

The Case of Tito and Soma Mukhopadhyay: Factitious Heroism by Proxy, Factitious Heroism, and Revealing the Deception Thereof for the Future of Autism Treatment

Dan Howitt

Harvard University (Cambridge, Massachusetts, the United States of America)

E-mail: dth055@g.harvard.edu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1027-8917>

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I reveal the masterful multifaceted communicative fraud that Soma Mukhopadhyay has engaged in with her profoundly autistic son Tito since 2000 on an array of major television programs, and in the presence of an array of scientists, physicians, and autism organization leaders who studied them, and which has not been observed by anyone else. Soma has deceived the public that her son has a normal if not advanced neurology and mind, and that all profoundly autistic persons may as well. She devised a variation of the treatment method and educational method that is referred to as Facilitated Communication, and refers to her method as the Rapid Prompting Method. By my having revealed the intricacy of the communicative fraud that she engages in with Tito, (a) the past, current, and future treatment methods and educational methods for autistic persons may be assessed more carefully by scientists, physicians, journalists, autism organization leaders, and others, and (b) the ways that autistic persons are conceived of may be proceeded with more carefully. I do not intend for my observational work, and ensuing conceptual work, to demonstrate to others that the particular fraud that Soma engages should be monitored for, but rather. that claims of, and demonstrations of, treatment methods and educational methods for autism be acutely visually and auditorily observed, such that the innumerable kinds of fraud that may be occurring are observed. The assessment of treatment methods and educational methods for autism with preexisting methodologies will likely result, as it did of Tito and Soma, in highly surreptitious fraud being overlooked, and perpetuated; and this entails the proliferation of mass deception.

Keywords: Tito Mukhopadhyay, Soma Mukhopadhyay, Factitious Heroism By Proxy, Factitious Heroism, Facilitated Communication, Rapid Prompting Method, Autism

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Introduction

1

None of the innumerable millions of people since 2000 who have observed the profoundly autistic man Tito Mukhopadhyay and his mother Soma Mukhopadhyay on CNN, PBS, BBC, Good Morning America, and Closer To Truth, and none of the array of scientists, physicians, autism organizations, and journalists who studied them, observed the brilliant, multifaceted, communicative fraud that Soma engages in with Tito.

Tito, since he was eleven years old in 2000, to the present, has been presented by Soma on the aforementioned television programs, and via other forms of media and literature, as being able to write-communicate and type-communicate not only normally, but at an advanced level, and on his own accord – that is, from an independent content of his mind – with the assistance of the Facilitated Communication method that she treats him with, which she refers to as the “Rapid Prompting Method.”¹

In this article, I provide my visual observations and auditory observations of the interactions of Tito and Soma that have not been observed from 2000 to the present by innumerable millions of people, including the vast array of scientists, physicians, journalists, autism organization leaders, and others, who studied them. I concurrently adduce various novel concepts in order to characterize my observations.

My observations, and concurrent conceptualization, demonstrate the presence of what I refer to as “Factitious Heroism By Proxy,” and Factitious Heroism.²

For context: (a) I demonstrated that none of the innumerable millions of people who observed the television presentations of the profoundly autistic woman Carly Fleischmann between 2008-2018 observed the brilliant communicative fraud that her speech-therapist Howard Dalal engaged in with her³; (b) I uncovered an array of instances of brilliant conceptual fraud (which I refer to as “dissociative fraud”) of fundamental mathematics and fundamental physics⁴; and (c) I observed a fundamental feature of the universe that has not been correctly observed, nor conceived of, by humanity to the present.⁵

2

The Harvard Educational Review in 1990 published an article of Douglas Biklen that presents the 1970’s clinical, communicative method of Rosemary Crossley of Australia to the United States, namely what is referred to as “Facilitated Communication”; and Biklen, a professor at Syracuse University in the United States, is considered to be the first person to do so; and Crossley, a clinician and educator in Australia, is considered to be the founder of the method.⁶

Biklen states:

Jonathan Solaris cannot speak. David Armbruster can say a few words, usually unintelligible. (...) I was not surprised by how either of them appeared. Theirs were the

¹ See (Terrill, 2000; Blakeslee, 2002).

² See (Feldman, 2018: 100-103; Feldman, 2004: 102, 117).

³ See (Howitt, November 2021, forthcoming).

⁴ See (Howitt, 2021; 2021a).

⁵ See (Howitt, 2021; 2021a).

⁶ See (Biklen, 1990; Autism Parenting Magazine, 2021).

behaviors of autism. But what I did not anticipate was that their communication with me would assault my assumptions about autism and ultimately yield important lessons for education (Biklen, 1990: 291).

In 1995 in the United States, the following article described the method, delineated its history, and argued that it is illegitimate.⁷

Facilitated communication (FC) ... a teaching-treatment technique ... is a method of assisting people with severe developmental disabilities to communicate.

(...) this technique, which involves providing physical support to people with disabilities as they type out messages on a keyboard or letterboard, appears to result in unexpected literacy and to disclose normative or superior intellectual skills among people with lifelong histories of severe developmental delay.

Controlled research using single and double blind procedures in the laboratory and natural settings with a range of clinical populations with which FC is used has determined that, not only are the people with disabilities unable to respond accurately to label or describe stimuli unseen by their assistants, but that the responses are controlled by the assistants.

