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ACTING STUDY AND SOCIAL SKILLS LEARNING:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Television, Radio, Film and Theatre

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Pamela Lindsay

August 2008

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ethel Walker", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Ethel Walker

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David Kahn", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. David Kahn

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Buddy Butler", written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Buddy Butler

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thea I. Williamson 07/07/08", written over a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

ACTING STUDY AND SOCIAL SKILLS LEARNING: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

by Pamela Lindsay

This thesis addresses possible connections which may exist between techniques of acting study and social skills learning for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. It examines the skill objectives of selected methods of instruction from both areas to provide data for comparative analysis. In addition, approaches to instruction with possible cross-disciplinary benefits were identified based on applications involving the building of shared skill objectives.

The related research data was summarized and illustrated through cross-reference charts. These revealed that such connections do exist; the percentages of objectives identified as common between acting study and social skills learning were revealed through individual and corporate analysis. The information presented supports future discussion regarding curriculum planning within both areas of instruction and encourages additional discussion regarding the creative potential of actors with Asperger's Syndrome.

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To our son, Matthew; you continue to provide me with many intuitively well-timed words of encouragement at just the right moment, expressing your constant belief in my work. I am eternally grateful and appreciative of these gifts. To our daughter, Valerie; you inspired the research of this thesis. Cici is absolutely right. Your many cups of tea and company bring joy and enthusiasm to my work and to life in general. To our son, Raymond, and daughter-in-law Yanira; it was a wonderful experience studying in tandem our respective academic efforts. For this, and for your service to our country, you have inspired me. To our grand-daughter, Isabella; my hope is that you will someday view this publication as a small reminder that you can do anything with a bit of determination. To my brother, Steve, and his family; your support throughout my journey up to this point has been incredibly important and each of you is an ever-present inspiration.

Finally, to my parents, Carlynne and Gordon Carlson; all my love and thanks for raising me with the understanding that the possibilities of life are limitless, for always encouraging my academic and personal growth, and for being the very best kind of parents through daily modeling of the truth within the statement that what one gets from life is directly proportional to what one gives to others. It is in this spirit that this research is dedicated to you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Scope of Research

The study of acting involves the ability to recognize and analyze human behaviors and responses as a primary objective for success. The work of the actor is not to simply emote. Instead, it involves the accessing of the actor's own perspectives and experiences, creating an organic connection to observations made in performance. An inter-personal event encountered on the stage possesses specific encoded meaning, shaped by the perspective and experience of the actor. The identification of this meaning creates an associated impact, which is viewed by the audience as specific behavior. Related actions should be allowed to naturally occur in response to this impact, and these are also acknowledged by the audience. The past experience of the actor provides a foundation of experience from which this work emerges. These experiences can be specifically analyzed and explored during the actor's preparation to provide grounding for desired organic behaviors and responses (Silverberg, 2-7). Each individual performer has a "very personal response to everyone and everything. (The actor) will find that everyone and everything has meaning...." which is identified in rehearsal and accessed in performance (17-18).

A similar process exists within therapeutic work for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome (AS). Social cognitive deficits which inhibit the ability to convey personal intention or receive information regarding the intention of others are among those that receive attention in such therapy. Skills involving personal observation, analysis, and behavioral response related to 1) social context, 2) environmental cueing, 3) gesture and

expression, and 4) intonation within interpersonal communication are specifically targeted (Gaus, 50-53).

The review of this information prompted a question regarding possible connections between the two areas. Do significant points of connection exist between the skill building objectives of acting study and those of social skills learning for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome?

This inquiry provided the specific foundation and direction for the research of this thesis, which is presented in the form of a cross-reference study. Core objectives of social skills therapy work have been compared and contrasted with objectives found within selected methods of acting study. The selection of these methods is explained in subsequent chapters.

Connections between the two areas were investigated to possibly provide a foundation for future research of inner/inter-disciplinary applications. Such a foundation could also provide expansion of the researcher's own scope of knowledge regarding additional ways through which actors might be taught to hone their abilities of organic behavior and response. Personal experience as an actor, director, and teacher of acting skills has generated the conclusion that these abilities can be overlooked within an actor's course of study. Attention is often placed on textual analysis and crafting which is more academic than visceral, and therefore tangible to the actor through a series of implemented steps. However, when the actor is on the stage, it is the connection to the visceral which prompts organic behaviors and responses that appear real and of the specific moment in which they occur (see Chapter Three). Therefore, any discovered

method which might lend itself to expansion of the actor's perceptive skills could be of significant interest to teachers of performance.

The researcher's own ongoing exploration into related teaching methods and techniques could also be influenced by the results of this study. This interest is prompted by 1) past experiences as a parent of an AS child, and 2) ongoing work in academic consulting for families who are educating children and teens with AS through independent study programs. Such programs include academic short and long-term goals which incorporate skill-building objectives of therapy and life skills training. Therapeutic objectives within such plans usually involve the application of social cognitive skills such as perspective-taking and inferencing ("reading between the lines"). These are applied to verbal (inter-personal or instructive), non-verbal (unspoken interpersonal or instructive), and written (textual) applications. Additional acting-based approaches to social skills learning identified within this study could provide possibilities of application within such curriculum planning.

Previously published works referenced in this study offer discussion in the following areas: 1) foundational elements of actor training and performance, 2) previous uses of acting-based work as therapy, 3) the analysis of multiple approaches to contemporary acting study, and 4) foundational data regarding background information and current practices regarding therapy for Asperger's Syndrome. This collection of sources includes publications providing information regarding both acting study and Asperger's Syndrome; these are listed in the bibliography under the primary area for which they were consulted.

Chapter Two features a literature review investigating the existence of any previous uses of acting study in support of therapeutic areas. Explanations of discovered approaches are provided, including their acting-based methods and practical applications through related exercises. The format for charts developed to illustrate 1) examples of techniques and 2) objectives found within each approach create a basic structure for the presentation of data which will be used throughout the thesis.

A definition of Asperger's Syndrome and related previous research is provided in Chapter Three. Background information regarding diagnosis, assessment criteria, and common skill objectives of treatment is presented prior to discussion of objectives found within acting study. For purposes of review, referenced terminology has also been presented and explained.

The specific methods of acting study which were included in the research are then identified. Preliminary discussion is followed by visual illustration of their components as identified within the research. A comparative analysis follows, featuring individual and corporate examination of the data.

Points of connection which may or may not have been found to exist are presented in the final chapter. Conclusions regarding possibilities for cross-disciplinary benefits are also explored. Ideas for possible further study both prompted by and based on the findings of this research are also shared.

The Appendix (Appendix A) presents related observations and experiences of the researcher. This perspective is applied to the formulation of further suggestions regarding steps that might be taken toward future research. This additional information

has been included to encourage continued exploration of ways that the work of the acting community might benefit from-and be of benefit to-therapeutic strategies for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome.

Chapter 2: Previous Therapeutic Uses of Acting Study

2.0 Overview

The art form of performance has a history of therapeutic benefit for individuals with disabilities. The process of performance preparation and execution offers opportunities for personal development and exploration which are unique to the theatrical environment. Participation in theatre-based activities can get people “out of their chairs and exploring *in action* topics of interest to them” (Sternberg, Garcia, 4). Such activities have the potential to transform lives through illumination about and learning of varied approaches to the challenges and experiences of daily living.

This chapter identifies notable sources providing information on some of the methods through which dramatic work has been of therapeutic benefit to individuals with disabilities. Some of the methods featured are: sociodrama, psychodrama, drama groups for the disabled, role playing therapy, social performance, and drama for psycho-therapeutic medical training. In addition, specific focus will be given to precedent-setting work of The Access Theatre, sociodrama, Acts of Being, and drama workshops for the learning disabled.

2.1 Literature Review

Patricia Sternberg and Antonia Garcia define sociodrama as a “group learning process focused on providing practice in solving problems of human relations. It also helps group members to clarify values and feelings and gives them an opportunity to practice new behaviors” (Sternberg, Garcia, xvii). Sternberg and Garcia outline a method through which workshops involving drama are conducted with a variety of populations.

Goals involve assisting individuals in achieving life changes through exploration of new approaches to problem solving.

The term “sociodrama” was coined by Jacob Levy Moreno (1889-1974), who began experimenting with role play as therapy while attending the University of Vienna as a philosophy student. Moreno viewed individuals as comprised of the roles played within society on a day-to-day basis. These roles were identified by particular sets of behaviors. Embedded within each role were collective (shared) and private (individual) components. Moreno therefore created two separate tools for role exploration. These were titled “sociodrama” and “psychodrama.” The former involved the shared aspects of a role; the latter involved the individual components (5-7).

Sociodrama is used to explore collective (group) issues, focusing on shared experiences vs. those which are more private. It is generally intended for educational purposes rather than for therapeutic purposes. It strives to engage participants through immersion in the process and is used as an educational tool. Spontaneity and creativity are incorporated while exploring behaviors and problem solving techniques. The technique of role playing is often employed to help participants understand the perspectives of others. Acting-based exercises are directly incorporated as members learn to act out events, helping them to find solutions to problems, practice behaviors, and understand the point of view of others. Participants also learn to develop greater empathy and express themselves more effectively (3-8).

Work begins with a warm-up period, when group members identify central issues and concerns through improvisational scenarios based on personal experience. These are

designed by the director to inspire member participation. The group is then led through a process of separating themselves from their own experience to focus instead on the similar experiences of others. For example, if a central issue of being hurt or let down by others is identified in warm-up work, the director will lead a discussion of circumstances in which another person might experience the same feeling. In this way, personal perspective is expanded and the perspectives of others are explored. The director then assists the group in identifying a central theme to explore in sociodrama. A related event is enacted circumstantially and emotions toward the exercise are shared. Communication is increased and connections are made through the realization that others share similar experiences and emotions. These exercises also serve the dual purpose of encouraging growth of problem solving skills. Members often identify multiple approaches to problems and begin to understand the perspectives involved with each. Ultimately, new behaviors are planned (15-18).

Goals for sociodrama sessions include catharsis, insight, and role training. Moreno provides his own definition of these terms. Catharsis is explained as “the deep expressions of emotions that take place in sociodrama enactments” within both the enactors and the audience and primarily addresses the “deep, releasing expression of emotion.” The value of insight is explained as allowing group members “to view a particular problem in a new and different way.” It is intended to address what is happening in the mind of the individual and a “new realization occurring in and through action.” He identifies role training as the experiencing of a new role in life, or “experimenting with better ways to play a role we are already playing in life.” This also

includes the exploration of new perspectives involved in verbal and non-verbal communication as it incorporates “practicing in an enactment of new behaviors to use elsewhere in life” (21-25).

These three elements are also present within the work of the actor. Theories of the Theatre (Carlson, 1984) explains the definition of “catharsis” as originating from the ideas of Aristotle, wherein the work of theatre “does not encourage the passions but in fact rids the spectator of them. Tragedy would thus function in the manner of homeopathic medicine, treating a disorder by the administration of milder doses of similar agents....” (18). Carlson also refers to the concepts of philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), identifying a veil existing between the external and the internal:

“Not only external objects,” he explains, “but even our own mental states are screened from us in their inner, their personal aspect, in the original life they possess. Instead of this....inner essence, we see the generalities and respond to the labels that make everyday life easier to live. It is the artist who from time to time brushes conventional generalities aside and brings us face to face with reality itself....we can recognize the sincerity of (the actor’s) attempt to penetrate the veil of the general, and this serves as a stimulus to us to seek our own individual insight.” (299-300)

Role training is directly addressed through the representation of alternate perspectives and the understanding of its relationship to our own. George Henry Lewes (1817-1869), a leading drama critic of mid-nineteenth-century England, is identified as addressing acting as an art form that should represent reality and impact the audience

through honest character portrayal (230). Thoughts and behaviors are communicated as truthfully as possible, generating recognition within the actor and the viewing audience.

The use of sociodrama can be applied to traditional acting study in the theatre. It can assist the actor with experiencing what a character feels. Through its use, the acting student does not approach a role by attempting to feel the character's emotions. Instead, the effort is placed on accessing actual experience. This approach is noted as having been influenced by Konstantin Stanislavsky:

This experience is what Stanislavsky was referring to....when he said,
“Note that I execute physical actions, not feel them; because if they are
properly carried out the feelings will be generated spontaneously. If you
squeeze them out of yourself, the result will be distortion and force.”

(Sternberg, Garcia, 147)

This actor's approach to sociodrama can be transferred to therapeutic use. For example, it can be applied to an understanding of cultural experiences of another country. As a Jewish immigrant from Vienna, Moreno was interested in using sociodrama to discover how cultures intermingle, how prejudices develop, and how people can use its techniques to overcome intolerance to cultural differences.

It can also be applied to the teaching of health and life skills. This is of particular therapeutic value when applied to health issues which are emotionally and socially charged. Sociodrama is described as being “particularly well suited” for the exploration of emotional and physical issues related to alcoholism, drug addiction, AIDS, and mental

illness. It can also be used to help students emotionally cope with the issues they face at various stages of development (155).

This acting-based approach to therapy is also useful in the teaching of therapists themselves. For example, a gerontology class can use sociodrama to experience the difficulties of aging. A program has been used in several states to train medical students in developing their “bedside manner” and more humane ways of executing their duties. Some of the areas explored include: general patient relationships, dying patient relationships, communication with families of dying patients, and the preparation of patients for diagnosis or treatment. Sternberg and Garcia state that “research data shows that doctors so trained are more confident and make more accurate diagnoses. Also, their patients relate to them better....” (158). This psycho-therapeutic training has been shown to improve the value of services provided by these medical professionals.

A visual overview of sociodrama techniques (exercises which are used to address specific skill building objectives) has been included. This information can be viewed on the following page as Figure 1.

Techniques:	Role Reversal	(Multiple) Double	Empty Chair	Soliloquy	The Aside	Walk and Talk	Freeze Frame	Concretization	Sculpting	Mirror	Future Projection
Skills Addressed:											
Empathy	X		X								X
Perspective Shift	X		X					X	X	X	X
Understand Internalized Thoughts								X	X		
Understand Internalized Emotions								X	X		
Communicate Personal Thoughts		X		X	X	X			X		
Communicate Personal Emotion	X	X		X	X				X		
Answer Internal Questions	X			X							
Emotional Catharsis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physicalized Thoughts		X						X	X		
Physicalized Words		X						X	X		
Physicalized Emotion								X	X		
Interpret Personal Body Language							X	X		X	
Interpret Body Language of Others		X					X			X	X
Respond to Behavior of Others							X			X	X
Discern Feelings of Others	X	X	X				X				X
Discern Thoughts of Others	X	X	X				X				X
Experience Thoughts of Others		X	X								X
Experience Feelings of Others		X	X					X			X
Interpret Figurative Language											
Imagine Future Events										X	X
Personal Insight	X			X	X	X		X	X		X
Release of Emotion						x			x		
Role Training	X		X								X
Learning of New Behavior											X
Explore Alternate Solutions		X				X	X				X
Experience Alternate Solutions						X	X				X
Discover New Views	X							X		X	X
Understand Interpersonal Dynamics	X					X			X		X
See Self As Others Do	X									X	
Emotional Support of Others		X				X	X			X	X
Observe and Question Oneself		X							X	X	
Explore Cultural/Academic Issues			X								X

Fig. 1. Exercises and objectives of sociodrama as explained by Sternberg and Garcia.

