

THE POWER OF ONE: PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING FROM INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

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Three decades ago Gordon Allport pleaded with fellow psychologists to attend to the uniqueness of the individual, and through this portal to develop appropriate scientific methodology to investigate complex problems. As he inquired,

Why should we not start with individual behavior as a source of hunches. . . and then seek our generalization. . . but finally come back to the individual not for the mechanical application of laws (as we do now) but for a fuller and more accurate assessment than we are now able to give? I suspect that the reason our present assessments are now so often feeble and sometimes even ridiculous, is because we do not take this final step. We stop with our wobbly laws of generality and seldom confront them with the concrete person.¹

In Allport's time practical methodology for studying individuals was limited. Over the last few decades, however, interest in developing rigorous scientific methods for use with single cases has borne fruit. Needless to say, though, the rigor and effectiveness of these methods still remain unrecognized by the majority of our colleagues. All too often conservative scientists, although

perhaps willing to admit that single-case designs have a role in hypothesis *seeking*, still turn to the predictable knee jerk question, “But what is the control group?” when hypothesis-*testing* arises. The implication is that the only tools useful for “real” science are randomized, controlled designs, as though these, and these alone, remain unflawed for scientific inquiry. In point of fact, no scientific method is perfect or absolute in value. Appropriate methodology means selecting methods and analytic procedures with flexibility—this is precisely the *art* of science.

And while flexibly selecting scientific procedures, it is well to recognize that *much can be learned from single clinical cases*, particularly when we collect collateral information that cross-validates results, and when we use rigorous analytic techniques such as interrupted-time-series analysis. While such methods require more formal observation and analysis than we typically use for clinical purposes, single case studies are within reach of everyone, whether researcher, healer, or potential healee. What is required is a specific attitude of mind, a relentlessness in testing hypotheses *beyond question* (or at least beyond as many questions as possible) for the presence of relationships.

In this issue we pursue our study of the “stream of truth” from single-case highland sources to philosophical Alps reflected in clear and deep mountain lakes. The paper entitled, “The Normalization of a Personality through Neurofeedback Therapy,” by A. P. Byers reports on effects with a single case of a treatment protocol that is forming new stream-channels and re-routing addiction treatment. What can we learn from controlled case studies such as this, to guide broad-scale application of these new methods in treating one of society’s most difficult and destructive problems? How can we explain the objectively documented transformation seen in the lives of chronically addicted individuals undergoing this new form of treatment—these are challenges raised.

Then, the controlled case study, “EEG Amplitude, Brain Mapping, and Synchrony In and Between A Bioenergy Practitioner and Client During Healing,” by S. Fahrion, M. Wirkus, and T. Pooley, examines indices of brain events in relation to a bioenergy healing technique applied to a chronic pain problem. This paper follows a model of *collaborative investigation* by a team composed of investigator, healer, and client, a model likely to facilitate more

rigorous and meaningful research in the field of energy medicine. It is encouraging to see that the new Office of Alternative Medicine of the National Institutes of Health is seriously encouraging collaboration between “alternative health care providers with experienced scientists, and conversely” in investigations they plan to support. Bringing the third member of the team, the client, into full participation represents an added dimension, yet one that is familiar to practicing clinicians who work collaboratively with those they treat. If, rather than objects of study, healer and client become full participant collaborators in investigations, a research climate is established in which is possible to learn more without compromising scientific rigor.

Collaborative participation is both potent and compelling. We live in a world noted for Aristotelian thinking, for putting people into little boxes like “scientist” versus “clinician” versus “client.” Such abstractions are always wrong. They deviate from the truth about ourselves. *We are multifaceted, both in our present being and in our possible being.* From what we are learning from physicists, healers, and many others about non-locality of events, we seem to be far more connected to each other and to the world around us than contemporary social models would have us believe.

With, “Modern Bioelectromagnetics and Functions of the Central Nervous System,” R. Becker concludes his exciting, comprehensive three-part conceptualization of how interactions between energy and the nervous system *really work*. We are fortunate to have this tour into the thinking of one of the foremost investigators in energy medicine, allowing us to participate in conceptual advances literally as they occur. The postulation that consciousness resides in the “other half of the brain,” the perineural cells (in contrast to neurons), will undoubtedly be a highly provocative stimulus to research.

Finally, “Lessons from Spiritual Healing Research and Practice” by Daniel Benor reviews a large segment of reports on healing. He stimulates and engages us in an exploration of principles and commonalities in this literature, with indications for mechanisms and comprehensive suggestions for guiding future research on healing. His paragraph entitled, “Subtle energy phenomena can be studied personally by experimenters,” is instructive, and in line with our theme of participation in learning from individual instance.

This brings us finally to celebrate the fact that advances in science are very often the product of an initial intuition associated with activity of a single mind, however linked that mind may be with others through communicative patterns both subtle and obvious. That event, that intuitive event, which sometimes consolidates a lifetime of experience in a flash, does not require randomized controlled designs. It does not require teams of scientists. It requires only that one person remain open to his/her own experience, and that the intuitive flash be brought into the light where it can be consciously considered by the all. It is precisely this type of unique event, in which all of us have participated in our own ways that, upon consideration, fills us with a sense of awe.

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1. G.D. Allport, The General and The Unique in Psychological Science, *Journal of Personality* 30 (1962), pp. 405-422.

SEA WALL

Although this painting relates to the energy of the sea breaking on a sea wall, it goes far beyond the superficial presentation of that subject matter. Artists must find ways to express the visual world and the inner world of emotional, spiritual, and intellectual responses to subjects, concepts and experiences. That transition from recognizable form to symbolic form is the bridge that brings the outer and inner worlds together. We create a new language of internal vision and energy which communicates those subtle nuances of our psyche in a form that opens up the deeper communication of the soul.

—Marilyn Hughey Phillis