In 2018 in England, the following article described the method, delineated the history of scientific studies of the method, and argued that it is illegitimate.⁸

Facilitated communication (FC) (...) is a technique that involves a person with a disability pointing to letters, pictures, or objects on a keyboard or on a communication board, typically with physical support from a “facilitator.” The physical support of FC usually occurs on the hand, wrist, elbow, or shoulder (Biklen, Winston Morton, Gold, Berrigan, & Swaminathan, 1992) but can also occur on other parts of the body. (2)

... there are no new studies on authorship and, therefore, no evidence that FC is a valid form of communication for individuals with severe communication disabilities. Given that facilitator control has been documented repeatedly and replicated by several different research teams across continents over the last 26 years, it is not surprising to see that there are no additional studies addressing the question of authorship in FC. What is noteworthy, however, is that there are also no studies that demonstrate that the individuals with disabilities are the authors of the messages generated with FC. (8)

Notwithstanding the aforementioned critical articles, and the following, aforementioned statement,

not only are the people with disabilities unable to respond accurately to label or describe stimuli unseen by their assistants, but (...) the responses are controlled by the assistants.

⁷ See (Jacobson, 1995).

⁸ See (Hemsley, 2018).

there apparently are no articles that provide precise descriptions of how the assistants (speech therapists, etc.) control the communication of the disabled persons. While the articles deduce that the assistants accomplish this via

physical support (...) on the hand, wrist, elbow, or shoulder (...) [and] on other parts of the body.

there apparently are no studies that provide analyses of videos of assistants working with their clients, and descriptions of when in the videos the assistants engage in this communicative fraud, and precisely how. And this is perhaps why, despite the findings of the critical articles, the aforementioned 2018 article provides leeway for the clinical procession of Facilitated Communication by emphasizing that wherever the method proceeds, there should be a scientific examination of the authorship of the communications of the disabled persons who are undergoing the method:

With substantial scientific evidence demonstrating the influence of facilitators over messages produced using FC, it is ethically and scientifically imperative to empirically test authorship of messages produced using FC and analyzing FC message data without authorship testing reduces the credibility of findings. (6)

However, if precisely how

the responses (...) [of] the people with disabilities are controlled by the assistants

were demonstrated, perhaps it would be concluded that there is no need for additional scientific examination of the various employments of the method, nor variations of the method, such as the aforementioned Rapid Prompting Method.

Moreover, the aforementioned is perhaps why Facilitated Communication and the Rapid Prompting Method are considered to be significantly beneficial by a considerable extent of people in the US, and likely worldwide: The aforementioned Autism Parenting Magazine, despite discussing the array of negative aspects of Facilitated Communication, also discusses an array of positive aspects of it, and does not reject it⁹; the following two major US media articles of 2016 and 2018 clearly indicate that Facilitated Communication is readily employed by a significant extent of people;¹⁰ and the following major autism media article of 2020 states the following about the Rapid Prompting Method:¹¹

Despite rapid prompting's popularity, no rigorous scientific studies show that the method works. There is no empirical support for the idea that it spurs academic progress or that its students express their own thoughts.

But the lack of proof has not dissuaded many parents. Mukhopadhyay conducts up to 11 sessions a day and holds workshops around the world several times a year. In Austin, she sees her clients at the offices of a nonprofit called Helping Autism through Learning

⁹ See (Autism Parenting Magazine, 2021).

¹⁰ See (Shermer, 2016; Salzberg, 2018).

¹¹ See (Borrell, 2020).

and Outreach (HALO), founded for her programs in 2002. Four-day HALO camps cost \$850, and training sessions for parents and providers are \$950. HALO sells Mukhopadhyay's books and a variety of letter boards. It also has lent its trademarked seal of approval to 10 independent providers in the United States, the United Kingdom and Mexico. Mukhopadhyay draws a salary of more than \$150,000 per year, according to tax filings. And HALO has competitors, such as the Growing Kids Therapy Center in Herndon, Virginia, which provides training called Spelling to Communicate that also focuses on motor skills and encourages autistic people to use a letter board to communicate.

Parents have also tried to introduce the method into U.S. special-education classrooms. According to a 2018 study, 17 percent of 535 special educators surveyed in Tennessee used the rapid prompting method with their students every day – a frequency on par with their use of such evidence-based practices as pivotal response treatment and the picture-exchange communication system.

Regarding what the Rapid Prompting Method is:¹²

Rapid prompting appears straightforward: A teacher holds up an alphabet board or a choice of two words on scraps of paper and then verbally or physically prompts an autistic person to point to individual letters or to words. The teacher might, for instance, tell the student that the sky is blue and then ask what color the sky is. Although teachers try to avoid moving the student's hand directly, they may nudge an elbow or tap a shoulder.

Moreover, the employment of the method can be observed in the extensive television coverage that I provide and discuss later in this article.

The Rapid Prompting Method began in the United States in 2001:¹³

The Cure Autism Now Foundation introduced RPM to the USA in 2001 (<http://www.halo-soma.org>). (...) In 2001, the Cure Autism Now Foundation offered Mukhopadhyay a fellowship to implement her teaching method at a school in Los Angeles, working with nine children with ASD.

