attributed to FC users on the basis of subjective reports.

Sufficiently serious issues arose to provoke formal statements of concern from professionals and parents in 1988, and a government-sponsored investigation in 1989. Despite Crossley’s resistance to objective testing (on the basis that FC users refused to cooperate when their competence was questioned), some small-scale controlled evaluations were conducted in the course of that investigation. When the facilitator’s knowledge about expected messages was well-controlled (more on this later), and the accuracy of messages was evaluated objectively, the effect disappeared. The disabled individuals were unable to communicate beyond their normal expectation. Instead, it appeared that the facilitators were authoring most FC messages, apparently without their awareness. These early studies suggested that FC was susceptible to a somewhat unusual kind of abuse: Allowing others to impose their own wishes, fears, hopes, and agendas on nonspeaking individuals.



At about that time Douglas Biklen, a special education professor from Syracuse University, conducted a four week observational study of 21 DEAL clients said to be autistic, who were reported to engage in high-level discourse with the help of facilitators. Professor Biklen was already established as a leader in the “total inclusion movement,” which seeks the full-time placement of all students with disabilities, regardless of their competencies and needs, in regular classrooms. The report describing his first qualitative study of FC, which Biklen said was begun “in an attempt not to test hypotheses but rather to generate them,” appeared in the Harvard Educational Review in 1990. He reported that the communication of the individuals he observed (some of whom were being “facilitated” for the first time) was sophisticated in content, conceptualization, and vocabulary, and contained frequent references to feelings, wishes to be treated normally and to attend regular schools, and society’s treatment of individuals with disabilities. This was in sharp contrast with the well-documented difficulties in social, play, cognitive, and communication skills that constitute current diagnostic criteria for autism (not to mention that the diagnosis is difficult to make and is applied to individuals with a wide range of competencies and deficits in all those domains). In his seminal article, Biklen mentioned the controversy over the Australian findings, but asserted that informal “indicators that communication was the person’s own were strong enough, in my view, to justify the continuing assumption of its validity” [italics added]. Some of the indicators he reported observing were disabled individuals typing independently or with minimal physical contact with the facilitator; content (spelling errors, unexpected word usage, etc.) that appeared to be unique to each individual; and facial expressions or other signs that the individual understood the communication. He also noted that facilitators often could not tell who was doing the spelling and that they could be influencing the FC in subtle ways without their awareness, and that this could be a problem. Finally, on the basis of his uncontrolled observations and the reports of Crossley and other facilitators, Biklen decided that autism had to be redefined as a problem not of cognition or affect, but of voluntary motor control. He returned from Australia to establish the Facilitated Communication Institute (FCI) at Syracuse University, and the North American FC movement was underway.

Can people learn, without being deliberately taught, to respond to subtle, subconscious, involuntary cues if an animal can? In the early 1900s, a horse, Clever Hans, astonished Germany by its self-learned ability to interpret visual cues and answer simple questions by tapping its hoof.



A SOCIAL MOVEMENT IS BORN

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Word of FC spread quickly with the help of several media reports of FC “miracles.” The rate of information exchange increased geometrically, feeding the system and driving it forward. FC newsletters, conferences, and support networks contributed to the spread of astonishing success stories, along with examples of prose and poetry attributed to FC authors.

Not surprisingly, the experience of accomplishing a breakthrough and being part of a movement was a heady experience for many facilitators. Some, however, reported wondering all along whether the words being produced through FC were really coming from their disabled partners. Others who had serious doubts about the method from the outset found themselves under considerable pressure from parents, peers, and employers to adopt the method wholesale and without question. Reports that facilitators’ private thoughts were being expressed through FC led some to conclude that individuals with autism must have telepathy—a view espoused by a professor of special education at the University of Wisconsin, among others.

FC has an almost irresistible appeal for parents, teachers, and other caring persons who struggle mightily to understand and communicate with individuals who often do not respond or communicate in return.

The Movement Takes Off

The Syracuse FCI began training new facilitators in earnest, in workshops that lasted from a few hours to two or three days. At least two New England universities became satellite programs of the Syracuse FC Institute, as did numerous other private and public agencies that provided training and support for facilitators.

