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## **Exceptional Human Experience**

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## **The Human Connection Project:**

*Educating for Peace through Planetary Consciousness*

### **Introduction**

The Human Connection (HC) Project has been created to reinforce the underlying sense that human beings are innately psychologically and physiologically linked, even when in widely-separated geographic locations. By presenting scientific demonstrations of nervous system interactivity occurring among spatially separated people in the form of ninety second news releases, the HC Project will offer an alternative to the current scientific world view, in which humans are considered physically isolated beings. The expectation is that our collective 'mind-set' can be altered by successfully focusing international attention on undeniable images of human interconnectedness.

Also, people will be taught how to increase a sense of connection, even under informal conditions. To further this aim, educational methods --including workshops, seminars and group biofeedback techniques-- are being developed for use in families, schools and communities. These will involve, but not be limited to, people engaged in sports, the arts, corporate management, public services, and professional organizations. Such methods will explain and encourage more positive forms of behavior and they will facilitate lasting experiences of interpersonal alignment, group insight and creative cooperative activity. As educational programs and media presentations become better equipped to explore human interconnectedness, as an accessible resource, it is hypothesized that there will be a gradual yet irreversible shift in the way people pay attention to themselves and others.

## **History**

This project was sponsored by the Mind Science Foundation (MSF) from 1990 to 1992. MSF is a 34-year old research institute based in San Antonio, Texas that uses a multidisciplinary approach to the scientific study of the human mind and its potential. Prior to the formation of this project, Sperry Andrews collaborated with Dr. William Braud, formerly Senior Research Associate at MSF, on a series of studies that indicated that the autonomic nervous system activity of one person is strongly correlated with the focused attention and intention of a conventionally isolated second person <sup>1, 2</sup>.

Due to the success of these and other studies <sup>3-12</sup>, the author decided to formulate a larger experimental protocol that would explore the following hypothesis: If humanity represents a communion of minds or a conscious unity that transcends spatial separation, it should be possible to explore this hypothesis by looking for real-time interrelationships among the neurophysiological and autonomic activities of geographically separated individuals. The project was conceived with both scientific

and educational components. It was then formalized as the Human Connection Project (HCP). HCP intends to raise \$1,100,000 in two stages of \$550,000 each, with the first stage of fund raising to be completed by April 1997 and the second by April 1998. HCP's address is 746 Nod Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897. Telephone: (203) 762-9280. FAX: (203) 761-8962. As of January 1996 Sperry Andrews now Co-Directs the Project with Dr. Ervin Laszlo (see p. 11).

## **Project Rationale**

Albert Einstein (28, p.136) wrote:

"A human being is part of the whole, called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest -a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal decisions and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

In the not too remote past, we were united by tribal consciousness. Over centuries, we have learned to share consensually agreed upon realities. World religions emerged, forming pockets of collective consciousness. As "believers," we could traverse vast geographic distances and still retain our sense of connection to a community. In return for potential immortality, we conformed to ideologies and customs of worship.

In the past century, we made individuality our god. We rebelled against traditional values. We pulled up our roots, going everywhere and anywhere. Personal self-fulfillment without limits and without bounds became the doctrine of our new freedom. Yet, our goal -to bring us in touch with ourselves- disconnected us from one another. We have made human contact more difficult.

By accentuating differences over similarities, we individualized our "selves." We had hoped to reach our fullest potential. However, our curious pursuit of greater self-fulfillment has significantly increased a painful confrontation with personal isolation. Still, the hurt of being alone is hardly new. But, it is ironic that loneliness is now so widespread, it has become a "shared experience," we are afraid to share. As many miss the companionship of other individuals, millions feel cut off from the institutions they rely on for work and community <sup>32</sup>. Though we commonly experience ourselves as separate individuals, scientific research suggests that we are not <sup>1-12,15-21, 35</sup>.

We use selective attention, or 'dissociation-in-the-service-of-the-ego.' Dissociation can be healthy and highly creative, an essential part of personal evolution. However, while selective attention enables self-protection and self-creation, it also provides the experience of self-isolation. By contrast, non selective attention, or 'association-in-the-service-of-the-ego,' allows us a sense of unconditional immersion or connection, a sense of greater meaning and belonging.

Still, we have had to demarcate both physical and psychological territories to survive, and have not developed a working familiarity with our undivided or undefended self. We dream of not having to maintain these boundaries, but, then, only under the safest of conditions. Yet such conditions occur so rarely, we often overlook these opportunities.