Aside, Portia Iversen is who co-founded Cure Autism Now (which later became Autism Speaks); and I discuss her later in this article in the context of my discussion about the PBS Closer To Truth television presentation in 2003 of Tito and Soma, of which she was an interviewee and participant. Moreover, regarding the involvement of Iversen and Cure Autism Now with the Rapid Prompting Method¹⁴:

In the early 2000s, the media billed Tito as a miracle. Mukhopadhyay first brought him to the U.S. in July 2001 with the support of Cure Autism Now, a nonprofit that later became part of *Autism Speaks*. The organization's co-founder, Portia Iversen,

¹² See (Borrell, 2020).

¹³ See (Schlosser, 2018).

¹⁴ See (Borrell, 2020).

wanted Mukhopadhyay to work with her own son, Dov. Within months of her arrival in the U.S., Mukhopadhyay was working with other parents, and Iversen's publicity machine attracted the interest of scientists. "Autism experts are studying him, amazed to discover, for what they say is the first time, a severely autistic person who can explain his disorder," journalist Sandra Blakeslee wrote in a 2002 article about Tito in *The New York Times*.

Regarding discussions about, and criticisms of, the Rapid Prompting Method:¹⁵

FC [Facilitated Communication] and RPM [Rapid Prompting Method] are strikingly similar in terms of claims of miraculous hidden communication and intelligence evident only during facilitator-dependent communication. (...) RPM may create an illusion similar to FC by fostering indefinite prompt dependency. (47)

RPM facilitators generate and subsequently prompt participants to convey messages that may not represent the individual's genuine desires, thoughts, or emotions. (45)

Given the similarities between RPM and FC, it seems very likely that the messages are (unintentionally and subconsciously) authored by the RPM facilitator (Boynton, 2012; Todd, 2012; Tostanoski et al., 2014; von Tetzchner 2012). (46)

(...) indefinite prompt dependency is entirely incompatible with genuine independent skill leaning – because the aid is actually making the responses and using the participant as a mechanism of expression. (...) prompt dependency precludes independence by rendering an individual facilitator-dependent. It is possible that no actual academic or communicative skills are taught to participants in RPM. Instead, participants may only learn how to better follow subtle, rhythmic, and frequent prompts. The danger, of course, is that an untrained observer might not be able to readily recognize such subtle prompts and may mistakenly assume that prompted responses accurately reflect the true preferences, academic abilities, and emotions of the individual. Such an outcome would make RPM equally as dangerous and inhuman as facilitated communication (FC), a thoroughly debunked method that creates a powerful illusion that seems notably simpler to RPM (Todd, 2013; Tostanoski et al., 2014; Travers, Tincani, & Lang, in press). (46)

Notwithstanding, and as I discussed of Facilitated Communication, what in my opinion explains the persistent prevalence of the Rapid Prompting Method is the apparent absence of analyses of videos of employments of the method; and this would explain why the authors of the aforementioned study state the following; and via italics I add emphasis to the words that demonstrate that the authors, as is the case of the authors of the critical studies on Facilitated Communication, do not, and cannot, argue that there is proof of communicative fraud:

It is *possible* that no actual academic or communicative skills are taught to participants in RPM. Instead, participants *may* only learn how to better follow subtle, rhythmic, and frequent prompts.

¹⁵ See (Lang et al., 2014).

While, of course, there is an absence of definitive proof of the effectiveness of the two methods, this, of course, is immensely different than the presence of definitive proof of fraud.

The following, aforementioned position of the aforementioned authors demonstrates, I believe, that not only has no one observed communicative fraud occur during the employment of the Rapid Prompting Method, but that, perhaps due to the unsaid belief that it is impossible to do so, there is not even the goal to do so: The authors believe that what is crucial is observing the prompts that occur, and the prompted responses, and that when the prompts are not observed, observers may mistakenly observe the communications of the disabled persons to be from an independent content of their minds.

The danger, of course, is that an untrained observer might not be able to readily recognize such subtle prompts and may mistakenly assume that prompted responses accurately reflect the true preferences, academic abilities, and emotions of the individual.

However, as is stated above:¹⁶

Rapid prompting appears straightforward: A teacher holds up an alphabet board or a choice of two words on scraps of paper and then verbally or physically prompts an autistic person to point to individual letters or to words.

The prompts are observational self-evident, as are the prompted responses, as can be observed in the videos that I provide of the extensive television coverage of the employment of the method. What is not only not observationally self-evident, but of the near observational impossibility of masterful practical magic, is the multitude of variations of novel, highly surreptitious, multifaceted communicative fraud that Soma engages in with Tito, even in the presence of world-renowned physicians, scientists, professors, and journalists, and the founder of the most important autism organization in the United States, who herself has a profoundly autistic child. Moreover, this has occurred in the presence of, via television, what I would estimate to be fifty to one-hundred million or more people world-wide over twenty-one years and ongoing. None of the above persons observed any of the communicative fraud. Two of the most elite physicians and scientists in history – Oliver Sacks¹⁷ and Michael Merzenich¹⁸ – studied Tito and Soma extensively, and concluded that Tito has a normal, if not advanced, brain and mind, and that he communicates from an independent content of his mind. Sacks is quoted on the back-cover of a book that is purported to be written by Tito as stating the following:¹⁹

(...) it has usually been assumed that deeply autistic people are scarcely capable of introspection or deep thought, let alone of poetic or metaphoric leaps of the imagination – or, if they are, that they are incapable of communicating these thoughts to us. Tito gives the lie to all these assumptions, and forces us to reconsider the condition of the deeply autistic.