Initiates (parents, paraprofessionals, and professionals in several disciplines) were often told that the technique was simple and required no special training. They were urged to train others, and to go out and try FC with disabled individuals. Thousands did. Soon FC was being heralded as a means of “empowering” individuals with severe disabilities to make their own decisions and participate fully in society. FC was rapidly becoming the Politically Correct treatment of choice. Soon after publication of Biklen’s article, special education personnel and parents around Syracuse, then throughout the U.S. and Canada, adopted FC enthusiastically. Scores of children were placed in regular classrooms doing grade-level academic work with “facilitation.” Decisions about the lives of adults with severe disabilities—living arrangements, medical and other treatments, use of hearing aids, and so on—were based on “facilitated” messages without any attempt to verify authorship objectively. In many cases FC supplanted other communication modes, including vocal speech and augmentative communication systems, that do not require another person for message creation. Some psychologists, speech pathologists and others began giving I.Q. and other standardized tests with “facilitation,” changing diagnoses and program recommendations in accordance with the “facilitated” results. Suddenly “retarded” individuals were proclaimed to have average or above-average intelligence. “Facilitated” counseling and psychotherapy were promoted to help FC users deal with personal problems. Colleges and universities offered courses on FC. Millions of tax dollars were invested in promoting its widespread adoption, with little objective evaluation of its validity or efficacy.



FACILITATED COMMUNICATION REQUIRES THE “FACILITATING” HAND OF THE THERAPIST AND AN ALPHABET BOARD. THE BOARD CAN BE A SIMPLE SHEET OF PAPER TAPED TO A WALL, OR IT CAN BE A SOPHISTICATED ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD THAT PRODUCES A TAPED RECORD OF THE RESPONSES.



Facilitators were also imbued, explicitly and implicitly, with a strong ideology that presents dilemmas for many who want to know who is really communicating in FC. Some components of the ideology include:

- ASSUME COMPETENCE.
- DON’T TEST.
- PREVENT ERRORS.
- EXPECT REMARKABLE REVELATIONS IN THE FORM OF HIDDEN SKILLS AS WELL AS SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION.
- USE CIRCUMSTANTIAL, SUBJECTIVE DATA TO VALIDATE AUTHORSHIP.
- AVOID OBJECTIVE SCRUTINY.
- EMPHASIZE “FACILITATED” OVER SPOKEN OR OTHER COMMUNICATIONS.

Contradictory evidence from the controlled evaluations that had been conducted in Australia and those that emerged later in the U.S. were mentioned rarely, if at all, in FC training materials and newsletters. When that evidence was mentioned it was to criticize the evaluation methods and the people who employed them, and to explain away the results by saying essentially that FC could not be tested. In short, FC’s validity was to be accepted largely on faith. With this, science was abandoned.

Concurrently Biklen, Crossley, and their colleagues published further reports of qualitative studies suggesting that FC was highly effective in eliciting unexpected literacy skills from large proportions of individuals with severe autism, mental retardation, and other disorders. Many of these individuals had received little instruction in reading and spelling, or if instruction had been attempted many had not appeared to learn very much. How, then, had they developed age-level or even precocious literacy skills? According to Biklen they acquired these skills from watching television, seeing their siblings do homework, and simply being exposed to words pervading the environment. Or perhaps some had actually been learning from instruction all along, but because their speech was limited they could not demonstrate what they learned.

How did they verify their claims? Biklen and his colleagues used participant observation and other methods employed by anthropologists, sociologists, and educators in field studies of cultures and social systems. The research was strictly descriptive, not experimental, and employed no objective measurement or procedures to minimize observer bias. Despite their acknowledgement of the real possibility of facilitator influence in FC, these studies did not control that critical variable. Late in 1991 a few parents of students at the New England Center for Autism, where I serve as Director of Research, began pressing our program to adopt FC. They asked us to make rather drastic changes in their childrens' lives on the assumption that messages produced with FC represented the childrens' true wishes and competencies. Some were angry when we decided instead to use it only under conditions of a small-scale experimental study employing the kind of objective evaluation methods that we try to apply to all techniques. At that time we could find nothing about FC in the research literature, so we consulted respected colleagues around the country. Some (in California, surprisingly enough) had not heard of it yet. Others invoked a Ouija board analogy or Clever Hans effect, and suggested that FC would be a short-lived fad. None knew of any objective evidence about FC. To our chagrin, we also encountered individuals with scientific training who were promoting the use of FC without considering the fundamental question about authorship.

The Sexual Abuse Component

The real possibility that "facilitated" words were those of the facilitators was not a cause for much concern as long as the process seemed benevolent. Few wished to throw a wet blanket on the euphoria created by reports of a breakthrough. But almost from the beginning, strange things began to happen: Some FC messages said—or were interpreted by facilitators to say—that disabled FC users had been abused by family members or caregivers. Often the abuse alleged was sexual, and many allegations contained extensive, explicit, pornographic details.

These early studies suggested that FC was susceptible to a somewhat unusual kind of abuse: Allowing others to impose their own wishes, fears, hopes, and agendas on nonspeaking individuals.



FACILITATED COMMUNICATION REQUIRES THE "FACILITATING" HAND OF THE THERAPIST AND AN ALPHABET BOARD. THE BOARD CAN BE A SIMPLE SHEET OF PAPER TAPED TO A WALL, OR IT CAN BE A SOPHISTICATED ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD THAT PRODUCES A TAPED RECORD OF THE RESPONSES.

