Scientific, Paranormal, and Spiritual Frames in Alternative Medicine

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Abstract
Although the term “integrative medicine” is being used to refer to the merging of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) with standard biomedicine, there are some spiritual and paranormal frames for alternative medicine that are only partially integrated into standard medicine if at all. This study examines the orientations of some alternative practitioners and clients/users in the U.S. and the UK in terms of their views of science, spirituality and the paranormal.

Keywords
Western medicine, spirituality, alternative medicine, paranormal medicine

Disciplines
Alternative and Complementary Medicine | Medical Sciences

Comments
Presentation given at the Friday Forum on September 7th, 2018. The Friday Forum is a series of lectures given by members of the Gettysburg College community on their personal scholarly research, creative activities, or professional or curricular development activities.

Professor Emmons has also published a series of documentaries on similar topics as the ones discussed in this presentation.

- "Drum Dreams: Drum Circles in North America"
- "Roll Your Own Religion: New Spirituality in North America"
- "Science and Spirit(s)"

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SCIENTIFIC, PARANORMAL
AND SPIRITUAL FRAMES IN
ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

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Paranthropology
Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal
Edited by Jack Hunter

JACK HUNTER
ESALEN INSTITUTE
ESALEN INSTITUTE (1962)  
BIG SUR, CA  

• HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT (ALDOUS HUXLEY, ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF EXPLORING CONSCIOUSNESS)  
• NEW AGE MOVEMENT, ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE, GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY
ESALEN & “THE RELIGION OF NO RELIGION” [HIPPIES & NEW AGE]

Krippal

Kaiser

How the Hippies Saved Physics

Science, Counterculture, and the Quantum Revival

David Kaiser
Center for Theory & Research
DEB FROST: HOW GET FINDINGS ABOUT CONSCIOUSNESS/PARANORMAL “INTO THE CULTURE”

I.E., PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS
DEAN RADIN

RESEARCHER AT IONS

PSI RESEARCH IN MEDICAL JOURNALS
SARA MACKIAN

EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY
SPIRITUALIST CHURCHES IN STOKE-ON-TRENT, ENGLAND
FIELDWORK FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE STUDY (2016-2017)

- ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS & PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN
  - UK (STOKE-ON-TRENT, SOMEWHERE IN WALES)
  - US (GETTYSBURG, ERIE, WEST CHESTER; LILY DALE, PORT CHESTER; YELLOW SPRINGS)
PREVIOUS RESEARCH & EXPERIENCE

2003, 2018

2012

1982, 2017
“PARANORMAL MEDICINE,”
Charles F. Emmons

• FORTHCOMING (2019), IN THE PARANORMAL IN POPULAR CULTURE, DARRYL CATERINE & JOHN W. MOREHEAD (EDS.), ROUTLEDGE
• MY RESEARCH: INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE (MANAGING THE MEDICALLY MYSTERIOUS), EMPHASIS ON PATIENTS & PRACTITIONERS, WHETHER THEY FRAME IT AS SCIENTIFIC, PARANORMAL, OR SPIRITUAL
MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT'S SCIENTIFIC/PARANORMAL/SPIRITUAL ABOUT ALTERNATIVE/HOLISTIC MEDICINE?

• THE MORE “SCIENTIFIC”, GREATER CHANCE OF BEING LEGITIMATED IN INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

• THE MORE “SPIRITUAL”, GREATER APPEAL TO SOME ALTERNATIVE PRACTITIONERS, USERS
NOT MY QUESTION:

• OBJECTIVE EFFICACY AND MECHANISMS INVOLVED IN ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

• BUT IF YOU’RE CURIOUS....
MARY RUGGIE (2004)

CH. 6: INVESTIGATING CAM (COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE): WHAT WORKS?
TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION (TM MOVEMENT)

MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI

HARVARD 1968
THE RELAXATION RESPONSE
HERBERT BENSON, M.D.
HARVARD UNIVERSITY MED SCHOOL
1975
DR. WILLIAM BENGSTON
INTENTION & ENERGY HEALING: DATA & RESULTS
PRESENTED BY THE HIGHERSIDE CHATS

LISTEN TO THE EPISODE AT THEHIGHERSIDECHATS.COM
LISTEN TO THE EXTENDED SHOW AT THEHIGHERSIDECHATSPLUS.COM
BEVERLY RUBIK (Berkeley PhD in Biophysics)

• “EFFECTS OF INTENTION, ENERGY HEALING, AND MIND-BODY STATES ON BIOPHOTON EMISSION”