Merzenich is quoted on that back-cover as stated the following²⁰:

¹⁶ See (Borrell, 2020).

¹⁷ See (Neuman, 2015).

¹⁸ See (Farley, 2016; Farley, 2015).

¹⁹ See (Mukhopadhyay, 2011).

²⁰ See (Mukhopadhyay, 2011: back cover).

Tito is not only authentic, but also miraculous. (...) [He] is a beautiful example of the possible.

The medium of my experimental study is the array of preexisting, extensive television coverage of Tito and Soma engaged in the Rapid Prompting Method, and a journal-article in which a purported email-conversation between the author and Tito is provided; and the context of my study is the array of preexisting literature and media on Tito and Soma, the Rapid Prompting Method, and Facilitated Communication.

The above method of experimentation allows all persons to visually and auditorily observe what I visually and auditorily observed.

Profound autism is, of course, an extraordinarily devastating neurological condition, which moreover, of course, entails devastating psychological effects on autistic persons; and the families and others who involved with autistic persons encounter significant difficulties. Moreover, the social, political, and economic structures of countries throughout the world are of course intensely impacted by the prevalence of profound autism, as well as lesser degrees of autism. The intractability of the condition is surely the basis for the devising of, and proliferation of, Facilitated Communication and the Rapid Prompting Method. However, as I conveyed above, significant structural resources have been, and continue to be, distributed to the practitioners of the methods; and since the methods are, as I have shown of two employments of the methods, not only fraudulent, but masterfully so, an immense extent of people worldwide are both being deceived, deceiving themselves, and deceiving others; and the deception is of profoundly autistic persons being improved by the methods, and of the very concept of profound autism. And due to the masterfully deceptive practitioners, even world-renowned autism organizations, scientists, physicians, journalists, and others, have unknowingly aided the structural proliferation of the methods, and the reconception of the profoundly autistic.

Now that the brilliant practical magic of the founder of the Rapid Prompting Method has been observed, and can now be observed by all persons, perhaps modifications of the aforementioned societal structures might occur, and perhaps the elating widespread deception will discontinue, for better or worse; but perhaps it is better to endure the despair of intractability than relish the elation of deception.

60 Minutes, 2003²¹

In 2003 on 60 Minutes, at **0:11 – 0:42**, the aforementioned Merzenich is interviewed about Tito, and states,

I was surprised when I – certainly surprised when I met him – to see the very compelling evidence that he was for real.

The narrator states that Merzenich had been studying Tito for nearly a year, and that Merzenich says that Tito is not only authentic, but miraculous.

Merzenich then states,

²¹ See (Mabrey, 2003).

There can be little question in the writing behavior in Tito that he's providing the answers and that the answers are coming from his brain.

However, and to begin:

1:54 – 2:03: Soma is with Tito, away from the interviewer, assisting him with his handwriting. Tito writes a word, she takes the pencil away from him, she erases the word, while she is erasing the word she states "vegetable", she gives him back the pencil, he begins to write again, and she states "vegetable" again. She is then shown with the pencil in her hand again, and erasing the word again; and as she is erasing, she states, "No one will be able to read that." Then, that excerpt of the filming stops, and another excerpt is shown.

At **2:55**, the interviewer is present, and Tito and Soma are sitting with her in a different area. The interviewer asks him a question, and he writes, "I would have been a vegetable." As I will further explain below, it is clear that Soma extensively prepares Tito on what to write.

3:04: As I explain further in my below section on the 2003 PBS Closer To Truth television episode, the following is the case about Tito's writing of "I would have been a vegetable." Tito appears to start each sentence with "I" on his own accord. Soma then reads each word that he writes, and verbally adds a letter at the end of each word; and the letters cue Tito on what to write for the next word. For the above sentence, she states "I-w," "would-h," "have-b," "a-v." He writes, "I would have been a vegetable." Aside, it is unclear whether she said "a-v" before he wrote "a," which would have made saying "been-a" not necessary.

3:34 – 4:02: The interviewer states,

He has written hundreds of poems, including this one, which we watched him write from beginning to end.

However, at **3:57 – 4:01**, he is shown typing with one finger. They then show the 12 line poem. Regarding whether they carefully watched him write – that is, whether they watched each key that he typed, and observed what appeared on the screen – I will provide the following:

PBS, Closer To Truth, 2003²²

0:40 – 0:58: The creator and host of Closer To Truth, Robert Kuhn, talks to Tito and then asks him a question. When Kuhn is finished with his question, Soma begins tapping on Tito's right shoulder with her right hand's fingers, at which time Tito, at **0:59**, begins to write. He writes, "I get." First, as is seen on the piece of paper on which he is writing, he begins his above sentence also with "I get", and the top sentence with "I can get". As was discussed above, the "get" and "can" were surely cued by Soma by her verbally stating "I-g" and "I-c" after Tito wrote "I". Second, as he is finishing the "et" of "get," Soma states "I get a-f." He then begins and finishes writing "flattered". As I further discuss below, Soma, by extending her vocalization of a word that Tito writes with the first letter of another word, she is queuing him on which word to write next by stimulating his memory on what she previously prepared him to write upon hearing the first letter of the other word.