So many social movements have a sexual component in them, and FC is not different. Production of sex abuse allegations usually set in motion an inexorable chain of events. Beliefs about FC, the complexities inherent in the method, and the fact that the alleged victim may be seen as particularly vulnerable because he or she is disabled, now began to interact with the zealous pursuit that seems to typify investigations of sex abuse allegations. School or program administrators were notified, who in turn called in representatives of social services and law enforcement agencies. If the accused was a family member with whom the FC user resided, that person was either required to leave the home or the FC user was placed in foster care. If a parent was accused, both parents often faced criminal charges, one for perpetrating the alleged abuse, the other for knowing about it and failing to act. Often actions were initiated by social service workers to terminate parental custody or guardianship. If the accused was a school or program employee, they may have been suspended from their job or even fired. A long and trying ordeal was virtually guaranteed for all involved. An investigation began. Police interrogated the accused, and questioned the alleged victim through their facilitator. Other evidence was sought in the results of medical and psychological examinations of the alleged victim, and interviews with others who may have had information about the alleged events. A presumably independent facilitator was sometimes called in to try to corroborate the allegation, introducing another complexity: There appear to be no established safeguards or objective criteria for ensuring that independent facilitators in fact have no access to information about cases, nor for deciding what constitutes corroborating "facilitated" content.

False allegations have devastating emotional and financial effects on the accused and their families, but leaving individuals in situations in which they may be abused jeopardizes their physical and emotional welfare. It would seem that extreme caution and stringent rules of evidence should apply. A number of cases have arisen in which the only evidence was a “facilitated” allegation, although there have also been reports of cases in which corroborating evidence or confessions were obtained. When an allegation is made through FC, two separate but related questions must be addressed: Who made the allegation, and did the alleged events actually occur? Some courts and investigative bodies in Australia, the U.S., and Canada have decided that the first question must be answered by controlled testing of FC under conditions where independent observers can verify when the facilitator does and does not have information necessary to produce communications. If the FC user does not convey information accurately and reliably under those conditions, and there is no other solid evidence, the legal action is usually terminated. That has been the outcome of testing in every case of which I am aware, but by the time that determination has been made the accused have been traumatized for the better part of a year and have spent tens of thousands of dollars defending themselves. Solid corroborating evidence would certainly answer the second question—whether abuse occurred—but it does not follow logically that it answers the question about who authored the “facilitated” allegation.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t until a number of false “facilitated” allegations of sexual abuse came to light that FC began to be scrutinized closely. As issues about the validity and reliability of FC were addressed in courtrooms all over the U.S., critical and questioning stories appeared in the print and electronic media. Concurrently (though somewhat slowly), results from a rapidly growing number of controlled evaluations began to be disseminated, and a few more skeptical voices were raised.

REPORTS THAT FACILITATORS’ PRIVATE THOUGHTS WERE BEING EXPRESSED THROUGH FC LED SOME TO CONCLUDE THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM MUST HAVE TELEPATHY.



How To Test FC



The rationale for conducting controlled observations to determine authorship in FC is straightforward: If the disabled FC user is actually the source of the messages, then accurate and appropriate messages should be produced on virtually every opportunity when the facilitator has no knowledge of the expected message. Some controlled evaluations of FC have been mandated by legal questions like those just described, but a number were carried out by clinicians, researchers, and program administrators who simply wanted an objective empirical basis for making decisions about FC. Even James “The Amazing” Randi was consulted in the early stages of testing, some calling him in to make sure fraud and trickery was not involved, others because they genuinely wondered if psychic power was the cause. Randi’s skepticism of the phenomenon was not welcomed by FC supporters. The first major American study was conducted by psychologist Douglas Wheeler and colleagues at the O.D. Heck Developmental Center in Schenectady, NY, who wanted objective evidence to convince skeptics that FC was valid.

How do you do a controlled study of FC? Recently I analyzed reports of 17 evaluations of FC that have appeared or have been accepted for publication in peer-reviewed professional journals, and eight presented at scientific conferences. The common and critical ingredients were:

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION.

OBJECTIVE MEASURES, I.E., USE OF INDEPENDENT, NONPARTICIPATING OBSERVERS OR JUDGES, “BLIND” TO THE CONDITIONS IN EFFECT, WHO RECORDED DATA AND/OR EVALUATED THE ACCURACY OF FC OUTPUT.

MAINTENANCE OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT BY THE FACILITATOR.

WITH ONLY A FEW EXCEPTIONS, FACILITATOR/FC USER DYADS WHO HAD BEEN WORKING TOGETHER WITH APPARENT SUCCESS FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD BEFORE FORMAL EVALUATIONS WERE CONDUCTED.