Bernie Warren has studied the relationship of disability and performance since 1982. His data is the product of years of recognized work as a drama therapist, university lecturer, and theatre professional and includes work with hospitals, schools, and other related institutions. In his guide Disability and Social Performance: Using Drama to Achieve Successful Acts of Being, (1988) he cites Charles Marowitz' The Act of Being: Toward a Theory of Acting (1978) as a primary and important resource for information regarding behaviors and responses on the theatre stage. These are then described as transferred to the "stage" of life experiences as social performance. Warren's primary areas of focus were disabling factors in daily human interactions and "ways of being" when in performance on the "social stage." (Warren, ix) It is of particular interest that Warren's guide is written in a format similar to that of a dramatic play, structured as a series of three acts and an epilogue which include the following:

Act I: the drama embedded in social performance

Scene 1: its relationship to other art forms

Scene 2: similarities/differences between ritual and drama

Scene 3: similarities/differences between social and theatrical
actors

Act II: disability in terms of social performance

Scene 1: the relationship between a disability and a handicap

Scene 2: types of performances required on various social stages

Scene 3: blocks to success within particular performance styles

Act III: ways in which drama/theatre effect change in the social actor

Scene 1: performance opportunities to become more socially adept

Scene 2: how and when drama may be considered therapeutic (iii)

Though all of the above can be defined as relevant to a discussion of drama as therapy, Act III is particularly relevant. Warren's definition of "drama," including his identification of how and when drama may be considered therapeutic, provides important information when investigating the goals and impact of this work. Therefore, discussion will focus on these points.

Warren's early work was conducted with longtime friend Rob Watling and mentor Bert Amies. It involved diverse groups of special needs populations and settings. Warren explains how short term visits to facilities generated an awareness of the potential therapeutic benefits of drama:

"We worked more as apostles preaching the power of drama to enhance people's lives than as drama therapists seeking directly and specifically to reshape them...the lessons that I learned from those sessions have profoundly affected my philosophical views on, and my practical applications of, the therapeutic powers of drama." (98)

The sessions involved training the participating social actors (those learning to "perform" on the "stage" of daily life) to constantly shift and adapt their social performance style to meet the needs of changing life scenes. This is described as being tedious but relatively mundane for those without functional limitations. Individuals with

functional limitations which cause handicaps to their social interactions found such tasks very difficult.

Warren's definition of the term "drama" is explained as those dramatic moments which make up human interaction. Any unique behavioral adaptation created to navigate through these changing dramatic moments is called an "Act of Being." Such dramatic moments are the product of conflicts between personal and social rituals (expectations) which create tension. This is identified as parallel to the theatrical tension which creates dramatic action on the stage.

Warren relates the idea that everyone has a unique acting style based on their own personal experiences. The disabled actor may possess inhibitors which influence expression of this style such as restricted experiences, unrealistic expectations, and rigid responses. He relates that these inhibitors can be more difficult to overcome than the functional limitations themselves. Children who possess severe functional limitations can become further restricted by limited stimuli and experiences. "Acts of Being" can be used to explore new experiences in non-threatening environments. Through this work, individuals can discover and explore new 'performance' styles which can then be transferred to the 'stages' of daily life (99-104).

Warren emphasizes that he is "convinced that we must spend more time providing access to the artistic process for all people. We must allow the arts the chance to work their magical changes" (114). These changes are discussed as exemplified by the theatre performance and rehearsal process in which "the actors can accomplish, sometimes with difficulty, tasks that not only give them a sense of self-worth but also, in some cases,

enable them to gradually overcome their physiological or emotional limitations” (116).

An overview of techniques used and skills addressed within dramatic work involving acts of being has been included on the following page as Figure 2.

Skills Addressed:	Techniques:	Threatening	Non-Threatening	Status-Bound	Friendly	Intimate	Measured	Honest	Gestural	Sensate
Increased Imagination		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Development of Spontaneity		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Emotional Balance		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physical Balance		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sense Memory-Successful Use		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sense Memory-Restrictions of Use		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ability to Codify Raw Experiences		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ability to Codify Raw Emotions		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Understanding of Social Expectations		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify Projections of Personal Expectations		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Understand/Use of Personal Filters:										
<i>Filtering of Physical Responses</i>		X		X					X	
<i>Filtering of Physical Impulses</i>		X		X					X	
<i>Filtering the Expression of Imagination</i>				X			X		X	
Opening of Eyes and Ears on the World		X	X		X			X		X
Understanding Individual World Map:										
<i>Individual World View/Genetic Blueprint</i>			X	X	X	X		X		X
<i>Identifying Personal Baggage-World Views</i>			X	X	X	X		X		X
<i>Recognize Selective Absorption-Stimuli Sorting</i>		X	X	X	X	X				X
<i>Analysis of Unique Personal Language/Style</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Modifying Acts of Being:										
<i>Modifying Active Choices-Times/Places</i>		X	X	X			X	X	X	
<i>Modifying Active Choices-Circumstances</i>		X	X	X			X	X	X	
<i>Modifying Active Choices-Social Stages</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Relating New Stimuli to Existing Experience		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Confident Communication-Words/Actions		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Expression-Unique Personal Navigation Style			X				X	X	X	X
Selection of Appropriate Behavior Choices		X	X	X	X	X		X		
Greater Eye Contact With Others			X	X	X	X		X		X
Increased Spontaneity/Improvisation Skills			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cooperation with Others			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Observe and Question Oneself			X	X				X		X
Exploring of Cultural/Academic Issues			X		X			X	X	X
Discovering Personal Roles on Social Stage				X						
Overcoming Physical/Emotional Limitations		X	X	X		X		X		X
Select Appropriate Personal Social Roles		X		X	X		X		X	
Perspective Change Through Catharsis			X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Recognizing Idiosyncrasies Within All People			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Fig. 2. Exercises and skill objectives identified by Warren as found within social performance and "Acts of Being."

In Special Talents, Special Needs: Drama for People with Learning Disabilities,

(2007) Ian McCurrach and Barbara Darnley provide a unique and precedent-setting handbook to teachers and facilitators of learning disabled people. McCurrach and Darnley are highly respected for their work within this field; as the Joint Artistic Director of Strathcona Theatre Company, one of Europe's leading professional companies of actors with learning disabilities, (8) McCurrach's work with learning disabled individuals directly transfers to dramatic workshops. He has also worked through the SHAPE network, which connects artists with disabled people in their community. Darnley is an actress who has been involved in dramatic work with the learning disabled since 1989. The introduction of the handbook notes that their work does not offer a direct form of traditional therapy for disabilities. Instead, they have established the value of such drama-based work as manifested through demonstration of the following results:

- the unlocking of creativity and imagination
- creation of a stimulating and safe environment for enjoyable and creative exploration of issues
- facilitation of exploration beyond an individual's habitual boundaries
- the involving of other areas of a community in the achievements of the disabled individual (8-9)

The above are described by McCurrach and Darnley themselves as main aims of their work to provide creative expression through drama. Their handbook is designed as a tool to assist drama students, actors, and directors in the accomplishment of these aims.

It is also a tool for special needs teachers, day center staff, youth workers, arts outreach programs, and others involved with the use of drama for people with learning disabilities.

Communication skills receive focus as an important core skill within their program. The primary forms of communication acknowledged are physical, verbal, and emotional. Physical communication is viewed as being executed through the body, verbal communication as occurring through speech and sound, and emotional communication as a combination of the physical and verbal (22).

In addition to applications which are more traditionally drama-based, many of the exercises suggested by McCurrach and Darnley can be used to create growth in the learning disabled individual's ability to communicate with others on a daily basis. Related skill sets are practiced and applied with other actors (fellow workshop group members) and with the audience of observers. Exercises are provided within the handbook to fulfill the program's goals.

An example of one such exercise is called "Giant Gestures," which focuses on physical communication. Group members explore how they non-verbally communicate with their bodies by selecting a phrase and communicating it to an audience without words. Commonly gestured words or phrases such as "hello," "no thanks," or "suit yourself" are used. Physical expressions suggesting sadness or laughter can also be incorporated. This exercise is designed to create an opportunity for group members to communicate with each other about their own experiences with their disabilities. For example, a hearing impaired learner will be able to share personally developed forms of

non-verbal communication with the group. These can be accessed and used in later exercises or performance work (22-29).

Another skill receiving focus is eye contact, identified as a “very potent tool in most communication, and onstage.” Actors must look at each other to share a moment convincingly and greet or challenge other actors and the audience with their eyes. This creates the sense that they are involved in the process of creating a shared experience. An example of an exercise which builds these skills is called “Mirror Pairs.” Partners focus on each other’s eyes while mirroring each other’s movements. The movements become more complex as partners grow in level of ability, eventually incorporating outwardly visible emotional elements. This exercise could seem simple in description. However, the learning disabled individual can exhibit the tendency to neglect the presence or thoughts of others. Mastery of this activity allows these group members to demonstrate improved ability to focus their attention and relate to the group (30-37).

Although concentration is important to good performance, it is tiring. Learning disabled actors possess varying levels of focus ability. Therefore, exercises are included which reinforce skills of concentration. The objectives for related activities include increased powers of observation and magnified listening skills (37-42).

One example is called “Crossing the River.” Actors begin by standing in two lines that face each other. Then they individually call out something they identify as being a quality in common with as many members of the group on the other side of the line as possible. The goal is to get as many people to cross over to your team as possible. This exercise encourages close observation and careful listening as the actors, both with

and without disabilities, learn to “really think about what is being said as well as the things they have in common with others on the stage and in the audience” (37-39).

An interesting exercise suggested by McCurrach and Darnley to increase the ability to understand and communicate emotion is called “Emotional Photographs.” They note that some learning disabled individuals do not possess the natural ability to understand their own emotions or share them with others. Therefore, workshop participants place fellow actors into a “photograph” pose which observers are encouraged to respond emotionally to and endow with a title. Another similar exercise is called “Emotional Statues.” Emotions are called out by a “director” and participants must hit a pose which expresses that emotion. The pose can involve such elements as gestures, facial expression and physical activity. The goal is the growth of skills enabling participants to externally communicate emotion in a recognizable way (63-64).

Another activity used to attain release and self-discovery within learning disabled workshop participants is known as the “Eurovision Song Contest.” After being divided into groups of three, each group must invent a name and decide on a song to sing which all three group members know. An imaginary language must then be invented by each group and applied to the song. The nonsensical quality of the lyrics require the meaning of the song to be projected through physicality and expression. They must all try to keep the same rhythm by focusing on and cueing off of one another. At the end of the session, votes are cast for the best performance. Voting criteria involves concentration, presentation, and “star quality” (an ability to draw the audience members’ attention by connecting with them on an emotional level of some kind) (70).

Improvisation is another skill used in dramatic work with learning disabled individuals. McCurrach and Darnley devote an entire chapter of their handbook to the importance of improvisational activities. The focus of such efforts is to teach the basic skills of working with others, accepting what is offered by others, and building on it. They discuss these concepts as difficult for some with learning disabilities to understand as they can find it “hard to accept someone else’s fantasy” and may find it “impossible not to relate every scene to their own environment and experience” (72).

Activities such as “I’m Sorry I Broke Your...” are effective tools to help build skills required to accept and build on an idea offered by others. It involves a structured exercise in which the following lines are used:

A: “You know that (insert an object) you lent me last week?”

B: “Yes, the one that (insert detail about object)”

A: “Well, I’m awfully sorry, I’ve broken it.”

B: (decides on an emotional response to portray verbally and physically)

C: (continues the conversation with a verbal and physical response) (74)

The objective for both actors is to practice confrontation, emotional behaviors, reactions, and responses in the moment while accepting and working with ideas and input from each other. A related exercise, titled “Accept and Build,” requires actors to agree with everything the group leader, or director, says. This is accomplished through scene work with one actor at a time. The actor must accept the conversational questions asked of them and answer “Yes, and...” in a way that moves the scene forward. Although this ability is a core skill of successful improvisation, it is hard for some people with learning

disabilities to accept information from the perspective of others which differs from their own reality. Additionally, information drastically abstract or different from their own experiences is easier for them to accept than that which is just slightly different. This type of exercise can therefore provide important practice (77-79).

Dramatic voice work is another important means of exploration for the learning disabled. It is used in these same workshops to encourage confidence and clarity of verbal expression. It also helps actors with learning disabilities to express and translate meaning within tone, pitch and pronunciation. Taping of vocal performances has proved to be an effective method of teaching and learning these skills. In addition, video taping can also offer productive methods of teaching and learning skills such as an understanding of messages being transmitted to others through physical action and facial expression. Improvisational activities can be produced on audio or video tape to further layer and enrich the skill building process (130-136).

McCurrach and Darnley acknowledge the ability of drama workshop activities such as those outlined in their handbook as also useful with groups of individuals who possess multiple and profound disabilities. These include individuals in wheelchairs. Also included are those in need of sensory stimulation involving areas such as hearing, sight, or touch. The placement of emphasis on interaction, events, and pace can create activities which specifically address targeted skills. They identify and “highly recommend” a London-based theatre company named “Oily Cart,” which creates workshops involving specially made sensory environments. These environments, providing stimulating and participatory dramatic play, are toured to participating schools

and offered to their students with learning disabilities (169-172). A visual overview of the techniques and skill sets associated with the workshops outlined by McCurrach and Darnley has been included on the following page as Figure 3.

Techniques:	Giant Gestures	I'm Sorry Broke Your...	Presents	Euro-vision Song Contact	Mirror Pairs	Crossing the River	Liar	Sound-track Story	Back to Back	Comm-ercial Break	Emotional Photos	Accept and Build
Skills Addressed:												
Communication for Hearing Impaired	X											
Multiple Methods of Expression	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
Making Choices	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Developing Patterns of Movement					X				X			
Concentration				X	X		X	X	X			
Focus on Others	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Respect for Others	X		X		X				X	X		X
Identify Common Denominators						X						
Powers of Observation	X				X	X					X	
Descriptive Ability						X						X
Copy Actions of Others					X		X					
Increased Imagination	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Produce Appropriate Sound								X				
Follow Instructions						X	X				X	
Center of Gravity									X			
Trust of Others					X				X			
Accept Appropriate Body Contact									X			
Exploring Emotions		X	X								X	X
Physicalizing Emotion		X	X								X	X
Memory Reinforcement												
Motor Skills	X				X				X			
Sequencing		X					X		X			
Brainstorming	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
Confident Communication	X	X	X	X		X						X
Expression of Personal Style				X						X		
Appropriate Behavior Choices		X	X									
Eye Contact With Others												
Spontaneity/Improvisation Skills	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cooperation	X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X

Fig. 3. Exercises and objectives found within work with the learning disabled as explained by McCurrach and Darnley.