• With Harry Jabs

• COSMOS AND HISTORY: THE JOURNAL OF NATURAL AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY, VOL. 13, NO. 2, 2017
“TWO RECENT COMPREHENSIVE META-ANALYSES OF ‘NONCONTACT HEALING STUDIES’...FOUND THAT OVERALL THERE WERE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF HEALING INTENTIONS ON BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS. THE 22 NONWHOLE HUMAN STUDIES MEETING STRICT QUALITY CRITERIA GAVE A WEIGHTED EFFECT SIZE OF $r = .12$ WITH 95% CI [0.09, 0.14]....AND THE 27 WHOLE-HUMAN STUDIES...$r = .22$ WITH 95% CI [0.19, 0.25]. THE RESULT IS STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT AND POSITIVE. IN OTHER WORDS, IT APPEARS THAT REMOTE HEALING REALLY HAPPENS.”  - BARUSS & MOSSBRIDGE, TRANSCENDENT MIND, WASHINGTON, DC: AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, 2017, p. 134.
JAMES McCLENON

EXPLAINING SHAMANIC HEALING IN TERMS OF PLACEBO AND HYPNOTIZABILITY
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL/ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONTEXT

• PLACEBO EFFECT ADDS TO (OR SUBTRACTS FROM) OBJECTIVE BIOMEDICAL EFFICACY.

• INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC LEGITIMACY AND PRACTITIONER/USER BELIEFS & PRACTICES IMPACT WHAT WILL ACTUALLY BE USED.
ALTERNATIVE?

- SOCIETAL VARIATION
  - INDIGENOUS (E.G. PERU)
  - CHINESE MEDICINE

- U.S. V. UK
MACRO LEVEL V. MICRO LEVEL

• MACRO: THE INSTITUTION OF MEDICINE

• MICRO: INDIVIDUAL PRACTITIONERS & USERS
INSTITUTION OF MEDICINE

- ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE
- COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE
- INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

- IN U.S.: NIH (NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH); MEDICAL SCHOOLS (YALE, HARVARD)
CONFLICT & STATUS

• REJECTION (MEDICAL ARTICLES)

• REFRAMING (E.G., AS PLACEBO)

• LOWER-STATUS MEDICAL STAFF & VOLUNTEERS
MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT’S SCIENTIFIC/PARANORMAL/SPIRITUAL ABOUT ALTERNATIVE/HOLISTIC MEDICINE?

• THE MORE “SCIENTIFIC”, GREATER CHANCE OF BEING LEGITIMATED IN INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

• THE MORE “SPIRITUAL”, GREATER APPEAL TO SOME ALTERNATIVE PRACTITIONERS, USERS
MOST DEEMPHASIZE "PARANORMAL"

- ASSOCIATE WITH GHOSTS, POP CULTURE
- "PARANORMAL" IS TOMORROW’S SCIENCE
- "PARANORMAL" IS TODAY’S SCIENCE (QUANTUM PHYSICS, SUBTLE ENERGY)
IT'S ALL THREE (SCI/PARA/SPIR)

• EDD EDWARDS
• BIO INTRINSIC RESONANT ENERGY
• ELECTRICAL, AT A DISTANCE, FROM “SOURCE”
NONSPIRITUAL & AGNOSTIC APPROACHES TO HEALING
“IT’S ALL SCIENCE”

- CHI GONG AS CHINESE SCIENCE
- WILLIAM BENGSTON: HANDS-ON HEALING OF CANCER IN MICE
- HOMEOPATHIC DOCTOR
- NATURAL HEALTH/HERBAL STORE
- CONVERSATION CURE
- MEDITATION FROM A BOOK
CHI GONG HEALING AS CHINESE SCIENCE
Curing Cancer with Intention
HOMEOPATHIC DOCTOR

- SCIENTIFIC FRAME
- OTHERS SEE AS PARTLY SPIRITUAL
CONVERSATION CURE AT PENTAGE
COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY

• STOKE POTTERS: “WE’LL BE WITH YOU!”

• LIVERPOOL: “YOU’LL NEVER WALK ALONE.”
WIDER WELLBEING

- HOLISTIC: BODY/MIND/SPIRIT
- HOLISTIC: COMBINATION OF SERVICES (MEDICAL, SOCIAL WORK,
  EDUCATIONAL, COMMUNITY)
- VARIETY OF INSTITUTIONS: FAMILY, CHURCHES, PUBS, FOOTBALL ETC.
DESPIRITUALIZATION

• Like Max Weber’s (1864-1920) “DISENCHANTMENT” (SECULARIZATION) OF THE MODERN WORLD, DECLINE OF MYSTICISM
SECULAR YOGA
SPIRITUAL HEALING AS PLACEBO

REFRAMING THE INTANGIBLE IN INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