FAMILIAR, COMMON COMMUNICATION CONTEXTS (E.G., TYPICAL ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE-DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, DISCUSSING EVERYDAY EVENTS, NAMING OR DESCRIBING FAMILIAR PICTURES OR OBJECTS).

ESTABLISHMENT OF APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL FC IN THE EVALUATION CONTEXT.

CONTROL OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE FACILITATOR.

The necessary control was established in a number of ways. In some studies, facilitators were simply asked to look at their partner and not the letter display, or were actually screened from the letter display. These kinds of tests were suggested by the observation that many facilitators focus intently on the letters while their partners look at the letters infrequently, if at all. Others presented visual stimuli like pictures, objects, or printed materials only to the FC user while the facilitator was screened from seeing them. Alternatively, spoken questions were presented only to the FC user while their facilitator wore earplugs or headphones playing masking noise. Several evaluations used a procedure described as “message passing.” FC users were engaged in some familiar activities in the absence of facilitators, who then used FC to solicit descriptions of the activities. A couple of evaluations involved independent facilitators, unfamiliar with the FC user, who solicited information that was presumably unknown to the facilitator (e.g., the FC user’s favorite food, a recent event in their life, names of family members, etc.).

“The Results

The most telling evaluations used double-blind procedures, in which facilitators and their partners saw or heard different items on some trials, and the same item on other trials. Neither could tell what information their partner was receiving. Responses that corresponded to information presented to the facilitator and not to their partner provided direct evidence that facilitators were controlling those FC productions. Multiple tasks and control procedures were used by several investigators. Facilitators in all evaluations had been trained by leading proponents of FC, or by others who had had such training. They seemed representative of the general population of facilitators, including parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, speech pathologists, and other human service workers. The sample of FC users in these evaluations also appeared representative, comprising a total of 194 children and adults with autism, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and related disorders.

None of these controlled evaluations produced compelling evidence that FC enabled individuals with disabilities to demonstrate unexpected literacy and communication skills, free of the facilitator’s influence. Many messages were produced over numerous trials and sessions, but the vast majority were accurate and appropriate to context only when the facilitator knew what was to be produced. The strong inference is that facilitators authored most messages, although most reported that they were unaware of doing so. Sixteen evaluations found no evidence whatsoever of valid productions. A total of 23 individuals with various disabilities in nine different evaluations made accurate responses on some occasions when their facilitators did not know the answers, but most of those productions were commensurate with or less advanced than the individuals’ documented skills without FC. That is, they were primarily single words and an occasional short phrase, produced on some trials by individuals whose vocal or signed communication exceeded that level, some of whom had documented reading skills before they were introduced to FC. For most of these individuals, there was clear evidence that on many other trials their facilitators controlled the productions. The controlled evaluations also demonstrated that most facilitators simply could not tell when and how much they were cueing their partners, emphasizing the importance of systematic, controlled observations for identifying the source of “facilitated” messages. The legal, ethical, and practical implications of these findings are obvious and serious. Together with the legal cases and critical media reports, they have made it a little more acceptable to voice skepticism about FC.



The Proponents Respond : Parallels With Psychics

Proponents of FC have criticized the controlled evaluations on several counts. The parallels of their responses to those received by James Randi when he tests psychics are startling. FC supporters, for example, argue that incorrect answers were due to lack of confidence, anxiety, or resistance on the part of FC users, who “freeze up” or become offended when challenged to prove their competence. Likewise, psychics claim they cannot perform in front of video cameras or in the presence of skeptics who make them anxious. In the case of FC, if this were true—if testing per se destroyed the FC process—participants in the controlled evaluations would not have responded at all, or would have produced inaccurate responses throughout, not just when their facilitators did not know the answers. Instead, many accurate words, descriptions, and other responses were produced, but for the most part only when facilitators knew what they were supposed to be. Additionally, many evaluations took place in familiar surroundings in which individuals had engaged in FC for numerous sessions, with their regular facilitators and letter displays. Sessions typically were not conducted or were terminated if there were any signs of distress or unwillingness to continue. Few refusals were reported. Participants in most evaluations completed numerous trials and sessions over extended periods of time. Most appeared cooperative, even enthusiastic, throughout. Several evaluations were conducted in the context of typical FC sessions, using the same types of materials and questions to which participants had appeared to respond successfully. Questions were no more confrontational or intrusive (perhaps less so) than those often asked in regular FC sessions; in fact, many tasks were identical to those recommended for FC training, except that conditions were arranged so that facilitators could not know all the expected responses. Finally, if FC users simply become too anxious to communicate when challenged, one has to wonder how they are managing to perform in regular academic classrooms, on I.Q. and other tests, in front of TV cameras, and before large audiences at FC meetings. And how can they give “facilitated” testimony, under questioning by judges and attorneys (which is anxiety producing for anyone), as prosecutors in some sexual abuse allegation cases are now arguing is their right? giving you a decent explanation for the reality at hand. Or there is the other route, that of letting go and allowing yourself to be drawn into a poetic and surreal world.