Another example of an existing connection between theatre and therapy is Access Theatre. This performance ensemble company for the physically and mentally disabled was developed in Santa Barbara, California by Rod Lathim. Cynthia Wischart's Storms and Illuminations: 18 Years of Access Theatre chronicles the evolution and impact of the group. World-famous actors, including Michael Douglas and Anthony Edwards, provide commentary about the success of the company to fulfill its goals. Douglas states that knowledge of its work provides "an experience of humanity" and "tears down boundaries. This gives the Access Theatre an immortality, because what happened on their stage on a single night reached out beyond the performance, beyond the individuals, and out into the world" (7).

Edwards offers the following insight regarding the impact of the group's work:

"Access Theatre reminded us that if the only part of our lives worth living is whatever time we claim to be able-bodied and able-minded, then we are cheating ourselves out of our lives. And if we choose our friends, lovers, mentors and collaborators only from among the able-looking we lose again...I was excited to see that my chosen profession offers opportunity to shake up expectations, to share in a process that is sincere and a result that is resonant." (12)

He also points out that the theatre strove to break down barriers and "prove that an artist with a disability can collaborate with other artists" (5). Wischart herself defines this purpose by adding that the effort to create something resulted in the bringing of people to a "common ground and a deeper understanding about themselves and about others. What

“struck her most” about Access Theatre was “the power of good it does to be heard and to listen in new ways.” She recognizes the unifying quality of the communication that can exist between the performer and the observer – not in traditional, expected performances but in theatrical experiences which break down expectations and experiment with new methods. Examples of these are productions in which jokes based on hearing were replaced with jokes everyone could appreciate, and a non-disabled dancer was paired with a cavalier in a wheelchair. “People with disabilities,” says Wisehart, “found Access Theatre liberating” (8-9).

May 10, 1979, marked the opening of one of the theatre’s first productions. “Circus of Life” drew an audience of 660 people. The journey to create this piece of theatre began when Rod Lathim was hired by the City of Santa Barbara Recreation Department. He convinced the City to back an original musical production starring developmentally disabled students. It was designed as a benefit for the Special Olympics. Television and stage actor Hank Underwood was cast as the ringmaster. “There was an incredible camaraderie with this group,” says Lathim, adding that they gained pride in themselves through what was accomplished at the theatre (16). It was desired that society’s labeling of the actors’ disabilities be abandoned and replaced with exploration of the actors’ own perspectives.

In 1980, the group produced “Take a Card” under the umbrella of Santa Barbara’s Independent Living Resource Center. The relationship between the two organizations lasted until 1988. “Take a Card” introduced sign language interpretation, wheelchairs, and “talkback” sessions to create communication with and access to the audience. The

latter is described as a natural progression for the company. Lathim describes the talkbacks as revelatory for the audience, many of whom said they would no longer view a person with a disability in the same way. Says Lathim, “It’s spine tingling to see how an hour and a half in the theatre can change someone’s outlook” (26).

Many individuals with disabilities were exposed to the art form of theatre through Lathim’s work. Some of these were identified by the group as possessing a particular talent for the theatre and received nurturing of their talent through his group. The lives of some of these young artists were impacted dramatically due to their training and the success it inspired. One of these artists was Solomon Smaniotto. He was Access Theatre’s youngest deaf performer, beginning his work there at age six. The memoir recalls that his mother identified him as a “bright, frustrated, isolated child, given to tantrums, who blossomed in the stimulating environment of the theater.” After working with Lathim, he went on to pursue professional acting work and was cast in the nighttime television show “Dallas” as a regular character. After “tiring of the Hollywood scene,” he attended the University of California at San Diego and continued his work in performance art as well as writing. Solomon recalls, “Being in Access Theatre was like growing up with two families...It helped me to feel whole and positive, and to find what we all have in common, which is our heart” (30).

Wisehart speaks of a touring performance to the Sunnyside school. The one and only deaf student in the school was in the audience and “sat in raptured disbelief as the visitors performed in a language he completely understood, his native tongue, American Sign Language” (53). That type of communicative experience was at the center of

Lathim's goals for the troupe and the audiences they encountered. Another student named Lori Hennessey was a member of that touring troupe. She was a deaf student who had convinced herself that her possibilities in life were limited. Access Theatre provided her with the opportunity to reach out and communicate in new ways. It also gave her an opportunity to step outside of her comfort zone, achieving things beyond her own expectations. Hennessey reflects, "I was denying my own identity. I just didn't know myself yet. And I knew almost nothing about how to have relationships with other people. But through the theatre, I was going to find out" (54).

Eventually the group began to receive funding from foundations as well as state and local agencies. Its work continued to thrive for eighteen years. One production, titled "Signing Off," toured to venues such as Disneyland's Very Special Arts Festival. An artist showcase for Disney, Warner Brothers, Columbia, and NBC occurred through funding from Michael Douglas, screenwriter/director David Seltzer and producer Gary Goddard. Titled "Storm Reading," the production was picked up to tour and has been viewed by audiences from Hawaii to Maine. In addition, Michael Douglas appeared with wheelchair performer Neil Marcus in the NBC television special "From the Heart." Neil and the cast of "Storm Reading" were honored at Kennedy Center and, ultimately, by President George Bush during a party on the White House lawn. A visual reference of the techniques and skills addressed through the work of Access Theatre has been included on the following page as Figure 4.

Techniques (Production Work):	Circus of Life	Our Eyes	Take a Card	Footlight	Signing Off	Stage Struck
Skills Addressed:						
Reduction in Sense of Physical Limitations	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reduction in Sense of Emotional Limitations		X	X	X	X	X
Expansion of Expectations of Self	X		X	X	X	X
Breaking of Pre-conceived Barriers	X	X	X	X	X	X
Collaboration Between Disabled and Non-Disabled			X	X	X	X
Deeper Understanding of Self		X	X	X	X	X
Deeper Understanding of Others		X	X	X	X	X
Seeing in New Ways		x	x	x	X	X
Improved Voice and Diction Skills	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hearing in New Ways			X	X	X	X
Non-Traditional Communication Between Audience and Performer	X	X	X	X	X	X
Experimentation With New Methods of Performance	X		X	X	X	X
Direct Promotion of Services for the Disabled					X	X
Pride in the Self	X	X	X	X	X	X
Exploration of Personal Perspectives		X	X	X	X	X
Sense of Accomplishment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Direct Audience Access to the Disabled			X	X	X	X
Access to New Experiences for the Disabled	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nurturing of Talent	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enrichment of Life Experience	X	X	X	X	X	X
Positive Outlook	X	X	X	X	X	X
Exploring Commonalities Between the Self and Others		X	X	X	X	X
Expand Personal Communication Styles			X	X	X	X
Step Out of Comfort Zone	X	X	X	X	X	X
Growth of Interpersonal Communication Skills	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sharing of Perspective Regarding Living With a Disability		X	X	X	X	X
Personal Acceptance	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inclusion of Wheelchair Performance			X	X	X	X
Inclusion of Sign Language			X	X	X	X
Inclusion of Voice Interpreters				X	X	X
Ability to Present Performance Message in Other Venues				X	X	X
Ability for the Disabled to Earn Income Through Theatre Work					X	X
Discovery of New Ways to Advocate for the Disabled						X
Development of Vocal Performance/Recording Skills						X

Fig.4. Exercises (performance work) and objectives found within Access Theatre as explained by Wisehart.

All of the methods discussed support the use of drama to enrich the growth and understanding of individuals with disabilities. In addition, they have been demonstrated to enrich the experience and understanding of those connected to disabled individuals as group leaders, community supporters, and caregivers. Although previous use of drama as therapy is in no way limited to the descriptions within this chapter, the methods discussed provide a broad overview of ways in which aspects of acting study have transferred from the environment of the theatre to alternative therapeutic environments. They have provided, and continue to provide, a unique set of tools for the achievement of improved communication skills and interpersonal understanding.

Chapter 3: Investigating Possible Connections between Acting Study and Social Skills Learning

3.0 Process

The various methods of acting-based work discussed have been identified as valid additions to therapeutic work. Examples include the building and enhancing of social communication and inferencing skills such as perspective-taking, sequencing, and the interpretation of body language. This previous implementation prompts the question of whether or not acting-based techniques can also be applied within therapeutic environments for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. For purposes of this discussion, the identifying abbreviation of AS will be used with the understanding that a diagnosis of high-functioning Asperger's Syndrome is implied. Additional explanation of this diagnosis will be provided within the following pages.

Foundational to this investigation is the identification of core deficits, manifested symptoms, and skill building approaches related to therapeutic work for those with AS. Specific focus is placed on approaches designed to address developmental needs in the area of social skills. This chapter will provide a definition of the syndrome itself, review its diagnosis and treatment, and discuss currently established goals for social skills therapy.

3.1 Terminology

The following therapeutic terminology is provided as an introduction to this discourse. Terms which do not include a specific cited reference are those which have been defined by the researcher.

Other terms related to neuro-typical (NT) acting study will also require clarification. Doug Moston, author of Coming to Terms with Acting: an Instructive Glossary (1993), is known as a member of the Playwrights/Director's Unit of the prestigious Actor's Studio in Los Angeles, California. He has served on the Blue Ribbon Panel of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, helping to select the best actors, directors, and shows for Emmy awards. Moston has also influenced the study of acting through service as the Artistic Director for The Drama Project in New York. Frank Corsaro has served as Artistic Director for the nationally famous Actor's Studio in Los Angeles. Corsaro explains the book provides a "simple, lucid discussion of words and concepts that are still being thrashed about whenever theatre people gather..." and adds that it "clears up the confusion associated with the myriad concepts and their labels"

(i). The terminology provided for included theatrical terms will be defined through use of Moston's glossary.

Therapeutic Terminology

Autism / Autistic: A condition analyzed by Rutter in 1968 as involving "four essential characteristics.... (1) a lack of social interest and responsiveness; (2) impaired language, ranging from absence of speech to peculiar speech patterns; (3) bizarre motor behavior, ranging from rigid and limited play patterns to more complex ritualistic and compulsive behavior; and (4) early onset, before 30 months of age" (Schopler and Mesibov, 13).

Autistic Spectrum: The range of diagnoses symptomatically similar to or associated with autism, including the high-functioning and low-functioning ends of the autism diagnosis

scale but primarily discussed in relation to high functioning autism: this diagnostic spectrum includes Asperger's Syndrome.

Hidden Disability: A disability not immediately apparent based on outward appearance.

Asperger's Syndrome: A condition named after Hans Asperger, whose research identified a group of children possessing such similar qualities as to group them and analyze their thought processes: the qualities now associated with a diagnosis of 'Asperger's Syndrome' include "lack of social understanding, limited ability to have reciprocal conversation and an intense interest in a particular subject..." (Attwood, 12).

Behavioral Codes: A sub-set of the term 'social codes' describing behavioral expectations related to observation and response within a particular social environment.

De-Coding: The analysis and understanding of meaning, both literal and hidden, which occurs within verbal, non-verbal and written language communication.

Egocentric Behavior: Behavior in which the self is of primary importance, not for means of vanity and elevation but because of a lack of understanding that anyone else would be affected by or should be considered in what is said and done.

Gestalt Thinking: The ability to make connections and cognitively piece together bits of information to deduct the whole message.

High-Functioning Autism: a neurobiological disorder diagnosed through identification of developmental impairments in the areas of social relationships and speech and language ability; ritualistic or compulsive behaviors, lack of emotional control, heightened anxiety, and deficits in thought processing are also often observed (Schopler and Mesibov, 20-22).

Inferencing Skills: the ability to pick up clues, read between the lines, and exhibit gestalt thinking ability.

Neuro-Typical: The cognitive processing ability of those without cognitive processing deficits related to Asperger's Syndrome.

Non-Verbal Language: Language which is not spoken, including information picked up through inferencing ability during social communication or through written language.

Perseveration: A "preoccupation with a particular topic or area of interest" (Attwood, 13).

Remediation: Special approaches, modifications or therapies required to help the AS individual accomplish cognitive tasks within deficit areas.

Social Codes: Expectations of thought, word and action within a particular social environment.

Social Cognitive Processing: The process through which spoken and unspoken social communication occurs.

Social Cognitive Thinking: The cognitive process required for successful social navigation including inferencing ability and the de-coding of hidden meaning.

Social Hidden Curriculum: Rules or guidelines which are generally not taught but are instead learned through repetitive exposure and the picking up of clues during social interaction: some examples of social hidden curriculum are metaphors of speech, body language, tone of voice, and expression.

Social Skills: Techniques used to navigate through the hidden curriculum of the social world.

Social Thinking: The cognitive processing required to recognize and assimilate social behavioral cues and make corresponding appropriate behavioral choices.

Social Group Therapy: A group generally consisting of three to five members in which social de-coding skills are learned and practiced through interactive methods.

Speech/Language Pathologist: A professional who often specializes in teaching social skills involving the hidden curriculum of social language to individuals with Asperger's Syndrome.

Therapy Community: Those providing therapeutic services to individuals on the autistic spectrum and their families, including individuals with AS; various areas of specialty include but are not limited to occupational, speech and language, physical, academic, and psychiatric therapy.

Theatrical Terminology

Action: "What you do to get what your character wants" (Moston, 2).

Activities: "...the physical things you do on stage" (5).

Character: "The person whom you are playing" (23).

Emotional memory: "Exploring, or creating a past event" for use in a scene (36).

Endowment: "To assign specific attributes and/or idiosyncrasies to objects and/or other people" (37).

Exploration: "All the different choices and ideas you try in rehearsal to arrive at a performance" (39).

Gibberish: "A technique using non-verbal sounds in place of the text or in place of words" (44).

Imagination: “That part of the mind that allows for the creation of images to bring us closer to solving a problem or to express more fully our true nature” (49).

Improvisational work: “An unrehearsed scene, in your own, extemporaneous words” (51).

Impulses: “Natural causes or stimuli that can be expressed vocally and physically” (52).

Instinct: “The non-intellectual, or innate stimulus for action” (56).

Internal work: “The part of the work that deals with feelings and emotions....to create truthful behavior” (57).

