PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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When I was growing up there were three subjects of considerable concern to teenagers that, in our society, were not considered appropriate for polite conversation. They were sex, death, and the supranormal. I suspect many maturing minds have grappled with the troubling questions these subjects raise without much help or guidance from their elders. These were uncomfortable topics that were seldom discussed in the home, and subjects that were considered far too delicate or personal in nature to be covered in the classroom. For the most part children were left to find answers on their own.

A decade or so ago the idea of including any of these topics in the school curriculum would have been unthinkable. Today, however, sex education is rapidly becoming accepted in the schools. More recently, with the considerable attention that is being given in the media to the problems of aging and death, courses in thanatology are becoming popular in colleges and some high schools are even beginning to include this subject in the curriculum. As for the supranormal, media coverage has increased to an all time high and youth's growing interest in the "occult" sciences has forced the buyer's market of education to give serious attention to the possibility of including this subject in the curriculum. Today over 100 colleges and universities offer courses in parapsychology and some high schools are beginning to follow suit, but, due to a lack of guidelines, schools are reluctant to embark on a course of study for which there is no clear direction. The information explosion in this field has far outstripped the few meager efforts that have been made to offer some kind of educational guidance to the inquiring young minds that are often confused by the great variety and quality of information with which they are confronted. "There can be no doubt that the so-called 'occult explosion' of recent years has proven a very mixed blessing for parapsychology. While it has certainly led to great interest in the parapsychologist's work, and a larger

audience for his worthwhile books, it has also led to a spate of shallow literature disseminating misinformation."[1]

As Charles Honorton has pointed out, "One of the most difficult problems encountered by persons wishing to become familiar with parapsychology is distinguishing between reliable and unreliable reading material. It is only too obvious that in the 'psychic' book area, the signal-to-noise ratio is very low."[2]

It is disturbing to note that a study by McConnell and McConnell showed that in one college bookstore, while "occult" books ranked very high in sales, the quality of books most frequently purchased was rather low, with books on mainline research in parapsychology being almost at the bottom of the list of the books sold in this category.[3] Similarly, sources of information high school students commonly use are insubstantial and of questionable quality and content. Since sensationalism always attracts the attention of youth it was not surprising that a recent survey (included in this paper) revealed that high school students found the TV show *Kreskin* and the *National Enquirer*, a tabloid billed as the nation's largest selling newspaper, their most commonly used sources of information on the supranormal.

The confusion between fact and fable in parapsychology and the difficulty students have in separating serious scientific research from superstition create a real need for a sound carefully structured educational program that addresses itself to these problems. A curriculum is needed that offers the kinds of information and experiences that will help students develop the kind of healthy skepticism and critical thinking they need to deal with the media explosion in the occult and the bombardment of information they are receiving on the supranormal. Such an educational opportunity recently occurred: In January, 1974, the American Psychological Association received funding from the National Science Foundation to develop a curriculum in human behavior for secondary schools. One of the 30 topics recommended for inclusion in the curriculum was: "Parapsychology and the Supranormal: Belief and skepticism in a legitimate area of research."[5] Each topic was to be covered in a two-to three-week instructional unit or module. The module on parapsychology was described as one that: "Establishes the legitimacy of such areas for investigation; examines the present evidence and the skepticism of many scientists; concludes with the psychology of belief."[4]

The plan was for each module to be designed in the field by teams composed of a specialist in the subject area and one or two high school teachers and students. In the summer of 1974 the American Psychological Association announced that the Human Behavior

Curriculum Project (HBCP) for secondary schools was accepting proposals for individual module topics from qualified teams.[5]

For the past few years I have been teaching a course in behavior, offered as a science elective for high school juniors and seniors in Division Avenue High School in Levittown, N. Y. I was asked to develop the curriculum for this course as a result of three books in comparative psychology I had co-authored for young adults. The course, which was based in part on these books, included a unit in parapsychology. Since I had begun research on another book for teenagers which was to have several chapters on parapsychological research, development of a module on parapsychology for the HBCP would complement the work I had already begun and would allow me to concentrate my effort in one area.

The first step in developing a module proposal was to organize a team which, according to the HBCP guidelines, should include a high school student and a specialist in the field. For advice regarding the selection of a specialist, I contacted Dr. Robert Van de Castle, information officer for the Parapsychological Association (PA). Dr. Van de Castle suggested that the Council of the PA be asked to recommend someone to work with me. During their meeting at the 1975 APA convention last September, the Council designated Joanna Morris as the team specialist. Her husband, Dr. Robert Morris, was then President of the PA, and Joanna had for the last several years been editing the *Proceedings of the Parapsychological Association.* To complete the team a high school student was chosen from several outstanding seniors in my behavior class who had expressed interest in working with us. In addition to the team, Dr. Irvin Child of Yale University and Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler of City College of the City University of New York agreed to act as consultants to the project.