Another criticism of the controlled evaluations is that the facilitators were not familiar with their partners, were inadequately trained, or did not provide appropriate “facilitation.” That is simply not true. As indicated in the summary above, the FC users’ preferred facilitators participated with them in most evaluations. The only exceptions were two studies that assessed initial responsiveness to FC with facilitators and FC users who were “beginners” when the evaluation started, and a couple of legal cases in which unfamiliar facilitators were involved (who nonetheless “facilitated” successfully with the FC users before controlled testing began). Many facilitators were trained by leading proponents of FC. Most were encouraged to provide whatever physical and emotional support they wished during the evaluation. If they were not “facilitating” properly, few understandable communications would have been produced. Quite the opposite was true. There is a peculiar irony in this criticism, however, since proponents offer no specific guidelines or standards as to what constitutes sufficient training and experience for facilitators. Some facilitators have started using the method after reading an article, watching a videotape, or attending a brief workshop. When we began to take a look at FC at the New England Center for Autism, for example, our three speech-language pathologists were trained by Biklen in a two-day workshop. That appeared to be the norm at that time (late 1991). A further contradiction is that there are reports throughout the descriptive literature on FC that facilitators who were complete strangers had some individuals with severe disabilities “facilitating” sentences (more, in some cases) in their very first session.

Implausibilities and Inconsistencies

An oft-cited criticism of the controlled evaluations is that they required FC users to perform confrontational naming tasks, which proponents consider inappropriate because individuals with autism have global “word-finding” problems. This argument is implausible for several reasons. First, many evaluations did not require FC users to spell specific names; descriptions, copying, multiple-choice options, yes/no responses, and answers to open-ended questions were just some of the other kinds of responses solicited. Second, there is no solid evidence that such problems are exhibited by individuals with autism. It can be difficult to distinguish words that an individual presumably knows but cannot produce from words that they simply do not know, even with individuals who at one time had well-developed language (e.g., neurologic patients). This would seem to be even more difficult with individuals with autism. Even if this rationalization applied to individuals with autism, what accounts for the results with the many FC users who did not have autism? Additionally, at least three studies documented spontaneous oral naming responses by FC users with autism that were more accurate than their “facilitated” responses. That certainly goes against the “word-finding” hypothesis for those individuals.

In other words, when the data contradict their claims, experiments are not valid; when the data support their claims, experiments are useful.

TARGETED INTUITION



Some FC proponents attribute negative findings to the supposition that most FC users are not experienced with the kinds of tasks presented to them in the controlled tests. This criticism is especially puzzling. By law, the skills of individuals with special needs must be evaluated on a regular basis, so most FC users have probably had a great deal of test experience. The tasks used in most controlled evaluations were like those used to teach and test academic and language skills in classrooms and training programs everywhere. In fact, many were precisely the kinds of activities that are recommended for FC training, on which the FC users in the controlled evaluations had been reported to perform very well. Again, if inexperience with the tasks were a plausible explanation, FC users should perform equally poorly when their facilitators did and did not know the expected answers. That was not the case in the controlled evaluations. Finally, FC proponents are inconsistent in claiming that controlled testing undermines the FC user's confidence, while in the next breath they are quick to tout reports that some attempts at controlled evaluations have produced evidence of FC's validity. In other words, when the data contradict their claims, experiments are not valid; when the data support their claims, experiments are useful. A report from Australia (referred to as the IDR report) said that three individuals with disabilities succeeded in "facilitating" the name of a gift they were given in the absence of their facilitators, but one was said to type his responses independently, without FC. The report provided no background information about the individuals, no details about the procedures, and described only one controlled trial completed by each individual. Another exercise described in a letter to the editor of a speech disorders journal claimed that four of five students thought to have severe language delays performed remarkably better with FC than without on a test of matching pictures to spoken words. The facilitator wore headphones but was not screened visually from the nearby examiner who was speaking the words, and no expressive communication was required of the FC users. At best, these exercises must be considered inconclusive, but they have been cited widely by proponents as scientific validations of FC. The contradiction inherent in arguing that controlled testing interferes with FC while endorsing exercises like these seems lost on them. The clear implication is that tests that appear to produce evidence supporting beliefs about FC are good, and tests that fail to do so are bad.