Moment to Moment (In the Moment): “Living in the present from one section to the next” (66).

Motivation: “The reason for your action” (70).

Objective: “What the character wants” (74).

Pace: “Picking up cues in order to affect timing” (82).

Personalization: “To endow an object or another person in a scene with something or someone personal to you” (87).

Physical action: “The physical manifestation of your action” (87).

Rehearsal: “The process of making ready a play or presentation by repetition and exploration” (98).

Scene Study: Utilizing a scene with two or more people to learn specific acting techniques to develop and refine a craft” (107).

Sense memory: “Re-creating experience and belief through the memory of the five senses. Creating a sensory response to a non-existing object” (110).

Subtext: “The intentions and reality behind what the character says” (166).

Other important terms will be explained as they are introduced. The above definitions are provided to promote greater clarity while investigating potential connections between dramatic acting study and social skills learning for individuals with high-functioning AS.

3.2 Definition of Asperger’s Syndrome

A foundational understanding of AS can be achieved through an understanding of the deficits in thought processing at its core. These deficits include gaps in the development of processing skills related to the decoding of spoken and unspoken language. This syndrome is defined as existing “within the spectrum of autism - with enough distinct features to warrant its own label... (based on) subtle impairments” to social communication, social interaction, social imagination, motor coordination and thought organization (Cumine,Dunlop,Stevenson, 4).

Asperger Syndrome (AS) is technically considered part of the autistic disorder spectrum. The difference between a diagnosis of classic autism and Asperger’s Syndrome lies in the identification of the latter as a “high-functioning” deficit. This high-functioning quality results in symptoms which are not externally apparent. Therefore Asperger’s Syndrome is defined as a hidden disability. This differs from “low-functioning” autism, identified by more outwardly obvious characteristics. These include but are not limited to: a lack of social responsiveness, significantly impaired or absent speech, bizarre or ritualistic motor behavior and an onset of symptoms during infancy (Schopler,Messibov, 13).

Social cognitive skills, or skills related to the observational analysis and application of social behaviors, develop innately throughout childhood. Cognitive deficits common to AS can inhibit this instinctive process, resulting in impeded analytical skills and inappropriately selected behaviors. Therefore, individuals with AS – either diagnosed or undiagnosed – have difficulty stepping outside of their own thought process to understand the perspectives of others. They require assistance in understanding and implementing the process of human behavior analysis and related perspective-taking (1-3).

Related diagnostic data, therapeutic information, and specific elements of social skills therapy identified during the research process are presented below.

3.3 Therapeutic Summary

Asperger's Syndrome is a relatively recent diagnosis. Dr. Hans Asperger, a Viennese pediatrician, introduced AS in 1944 research findings. His research spanned three decades, launched by his initial ground-breaking paper titled "Autistic Psychopathies in Childhood" (1944). He identified a group of children as having high levels of thinking and the capacity for special achievement.

Hans Asperger's work was translated into English by Lorna Wing in the early 1980's. Wing replaced the term "autistic psychopathy" with "Asperger's Syndrome." There were similarities between the diagnostic criteria of Autism and that of Asperger's test subjects, with enough differences in the latter as to warrant a separate label. Two of the main AS diagnostic tools currently in use are the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual*

(DSM IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and the *International Classification of Diseases*, 10th edition (ICD10, World Health Organization, 1992). Both of these references base criteria on a grouping of developmental deficiencies in areas of social interaction, social communication, and social imagination called the “triad of impairments” (Cumine, Dunlop, Stevenson, 1-3).

On average, children are not recognized as having AS until they are between eight and eleven years old, an age range spanning the middle to late elementary school years. This is a time when foundational concepts are taught and deficits associated with AS slow the rate of learning (Atwood, 12-21).

An article from Time titled “The Secrets of Autism” (May 6, 2002, 46-56) references California as witnessing the number of autistic children in need of social services as quadrupling from around 4,000 to almost 18,000. It also states that the most current studies “suggest that as many as 1 in 150 kids age 10 and younger may be affected by autism or a related disorder – a total of nearly 300,000 children in the U.S. alone” (48). Adults are then added to this assessment. “According to the Autism Society of America, more than a million people in the U.S. suffer from one of the autistic disorders (also known as pervasive developmental disorders or PDD’s)...five times as common as Down Syndrome and three times as common as juvenile diabetes.” Parents are described as “besieging” therapy offices for remedial assistance, and school systems are referenced as adding special aides to design learning approaches which just five years prior were “stuck in the stagnant backwaters of neuroscience” (48).

Though the causes are unknown, a basic understanding of AS can be achieved through the study of its therapeutic definition and treatment. Individuals with AS are described as mind blind (Time, 51). They live with the assumption that their thoughts and feelings are identically the same as those of others. The term mind blindness was coined by researchers and applies to a lack of ability to appreciate that other people have mental needs, desires, and beliefs which may be different from one's own. Therefore, individuals with AS must be taught this perspective, whereas "neuro-typical" individuals (those who do not display symptoms of AS) can instinctively learn this information based on social contact and repetition (Cumine, Dunlap, Stevenson, 19-24).

One important element to the learning of such non-verbal language is through imitation of social details such as body posture and facial expression. According to Andrew Meltzoff, child psychiatrist at the University of Washington, children recognize drooping shoulders equal sadness or exhaustion and twinkling eyes mean happiness or perhaps mischievousness. Children with AS do not recognize such clues. Says Temple Grandin, an adult engineer diagnosed with (high functioning) AS, "I had no idea that other people communicated through subtle eye movements until I read it in a magazine five years ago" (51).

Asperger's Syndrome can generally be described as an inability to decode spoken and unspoken language. The result is a substantial gap in social skills, or skills required to appropriately and effectively interact with others. Consequently, AS individuals lack the ability to identify and practice appropriate personal behaviors and responses. The

result is a disability involving ineffective interaction with the world around them. The extent of this disability is relative to the severity of an individual's diagnosis.

Therefore, related skills innately common to the neuro-typical community must be taught to those with AS. Such details are commonly referred to as “hidden curriculum” (Winner, 32) and are embedded within interpersonal scenarios. Primary elements of external hidden curriculum include gesture, facial expression, posture, tone of voice, body language, and eye contact. Primary elements of internal hidden curriculum include making guesses, picking up clues, perspective-taking, drawing conclusions, and focus of thought.

The above information is provided as a foundational summary recognizing core components of therapy for Asperger's syndrome. These components can be analyzed through identification of specific incorporated objectives. The objectives incorporated within foundational components of acting study can be similarly identified. The remainder of this chapter shall focus on this discussion.

3.4 Objectives of Acting Study

An actor learns to read between the lines. Award-winning actor Michael Caine's Acting in Film (1990) defines the creative process of creating a character as making “deductions” and “picking up clues” based on insight (87). Tony Barr, author of the respected actors' manual titled Acting for the Camera, (1997) describes the most important quality for the actor as that of listening. “Most of acting is reacting, and you only react if you're listening,” he notes, and adds that the act of listening is not just done with the ears but also includes picking up non-verbal sensory information. “...you “hear”

whatever you can perceive, and all things that we “hear “affect us to some degree or other. *So listening is also sensing...*” (19). This focus on others is also a theme of Christina Ferra-Gilmores’s acting career guide titled The 7 Steps to Stardom (2006). The “treasure” she offers is a greater focus outside the self during acting work. She issues a challenge to actors: “Go to give the gift, don’t go to get the gift” (27). These authors agree that an actor’s success requires exploration of inter-personal communication and its unspoken cues. The product of such exploration is the expression of selected behaviors and responses, with a goal of behavioral authenticity in performance which brings desired responses from fellow actors and the observing audience.

However, it should not be assumed that all people innately possess the ability to process and execute such work. As discussed, the involved inferencing skills are not naturally accessible to a large segment of the American population. However, the ability to understand responses-both personal and those of others—can be strengthened through training and practice.

The analysis of goals common to the study of acting can be approached through assessment of elements which are either directly or indirectly related to objectives of social skills learning. Therefore, for matters of this research, focus will be narrowed to the following specific key areas: interpretation, analysis, and application of behaviors and responses.

Acting, like social skills therapy, involves the study of human behavior. In particular, the study of the effect one’s actions have on others and the recognition of internal response to stimuli. The latter is run through a filter of options involving both

emotional and physical actions, and appropriate choices for a particular moment are made. These elements can be summarized as 1) truthful observation of, 2) selected response to, and 3) practice in performance of behaviors and responses. Exercises within the researched methods of acting which are identified as productive within the above areas will be explored for possible cross-disciplinary benefit.

The criteria for such exercises would be the transference of related acting concepts to daily life behaviors and applications. Therefore, as AS individuals have been explained as egocentric, attention will be given to methods with potential for personal involvement and connection. The exercises should also increase successful daily life application of interpersonal communication abilities. The promotion of improved interpersonal behavior and response in the moment (at the moment a social event is experienced vs. after post-analysis and reflection) should be established as another core area of interest when researching existing or potential methods of drama-based social skills therapy (Winner, 2000). The work of the actor which builds interpersonal communication skills in performance will also be explored. This will include work within various methods of acting study; these will be identified in Chapter Four.

3.5 Objectives of Social Skills Therapy

The learning of the above elements, both internal and external, occurs through therapy focused on 1) interpretation of thought, 2) selection of behavior, and 3) analysis of response from the perspective of the self and others. In Thinking About You, Thinking About Me: Philosophies and Strategies to Further Develop Perspective Taking and Communicative Abilities for Persons With Social Cognitive Deficits, Michelle

Garcia Winner describes in greater detail such skills receiving primary therapeutic focus in what is termed “social skills therapy.” These include but are not limited to:

1. Recognizing the thoughtful presence of another person
2. Recognizing the individuality of the other person
3. Recognizing that another person has his or her own personal set of emotions
4. Recognizing and responding to another person’s desires and motives
5. Recognizing that another person has his or her own personality
6. Having an intuitive desire to learn about others’ interests and personal histories
7. Developing and using memory of a person to facilitate and sustain interpersonal relationships as well as create a base of understanding about that person’s potential actions
8. Formulating language to inquire about another person’s interests
9. Understanding social conventions surrounding specific environments
10. Understanding social conventions specific to social contexts
11. Staying aware of the shifting internal states of the communicative partner through eye contact (9-11)

The above is only an abbreviated version of the list. These skills involve reading between the lines, picking up clues, making deductions, sensing and perceiving one’s affect on others, and increased focus on others.

As evidenced by this list, AS individuals generally need to learn “...in relation to themselves” (Cumine, Dunlop, Stevenson, 40-41). A connection to therapeutic materials

which engage personal interest can provide greater internalization, leading to better information retention.

AS social skills therapy groups are filled with high-functioning children who have been placed together based on functional ability and compatibility. They attend school and navigate the standard classroom environment with modifications. They are also able to participate in interactive games and activities. The ability to implement creative techniques is supported by the genetic predisposition of group members: the social inhibitors of AS do not indicate a generalized lack of intelligence. In fact, these children are potentially quite gifted. For example, the previously mentioned article from Time notes that 20% will perform in the gifted range. “Filtering the geeky (AS) genes out of high-tech breeding grounds like Silicon Valley, in other words, might remove the very DNA that made these places what they are today” (51).

However, there are inhibitors to the realization of this potential. Problems with social cognitive learning and related processing gaps usually lead to problems with making and keeping friends, as well as problems with bullies and teasing. Researchers noted in Good Friends Are Hard To Find, by Fred Frankel, found the following to be true:

“Children who had chronic difficulties making and keeping friends were more likely to drop out of school and have drug problems in adolescence. Children who did not have a best friend outside the family grew up to be lonely young adults. They found that close friends teach each other social

grace and how to solve disagreements. Close friends....help each other to look beyond their own needs and become sensitive to others.” (1-2)

These social abilities are innate to neuro-typical children but are hidden and elusive to the child with AS.

The above information is provided as a foundation for discussion and analysis of data within following chapters. It is also relevant to the formulation of conclusions regarding possible connections between techniques of acting study and those which assist the AS individual to navigate through the changing environments of the social world.

Chapter 4: Exploring the Objectives of Acting Study and Social Skills Therapy

4.0 Related Terms and Methods

The methods of acting study chosen for investigation fall into two categories. The first includes those specifically created as accessible for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. These will be coded herein as AS methods of acting study. The second category includes methods which were not specifically created as accessible to those with AS, herein coded as neuro-typical (NT) methods. Each of these AS and NT methods were chosen based on 1) their modern use, 2) the existence of a definitive guide explaining their instruction, and 3) the diversity of their approaches.

The term "modern" refers to methods in application from 1970 to present day. The selection of these dates was not based on necessity; this broad date range was viewed as potentially providing diverse approaches and an ample quantity of materials for research spanning from the late twentieth to the early twenty-first century. The initial selection of a cut-off date of 1950 presented the problem of anchoring research in the middle of the twentieth century, yielding materials which seemed old-fashioned or outdated. This date was therefore moved up to 1970.

The term "definitive guide" refers to a method's inclusion of an outline or workbook explaining the steps involved in its application. The presence of such guides provides tangible information regarding popular use within a curriculum of acting study, offering proven and suggested models for structure and approach. Included are descriptions of central ideas, learning objectives, and related exercises. The presence of such information provides tangible data for use in this comparative analysis.

The above reference to “diversity of approach” identifies the research as focused on a variety of methods which exist independent of each other. This contrasts an attempt to focus on the analysis of different instructors who may have developed individual approaches to the teaching of a similar method; those chosen are not linked in such a way. Instead, they represent a broader selection of methods ranging from the basic to the evolutionary. Descriptions of each will be provided prior to the presentation of their analysis.

The AS methods chosen include the work of Anita Wolf, Cindy Schneider, Judith Martinovich, and Amelia Davies. The NT methods chosen include the approaches of Anita Jesse, Gordon Phillips, Richard H. Felnagle, Larry Silverberg, and Ned Mandarino. Examples of exercises developed for work within each of these methods will be examined.

4.1 Exploration of Neuro-Typical Methods

The Sanford Meisner Approach: An Actor’s Workbook (Silverberg, 1994) constructs an outline of activities for acting instruction. The workbook presents exercises structured from models originally created by Sanford Meisner. These are grouped to create a curriculum of class sessions. As evidenced by the title of the guide, Meisner’s proven techniques have greatly influenced Silverberg’s approach to acting study. The memoir Sanford Meisner on Acting (Meisner, Longwell, 1987) features an introduction from Hollywood director Sydney Pollack who describes Meisner as “too awesome a presence for familiarity of a first name” (xiii). The book’s preface by Horton Foote notes, “In his work at the (Neighborhood) Playhouse and in his private classes he trained

many of our most distinguished actors and directors, as well as many of our most successful acting teachers” (Silverberg, xii).