In an effort to enlist input from the many scientists and educators who are members of the PA, a letter announcing the preparation of a module proposal in parapsychology was sent to all members. Included with the letter was a questionnaire which invited opinions and suggestions for module content.

HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY CONFIRMS STUDENT INTEREST IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Before beginning work on the module proposal I felt it would be useful to determine the knowledge, attitudes and interest in parapsychology among high school students. With the help of several of my students and colleagues, a questionnaire was developed and given to 130 high school juniors and seniors in my school. In order not

to influence student responses, the content and purpose of the questionnaire were not discussed prior to the administration of the survey. The same survey was given to 130 students in a high school in Decatur, Illinois, and 30 students in the Tam High School District in the Bay area of Northern California. Following are the questionnaire and the results from each of the three schools in which it was given:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer each question in the order in which it appears. If you don't know the answers to the first two questions make a guess. Do not change any answers.

1—Parapsychology is a branch of science that studies_____

	Acceptable definition	Unacceptable definition
N. Y.	23%	77%
Ill.	24	76
Calif.	39	61

2—What kinds of experiences would you describe as ESP experiences? _____

	Acceptable definition	Unacceptable definition
N. Y.	91%	8%
Ill.	86	14
Calif.	87	13

3—ESP stands for Extrasensory Perception. Such phenomena as mind to mind communication (telepathy) and correctly predicting events before they occur by hunches (precognition) are examples of ESP. There is no satisfactory scientific explanation of how people could receive information other than through their senses. Therefore, ESP is a controversial subject. Many people deny it exists.
Do you believe ESP does exist? ___YES_____NO___

	YES	NO
N. Y.	96	5
Ill.	86	14
Calif.	90	10

4—The following list of phenomena are associated with ESP. Please indicate your feelings about them.
Telepathy (mind to mind communication)

	YES (Believe it is possible)	NO (Do not believe it is possible)	MAYBE (Am not sure)
N.Y.	60	12	28
Ill.	67	12	21
Calif.	74	13	13

Clairvoyance (perception of physical objects and events not available to the senses)

N. Y.	48%	17%	35%
Ill.	53	25	23
Calif.	58	23	19

Psychokinesis (influencing the movement of matter mentally)

N. Y.	44	32	24
Ill.	22	51	27
Calif.	39	29	32

Precognition (knowing about the future without any clues from the senses)

N. Y.	70	9	21
Ill.	57	19	24
Calif.	65	13	23

Paranormal healing (the ability of one person (the healer) to produce a "miraculous" cure in another)

N. Y.	24	43	33
Ill.	22	57	21
Calif.	23	10	68

5—You have probably heard about ESP from some of the following sources. Using the numbers from 1 to 3 please indicate the sources from which you have received information.

1 — Most information 2 — Some information
3 — No information

Source of Information		Most	Some	None
TV	N. Y.	10%	43%	46%
	Ill.	34	60	6
	Calif.	41	43	26
Radio	N. Y.	60	29	12
	Ill.	7	34	59
	Calif.	5	27	68

Books	N. Y.	24	40	36
	Ill.	41	43	16
	Calif.	46	46	8
Magazines and Newspapers	N. Y.	31	50	19
	Ill.	32	54	13
	Calif.	29	63	8
Personal Experiences	N. Y.	41	41	17
	Ill.	10	38	52
	Calif.	20	64	16
Experiences of People you Know	N. Y.	31	52	17
	Ill.	12	54	34
	Calif.	24	60	16
Word of Mouth Discussion with Others	N. Y.	20	40	40
	Ill.	36	46	18
	Calif.	57	43	0

The students were asked to list any specific books, magazine articles, TV shows etc., from which they had learned about ESP and give their reaction to the information they received from the sources listed. While the sources were quite varied the responses they described to the information they had received were characterized by interest, amazement and credulity.

6—Have you ever had an experience or known someone who has had an experience you believe can *only* be explained by ESP?

	YES	NO
N. Y.	55%	45%
Ill.	38	62
Calif.	39	61

Students who felt they or someone they knew had had an experience that could only be explained by ESP were asked to describe the experience. The experiences they described were classified in one of the following categories:

	Telepathy	Clairvoyance	PK	Precognition
N. Y.	33%	27%	4%	36%
Ill.	26	29	0	46
Calif.	16	34	0	50

7—Do you believe scientists should investigate ESP?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
N. Y.	82	3	15

Ill.	63	11	26
Calif.	71	13	16

8—Scientists are investigating ESP and recent research indicates that most people probably have some ESP abilities. Would you be interested in finding out about your own ESP abilities?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
N. Y.	84%	4%	12%
Ill.	69	18	13
Calif.	77	13	10

9—Many colleges and universities are now offering courses in ESP. Do you think there should be a high school course in this subject?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
N. Y.	80	7	13
Ill.	60	21	19
Calif.	71	6	23

10—Would you like to take a course in ESP if it was offered in your high school?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
N. Y.	75	8	17
Ill.	60	21	19
Calif.	74	19	6

11—Here are some topics that might be explored in a high school course in ESP. Please use numbers from 1–3 to indicate your interest in these topics.