SILENT SKEPTICS

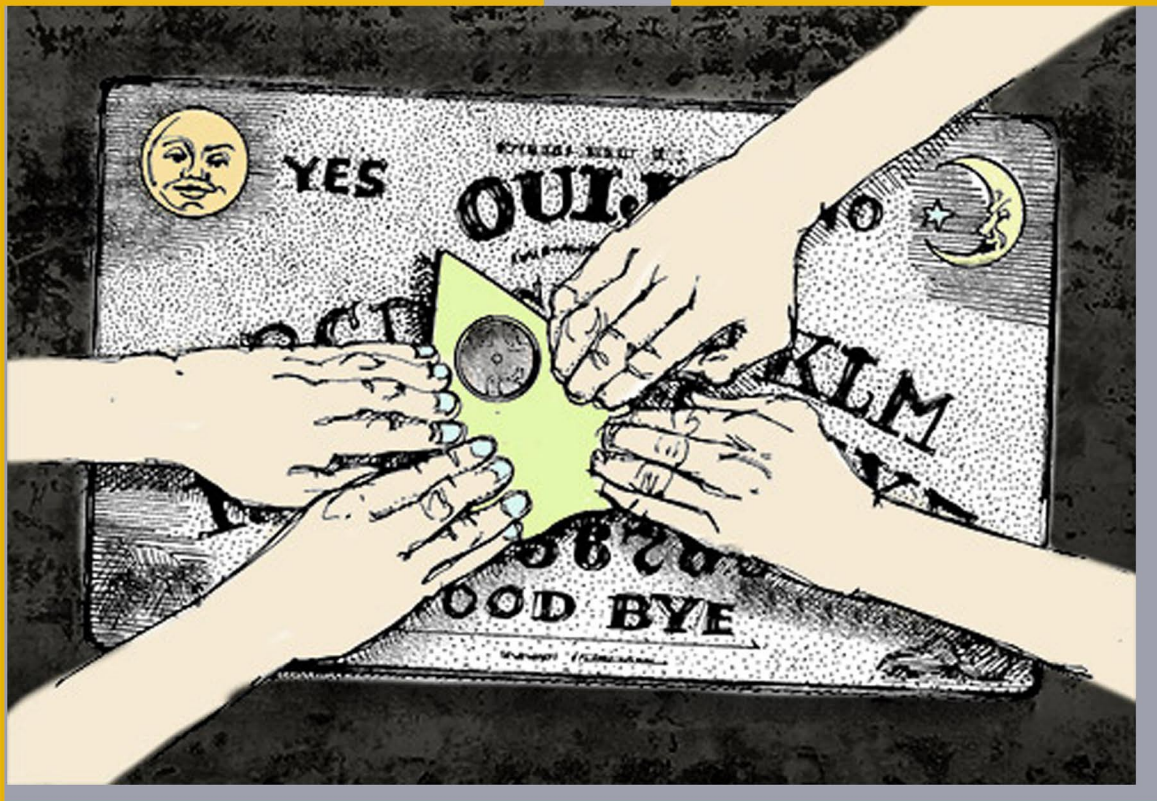
If FC is so obviously not the mental miracle supporters claim it is, why does the movement continue to grow? Why hasn't the scientific community made a significant public statement against FC? A number of variables probably account for the initial and continuing reluctance of many skeptics to speak up. First, scientists in general are cautious about drawing conclusions without data. When FC first hit the disability community in North America, there were no objective data to be had. A rejoinder to Biklen's first report by Australian psychologists Robert Cummins and Margot Prior was submitted to the Harvard Educational Review early in 1991. Their paper summarized the results of controlled tests of the validity of FC and the legal and ethical problems it had engendered in Australia. It was not published until late summer 1992, and by that time the FC movement already had considerable momentum. Even then, many skeptics withheld judgment on the basis that the Australian data were limited. This was essentially our reasoning at the New England Center for Autism—that some individuals with autism might write or type better than they could speak (we knew a few), and that if there were some merit to the claims about FC, it would be revealed through careful research using objective methodology. At the same time, however, we sensed something ominous in the rapidity and zeal with which FC was being applied, the resistance to critical scrutiny, and the antiscience stance of many adherents. Even as the dark side of the FC story began to unfold, relatively few in developmental disabilities who knew how to test the claims about FC experimentally wanted to get involved, perhaps thinking that the best response was to continue to do sound research in their own areas. Others did not want to be seen as naysayers or debunkers. Cummins and Prior, both with long histories of involvement in treatment and research in developmental disabilities, were among the first in Victoria to go public with their concerns about FC. Their expressions of skepticism and calls for caution were met with hostility and personal attacks from FC proponents in Australia, a scenario that has repeated itself in the U.S. That suggests another variable, in my opinion one of the most potent: It was (is) not Politically Correct in many circles to suggest that FC might not be all it appears, or even to call for objective evaluation to determine if it is. Those who do are likely to be labelled heretics, oppressors of the disabled, inhumane, negative, jealous of others' discoveries, "dinosaurs" who cannot accept new ideas, and out for financial gain.