Footnote explains the effects of Meisner’s training:

“....a moment in an acting exercise in which they suddenly experience themselves as so much greater and more powerful than they were aware of; more expressive and spontaneous, more deeply caring, concerned and interested than they ever thought possible; that they can be totally available and receptive to their partners as well as their own passionate spirit; that they are courageous and ready to take risks.....” (xv)

Although Silverberg has created a specifically structured guide for instruction and study, the influence of the above approach should be acknowledged.

Silverberg’s incorporated steps of concept learning are listed as “sessions.” One such session outlined is called “The Reality of Doing.” This step is defined as the “seed to the craft of acting” (2). It is also described as a healthy approach, grounded in what is happening within a particular moment. An objective of this work is to increase an actor’s focus on others involved and to send the message “....I am with you *right now*.” Actors are encouraged to cease trying to repeat what worked previously in performance and instead respond the specifics of a particular moment. This includes acknowledgement that every time an actor experiences a moment on stage, it should be treated as if it is the first time. Lessons involving principles of the “Reality of Doing” are designed to help actors stop trying to replicate what has been done before, or what previously “clicked” in rehearsal. Instead, they are encouraged to use rehearsal and blocking as a directional

guide and allow themselves to respond to specifics of each moment as they actually occur in each individual performance.

Another session of Silverberg's program is titled "Point of View." The simplified term for this step of the program is "putting into language" (20). Acting students are taught to communicate more specifically and fully through both verbal and non-verbal means. He refers to a quote from David Mamet and states that "...people go to the theatre so that they can see that real communication between human beings is still possible" (24). Students work in pairs, taking turns stating what they see and hear happening from their own point of view. This involves both physical behaviors and emotional responses and occurs through repetition-based exercises. An objective of this work is for the actors to: 1) develop more honest inter-personal communication, 2) increase ability to communicate one's own point of view, and 3) increase ability to interpret the point of view of others.

The "Three Moment Game" is part of a session called "What's Happening?" (27). It is designed as an expansion of the exercises involved in "Point of View." Repetition between partners (actor "A" and actor "B") is prompted by a provocative question. Work begins when a question is created by "A" spontaneously and "B" immediately responds. Physical behaviors and responses are the focus as each pair of actors creates spontaneous verbal and non-verbal communication. Each round of the exercise must not be based on previous moments experienced with other partners. Instead, they should involve genuine responses and behaviors inspired by the specifics of the current moment. Another

objective approached in this session is the ability to “read” a partner. The workbook provides the following note:

“Are you finding it hard to “read” your partner? It is difficult! We are stretching new muscles here! What I want you to know right now is that what you get from your partner is not simply what you see with your eyes. Sometimes you may get something and not really know how you got it, yet you have a hunch about it. TRUST THAT HUNCH.” (30)

Ned Manderino, author of The Transpersonal Actor, (1976) has developed a unique method of acting study inspired by the Konstantin Stanislavsky System, “still considered the bible for beginning actors....” (4). His evolutionary interpretation developed out of a belief that the “relentless pursuit of (its) exercises has bogged down the System’s creative potential.” His goal was to develop “a more progressive essence” through the evolution of its original theories into a new approach to acting study (18). The resulting method incorporates a goal of providing techniques for experiencing more finely tuned responses to input from the world. The approach is described by actor Stacey Keach as “One of the most refreshing and practical....to emerge since the works of Boleslavsky and Stanislavsky” (230). When justifying his development of this new approach, he refers to the concept that “each new generation is able to perceive with different eyes” (29). He provides further insight through his reference of a “sign on the house of a Kenyan artist: “Copying Puts God to Sleep” and states, “It certainly puts Stanislavsky to sleep” (37).

Mandarino's method is designed to prompt new behavioral changes in the actor. For example, an exercise called "Introjection" is defined as a form of mimicry in which actors are assisted with moving from simple behavior patterning to more bold and complex behavior choices. Actors select a person from their own lives and determine if they are positively or negatively affected by them. In doing so, they attempt to re-create the inner life of that person and "make direct contact" with the inner "driving action" of that personality. Actress Cicely Tyson commented to Mandarino that during such work, she had to "get under the character's skin until it was skin tight" (89). The exercise is created to tap into and expand the observational skills and compassion of the actor for greater understanding of the experience and point of view of others.

Another exercise is called "Channeling Impulse." It trains the actor to create a localized area within the body where impulses and sensations can 'reside' while relaxing the rest of the body-especially that part of the body where the impulse originated. Sensations and impulses are "allowed to travel through areas of relaxation into a , predetermined area." Nuanced behavior is created in the actor through an understanding of the physical and psychological affects created by the travel of impulses from one area of the body to another, such as the nervous system or the extremities (64-67).

Relaxation activities are also included in Mandarino's method and are noted as deserving of specific attention in acting study. Special focus is given to: 1) a relaxed mental state, 2) deep physical relaxation, and 3) finding one's "center" of comfortable alignment to allow energy to flow freely through the body and mind (180-196).

Mandarino believes that techniques should be allowed to evolve and integrate into the demands of contemporary acting work, and the absence of this process places boundaries on its potential. He states:

“This new century will require actors, as well as others, to make innumerable paradigm shifts. Many feel that the survival of civilization requires a new species of humans.... a new species of actor with a completely new technique...” (29-30)

Anita Jesse has trained hundreds of television, film, and theatre actors at her studio in Los Angeles, California. Her teaching strategies are outlined in two guides called Let the Part Play You (1989) and The Playing Is the Thing (1996). Both books received cover endorsements from known actors such as Stacy Keach, Eva LaRue, and John Ritter, as well as faculty members from California Institute of the Arts and Illinois State University.

Jesse believes that the process of acting primarily consists of the freeing of internal abilities that build skilled performances. She elaborates that the craft of acting is developed by claiming and restoring innate faculties such as access to emotions, concentration, imagination, listening, and relaxation.

She refers to the process as valuable whether or not one chooses to perform professionally due to the strengthening of these faculties. Students will develop enhanced imagination, problem-solving skills, creativity, connection to the emotional self, listening skills, communication ability, relaxation ability, and self-acceptance (11-12).

Let the Part Play You provides a workbook for the teacher and student, covering various areas of acting study. These are divided into three sections: “Part One: Freeing the Actor Within,” “Part Two: Exploring the Script,” and “Part Three: Allowing the Part to Play You.” This analysis will focus on part one, which deals with the development of the actor’s foundational skills.

Part One includes the following lessons: Learning to Listen, Learning to Concentrate, Developing Your Imagination, Reclaiming Your Emotions, Learning to Relax, and Observation. Lessons in part three feature: Memory, Luring Your Emotions, Don’t Manipulate Your Body to Show Emotions, and Your Body Doesn’t Lie. Each of these lessons receives explanation in the workbook. Some of them are outlined below.

“Learning to Concentrate” involves multiple skill focus including identification of an appropriate mental target. Jesse discusses how, when attention is completely off of the self and on the responses of other person, the actor gets the information required to improve strategies of action and communication. Another focus of this section is “Training Your Mind to Focus On Your Mental Target.” This involves concentration which, Jesse notes, follows personal interest. She also refers to such abilities of concentration as being at the center of the acting process. Related skills are also discussed as workable daily activities; the switching of attention from one type of sensory information to another can also be applied to daily practice.

Another lesson, titled “Hold Up the Mirror to Nature,” deals with observation. Training objectives include observation of expression as it occurs during human communication such as: personal eccentricities of speech, vocal patterns, facial

expressions, and body language providing “invaluable models of emotional life” (50). Efforts to routinely take part in such observation, and to recreate what has been observed, can provide mental and physical tools that will influence the actor’s future work.

Included exercises are prefaced by a set of guidelines. For example, actors are encouraged to trust their instincts and their “innate human urge” to mimic. Imitation is favored over description, prompting a focus on activity. Actors are also instructed to open themselves up to new sensory experiences. Actors are told they should expect to “see through strange eyes, hear with someone else’s ears, touch with unfamiliar tactile awareness” and “think with your subject’s mind-feel with your subject’s heart” (51).

Emotions are described by Jesse as residing within the physical body, existing as physical sensations. This is explained as occurring in the viscera, or soft internal organs of the body cavities including the heart, lungs, stomach, liver, and intestines. These are acknowledged by terms like: “I have this knot in my stomach,” “My heart is breaking,” “Get off my back,” and “My heart was in my throat” (44).

Jesse comments, “Feelings do not come over us from out of the blue. You aren’t just walking alongside a sidewalk and some *sad* falls off a ledge and and hits you. Emotions are effects” (45). These effects are noted as responses to real or imagined events and our perceptions of them. The process of reclaiming emotions is identified as a willingness to change one’s personal response habits and inhibitions to experience new behaviors. One must forego emotional security in favor of personal development.

In The Playing is the Thing, Jesse offers an in-depth guide to working on the above areas with students, providing games and exercises for skill building. Featured are

lessons providing training related to: accessing emotions, concentration, emotional range, ensemble work, freeing the body, physicalizing vs. intellectualizing, imagination, interaction, memory (lines), listening, spontaneity, and understanding circumstances.

The tools of acting are also explored by Gordon Phillips in Take It Personally: On the Art and the Process of Personal Acting. In the book's introduction, Phillips explains his main reason for creating this discussion on his process as "to take the mystery out of good acting." In addition to his substantial body of work as an acting coach and Broadway performer, Phillips also taught acting classes for Lee Strasberg (an American acting icon famous for his coaching of legendary actors such as Audrey Hepburn and Marlon Brando).

Designed in the form of a tool box, Phillips' guide teaches the importance of "The Three R's of Acting": receiving, reacting, and responding. Techniques involve complete and concentrated focus on a "listening-reacting circle" in which observations by the actor prompt adjustments to thoughts and action strategies. The cycle is described as occurring "in a millisecond." It is also described as learned behavior in daily life which is forgotten in a play which is repeated many times. "The Three R's" of acting have therefore been provided to teach actors to not just listen but really hear, "digest" the words of others, and place primary focus on the words and actions of others instead of their own (79-80).

Phillips includes extensive discussion of vocal work for the actor. His experience working with opera singers at Yale University and the Curtis Institute of Music provided illustration of the process through which a singer's life gets integrated into the vocal

instrument. Stimulation of an emotional part of the brain brings richness to the color and timbre of the voice. Phillips' process of vocal work is acknowledged by "noted opera director and coach" Kay Walker Castaldo as a useful tool (126). Phillips' exercises to create an expressive voice are featured to help the actor experience the truth that singing and speaking are much alike. The difference is simply that singing is done on pitch (120). He cautions against being a "voice actor" and "singing" the lines. He notes Shakespeare's reference that such actors "mouth" the words (Hamlet, III, 2). Also referenced is Sir John Gielgud's conversation with David Frost on television. Asked if he would choose to do anything over again, Gielgud said, "I would not mouth my lines" (166).

Objectives for his techniques focus on skills to steer students away from such obstacles. Other obstacles of focus include: prior expectations of events, tension and anxiety, fear and insecurity, and too much focus on the self. "If you are aware of the process," says Phillips, "you're doing it wrong" (161).

The last approach analyzed in this research of NT acting study is that of Richard H. Felnagle. This approach, presented in his teacher's and actor's guide Beginning Acting: The Illusion of Natural Behavior, (1987) was chosen for this research based on its paradigm. "On the stage," says Felnagle, "we must consciously and deliberately create the adjustments to our behavior that would (otherwise) occur spontaneously....Creating all these adjustments is what acting is all about" (1). Emphasis is primarily placed on the way that the behavior of a human being automatically adjusts to reflect changes in

aspects of who we interact with, how we interact with them, what we are doing, and where it is being done.

Felnagle discusses that acting ability is “a fundamental, necessary social skill that all people are expected to have to some degree” (30). He recognizes parents as an individual’s first acting teachers, citing reactions to stimulus and matters of learned etiquette. Each level of maturity brings higher stakes, or greater consequences for mistakes as this “acting” becomes more complex. Examples include dealing with people who are unfriendly and situations which are unpleasant. Felnagle emphasizes, “Anyone who can’t successfully do these things when the need arises is not going to be a very successful human being. Everyone must be able to do this kind of acting” (31).

Chapter One discusses the process of giving meaning to words. The script of a play is described as merely words which derive their meaning from the context of who put them there and the physical, interpersonal situation in which they are used. Therefore, actors should never assume that their own personal knowledge of meaning will automatically be communicated to an audience. This meaning is communicated by the actor through creation of physical context. The words of the playwright are referred to by Felnagle as a code which must be broken. The deciphered meaning must then be applied to movement and gesture. This process is therefore divided into two parts: decoding the words of the script for clues to action and then putting the clues to physical work in the “doing” of something, or the “acting” of the part (8-9).

The term “part,” as it applies to a character in a play, can itself be decoded for multiple meanings such as: 1) one section of a whole, as in “dividing into parts”, 2) the

creation of another unique entity, as in “the parting of a cell,” and 3) acknowledgement of a specific moment, as in a “favorite part of a book.” The above reference to the assigned meaning of “acting” as “doing,” paired with the assignment of these meanings for “part,” can be translated in the manner explained by Felnagle. In this context, “acting the part” could be de-coded to describe what is being done during a unique, specific moment within a particular section of a play. This reference to the “doing,” or the physical action, is the foundation of his method. He explains:

“Doing is what realistic acting is all about....and this characteristic is also true of acting in general. Otherwise, acting would be called speaking. But it isn’t; it’s called acting. To act means to do....if actors are not using their bodies, they are not acting.....Movement, after, all is the most basic sign of life; things that don’t move are dead, including actors.” (10)

A significant question addressed by the process involves the means through which an actor might identify essential details in need of de-coding. This is answered by a breakdown of categories which inform the actor of such details: the situation, the relationships, and the objectives. When these are understood and communicated by the actor, the audience will then form an illusion of natural behavior (34).

In the lesson titled “Playing the Situation,” practice is given to de-coding rules of “doing” applicable to specific environments, such as:

- The less familiar a person is within an environment, the less they will move around it.

- The more familiar people are with their surroundings, the more they will abuse the furniture.
- The more a person is related to a certain place, the more casually they will dress.
- The less familiar people are with a place, the more restrained their mode of expression is likely to be.
- In a scene, different characters will most likely have different relationships to their setting. (46-47)

These are presented as guidelines to help the actor begin to think about this area of work. They are not absolutes and may even be broken by a character to make a point. Felnagle hopes they will help the actor to begin to identify what their character would and would not do in a given situation.