• BODY AND MIND CONNECTIONS NOW MAINSTREAM (PLACEBO FINDINGS)
• (NOT BODY/MIND/SPRITIT)
OPTIMIZING PSYCHEDELIC HEALING:
THE POWER OF INTENTION, BELIEF &
THE PLACEBO EFFECT
RATIONAL FRAME FOR SPIRITUAL/PARANORMAL

• “YOU CAN FEEL THE HISTORY”

• THE FERTILITY CLOTH
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF CLIENTS

- ADD-ON EFFECTS TO SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES
- PLACEBO OR "REAL" SPIRITUAL EFFECTS
MASSAGE AS
SCIENTIFIC PLUS
SPIRITUAL/INTUITIVE
FROM A SKEPTIC

• “YOGA AND MEDITATION ARE MEDICAL, BUT WE ARE ASKED [BY THE INSTRUCTOR] TO IMAGINE ‘FILLING UP WITH SPIRIT.’ THERE MAY BE ANOTHER DIMENSION.”
IMPORTANCE OF “THE AUDIENCE”

• CHIROPRACTORS

• MASSAGE THERAPISTS

• COUNSELORS

• MEDITATION INSTRUCTORS

• REIKI FOR HORSES WITH VETS
“SPIRITUAL” BUT IGNORANT OF THE PROCESS

- “JUST FEEL”
- BIOFEEDBACK (DON’T HAVE TO THINK)
- LET THE RITUAL (METHOD) TAKE CARE OF IT
IT'S ALL SPIRITUAL
MYSTERIAN VIEW

• “DO YOU THINK YOUR (MASSAGE ENERGY WORK) WILL BE EXPLAINED SCIENTIFICALLY SOME DAY?”

• “GOSH I HOPE NOT! THAT WOULD SPOIL IT!”
“LET’S LEAVE THE SCIENTISTS OUT OF THIS!”

• SPIRITUALISM: SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND RELIGION
SPIRITUALISM
DEATH IS NOT THE END
WE PROVE SURVIVAL
NORTH LONDON SPIRITUALIST CHURCH
SPIRIT MEDIUMSHIP
The laying on of hands takes place during a service at the Healing Center. Touching the head and shoulders is believed to be a way to channel divine energy for healing.
CONNECTING

• WITH ENERGY (EARTH, UNIVERSE)
• UP THROUGH FEET, STRAW FROM COSMOS
• WITH GENERIC “SPIRIT”
INTUITIVE

- NOT KNOW HOW

- GUIDED

- IMPROVISE VS. REGIMEN
SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE (INTUITION)

- JUST “G-KNOWING” WHERE TO PUT YOUR HANDS WHEN HEALING
- GUT FEELINGS (NOT RATIONAL OR VERBALIZED)
MIXTURE OF PROCESS AND INTUITION (LOTS OF VARIATION AMONG HEALERS IN SPITE OF FORMAL TRAINING)
HEALING CLASSES, METHODS & THEORY

• REIKI, CHI GONG, SPIRITUALIST

• THEORY VS. INDIVIDUAL VARIATION IN PRACTICE
SPIRIT MEDIUM
APPROACHES

PHENOMENOLOGICAL & LABORATORY
SPIRIT GUIDES

• 74% OF SPIRITUALIST MEDIUMS HAVE SPIRIT GUIDES (EMMONS & EMMONS, 2003/2018)

• SPIRITUALIST HEALERS MAY HAVE “HEALING TEAM” OF GUIDES

• NORMS AGAINST DOING MEDIUMSHIP DURING HEALING IN SPIRITUALIST CHURCHES
“YOU NEED SOME TLC.”

- MESSAGES DURING HEALING (VS. NORM)
SPIRIT MESSAGES RELEVANT TO HEALING

• “I AM NOT A DOCTOR AND CANNOT PRESCRIBE.”
• “ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT....”

• SPIRIT MESSAGES AS HEALING (GENERAL WELLBEING)
PRAYERS

• PRAYER CIRCLES
• PRAYER LISTS

• SOCIAL SUPPORT, PLACEBO
• PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL/MEDICAL STUDIES OF HEALING AT A DISTANCE (WITH CONTROLS)
THE ROSETO EFFECT

• ROSETO, PENNSYLVANIA, U.S.
• COMPARISONS TO OTHER ITALIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES
• CHANGES BETWEEN 1935 AND 1985
• BEYOND GENETICS, DIET, LIFESTYLES: SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT & SUPPORT
CONCLUSIONS

• TENDENCY TO RATIONALIZE HEALING IN INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE (FRAMES: PLACEBO, QUANTUM PHYSICS)

• GREAT VARIETY IN PERSONAL PRACTICES, RATIONALES

• GENERAL THEORIES IN BOTH BIOMEDICINE & SPIRITUAL SYSTEMS COME SHORT OF CAPTURING THE “EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY” OF HEALING BEHAVIORS