In fact, our "consciously, chosen self" can feel so awkward about fully associating with others that we often avoid connecting, even with those we love most. For the sake of improving our chances for survival and control over our environment, we have freely and creatively isolated ourselves, choosing instead to notice only a limited and limiting sense of connection with others and Nature.

Research into consciousness, in general, and into psychoneuroimmunology or Mind Made Health, in particular, indicates that self-isolating behavior patterns can go too

far, in some cases leading to a critical lack of individual and social integration<sup>6,15,17,19,20,25,27</sup>. To date, HCP's findings suggest that, for individuals, this lack of integration may be evidenced, in extreme cases, as the pathology of Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD).

With MPD, an individual typically presents a conglomerate of more or less separate psychological and physiological systems in the form of predisposed personalities, each with unique medical profiles<sup>16-30</sup>. Dysfunctional behavior between and among personalities is sustained by overly restrictive habits of selective attention, accompanied by fear of sharing experiences involving mutual recognition, connection or integration, since these connote loss and death instead of fulfillment and growth (19,p.8). Therapeutic measures often involve encouraging the various alternative personalities to more fully associate by having them each pay attention non selectively to the fact that they actually share the same mind and body.

In essence, humanity seems to share the same necessity, a need to encourage a sense of connection among its many members, who are currently separated by familial, cultural, national and economic boundaries and by exclusive identification with their own unique personal experiences. As is the goal in MPD therapy with individuals, all the many "alternative" personalities within humanity might need to accept, as well as experience, that they are vital aspects of a larger, indivisible, mind/body system.

Psychological testing shows that individuals will often conform to the "will" of whatever group they are in<sup>13,14</sup>. Because what the majority of humanity now agrees to is 'separateness,' HCP suggests we may need to encourage large numbers of people to contemplate and experience a much deeper level of connection before we can expect any given individual to explore a more familiar manner of sharing with others.

Collectively, we could view ourselves as a highly adaptive living system, or as a symbiotic organism avoiding the dangers of suffering a critical dysfunction. We could come to recognize that we are "self-regulating" and even "self-aware," at some level not yet commonly accessed by the majority of individuals.

If these views were supported by scientific fact, many more individuals might feel they have permission to access and promote a more intimate form of connection with others, thus revising religious and cultural behavior. Effectively presented, tangible evidence of human connection could help dislodge what may be a human mind-set that is counter to survival, a tendency to be unnecessarily divisive.

HCP predicts that this project could beneficially effect geopolitical restructuring, while improving quality of life. To achieve this goal, humanity would need to shift the way it pays attention. We would need to reconsider who we are and redefine what we are, to determine where we are going together.

HCP is designed to determine whether scientific evidence of interpersonal connection can be effectively presented to world audiences so as to further dissolve artificial conceptual divisions among people. The public media, in this instance, will serve as a biofeedback mechanism, and HCP, if it is warranted, will produce impactful media presentations and scholarly discourses intended to awaken humanity's underlying sense of connection.

HCP's Project Rationale enables both exploration of and interaction with prevailing human conditions. This project can help to determine whether or not the future evolution of individual-creative-freedom will ultimately require a new form of shared experience.

Regarding the need for adaptation or conformity to enable this change, HCP suggests the only requirement may be that we learn to sense a broader range of

connection, wherein, when it is appropriate, our individual consciousness is experienced as literally indivisible from the consciousness of others.

### **Scientific Research Component of HCP**

Prior to conducting a full-scale five-lab experiment, HCP plans to develop a detailed technical protocol that will be rigorously criticized by mainstream scientists. A preliminary protocol is currently undergoing development and review. Five geographically separate laboratories are to be used for the following reasons: (a) a large number of small-scale projects have been completed successfully, yielding highly suggestive results; (b) multiple cooperating laboratories foster replicability in that experimental results are not confined only to one investigator or location; (c) possible distance factors can be examined and addressed; (d) both meaning and motivation may be heightened with more laboratories involved; and, perhaps most importantly, (e) the processing capacity of five laboratories (using a central facility for evaluation) would allow sophisticated experiments and analyses to be carried out that otherwise would lie beyond the capability of any individual laboratory or location.

Twelve groups involving five participants each will be selected. These groups will possess different levels of interpersonal familiarity. For example, at least four groups will be comprised of individuals who are complete strangers to one another. Another set of groups, by contrast, will be emotionally close, having learned specific ways of achieving and maintaining a sense of interpersonal connection.

These groups will be split up so that a member from each group will be positioned at one of five neuroscientific laboratories. In turn, each group of five will be monitored for their interactive central and autonomic nervous system reactions to specific stimuli under controlled laboratory conditions.