The fourth lesson concerns “The Who, the What, and the Need.” The “Who” involves information given to an audience based on how the character looks, their patterns of speech, and information that might be found on a driver’s license. “What” refers to facts provided through the reference of other actors, such as family background, occupations, and personal relationships. These elements of “Who” and “What” comprise the perception of a character’s personality. The author notes, “They (actors) are doing no more than we all tend to do when we think of the personalities of people in general” (192). The element of “Need” binds characters together, as it is established based on what one character wants from the others. According to Felnagle, successful communication on is dependent on the establishment of all three of these elements in performance (63).

The above NT methods were found to involve differing approaches and incorporated exercises related to their objectives for skill building. They comprise the first set of methods to be analyzed and compared in later chapters. The second set of approaches-AS methods of acting study-will be defined and investigated below.

4.2 Exploration of Methods Addressing Issues of Asperger's Syndrome

Anita Wolf is Executive Director and Founder of an organization called Actors for Autism. Her book, Acting for Kids on the Autistic Spectrum, (2005) is endorsed by Hollywood director, writer, and actor Joey Travolta as an “important book for anyone who wishes to teach acting to children and adults on the autistic spectrum”(xii). Wolf's book chronicles their meeting and his thoughts on their collaboration.

Travolta's name is commonly known within the entertainment industry. This is due to his own success as well as that of his brother, award-winning actor John Travolta. Joey Travolta's career began with work in special education at an orphanage; he created acting scenes as lesson plans to reinforce concept learning. This area of work would later merge with his artistic aspirations through the founding of an acting facility for children and adults called “The Entertainment Experience.” It was here that Wolf approached Travolta about a pilot program of acting classes for individuals with autism.

They recognized the potential of such a program to address some of the common deficits existing within children and adults on the autistic spectrum. For example, they have limited reciprocal conversation skills and do not understand unwritten rules of communication. These deficits “significantly impact their ability to demonstrate social and emotional competence” (xi).

The program developed by Wolf and Travolta was designed to include classes in producing, film-making, writing and directing. Acting is included as a part of each. There are multiple reasons for Travolta's addition of an acting component to all of these areas of training: 1) students must learn to get along with a film crew, 2) 90% of communication with others is non-verbal, 3) it builds confidence and self esteem, and 4) it provides practice at communicating a message to a group and verifying it was received with the correct intention (xii).

Wolf went on to found Actors for Autism, helping to provide services and training in many areas of the entertainment industry to individuals with autism. A significant goal of the organization is to change the public perception of those with autism, creating a shift of focus from what they cannot do to what they can accomplish. Her book sets forth a curriculum which can be followed and implemented by anyone desiring to create an acting experience for children on the autistic spectrum. Its included acting-based activities assist participants to personalize theory and create practical experience. Wolf cites the adage, "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand" (19).

Two major areas of focus in Wolf's program are role playing and kinesics. Though they are discussed as separate approaches, the goals for each will be explained as involving an increase in understanding of social communication principles. Social coding is at the core of this understanding. "In autism," states Wolf, "there is a genuine inability to read and interpret other people's different beliefs, emotions, and thoughts, which makes it difficult for people with autism to adapt to changes in everyday life" (17).

Role-playing games are included within her program as a tool for social development. They are designed to build eye contact, communication skills, social skills, and life skills. Indeed, any time a “What if....?” acting situation is utilized, imagination and behavioral rehearsal are both involved. These games involve realistic scenarios involving multiple perspectives.

Other children act as observers and provide feedback on the actor’s role-play. Focus is on the behaviors observed, as an understanding of what works and what does not is important to the learning of behavior choices. The experience has been described by children as “the most powerful learning they’ve ever experienced” (19-21).

“Kinesics” is a term defined by Wolf as describing a repertoire of behavior which is non-verbal. It involves symbolic body language, exemplifying the communication of information through behavior. The elements involved in this communication include usage, origin, and coding.

The term “usage” refers to identification of the following:

- Setting
- Relationship to verbal communication
- Awareness
- Intention
- Type of information: informative (shared meaning), interactive (influencing behavior of others), communicative (specific message)

The term “origin” refers to:

- Relationship between stimulus and non-verbal activity

- Common experiences
- Varied experiences (can be shared or taught)

The term “coding” refers to:

- Arbitrary coding (such as the opening and closing of a hand)
- Iconic coding (carries clues, such as a gesture)
- Intrinsic coding (visually relates to what is signified) – pictorial, showing size and shape; spatial, showing distance; rhythmic ‘conducting’; kinetic gesture, such as the shaking of a fist; pointing something out (22-24)

Body language is stated as accounting for over ninety percent of conversation. It therefore plays a crucial role in communication. An important part of acting is described as taking on the body language of a character. Similarly, children with autism can practice taking on social roles in a safe environment through acting work and share feelings within the safety of a characterization. Feedback is also helpful as a learning tool for observers (24-25).

The technique of videotaping is acknowledged as a beneficial form of such feedback. It allows the actors to see and understand what their body language is communicating. Wolf notes that use of videotape provides participants with the opportunity to identify elements of character performance which can be improved. “The camera is worth a thousand words,” says Wolf, who recognizes the ability to re-shoot as an opportunity for the actors to re-create their work and to document their development (25).

The final area of kinesics discussed is posture. It is addressed as having hidden meaning and as affecting the perception of others regarding feelings or emotions conveyed. Children are taught that it can contradict what is actually felt inside. Disinterested, confident, withdrawn, and extroverted messages are all exemplified in the work done to reinforce information about messages conveyed to others through body language (26).

Improvisational exercises are used to practice the principles taught in a spontaneous way. They also provide opportunities to demonstrate and rehearse learned skills. One such exercise, "Famous Last Words," is described by Wolf as involving skills of perspective-taking as actors try to invent famous last words that might be said by a chosen character from movies, cartoons, or songs. Elements of acting such as voice and diction work and memory skills also receive focus within the context of such improvisational activity (70).

Amelia Davies also offers ideas for the use of acting with AS individuals in her book Teaching Asperger's Students Social Skills through Acting: All Their World's a Stage (2004). She focuses on the use of acting as an activity through which individuals can laugh and access their sense of humor, participate in a drama class, achieve self-esteem, and receive some training in the "fine art of fitting in" (xvi). She describes her creation of the book as a springboard and a guide. Included are processes she has developed for the teaching of acting to those with Asperger's Syndrome.

"Acting secrets" taught in her workshops include lessons such as appearing confident when actually scared, holding someone's attention, and guessing what people

are thinking based on body language. Davies never mentions Asperger's Syndrome or social skills. The approach is designed to provide an opportunity for children to take a break from their diagnosis (xvii-xix).

She mentions that these students are like any other actors, always ready for a costume and a spotlight. However she stresses the process of working first through the body, then through the words for maximum success. Through opportunities to take part in such drama classes, students can gain experience performing theatrically and practicing skills in a safe, supportive, and fun environment (31).

Another program designed for individuals with autism is described in Acting Antics (2007). Author Cindy B. Schneider outlines a theatrical approach to teaching skills of interpersonal communication to children with Asperger's Syndrome. Included are activities ranging from warm-ups and group work to staging a show. Schneider spent 20 years in the special education classroom before becoming an Autism Consultant to teachers throughout the United States. While involved in this consulting work, she became aware of the "lack of effective programming being implemented to teach social understanding" (13). Therefore, she embarked upon the task of putting together a "how-to" manual for starting a drama group for kids with social cognitive deficits.

Schneider's primary rules for acting work are simple: 1) listen to the director and 2) never hurt another actor. The latter involves making comments regarding other actors' work which are helpful and constructive. Activities address key skills of interpersonal communication such as understanding humor, working with others, interpreting non-

verbal signals, initiating conversation, recognizing the perspective of others, and body awareness.

Judith Martinovich presents ideas for arts-related skill-building programs in Creative Expressive Activities and Asperger Syndrome: Social and Emotional Skills and Positive Life Goals for Adolescents and Young Adults. Ideas for the use of activities from many areas of the arts are noted, including drama-based activities. One such activity is called “An Open Face.” Its implementation involves partners demonstrating for each other the ways they might show internal emotions to others through use of facial expression (157). Another activity, called “Assertiveness, Aggression, Cooperation” features the use of drama to act out potentially aggression-causing daily life situations and explore possible solutions. Also explored through such activities is the difference between assertiveness and cooperation and identification of appropriate moments to utilize each. Role play is also used to achieve greater understanding of moral lessons, complex emotions, self-regulation, personal values, connection to others, and conversation skills. Objectives and activities included in Martinovich’s approach have been included as Figure 10.

This chapter has provided details regarding work within selected methods of AS and NT acting study. Examples of incorporated exercises for each method have been identified. Content and skill objectives related to each exercise have also been explored. These can now be viewed in the form of cross-reference charts summarizing the information presented above. This systematic approach, used to compare and contrast

the objectives of exercises selected from each method of acting study investigated, will be explained within the contents of the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Objectives Found Within Acting Study and Social Skills Learning

5.0 Selection of Model

The foundation for this analysis was established through an exploration of elements found within the I LAUGH model outlined in Michelle Garcia Winner's Thinking About You, Thinking about Me: Philosophies and Strategies to Further Develop Perspective Taking and Communicative Abilities for Persons with Social Cognitive Learning Challenges (xi-xii). This model was selected for two reasons: 1) Winner's established authority and presence within her field (Time, 50) and 2) the concisely defined, clearly illustrated, and highly visual presentation of information within her published guides. These latter qualities proved beneficial to the cross-comparative research style of this thesis.

5.1 Definition of Model

A review of the I LAUGH model is important to the understanding of its applications within this phase of study. Winner first presented the model as a tool for assessment of social cognitive skills in her reference book for teachers and caregivers titled Inside Out: What Makes the Person with Social Cognitive Deficits Tick? (2000). It was developed to illustrate the specific clusters of deficits which note the presence of a syndrome, rather than a challenge to a singular developmental area. In Thinking About You, she describes the acronym as follows:

“The I LAUGH model was developed to create a framework with which we can organize and describe our observations and test results as they relate to

social cognition. It incorporates issues related to Central Coherence theory, Executive Dysfunction, and Theory of Mind/Perspective Taking. It elaborates upon the “triad” of impairments for persons on the autistic spectrum: communication, socialization, and imagination (Wing and Gould, 1979). . . . A diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, Nonverbal Learning Disorder, or even the broader diagnosis of social cognitive deficits does relatively little for our students without an appropriate treatment plan. Breaking down the student’s challenges using the I LAUGH model helps focus our attention on our students’ specific needs.” (xiii)

Individuals with Asperger’s Syndrome can exhibit “discreet but overlapping” disabilities involving conceptual learning, inferential learning, language formulation, perspective taking, and organizational abilities. Winner acknowledges perspective-taking skills as “the driving force that is inter-related to all others” within the I LAUGH model (xiv).

The tools developed for purposes of this analysis reference the letters represented within the acronym I LAUGH as defined by Winner in Thinking About You:

- “I”: initiation of communication or action
- “L”: listening with the eyes and brain (including visualization)
- “A”: abstract and inferential thinking
- “U”: understanding perspective
- “G”: gestalt processing (getting the big picture)
- “H”: humor and human relatedness (understanding subtleties of humor)

(Table 1, xi)

A cross-reference chart was created to illustrate the above information and provide a foundation for the analysis explained on the following pages.

5.2 Explanation of Cross-Reference Charts for Individual Methods

Charts for each individual method of acting study were created to illustrate: 1) examples of included exercises, 2) their related skill objectives, and 3) any connections existing between addressed skills and those associated with the I LAUGH model. These were indicated through notation of corresponding initials. The selection of exercises was based on the presence of guidelines and practical instructions within cited reference materials.

A final summary chart consolidated the information from all of the researched methods of acting study. It also provided a point of reference for cross-comparison between the skill objectives of each method and the skills addressed in social skills learning.

Each of these charts were developed by the researcher and are included in the following order:

1. The I LAUGH model: areas of function and skills addressed (Fig.5)
2. The Davies Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.6)
3. The Felnagle Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.7)
4. The Jesse Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.8)
5. The Manderino Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.9)
6. The Martinovich Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.10)

7. The Phillips Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.11)
8. The Schneider Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.12)
9. The Silverberg Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.13)
10. The Wolf Method: exercises and skill objectives (Fig.14)
11. Summary: the relationship between the above methods (Fig.6-14) and core skill building areas found within the I LAUGH model (Fig.5)

The above information is included on pages 75-85. Individual and corporate analysis of this same data will follow, serving to inform and continue discussion of possible connections which may or may not exist between objectives of acting study and social skills learning.

	I= Initiation: Communication and Action	L= Listening With Eyes and Brain	A= Abstract and Inferential Thinking	U= Understanding of Perspective	G= Gestalt Processing Ability	H= Humor and Human Relatedness
Functional Areas:						
Skills Addressed:						
Initiation of Social Interaction	X					
Initiation of Novel Activity	X					
Observation of Social Cues		X				
Processing Meaning of Others' Messages		X				
Thinking with the Eyes, Eye Contact		X				
Inferring Meaning from Social Cues			X			
Deciphering Meaning of Words, Language			X			
Regulating Social Relationships:						
Recognizing Others' Perspectives				X		
Incorporating Others' Perspectives				X		
Relationship of Language/Concepts					X	
Writing Ability-Non-Tangential					X	
Keeping Remarks on Topic with Group					X	
Cooperative Learning					X	
Understand Subtleties of Humor						X
Understanding Humorous Responses:						
Laughed At						X
Laughed With						X

Fig.5. Functional areas and related skills addressed within Winner's I LAUGH model.

Skill Objectives:		Centers of Body		Passing		Yada, Yada, Blah, Blah		Machines	Mirrors	Amoebae
Exercises:		Laban	Tableau	Energy	Gibberish	Blah, Blah				
Work Within a Group (I,L,A,U,G,H) Receive Input from Others (I,L,A,U,G,H) Interpreting Meaning (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		X	X		X	X				X
Understanding of Expression (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X				
Experimenting with Voice, Sounds (I,L,A,U,G,H)							X			X
Awareness of Body Language (I,L,A,U,G)		X	X		X	X	X	X		
Following Directions (I,L,A,U,G)		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Tone of Voice (L,A,U,G,H)		X			X	X				
Understanding Speech Patterns (L,A,U,G)		X	X		X	X				
Making Choices (L,A,U,G)			X			X	X	X	X	X
Following the Pace of Others (I,L,G)		X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Sense of Sharing of Personal Energy (I,L,A,H)		X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Imagination (L,A,G)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Acknowledge Others' Personalities (A,U,G)		X				X				
Character Development (A,U,G)		X	X			X				
Finding Physical Center (I,A)		X	X				X	X	X	X
Awareness of Body (I,A)		X		X			X	X	X	X
Perspective-Taking (A,U)		X	X			X	X	X		X
Word Association (A,G)			X	X	X	X				
Visualization and Imagery (G,A)		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Efficient Physical Movement (I)		X		X			X	X	X	X
Eye Contact (L)				X	X	X		X		
Listening Skills (L)		X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Relationship of Body in Space (A)		X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Exploring Movement (A)		X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Abstract Thinking (A)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:		12	18	12	13	12	22	15	16	18

Fig.6. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Davies method.