2:17: Portia Iversen asks Tito a question. Tito writes "I," Soma quickly says "I," Tito writes "just," and Soma quickly says "just-n." The next word that Tito writes, immediately after he hears the "n" of "just-n," is "need." Soma then says "need-t," and Tito writes "to." Both the

²² See (Kuhn, 2003).

“n” and “t” are quickly but sharply voiced. The filming then stops, and then resumes as Tito is writing the last word of the sentence. Soma is queuing Tito on what he should write for the next word by including the first letter, of what she has prepared him to write for the next word, as the last letter of the word that she verbally calls out. (Aside, for the above first word “I,” Soma says “I-s”, which was likely done in order to cue him to write a word that begins with “s” for the next word).

For the question that Iversen asked, there likely are many answers that Tito could have written. Since he proceeded with “just” after “I”, Soma likely adjusted the kind of answer that she wanted him to produce. Aside, most people likely overlook the above because they attribute it to her Indian accent: While Americans et al. do not state, for example, “just-n” for “just,” and “need-t” for “need,” most people, upon hearing her intense Indian accent, likely think that this anomaly is due to her accent.

4:16: The filming begins with Soma saying “have-t”; and Tito then writes “to.” Soma then says “to-w,” and Tito writes “wait.” Soma then says “wait-l,” and Tito writes “long.” Soma then reads the sentence, “I do not have to wait long.”

8:18: Soma begins with saying what Tito wrote. He writes “I”, and Soma says “I-c”; and you can moreover see how she pronounces the “c” with her mouth. Tito then writes “could not.” Soma then says “couldn’t-n”; and Tito then writes something like “not”. Soma then says “not-e”; and the filming of that instance of him writing stops, and Soma does not read the sentence that he wrote.

12:28: Soma says “it-c”, “can-b”, then-d”, for Tito’s writing of “It can become bigger than the door”. It is difficult to hear the entirety of what she says; and what Tito actually wrote is not shown. Moreover, I think that she calls out “because” rather than “bigger”, as Tito is writing, and then verbally corrected it in her final reading of the sentence. Soma cues “can”, “become”, and “door”, and then likely adds and corrects some of the words in between, namely “bigger” for “because”, and “the” prior to “door.”

25:17: When Soma reads a sentence that is already written by Tito, she does not say any post-word letters.

3:51 – 4:50: Before Kuhn asks him a particular question, and while the group is having a discussion, Soma begins to state some words, and Tito concurrently is writing. At the same time that Kuhn finishes asking a brief question, Tito is finished with the core of his answer. Tito then continues to write something that is completely separate from Kuhn’s question. I believe that Tito knew what to write before Kuhn asked him the question – that is, that Soma prepared him for the answer. Tito then continued to write something that was separate from Kuhn’s question, likely due to being confused about what to write at what time. Aside, no one was observing, for the above, the coordination between Soma speaking and Tito writing. It is possible that she stimulates him, via his memory, to provide X answer by stating one or a few words to him at the outset, which seems to be the case for the above. Moreover, as he was writing, she could have been stating words before he wrote them. For the above, the camera was not filming his writing.

5:23: Kuhn asks, “Does he read?” He has never been shown to read to an even extremely minimal degree, and, it is clear that he cannot read his own writing. He has never replicated what he just wrote, and has never been publicly asked to replicate what he just wrote.

7:42: Soma says that he sometimes edits his writing. She has never publicly demonstrated that he does this. He has had significant television coverage, and other kinds of public coverage. This episode of Kuhn’s program was in 2003, which is when Soma and Iversen

worked together. In 17 years, no editing has been demonstrated. **7:56**, Soma states that he “corrects himself, backspaces, opens his files.” This has never been demonstrated.

8:13: Iversen begins to ask Tito a question, and when she is about half way through her question, Tito begins to write. Her question is entirely unclear half way through, and it is necessary to wait until she is finished in order to understand what she asked. As for his answer, this is uncertain: Soma states the three-word answer, and I believe that it is something like “I could not.”

10:11: At the instant that Kuhn begins to ask Tito, “Tito how do you see color?”, Soma presses a key on the computer. I believe that the key that she pressed prepares a prearranged computer program to proceed upon the next key-strike – that is, her key-strike puts the prearranged program in ready-mode; and then the program proceeds upon the next key-strike. In this case, the program is a prearranged automated verbal statement, namely “Shapes come first and then color.” Upon Tito’s first key-strike, the prosody of the automated verbal statement begins, and is of a consistent prosody. Tito’s second key-strike is a miss-strike, as he lightly touches three keys in between each other. The camera then does not show any more typing until his last key-strike. For his last key-strike, the automated voice states “color” (the last word of the above statement) before he makes the key-strike; and after he makes the key-strike, there is no automated voice.

In addition to the above, while it appears that he makes at least 3 key-strikes, of the 6 that would be needed for the 6 word sentence, the keys that he strikes are letter-keys, not word-keys: On the keyboard of 26 letters, there are no keys which, when pressed, result in the words “Shapes,” “come,” “first,” “and,” “then,” “color.” That is, there are no keys that are devoted to these particular words. Moreover, there are no typed-communication programs that use the 26 letters in this way; and such programs would, in any case, be useless.