State-of-the-art Visually Evoked Potential (VEP) techniques will be employed. Autonomic nervous system reactions will be analyzed separately and a multi variate analysis performed.

Participants will, at specifically scheduled times, be stimulated with a series of randomly occurring light flashes whenever they are allowed to covertly pay attention to one or more members of their group over a one-way closed-circuit video camera and monitor system. Of course, participants will have no known means of knowing when, or for how long, or even if another member of their group can see them.

Previous studies show that a participant's physiology significantly responds both to the focused attention and intention of a conventionally isolated second person <sup>1-7,35</sup> and to VEP stimuli when it is administered to an isolated second person <sup>8,9,11,19</sup>.

The scientists and laboratories offering to participate in this project include: Dr. Jacobo Grinberg-Zylberbaum at the National University of Mexico in Mexico City, Mexico; Dr. Steven Fahrion formerly with the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas; Dr. T.M. Srinivasan, at Arizona State University at Tempe; Dr. Jim Brown and Stephen Wall at the Biofeedback Training and Research Institute in Cotati, California; and Dr. Sydney Weinstein at Neurocommunication Research Laboratories in Danbury, Connecticut. Other laboratories are also interested and are being considered.

### **Educational Media Component of HCP**

If this research validates the connection hypothesis, we will initiate the next phase of the project involving the educational media. Then, since this research would be considered valuable to society at large, HCP would offer educational and media presentations as described below.

From the experiment, we would incorporate the video images of participants. Participants would either be seen in profile or full face respectively, depending upon whether or not they are focusing their gaze on other members of their group over one-way closed-circuit video systems. These images would then be synchronized with corresponding recordings of the participants' internally changing physiological states. Next, we would assemble the faces of each group into a split-screen television presentation.

Participant groups comprised of friends could contrast with groups of strangers, and these could be viewed in succession, where each individual's face would be underscored with the name of his or her laboratory location. Two or more participants' correlated statistical data could be represented as changes in facial-image-illumination so as to show viewing audiences subtle variations in interpersonal rapport or connection as it occurred among the members of each group, during the experiment.

And, for visual effect, false-color biomedical mapping techniques could be used, as are currently employed by scientists at the National Institute of Mental Health to visually distinguish the different physiological states in people with MPD. With the help of these data analytic methods, we could present audio/visual evidence that, as representative members of humanity, participants in this study evidentially shared an interactive rapport while spatially separated.

HCP would provide a 90-second video release to news services for their own presentations to international multicultural television audiences, to be coupled with narratives on the results of this project delivered by newscasters in English or in the language most used by a given audience. These news releases can then be shown repeatedly on worldwide news networks, thereby stimulating further coverage through TV, radio talk shows and print media.

As supporting aspects of HCP, two feature documentary films and a dramatic feature film are currently under development. One of these documentary film treatments, similar to Nova, has been prepared by an award-winning producer. In this documentary, we intend to show psychophysiological rapport between twins, married couples, friends, corporate executives, blue collar workers, musicians, and co-performing athletes. We would also evaluate co-consciousness, if it occurs when people are spatially separated. In addition, the film will look at rapport between people who have never met one another, as is of course the case with the majority of humanity. In these film treatments, we would present convincing dramatizations of both the obstacles to and opportunities for experiencing our human connection.

#### Potential Educational Impact

When presented, images of connection may elicit strong feelings of belonging, such as recalling the bond between mother and child. In order to evaluate the intensity of emotional response, representative audiences will be tested with standard psychological instruments currently used in advertising research.

Some viewers may experience a real-life influence on their behavior and world view. These viewers may be motivated to form more coherent, cooperative, and lasting relationships, where before they may have reluctantly accepted some form of self-isolation. Having experienced an inner sense of connection from viewing these images, some may learn to look beyond the inherent differences of personality, family, culture, economic status or nationality.

Broadcasting images of human connection to large audiences may shift the opinion of humanity insignificantly at first, yet once these images are seen and discussed on talk shows, in the world press, and made the subject of popular movies, HCP predicts that, in time, there would be an increasing number of beneficial repercussions. Perhaps, it would not be easy to dismiss the inherent value of sharing

this connection consciously, because in today's world it could be recognized as both our own and humanity's most precious natural resource.

HCP reasons that our collective human 'mind-set' can be altered. Moreover, sharing this type of discovery on a global scale could be an essential step in the evolution of human consciousness.