Skill Objectives:	Watching	Physical	Creating	Patterns of Behavior	Picking a Number	Pantomime: Changing Context	Motivational Improv.	Changing Motivation of a Speech	Motivation: Moment to Moment
	TV	Situational Pantomime	Playing Space						
Exercises:	Drama								
<i>Observation and Analysis:</i>									
Interpretation of Context of Actions (I,L,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Interpersonal Verbal Communication (L,A,A,U,G,H)	X					X			X
Interpersonal Physical Communication (L,A,A,U,G,H)	X	X		X	X	X			X
Behavior Analysis: Movement (L,A,A,U,G,H)	X			X	X				
Identifying Interpersonal Relationships (L,A,A,U,G,H)						X	X	X	X
Behavioral Analysis (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X		X	X	X			X
Fill In Details of a Situation (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Understanding of the Concept of Context (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Recognizing and Identifying Context (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X				X	X	X	X
Understanding of Different Perspectives (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Recognizing the Impact Situations: Action (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
De-Coding of Expression (L,A,A,U,G)	X	X	X			X	X	X	
Development of Analytical Imagination (L,A,A,U,G)	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
Identifying Spatial Relationships (L,A,A,U,G)				X		X	X	X	
Interpretation of Context of Words (A,U,G)	X		X			X			X
<i>Active Application:</i>									
Transfer of Verbal Context (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)	X		X			X	X	X	X
Transfer of Physical Context (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Physical Communication: Perspective (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Application of Different Perspectives (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)		X	X			X	X	X	X
Development of Active Imagination (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Appropriate Behavior: Situation (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Appropriate Behavior: Relationship (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)	X		X			X	X	X	X
Physical Patterns of Behavior (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)				X	X				X
Communication: Physical Appearance (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)				X			X	X	X
Communication: Physical Distance (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)				X			X	X	X
Behavioral Mimicry (I,L,A,A,U,G,H)	X			X	X				
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:	18	13	14	14	8	22	17	18	22

Fig.7. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Feinagle method.

Skill Objectives:	Bending the Rules	Can You Top This	Day-Dreaming	Finding the Triggers	In Your Own Words	Listen Out Loud	I Want You To	Symphony of Sound	Tell Me A Story
Ensemble (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X							X	X
Interaction (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X		X		X	X		
Learning Lines (I,L,A,U,G)				X	X				
Understanding Dramatic Action (A,U,G,H)				X			X		
Understanding Given Circumstances (A,U,G,H)									
Freeing the Body (I,A,G)	X				X				
Getting Out of Head and Into the Body (I,A,G)	X							X	
Access to Emotions (I,A,G)			X						
Emotional Range (I,A,G)							X		
Relaxation (I,A,G)			X					X	
Spontaneity (I,A,G)	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Imagination (L,A,G)	X	X	X				X		X
Scene Analysis (A,U,G)				X	X				
Understanding Character Needs (A,U,G)					X		X		
Understanding Conflict (A,U,G)							X		
Concentration (I,L)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Listening (I,L)		X		X		X	X	X	X
Warm-Up: Physical (I)	X								
Warm-Up: Vocal (I)	X							X	
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:	9	5	4	5	6	4	9	7	5

Fig.8. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Jesse method.

Skill Objectives:	Exercises:	Introjection	Channeling	Spatial	Spatial	Spatial	Moving	Highlight	Relaxation
			Impulse	Object:Outer	Object:Projected	Objects	Object	Exercise	Exercise
Creating Meaning in Actions (I,L,A,U,G,H)				X				X	
Heightened Emotion Through Behavior (I,L,A,U,G,H)								X	
More Meaning to Words Spoken (I,L,A,U,G,H)							X		
Conveying Motivations (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X			
Making Choices (I,L,A,U,G,H)				X		X		X	
Behavioral Effects: Imaginary Stimuli (I,L,A,U,G)	X		X					X	
Connection: Others' Experiences/Feelings (L,A,U,G,H)	X								
Dissolving of the Personal Ego (L,A,U,G,H)							X		
Visualization: Imaginary Circumstances (L,A,U,G,H)							X		
Insight Into Emotional Equipment (L,A,U,G,H)			X				X	X	
Greater Expressive Freedom (I,L,A,G)					X		X	X	
Sensory Imagery (I,L,A,G)			X				X	X	
Improved Sensory Awareness (I,L,A,G)			X				X	X	
Selecting Motivations (I,A,U,G)						X			
Selecting Actions (I,A,U,G)			X					X	
Expanding Powers of Observation (L,A,U,G)	X								
Relationship: Emotions/Sensations (L,A,U,G)			X				X	X	X
Greater Poise (I,L,G)					X				
Creating Energy Within the Body (I,A,G)			X	X			X	X	
Send Personal Energy Into Acting Space (I,A,G)			X	X				X	
Awareness of Energy Flow Within Body (I,A,G)			X	X			X	X	X
Tracking Flow of Energy Through Body (I,A,G)			X				X	X	X
Release of Tension (I,G,H)									X
Greater Sense of Rhythm (L,A,G)							X		
Spatial Imagery (L,A,G)							X		
Visualization: Form and Texture (L,A,G)							X		
Understanding Senses: Physical Presence (L,A,G)			X		X		X	X	
Revelation of Personal Traits (A,U,G)	X								
Introspection of Personal Psyche (A,U,G)	X							X	
Deeper Physical/Mental Relaxation (I,G)									X
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:		5	11	5	3	3	15	16	5

Fig.9. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Manderino method.

Skill Objectives:	Exercises:	Moral	An Open Face	Social Anxiety and Stress	Reading Social Cues	Assertiveness Aggression Cooperation	Anger Management	Values	Improv-Conversation	Open Ended Questions
Use and Identify Facial Expression (I,L,A,U,G,H)		Stories	X		X	X			X	
Express Range of Emotion (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Identify Social Anxiety (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Identify Emotions (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Express Emotions Appropriately (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Cooperate with Others (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Practice in Managing Emotions (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Ability to Compromise (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X				
Exploring Alternate Perspectives (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X		X	X			X	
Exploration of Alternate Choices (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X				X			X	
Exploration of Effects of Choices (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X			X	X			X	
Role Playing (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X			X	
Asking Questions (I,L,A,U,G)		X							X	
Visualization (I,L,A,G)		X			X				X	
Imagery (I,L,A,G)					X				X	
Identify Concepts (I,A,U,G)		X							X	
Giving Up Control (I,A,U,G)						X			X	
Identify Implications (I,A,U,G)		X	X			X			X	
Interest in Others (I,L,A,U,G)					X				X	
Imagination (I,A,G)					X					
Sense Memory (A,G)										
Relaxation (I)			X							
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:		7	9	11	12	14	14	9	16	10

Fig.10. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Martinovich method.

Skill Objectives:	Exercises:	Neutralizing the Self	Actualizing: Sensory	Actualizing: Physical	Neutralizing Partners	The Three R's	The Big Three	Stage Movement	Exploring Possibilities	Expressive Voice
Advanced Scene Work (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X	X		X	
Reacting (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X	X		X	
Responding (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X	X		X	
Improvisation (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physical Expression (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Intimacy (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X	X	X	X			
Give and Take (I,L,A,U,G)					X	X	X		X	
Needs (I,L,A,U,G)							X		X	
Actions and Strategy (I,L,A,U,G)							X		X	
Movement with Feeling (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X		X	X	X		
Receiving (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X	X		X	
Process Singing (I,L,A,G)										X
Open Throat (I,L,A,G)		X								X
Forward Thrust of Voice (I,L,A,G)										X
Personalization (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X	X	X	X			
Physical Re-Living With Rehearsal (I,L,A,U)				X		X	X	X		
Emotional Re-Living (I,L,A,U)			X		X	X	X			
Re-living Touch (I,L,A,G)			X	X						
Re-Living Sound (I,L,A,G)			X	X						
Juxtaposition of Real/Imaginary (A,U,G)		X	X	X	X	X				
Obstacles (A,U,G)							X		X	
Considering Opposites (A,U,G)							X		X	
Body Freedom (I,A)		X	X	X		X	X	X		
Smell Awareness (A,G)		X	X							
Taste Awareness (A,G)		X	X							
Seeing Awareness (A,G)		X	X		X					
Sensing A Meaningful Object (A,G)			X							
Imagining the Body (A,G)		X	X	X	X			X		X
Relaxed Mind (L)		X	X	X	X				X	X
Engaged Psyche(L)		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Open Spirit (L)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Relaxed Body (L)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:		11	19	15	11	17	20	7	14	8

Fig.11. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Phillips method.

Skill Objectives:		Joke	Flexible	Partner	Taxi	Scenes from	Blah	Sell Your	
Exercises:	Script	Phrases	Scenes	Props	Driver	a Flat Hat	Blah	Freeze	Partner
Working with Others (I,L,A,U,G,H) Reading/Interpreting Nonverbal Signals (I,L,A,U,G,H) Experimenting With Emotions (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Shifting (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X				X	X	X	X	X
Being Flexible: Situations/Events (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interpreting Language (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Understanding Humor (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Peer Interactions (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Following Directions (I,L,A,U,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Responding to Rules and Structure (I,L,A,U,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Remembering Names (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X	X	X			X
Ending Conversation (I,L,A,U,G)			X		X		X	X	X
Initiating (I,L,A,U,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Compromise (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X		X	X	X	X
Waiting and Patience (I,A,U,G,H)			X		X	X	X		X
Understanding Others' Perspectives (L,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Understanding Meaning:Nonverbal Signs (L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sequencing (I,L,A,G)			X		X	X	X	X	X
Expressing Using Nonverbals (I,L,A,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Creative Thinking (I,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Flexible Thinking (I,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Problem Solving (I,A,U,G)		X	X			X	X		X
Response to Time (I,A,U,G)					X				X
Organizational Skills (L,A,U,G)	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
Taking Risks (I,A,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Motor Planning (I,A,G)				X	X	X			X
Body Awareness (L,A,G)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Appreciate Others' Strengths (A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Increased Self-Esteem (A,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:		11	18	25	21	27	26	23	29

Fig.12. Exercises and objectives found within the Schneider method.

Skill Objectives:	Exercises:	Story-telling	Basic Repetition	3 Moment Game	Pinch and the Ouch	Coming to the Door	The Activity	Improvisation	The Magic As If
Responding to Others (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Heightened Listening Ability (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Active Listening Ability (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Truthful Listening (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Working With What Happens (I,L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Emotional Observation (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Deciphering Others' Point of View (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Acknowledging Impulses (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Exploring Impulses Acknowledged (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Working Off of the Other Person (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Instinctive Interpersonal Communication (I,L,A,U,G,H)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Responding to Observed Behaviors (I,L,A,U,G,H)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Quicker Responses in Communication (I,L,A,U,G,H)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Live Truthfully: Imaginary Circumstances (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X	X	X	X
Assimilating the Unexpected (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Experiencing Natural Responses to Stimuli (I,L,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physical Observation (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Giving Up Control (I,L,A,U,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physical Communication: What Is Observed (I,L,A,U,G)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Truthful Communication: Personal View (I,A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ensemble Focus - Abandoning Self Focus (L,A,U,G,H)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observing Behaviors (L,A,U,G,H)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Emotionally Open to Others (L,A,U,G,H)				X	X	X	X	X	X
In the Moment vs. Anticipating Moment (I,L,A,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greater Emotional/Physical Availability (I,L,A,G)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Verbal Communication: What Is Observed (I,A,U,G)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Understanding Personal Point of View (A,U,G,H)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Deepened Imagination (L,A,G)						X	X	X	X
Saying Exactly What Is Meant (I,U,G)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus Ability: Singular/Multi-Focus (I,L)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Achieving Calmness (I,A)				X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus on the Attempt vs. Result (A,G)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:		8	22	30	30	32	32	32	32

Fig.13. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Silverberg method.

	Group	The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly	Scene Improv-Director's Cut	Coming Home	Translate Gibberish	Introducing Association	Only Questions	Continuing Emotions	Dubbed Movie
Skill Objectives:	Exercises:								
Exploration of a Variety of Emotions (I,L,A,U,G,H)	Storytelling Six Episodes	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Applying Body Language (I,L,A,U,G,H)				X	X		X	X	X
Applying Tone of Voice (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Out-of-the-box Thinking (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cooperation with Others (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Working Within a Time Frame (I,L,A,U,G,H)	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Observational Skills (I,L,A,U,G,H)						X	X	X	X
Interpreting Body Language (L,A,U,G,H)				X	X		X		X
Interpreting Tone of Voice (L,A,U,G,H)				X	X		X		X
Getting the Big Picture (L,A,U,G,H)	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Exploration of a Variety of Environments (I,L,A,G)			X	X			X		X
Word Association (I,L,A,G)						X			
Image Association (I,L,A,G)	X				X	X	X	X	X
Memory Association (I,L,A,G)		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Putting the Group First (I,A,U,G)	X					X	X	X	
Accepting the Suggestions of Others (I,A,U,G)		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Inventing Details (I,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Trying New Things (I,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Asking Questions (I,A,U,G)							X		
Accepting Change (I,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Main Idea (L,A,U,G)	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Imagination (L,A,G)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Perspective-Taking (U)			X	X		X		X	X
Total Skill Objectives Addressed:									
	12	13	13	17	13	14	20	17	19

Fig.14. Exercises and skill objectives found within the Wolf method.

		% of Identified Skill Objectives Involving "I": Initiation: Communication and Action	% of Identified Skill Objectives Involving "L": Listening With Eyes and Brain	% of Identified Skill Objectives Involving "A": Abstract and Inferential Thinking	% of Identified Skill Objectives Involving "U": Understanding of Perspective	% of Identified Skill Objectives Involving "G": Gestalt Processing Ability	% of Identified Skill Objectives Involving "H": Humor and Human Relatedness
Methods:	Total Skill Objectives Identified						
Davies	138	45%	49%	82%	41%	54%	22%
Felnagle	146	47%	97%	100%	100%	100%	58%
Jesse	54	78%	50%	69%	65%	67%	13%
Phillips	122	54%	62%	76%	53%	65%	20%
Manderino	63	67%	60%	95%	44%	100%	24%
Martinovich	102	93%	81%	96%	82%	95%	64%
Silverberg	218	81%	81%	94%	82%	94%	66%
Schneider	207	76%	71%	100%	79%	100%	40%
Wolf	138	74%	69%	96%	80%	96%	38%

Fig.15. Percentages of exercises containing specified skill objectives within each method.