In addition to the above, Soma, while the automated voice is proceeding, verbally reports the first 4 words of the above statement in the following manner.

Computer: “Shape”

Soma immediately thereafter: “Shape”

Computer: “Come, First”

Soma immediately thereafter, and rapidly: “Shape-Come-First”

Computer: “And”

Soma simultaneously: “And”

Soma is reading the words from the screen. While this is not relevant to the above, I believe that she does this as a distraction, namely to try to distract observers away from fully attending to the keys that Tito is pressing, and from the relation between the automated voice’s prosody and the keys that Tito presses. Moreover, I believe that she, in doing this, is trying to provide legitimacy to the relation between Tito’s key-strikes and the automated voice: She is trying to convey that since she is reading the words on the screen, she is simply reading what the computer program is also reading, namely Tito’s key-strikes. Aside, there is no need for Soma to say anything, at any time, during Tito’s typing and the automated voice’s speech. There is also no need for Soma to verbally state each word that Tito writes with his pencil. I believe that she does both of these for the above distractive purpose, and legitimacy purpose.

10:38: While the group is having a discussion, the camera shows Tito in the process of writing with his pencil, and Soma stating several words during this time, as she watches him

writing. (However, there is no audio of her voice, and only her mouth can be seen forming words). At **10:45**, Soma states “door” and then taps 5 times total with her right index finger on the clipboard holding the piece of paper on which Tito is writing. Tito then writes the last word of that statement, which is “door.” Soma then states what he wrote, “Only after I see the door”; and then she adds, “I see the room,” “Only after I see the door.” It is unclear whether “I see the room” is what she is adding to the discussion *about* Tito’s statement “Only after I see the door,” or whether Tito also wrote this during that time-period. Regardless, it is clear that she verbally instructed him to write “door.” And again, she should not be verbally stating anything, at any time. Aside, it is fine if she wants to ensure that he has a pencil in his hand, and if she asks him to write, and if she touches the paper in order to further direct him to write, and even if she directs him back to his chair if he gets up from it, but she should not be verbally involved at any time; and care should be taken by observers in order to ensure that she is not pointing to anything in particular, such as particular keyboard keys, and particular words that may be pre-written on the paper or screen.

In addition to the above apparent purposes of her verbal involvement, there is now proof that she verbally instructs him on what to write. Moreover, as is shown in the above 60 Minutes segment, there is proof that she extensively prepares him on what to write.

12:25: Soma abruptly states, “I can see a point” and gives Tito his pencil; and then he apparently writes, “It can become bigger than the door.” Again, Soma began a process without notifying anyone of it. In this instance, I believe that her stating to Tito “I can see a point,” signifies to him that it is time to write, “It can become bigger than the door.”

Aside, in the various television coverage from 2003 to the present, Tito provides the same brief statements, or variations thereof.

Also aside, autistic author Donna Williams of Australia in 1992, 1994, and 1998 was one of the first people, and perhaps the first person, to provide such statements.²³ All of the statements, which I argue that Soma provides for Tito, are usurped from Williams, both directly, and in slight variations, in order to give the appearance of novelty. Williams is well known for describing what she calls “fragmented vision” and for describing the disintegration of her sensory experience.

17:09 – 17:42, and 21:14 – 21:30: Tito is shown in the process of writing, and Soma is shown speaking to him at times.

25:17: Soma interrupts Dr. Eric Courchesne, and begins to read from the piece of paper; and Tito is now several feet away. Since Tito was away from the paper, there was no need for Soma to interrupt Eric. She reads from the paper, “That it will lead to the better kinds of treatment.” As was reported by 60 Minutes in 2003,²⁴ Tito does not write on his own accord:

He cannot pick up the pad and pencil to write without his mother’s constant prodding and urging.

It is clear that Soma initiated his writing of that statement, and either verbally guided him while the camera was filming elsewhere, or stimulated Tito in some way to produce a statement that he was previously prepared to write. Aside, and as is especially shown in the below PBS video of 14 years later, it clearly appears that there are words which, when spoken to Tito, stimulate his memory of previously taught statements: As is the case when Kuhn and Iversen asked Tito

²³ See (Williams, 1992; 1994; 1998).

²⁴ See (Mabrey, 2003).

questions, he clearly appears to respond to a particular word, and begins typing or writing after hearing the word, despite that the question has not been fully expressed, and despite that the sense of the question has therefore not even partially been conveyed. I believe that Soma has taught him that certain words should be followed with certain written/typed statements; and this would explain why it is not necessary for him to listen to the entire question, and instead only approximately half of it; and in the below video, he sometimes begins typing after hearing only 1-2 words of a question.

PBS, 2017²⁵

0:02: The interviewer asks Tito a question. At **0:09**, just after he begins typing (he types 4 letters), shown at the top of his computer screen is a pre-typed statement, namely, “about my sensory perception.” I also believe that the first word of his own statement below it, namely, “My,” was pre-typed, since it was present despite that he had typed only 4 letters, namely, “sens.” Clearly the pre-typed statement is there as a cue to Tito for what he should type: He clearly is taught to identify the appearance of the above phrase as meaning that he should proceed with X answer, which he typed from the extensive preparatory instruction that Soma provided to him.