### **Practical Applications for Human Connection**

In addition, HCP intends to offer practical applications as well, employing the methods of applied psychophysiology to strengthen personal intuition and to facilitate shared insight, enhancing, for example, team collaboration among athletes, musicians, married couples, and corporate management.

HCP suspects that the popularization and acceptance of our human connection could follow much the same course as Creative Previsualization or Mental Rehearsal, which was found years ago to provide Soviet Olympic athletes with a sizable competitive edge. In fact, Soviet athletic success led to the acceptance of Mental Rehearsal techniques in the United States.

Also, HCP is responsive to the fact that quality management in the corporate world looks for ways of providing greater coherence, flexibility, and collaboration in the workplace. Today, a premium is put on companies that are both fast moving and more willing to embrace change as a way of life. People must work with an ever-changing assortment of tools, customers, industries, and regulatory environments, each of which exacts new demands for increased efficiency. HCP asserts that developing a person's sense of connection with others helps improve their ability to adapt more creatively and successfully to both personal and environmental change.

### **Project Overview**

This project is expected to be carried out in the following four phases, with Phase I already completed. The inter-disciplinary nature of the project, coupled with the involvement of diverse scientists in multiple laboratory settings, has required extensive dialogue over an extended period of time. As a result of these discussions, participating researchers and advisory board members have reached consensus on protocols for future research, participated in preliminary research programs, published findings and engaged the commitment of their respective institutions to participate in this innovative endeavor. The Human Connection Project is now ready to move forward. Administrative and fund-raising assistance is essential.

Phase 1: A preliminary program of research and development consisting of four research experiments has already been carried out. Two research papers and two articles have been published discussing the results of these experiments <sup>1-3,18</sup>. Outside the project, two research papers have been published indicating that shared attention is a significant interpersonal dynamic <sup>5,35</sup>, and a third article is in press (19). Additional pilot studies are planned <sup>31,33</sup>.

Much of the preliminary work of solidifying contacts with the brain research laboratories has been completed, and budgets have been prepared. A total of \$100,000 was contributed by Sperry Andrews, the Mind Science Foundation, Kathy Grant, and the Fetzer Institute. Some related research was supported in part by SRI International.

Phase 2: HCP is now in the beginning stages of this Phase, which involves fund raising, organizational activities and the development of detailed budgets for Phases 3 and 4. These budgets are being used in presentations to major funding sources. Phase 3 and Phase 4 funding will be sought in stages and may not be funded by the same agencies or at the same time.

An advisory committee of recognized experts from the fields of neuroscience, physics, psychology, and the arts is being established with the objective of

formalizing a core group. This committee now serves as an active sounding board for HCP.

At present, the Advisory Board includes: Larry Dossey, M.D., Stanislav Grof, Ph.D., Bernard Haisch, Ph.D., Willis Harman, Ph.D., Stanley Krippner, Ph.D., David Lorimer, P.G.C.E., Edgar Mitchell, Ph.D., Karl Pribram, Ph.D., Dean Radin, Ph.D., Peter Russell, D.C.S. Rupert Sheldrake, Ph.D. and Karan Singh, Ph.D.. Amit Goswami, Ph.D. and Beverly Rubik, Ph.D. are consultants. Eve Berry, M.A. is Director of Administration and Educational Program Development and Jerry Wesch, Ph.D. is Director of Management.

The following scientists and laboratories are offering to participate in this project (including those already mentioned on pages 8 and 9): Dr. Dean Radin at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas; Dr. Dick Bierman at the Free University of Amsterdam in Holland; and Dr. Mark Germine in Loma Linda California.

The Human Connection Institute was formed in early 1996 to train facilitators in the practical application of 'group intelligence' principles in business, education, government, sports, and medicine --in short, in any circumstance where teamwork and understanding in relationships count.

International Collaboration: As of January 1996 the HC Project has merged its efforts with a project titled 'Educating for Peace Through Planetary Consciousness' headed by Dr. Ervin Laszlo and sponsored by the Club of Budapest and the Institute of Noetic Sciences under the patronage of UNESCO.

Phase 3: Group biofeedback research <sup>31</sup> will coincide with studies involving two and three laboratories <sup>33</sup>, separated by a thousand miles or more. Then, five geographically separated laboratories will participate in an experiment exploring the central hypothesis of this project <sup>34</sup>.

Phase 4: An educational program will explore the various physical, physiological, psychological, economic, and sociological factors that facilitate or impede humanity from developing a more profound sense of connection. The scientific results of the project will be presented to the general public.

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