

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF

Disability Studies

Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association · Association Canadienne des Études sur l'Incapacité

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Hosted by The University of Waterloo

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Codes
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Codes

My students have codes
Special education codes
Colds, viral, pathological, easy to catch
Codes, more serious in their grim munificence
They linger long beyond school

When our daughter was little
My wife and I spoke in code
For her own protection
From what was too intense, too incomprehensible
As most parents do
We've stopped now that she's older and can decipher our codes
Our cat didn't "go the farm", he died; she was old enough to know almost everything
Now she speaks in code with her friends
Their interference thwarts our interference
And we're the baffled ones

Maybe special education codes are meant to protect too
Euphemistically muting diagnoses
Problem is colleges don't speak these codes
If our students want the same accommodations there
They can't say they were *coded*
They have to learn to call themselves *disabled*
We call this self-advocacy

Some students with 54 codes
Have trouble with printed codes we take for granted
A computer programming code can be made to have machines read to them
Reading out loud like the ancients did
The first silent reader a witch
But now they say most readers read well silently
Except for some code 54s
Whose brains over-recruit for visual tasks
They see so damn well, even in 3 dimensions, that
When silently reading they lack synapses to hear the words in their... h e a d s
Or so the research says
Code 42s have trouble with the code of conduct
And the code of conduct has trouble with them
Like musicians the conductor can't get to play in time
Like they don't conduct electricity or conduct it too much

A code 44, severely medically disabled, could have autism, troubles with social codes
Or leukemia, thousands of tiny gene coding errors we're only starting to crack

An IQ test has a coding task
Which means copying, which you're not supposed to do in school,
Except off the blackboard
Which is a sign of intelligence

From what I'm told (thanks mom)
If they had them back in the day
I would have had a code in school too
I was, apparently, so clumsy that I was tested and found wanting
In visual motor integration
The doctor called it mild brain damage
Then, as mom cried, he shrugged and said maybe I'd outgrow the worst
I do remember I couldn't write neatly, copy off the board, count little dots, play sports very well
These were valued codes in school and I wasn't very popular
But sometimes my mom recopied my stories for me and teachers read them to the class

And no one could believe it
And I got bigger, not much but enough
And I learned I was better at contact sports

With their own codes of violence

So it all sort of worked out but not before I got the feeling
That I was the only one in the room who didn't know the code
Which has never quite left me
But maybe feeling this way could be coded as normal
Would I have been better off if there were codes when I was a kid?
That's a code I'll never crack

Last year the Alberta government was going to get rid of codes
Action on Inclusion – the new black, the new sheriff in town, the latest thing,
The going concern in special education
Said codes, despite the good intentions,
Were too clinical, too medical, too negative and exclusionary
Codes' days were numbered
Suddenly, Action on Inclusion is dead
And the codes are back, with a vengeance, their cancellation cancelled,
Termination terminated, bells unring
Codes unbroken