0:59: The interviewer begins to ask him a question, namely, “Is there one sense that is more powerful than others?”; and when the interviewer reaches “sense,” Tito lowers his arms and hands and begins typing. I believe the word “sense” cued him to write a prepared answer: An answer that Soma previously taught him to write.

1:27: Tito is shown typing, he then briefly hesitates, the interviewer asks, “What does sensory overload feel like to you?”, he continues to type after she says “like” and does 3 key-strikes. Soma then reads an approximate 28 word statement from the screen. While it is likely that there was a break in the filming at the time (**1:36**) when Soma picked up the computer to read the screen, it is still apparent that Tito was writing his answer even prior to the question being asked; and this was likely because there was a cue-topic at the top of the screen, written by Soma, which Tito was already instructed on how to answer.

2:17, The interviewer asks Tito, “What helps calm your sensory system?” At **2:21**, it appears that a portion of the filming was excised, and that it resumes from a slightly different angle. Tito likely had hesitated to respond.

Disabilities Studies Quarterly, 2010²⁶

Tito’s responses in the email-interview with Professor Ralph Savarese are in diametric contrast to the statements of his during the above television interviews. In the television interviews, Tito’s responses are entirely of the nature of soliloquy or monologue, whereas in his email interview with Savarese, his responses are entirely of the nature of dialogue. I believe that this further demonstrates that Tito’s in-person written communication is the result of Soma’s aforementioned interventional conduct, and that Soma is who emailed with Savarese. For example:

T.M. Who knows from where I learnt it? But one thing is for sure: I was exposed to poems very early on in my life. Mother recites, and used to recite, poems in Bengali,

²⁵ See (PBS, 2017).

²⁶ See (Savarese, 2010).

Hindi and English languages. I by-hearted most of them because I appreciated the sound pattern. Maybe I felt that my words would sound something like that. Or maybe I did it unintentionally without any kind of care. But you noticed it and asked me because you appreciated it. Thank you.

T.M. In one of my yet to be published works (in fact, it is a book about my social experiments), there is a character who is a flying, invisible kangaroo that never looks straight, only cross-eyed. When they did the interview on CNN, I was writing this piece. The whole world looked like a field to me as would be seen through the eyes of that flying, invisible kangaroo that never looks straight, only cross-eyed. The kangaroo could separate this from that – the specifics from general, the colors from shapes, properties from labels – and giggle at all the confusion that could happen after that!

T.M. I have described it in my book *How Can I Talk if My Lips Don't Move?* However, since you ask it again, I may say this about my processing – it may make me disassociate myself from the totality of the situation and select one aspect of it. After that, I may be completely within a labyrinth with my overindulgence or overassociation in that single aspect of the environment that has multiple aspects, making me ignore the other parts of the situation. Does it link to poetry? I do not know.

Conclusion

At **5:17 – 5:24**, the following is stated in the aforementioned 60 Minutes presentation.

If Tito is a miracle of autism, the miracle worker is his mother Soma ...²⁷

The statement continues with,

“... Soma, who gave up a career in chemistry to devote her life to teaching her son – even though doctors in India said he would never be able to learn.”

Soma desires to publicly portray Tito as a miracle, and to publicly portray herself as a miracle worker; and in order to accomplish this, she engages in, and continues to engage in, the novel, highly surreptitious, multifaceted, communicative fraud that I revealed, and which has evaded the tens of millions and perhaps hundreds of millions of viewers of them over the last approximate twenty-one years, including the vast array of scientists, physicians, other clinicians, journalists, autism organization leaders, etc., who studied them.²⁸ In so doing, Soma, with regard to Tito, engages in Factitious Heroism By Proxy, as she, via her fraud, portrays him as accomplishing something (that is, as being a “miracle”) in order that he is admired by other people, and in order that she encounters immense conceptual gratification and emotional gratification. Moreover, Soma engages in Factitious Heroism, as she portrays herself as being the hero (that is, the “miracle worker”) of the accomplishment that she presents Tito as having accomplished.

A corollary to the above Factitious Disorders is the following, as the aforementioned Dr. Feldman states:

²⁷ See (Mabrey, 2003).

²⁸ See (Merzenich, et al., 2008).

(...) false heroes accept their ill-garnered accolades, often with mock humility.”²⁹

In the 2007 New York Times review of the aforementioned Iversen’s book, *Strange Son: Two Mothers, Two Sons, and the Quest to Unlock the Hidden World of Autism* (about which the two mothers are Iversen and Soma, and the two sons are Iversen’s son Dov, and Tito), a quote from Iversen’s book³⁰ where she quotes Tito is provided.

“Men and women are puzzled by everything I do,” Tito wrote. “My parents and those who love me are embarrassed and worried. Doctors use different terminologies to describe me. I just wonder.”³¹

This is what I refer to as “mock humility by proxy”: Tito is not engaging in mock humility, but rather Soma is, via her communicative fraud with Tito, whether she is engaging in interactive communicative fraud with him, or writing for him.

In 2003 on Good Morning America, during an episode of Dr. Tim Johnson’s presentations, Johnson states the following³²:

Tito’s poetry caught the attention of world-renowned autism experts, who wanted to study him. The boy was one of the few people with autism able to describe his inner experience.