The FC Future

Needless to say, considerable attention and acclaim have accrued to the leaders of the FC movement, but as the data and the harms have mounted, so has the criticism. Recent months have seen a marked shift in media coverage from the glowing reports of miracles that made almost no mention of objective evidence (e.g., PrimeTime Live) to stories about families for whom FC has been anything but a miracle. A documentary on the PBS investigative news program, Frontline, honed in on the implausibility and lack of empirical support for Biklen's initial claims, along with the emerging evidence from experimental evaluations showing overwhelmingly that most FC is facilitator communication.

The public position of Syracuse University officials appears to be that Professor Biklen's notions are simply provoking the furor and resistance that all radical new ideas encounter. Perhaps that is the case; time and objective data will tell. Time will most certainly be required for the legal system to do its part in determining the future of the FC movement. A number of cases involving "facilitated" sexual abuse allegations are in process at this writing. To my knowledge, there has been one conviction so far. Several individuals and families who have been cleared of false allegations have filed damage countersuits against the facilitators, school and program administrators, and social service agencies involved. On January 10, 1994 a civil suit was filed in federal District Court for the northern district of New York seeking \$10 million in damages on behalf of a family who were among the first victims of FC allegations in the U.S. Among the ten defendants are Douglas Biklen and Syracuse University.





Are there parallels between the ideomotor responses that direct dowsing sticks and the Ouija board and the response of the autistic subjects to the touch of their facilitators?

Finally FC

Finally, if FC is not a mental miracle, is it sleight of hand? By this I do not mean there is intentional deceit on the part of the facilitators. Far from it. Most are genuine, honest, caring individuals who wish the best for their charges. Herein lies an explanation. The power of a belief system to direct thought and action is overwhelming.

A full and complete explanation for the FC phenomenon is still forthcoming, but clearly there are parallels with the ideomotor responses that direct dowsing sticks and the Ouija board. As the facilitator gently directs the hand to begin typing, letters are formed into words and words into sentences.

Just as with the Ouija board where elaborate thoughts seem to be generated out of thin air while both parties consciously try not to move the piece across the board, the facilitators do not appear to be conscious that it is them generating the communication. Even with the autistic child looking elsewhere, or not looking at all (eyes closed), the hand is still rapidly pecking out letters as if it were a miracle. Unfortunately there are no miracles in mental health. All of us wish FC were true, but the facts simply do not allow scientists and critical thinkers to replace knowledge with wish.