More than one thousand skill objectives are included within the combined research of all examined methods. Therefore, rather than a lengthy line-by-line acknowledgement of examples, discussion will occur through brief and individual analytical summaries informing a later corporate cross-comparison of data.

5.3 Individual Summaries of AS Methods

100% of the skill objectives found within the incorporated exercises of the Schneider method (Figure 12) address functional areas “A” (abstract and inferential thinking) and “G” (gestalt processing ability) within the I LAUGH model. The next highest percentage of 79% is identified for those addressing the area of “U” (understanding of perspective). The other functional areas of the acronym fall within the range of 40% to 76%.

The highest percentage found within the Wolf method (Figure 14) is that of 96% in the areas of “G” and “A”. A review of skill objectives addressing the functional areas of “I” (initiation) and “U” also yield high percentages of 74% to 80%. Areas “L” (listening) and “H” (humor) are found to be addressed at percentages ranging from 38% to 68%.

The Martinovich method (Figure 10) also contains high percentages of addressed skills which parallel those associated with the functional areas of the Winner model. The areas of “I,” “A,” and “G” all fall within the range of 93% to 96%. These are followed by a range of 81% to 82% for “L” and “U.” The lowest percentage is found within the area of “H,” however it is still calculated as well above 50%.

The Davies method (Figure 6) contains only one area, that of “A”, which is established as significantly higher than 50%. However, the other functional areas of the acronym were identified within the skill objectives of examined exercises as falling within a range of 22% to 54%.

5.4 Individual Summaries of NT Methods

100% of the skill objectives identified for exercises within the Felnagle method (Figure 7) address the functional areas “A”, “U,” and “G.” A fourth area, “L” (listening with the eyes and brain), receives an equally high 97%. The other two areas fall in the mid-range of 47%-58%.

The Manderino method (Figure 9) also exhibits high percentages. 100% of its identified skill objectives involve the functional area of “G,” and 95% address the area of “A”. The areas of “I” and “L” both exceed 50%. The other areas of “U” and “H” are identified as present within objectives, ranging from 24% to 44%.

The areas of “A” and “G” are identified within the Silverberg method (Figure 13) as addressed by 94% of skill objectives examined, and those of “I,” “L,” and “U” all fall between 81% and 82%. The lowest percentage, that of “H,” is observed as present within 66% of its skill objectives.

The Jesse and Phillips methods (Figures 8 and 11) present lower percentages. However, each of the skills addressed within the I LAUGH model can in fact be found within their researched exercises and related skill objectives, ranging from 13% to 78%.

5.5 Comparative Analysis of All Methods

Even though some of the noted percentages for the various methods are lower than others, all rank above zero. In fact, other than a calculation of 13% for skill objectives involving “H” (humor and human relatedness) within the Jesse method, all areas of skill building for all methods are identified as ranging from 20% to 100%.

When viewed as a whole, the individual methods could be compared and contrasted with each other. They were then ordered according to their total percentages of researched skill objectives which parallel those of the I LAUGH model:

1. Martinovich-85% (AS)
2. Felnagle-84% (NT)
3. Schneider-78% (AS)
4. Meisner-70% (NT)
5. Manderino-65% (NT)
6. Wolf-61% (AS)
7. Jesse-57% (NT)
8. Phillips-55% (NT)
9. Davies-49% (AS)

In addition, the following information became clear:

- 100% of researched methods of acting study were found to address skill objectives defined within the I LAUGH model to some degree, including 1) initiation, communication and action, 2) listening (with eyes and brain),

3) abstract and inferential thinking, 4) understanding of perspective, 5) gestalt processing, and 6) humor and human relatedness.

- When all researched methods were compared, Martinovich's AS method and Felnagle's NT method both contained the highest and nearly equal percentages of incorporated skill objectives which parallel those found within the I LAUGH model.
- There was no significant percentage difference between the highest ranking researched AS and NT methods of acting study; both have been found to incorporate similar focus on skill objectives related to the Winner model.

5.6 Combined Summary

Varied yet high percentages of skill objectives paralleling those of the Winner model were found to exist within each of the analyzed methods. The intention of this analysis was not to provide a comparison or ranking of these percentages. Instead, the effort of the research was to provide information obtained from a variety of styles and approaches. Therefore, references to the lowest or highest percentages were included to identify the extent to which exercises may have been found to address objectives connected to those of the I LAUGH model. Primary importance was therefore placed on the investigation of whether or not such connections could be found to exist.

The methods and exercises receiving lower percentages were identified as possessing connections and the potential for cross-benefits. Higher percentages indicated

a more definitive identification of existing inter-disciplinary connections. With this approach in mind, the methods were compared and contrasted.

One of the most interesting findings was that of a single point between the totals of the two methods with the highest percentages: Martinovich's AS method and Felnagle's NT method. Examination of this fact led to the determination that a method of acting study did not have to be specifically developed for therapeutic purposes to possess a high percentage of objectives related to AS social cognitive therapy and its associated skill building potential.

In addition, 70% of established skill objectives identified within the Silverberg approach paralleled skills addressed by the Winner model, followed by 65% of such objectives identified within Manderino's method.

The lowest discovered percentage of I LAUGH-related skill objectives found within all combined exercises for an individual method was 49% within the Davies method. It is fair to round this number to 50%. This signifies that one half of all objectives analyzed from exercises associated with this method were found to be related to the Winner model.

This research also revealed that the AS methods possessed the first, third, sixth, and ninth highest listed percentages. The NT methods were listed with the second, fourth, fifth, seventh, and eight highest percentages. The top percentages of skill building objectives related to the Winner model were not solely reserved for the AS-based methods. Instead, when multiple methods were compared, the result was a relatively even representation through percentages which substantially favored neither the AS or

NT methods. This supports the further discussion of the following chapter regarding possibilities of potential for cross-disciplinary benefits and related promotion of social cognitive skills associated with the I LAUGH model.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.0 Identified Connections and Benefits

The collection of data presented in previous chapters provides an answer to the significant question of this research. Through included methods, materials, and analyses, clear connections have been made between the skill building objectives of acting study and those of social skills learning. This chapter will conclude the research with discussion specific to these discovered connections.

The presented data indicates that cross-benefits could exist between AS and NT methods of acting study. Opportunities for social skill building are present within all of the AS and NT methods researched; these include an increased connection to social learning concepts through active participation and practical application. They were observed as occurring in the form of exercises and skill objectives related to the I LAUGH model.

These related objectives present possible cross-benefits to NT and AS students and teachers. The cross-application of exercises might result in ideas for new or synthesized approaches. The student could possibly experience different perspectives or approaches to work and concepts, which may result in enhanced connections and understanding. Any such cross-benefits could provide the instructor with additional possibilities or ideas regarding the structure and content of an existing acting curriculum.

The above possibilities are supported by the objectives identified within Felnagle's NT method. One example includes the ability of the actor to understand and convey intended meaning through learned skills (see Chapter Four). These skills involve:

1) the recognition of clues embedded within words and actions, and 2) the decoding of their related meaning.

Carlson refers to similar ideas regarding such processing in performance. One area of specific discussion is the processing done by spectators as they decode and interpret semanticized and encoded stimuli. This, according to Carlson, is “the most neglected area of theatre semiotics and needs much greater attention” (500). He also refers the actor’s “duty” of discovering recognizable symbols of expression (230). This includes verbal and non-verbal elements of behavior and response in performance and their relationship to the decoding processes of both the audience and the actor.

Connections between these same skills and those addressed within the I LAUGH model exist in areas such as: 1) the observation of externalized social cues and clues, 2) the processing and deciphering of the perspectives of others, and 5) the understanding of humor and humorous responses (Figure 5).

Each of these areas have been previously identified as 1) included within social hidden curriculum, 2) not innately accessible to those with AS and 3) addressed within the work of social skills learning. Related skills can be learned and applied to the decoding of information on the social stage during social performance (Chapter Two). These same skills, identified by Carlson and addressed within the Felnagle method, can be developed by the actor and used in performance on the theatre stage (Figure 7).

Established and published methods of acting study which are designed to build strong vocational skills within the committed acting student were pursued for use in the research of such points within this thesis. These shall herein be termed as “serious”

methods. All of the NT methods analyzed were recognized as serious methods of training. The AS methods analyzed were primarily focused on 1) the stimulation of social interaction, 2) the opportunity to engage in a form of creative expression, and 3) child-friendly application; they took the form of an extra-curricular or after school activity as opposed to a serious method of vocational acting study as described by the above criteria. An established and published course of study, providing strong vocational training and designed to address the needs of the committed AS acting student, could not be found. This statement is not meant to infer that such programs do not exist. However, an exploration of numerous resources (including internet websites, theatrical and commercial book suppliers, distributors of materials related to theatrical programs designed for special needs individuals, and available library information) revealed no such documentation.

6.1 Recommendations for Additional Study

Information presented in Chapter Three defines the diagnosis of AS as a relatively recent phenomenon, occurring most often between the ages of eight and eleven. Therefore, an hypothesis regarding 1) the focus of AS acting programs on the above-mentioned demographic of young people and 2) possible future adaptation of such programs to include a wider age range of maturing AS individuals could be presented. Conclusions regarding this topic would require additional investigation.

Further study could also involve efforts to locate serious AS methods of acting study such as that mentioned above. Information gained from discovered resources could include 1) program structure, 2) skill emphasis, 3) pace of instruction, 4) potential for

cross-benefit to NT acting students and teachers, and 5) approaches to practical exercise and performance. If such programs were found, a cross-comparison with NT methods such as that undertaken within this study could also be completed as a continuation of discussion.

The research of this thesis should also be continued. Additional analysis can be done to determine which exercises produce the greatest and most consistent success in application. For example, if data exists for multiple exercises from various methods which address a similar skill objective related to the I LAUGH model, additional study could be done to identify which is the most effective.

The recommended methodology for such analysis would be that of human study, conducted with groups of AS and NT acting students. Such study could possibly identify which exercises are proven most effective within 1) AS acting study, 2) NT acting study, and 3) study involving combined groups of AS and NT students.

Joey Travolta has been referenced earlier in this paper as having experienced acting programs with children on the autistic spectrum. This has primarily occurred through his facility called “The Entertainment Experience.” Parents have driven over two hours to bring their children to his classes. Travolta acknowledges that “Parents reported seeing carry over of (practiced) skills into both the home and school environments.” However, he informs these same parents that “their child can be a brilliant writer, producer or director but if he cannot get along with the crew then nobody will want to hire him”(Wolf, x-xi). Travolta’s classes strive to teach children social skills related to such success.

The inclusion of researched skill objectives connected to those of the I LAUGH model within a program of acting study could help build the skills and benefits described by Travolta directly into the foundation of an actor's training. This possibility exists for both the AS and the NT actor; all could possibly benefit from increased social decoding skills, regardless of their current level of proficiency. Additional research can attempt to define some of the ways such a program might be structured to achieve such results.

The data also suggests another final area of possible future research. Programs involving some type of instruction in acting and performance currently exist as available and accessible within many communities. An opportunity therefore presents itself to expand the presence of theatre within such communities through the establishment of programs which incorporate elements of social skills learning.

The information and ideas within this thesis have been offered to encourage discussion regarding the structure of current programs of acting training. They may also prompt further investigation of potential cross-benefits that exist within NT and AS acting study. The research has also been presented as a potential catalyst for additional discussion regarding techniques of teaching which might increase connections to concepts of acting within the student. Members of the acting community could apply their expertise toward the incorporation of such techniques into existing programs, creating adapted or new approaches for acting study. One result could be additional encouragement and development of abilities within AS actors, providing future theatre audiences with the creative work of individuals who possess what Travolta referred to as the possibility of brilliance (xi).

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Appendix A: Observations

As an actor, a teacher, and a parent of a seventeen-year-old Asperger girl, the information gathered through this research has proved highly instructive. Since I now provide services to other families as an academic consultant to families with AS children, I often joke with my husband that our daughter's diagnosis prompted the receiving of our "unofficial AS Ph.D." Therefore, the information presented in this final note comes from such personal education and experience.

I have observed our daughter to be a highly visual learner. She acts all the time- she always has, as have most of the AS children she grew up with in social skills programs. This tendency toward acting originally took the form of a mimic, playing out lines and songs from favorite films. Many children enjoy this, but it was clear she had a different kind of affinity for it.

A great benefit of AS has been observed to be an incredible long-term memory. This ability compensates for a very poor short term memory. When personally connected and emotionally invested, her mind opens wide and then closes on information like a steel trap. She and I worked together for two years in an independent academic study program, frequently employing the use of acting and performance to form connections to concepts. This was done through multiple methods, including on-camera, voice-over, monologue and improvisational work. She not only retained the information (typically taught through written repetition and short-term memorization), but she still remembers much of it today. These acting-based techniques proved highly successful.

In addition to long term memory skills, another quality of benefit to her (and to other AS individuals) is an almost complete disregard for the censorship of others. Subtleties such as tone of voice, expression, and sarcasm often elude them, so they are not as obsessed as many of their peers over what people think of them. Therefore, they are not overly self-conscious. This can sometimes work to their detriment, however it is a priceless attribute for performance and enables risk-taking, experimentation, and unique and creative choices onstage. If found lacking in talent, they makes up for it in personal style. For example, when our daughter was confronted with her first drama class monologue in high school, she immediately jumped into the very creative choice of portraying all three of the witches in the famous cauldron scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. She had never performed Shakespeare before, which certainly made this an interesting choice. She had only excitement for the project, created a wonderful costume, and did a brilliant job. This story is shared to demonstrate that AS individuals who deal with attributes that hinder day-to-day navigation can turn these same attributes into golden keys to their rich imaginations, unlocking the acting instrument to produce performance gems.

Since the estimated number of individuals diagnosed with AS increases exponentially every year, I now find myself watching professional actors who possess a type of super-creative, out-of-the-box, completely unique and uninhibited quality. I then think of how the acting community would not be the same without them.

There are no serious acting programs known to exist for AS individuals. If there are, they are not widely known. It would be fair to say that most programs of acting

study are not designed with such hidden social and learning disabilities in mind, and this situation can result in blocks to the AS actor with great potential.

Therefore, additional research is suggested involving ways that the theatre community might prepare to take advantage of the increasing numbers of high-functioning individuals diagnosed with AS now moving through high schools, colleges and community programs. The theatre is a natural environment for their strengths and abilities. According to the results of the research herein, acting study provides a channel for these clever individuals to enter into a forum where the potential exists to provide unique contributions. In addition, the theatre community may enjoy cross-benefits by contributing to the efforts of therapists seeking to provide behavior and response training which exists in acting study-and in life-as the core of human connection and communication.