Johnson then invokes Merzenich:

Merzenich says Soma and Mukhopadhyay’s efforts should be examined closely by the medical world. “So we need to look at the strategy more widely and determine whether or not it is a valid strategy for a large number of children,” Merzenich said. “That’s still unresolved. But the initial observations are extremely hopeful.”

Johnson then quotes Merzenich:

“There might be thousands of children like Tito, and one of our challenges is to determine whether anything can be done about that and whether there are more children that can be in a sense awakened like Tito,” Merzenich said.

In light of how Tito began to be publicly presented at eleven years old, and Carly Fleischmann, about whom I have presented this article³³, at thirteen years old, and in light of the apparent absence of publicly presented employments of Facilitated Communication and the Rapid Prompting Method to children of, for example, three to eight years old, the following issue arises: Before children of eleven years old and beyond are capable of verbally communicating, and type-communicating and write-communicating, at the levels that they do, they of course must under a multitude of years of formative communicative-

²⁹ See (Feldman, 2018: 100).

³⁰ See (Iversen, 2007: 142).

³¹ See (Zuger, 2007: 4th paragraph).

³² See (Johnson, 2003: 19th, 32nd, 18th paragraphs respectively).

³³ See (Howitt, 2021, forthcoming).

education, such as gradually learning the alphabet, simple words, complex words, spelling, grammar, combinations of words, the construction of sentences, etc., and how to understand the verbal expression of language that are expressed them, and how to verbally express language to others. As is conveyed in the various public presentations of Tito and Soma, and Carly, they are characterized as children who, despite not undergoing any of this formative education, in any formal context, due to being incapable of doing so, were able to do so entirely autonomously, in their own informal context, and with no practical demonstrations that they were doing so, and that the employments of Facilitated Communication and the Rapid Prompting Method with them simply allowed them, at eleven years old and thirteen years old, to educe the capacities that they already had. That is, they are characterized as always having had highly elaborate, communicative minds, and as having developed their minds on their own accords (that is, without the assistance of anyone, nor any methods), and that the novel communicative methods are simply the conduits that allowed for the educing of their minds, which previously remained entirely quiescent.

This, however, is surely another facet of the system of fraud of the clinicians of the methods. There, of course, was no early-childhood education of the profoundly autistic children that is even minimally consistent with the later, abruptly presented, advanced verbal-comprehension, and advanced written-communication, of them at approximately eleven years old and older. Moreover, attributing the acquisition of this education to the profoundly autistic children themselves results in the proliferation of the now proven, staggeringly inaccurate conception of such persons as having normal to advanced minds, which were, moreover, previously simply quiescent: Not only are such persons, despite their florid, extreme, practical symptomology, inaccurately conceived of as being normal to advanced, but they are inaccurately conceived of as having undergone early childhood education and development completely autonomously, despite the absence of any practical indications that they were doing so from the onset of their autism (that is, before three years old³⁴), to their later presentations of their supposed, typical to advanced verbal-comprehension and written-communication.

Regarding the nature of the fraud: As I discussed previously, this kind of fraud is by-proxy in nature, which means, as is the case of Munchausen By Proxy, that the perpetrators typically ardently publicly express that they have not engaged in harmful conduct and fraudulent conduct.³⁵ Surely, at a particular level of their minds, they not only know what they are doing, but that they are deriving significant gratification from what they are doing; but at another level of their minds – such as when their minds operate socially – they clearly disassociate from their memory of what they have done, their knowledge of what they have done, their knowledge that they have derived gratification from what they have done, and the gratification that they have derived. As such, it would not be accurate to conceive of the perpetrators as being normal (or typical) persons who elect to engage in such fraud. Rather, they, despite their typically highly socially facile capacities, and humanism – their affability, devotion to their clients, concern about autism, pride in what they have accomplished, and pride in their clients – are direly mentally ill. However, in the case of Factitious Heroism By Proxy, unlike what is the case of the grave Munchausen By Proxy, the subjects of their by-proxy conduct at least do not *appear* to be physically nor psychologically harmed. However, I will speculate that the pre-public training that is likely necessary in order to succeed in

³⁴ See (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

³⁵ See (Feldman, 2018; Feldman, 2004).

having the autistic persons do what they do in public may be extraordinarily arduous, and akin to the brutal training of circus animals.³⁶

Elephants, tigers, and other animals that circuses use to entertain audiences do not stand on their heads, jump through hoops, or balance on pedestals because they want to. They perform these and other difficult tricks because they're afraid of what will happen if they do not.

In case the autistic persons are not subject to brutal physical treatment, I would speculate that, at a minimum, they are subject to training that is of such extraordinary repetition that it is of neurological and psychological brutality.

The following is the title of one of the aforementioned seven books that Soma claims were written by Tito, and which he is listed as the author of: *The Mind Tree: A Miraculous Child Breaks the Silence of Autism*.³⁷ Soma surely titles the book in this way due to her perpetual desire for Tito to be conceived of as "miraculous," and for her as "the miracle worker."

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³⁶ See (People For The Ethical Treatment of Animals, 2021).

³⁷ See (Mukhopadhyay, 2011; Google Books, 2021).

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