1.5

1

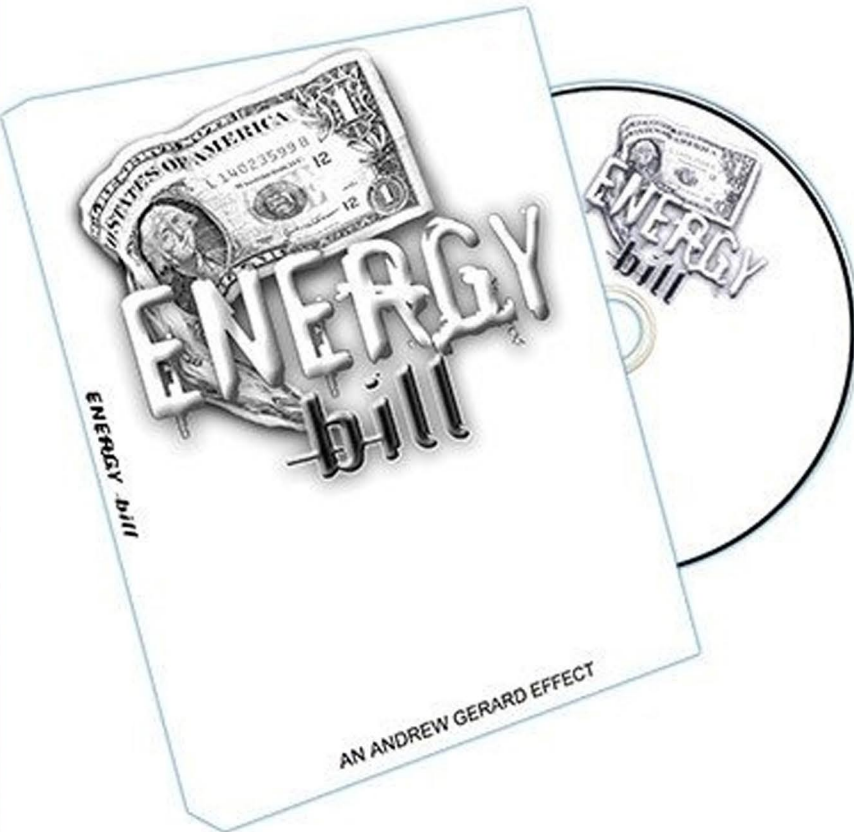
TRUCK

The performer places five envelopes on the table. Each, he explains, contains a card bearing a simple design. A prediction is placed inside a participant's pocket. He is given a free choice of any envelope. The contents of the other envelopes are shown to be all different. The card from the chosen envelope is removed; it bears a diamond. The prediction is opened - it bears a matching diamond. The method is an outgrowth of Tony Corinda's "The Third Choice" (from Step 4 of *Thirteen Steps to Mentalism*, 1958). The envelopes are opaque, of the end-opening "pay envelope" variety, with the flaps cut off. They are ungimmicked; the cards are not. One of the cards is made from blank-faced playing card stock with a printed back design. On the face of this card is a triangle. The other four cards are made from double-blank stock, and have drawings on both sides. One side of each bears a diamond; the other side has some other design (circle, square, star, heart). The triangle card goes into its envelope face-up. The others go in diamond-side-down. Prepare a prediction forecasting the choice of the diamond and you're ready to begin. Deal the envelopes into a tabled row so that the one containing the triangle card is closest to the participant. (If you wish, mark the triangle envelope and thus allow the participant to mix the envelopes. Retrieve the envelopes and deal them haphazardly in a row, positioning the marked one nearest to the person.) Put the folded prediction message in the participant's pocket. Explain that only one envelope contains the same design as on the prediction paper, and therefore, "Four of the envelopes must be eliminated." Direct the participant to point to any envelope. If any other than the triangle envelope is designated, pick it up and say, "This is the one you felt compelled to select." As you put it back on the table, away from the row, turn the envelope over. Gesture toward the envelope nearest the participant and ask the person to remove its contents as you say, "Let's see what you didn't select." He removes the triangle card. Because this is a legitimate card it can be freely handled. The implication is that all of the cards are free from guile and could also be handled by the participant. Of course, they are not, so you must extract the cards from the remaining envelopes yourself. When you do this, convey the idea that you're taking over in order to speed things up. Pull each card from its envelope, displaying the assorted null designs. Finally, remove the card from the selected envelope; because it was previously turned over, the diamond design will show. If the chosen envelope contains the triangle, continue by saying, "Fine, we'll eliminate that one." Push it aside and have the participant designate three more, one by one, for elimination. The remaining envelope, defined as the chosen one, contains a doubleracer. You can proceed as already described.

BUYmeONCE



THE PERFORMER OFFERS A DEMONSTRATION OF HUMAN ENERGY. A BILL IS BORROWED, SIGNED AND PLACED ON THE TABLE. HELD AT THE PERFORMER'S FINGERTIPS, THE BILL STARTS TO MOVE. THE PERFORMER LETS GO OF THE BILL AND STEPS A FEW FEET AWAY... THE BILL CONTINUES TO MOVE! FINALLY THE PERFORMER GESTURES AND THE BILL FALLS OVER! THIS DVD GOES OVER EVERY DETAIL YOU WILL NEED TO KNOW TO BE DOING THIS RIGHT AWAY. PERFORMANCE NOTES AND SUBTLITIES ARE INCLUDED ALONG WITH ANDREW GERARD'S PERSONAL PRESENTATIONAL PLOYS. ANDREW GERARD HAS BECOME KNOWN AS A CREATOR OF EFFECTS THAT CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. ENERGY BILL HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DEVASTATE EVEN THE MOST HARDENED SKEPTIC....



ANDREW GERARD

THE PERFORMER OFFERS A DEMONSTRATION OF HUMAN ENERGY. A BILL IS BORROWED, SIGNED AND PLACED ON THE TABLE. HELD AT THE PERFORMER'S FINGERTIPS, THE BILL STARTS TO MOVE. THE PERFORMER LETS GO OF THE BILL AND STEPS A FEW FEET AWAY... THE BILL CONTINUES TO MOVE! FINALLY THE PERFORMER GESTURES AND THE BILL FALLS OVER! THIS DVD GOES OVER EVERY DETAIL YOU WILL NEED TO KNOW TO BE DOING THIS RIGHT AWAY.

PERFORMANCE NOTES AND SUBTLITIES ARE INCLUDED ALONG WITH ANDREW GERARD'S PERSONAL PRESENTATIONAL PLOYS. ANDREW GERARD HAS BECOME KNOWN AS A CREATOR OF EFFECTS THAT CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE. ENERGY BILL HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DEVASTATE EVEN THE MOST HARDENED SKEPTIC....

- No THREADS
- No MAGNETS
- No STATIC
- No BLOWING

PERFORMED WITH A BORROWED BILL / NO SWITCHES
EXAMINABLE BEFORE AND AFTER
NO DEVICES USED OF ANY KIND