	1—Great interest	2—Some interest	3—No interest
a) The History of ESP			
N. Y.	18	58	24
Ill.	14	63	23
Calif.	14	59	28
b) Case studies of famous psychic (ESP) subjects.			
N. Y.	13	39	47
Ill.	50	37	13
Calif.	28	59	17
c) Exploring reasons for belief or disbelief in ESP.			
N. Y.	11	45	44
Ill.	38	42	20
Calif.	24	52	24

d) Experimental techniques used in ESP research today.

N. Y.	16%	49%	36%
Ill.	41	38	21
Calif.	39	54	7

e) Dangers of fraud and deception and how they can be avoided in ESP research.

N. Y.	23	43	34
Ill.	32	45	23
Calif.	31	41	28

f) What investigators have discovered about ESP and related phenomena.

N. Y.	14	44	42
Ill.	51	34	15
Calif.	48	34	17

g) Classroom projects and experiments in ESP.

N. Y.	16	41	43
Ill.	52	31	18
Calif.	48	41	10

h) College courses in ESP (what is offered and where).

N. Y.	22	42	35
Ill.	18	47	35
Calif.	31	48	21

i) Career possibilities in ESP research.

N. Y.	29	37	34
Ill.	13	40	47
Calif.	7	52	41

j) Possible applications of ESP.

N. Y.	15%	51%	34%
Ill.	42	38	20
Calif.	25	46	29

k) Implications of ESP research for science and society.

N. Y.	19	52	30
Ill.	33	45	22
Calif.	25	43	32

Listed below are some of the areas in which research is being done. Which of these areas would you be interested in?

l) Telepathy, mind to mind communication.

N. Y.	17	34	49
Ill.	64	20	16
Calif.	69	24	7

m) Clairvoyance, information about objects and events not available to the senses.

N. Y.	18	38	42
Ill.	36	38	26
Calif.	41	30	30

n) Psychokineses, influencing the movement of matter mentally.

N. Y.	27	43	55
Ill.	36	30	34
Calif.	30	48	22

o) Psychic Healing, the ability of one person (the healer) to produce a "miraculous" cure in another person.

N. Y.	32	35	33
Ill.	17	31	52
Calif.	23	46	31

p) Precognition, predicting future events.

N. Y.	17%	32%	51%
Ill.	49	29	22
Calif.	66	21	14

q) How ESP is affected by altered states of consciousness such as meditation, hypnosis, dreaming, drugs etc.

N. Y.	23	34	43
Ill.	38	34	28
Calif.	32	50	18

r) ESP in animals, what present research indicates.

N. Y.	30	35	36
Ill.	23	42	34
Calif.	30	44	26

HIGH SCHOOL COURSE IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY OFFERED AS A SCIENCE ELECTIVE

To prepare a testing ground for the HBCP module, should it be funded, I decided to write and submit to my own school district a syllabus for a course in parapsychology. The course, which I titled *ESP–A Challenge for Science,* was to be a ½ year science elective for juniors and seniors.

Although inclusion of parapsychology as a unit in my behavior course had not met with any objections, I was a bit apprehensive about the administration's approval of a course offering in a subject that is not only considered controversial, but is, in the minds of many people, still confused with magic and superstition. This attitude was reflected in a comment by one of the administrators when my syllabus was presented for approval at a meeting of the District Principal's Council. "The next thing you know", he said, "we will be teaching astrology and phrenology." I recently came across a syllabus for a high school course in experimental psychology proposed for the New York City public schools which indiscriminately lumped parapsychology with witchcraft and magic in a kind of confused potpourri, with no attempt made to distinguish between serious scientific research and the occult's lunatic fringe. Perhaps the authors of this syllabus thought they could make parapsychology more palatable by not taking it seriously.

Youth are attracted to the occult, and with increased media coverage of the paranormal, there is a growing need for an educational program in the secondary schools that would not only give serious treatment to the sound research in parapsychology but would also offer the kinds of information and experiences that would help gullible adolescents to differentiate between serious scientific research in this field and the superstitious and pseudo-scientific claims of various cults. I wanted to structure my syllabus in such a way as to minimize objections, but at the same time present material on this subject that would be not only accurate and up to date, but would be recognized for its broader educational value. R. A. McConnell's *ESP Curriculum Guide* provided excellent guidelines.[6]

McConnell suggests that "We can learn much about science in general from the study of ESP," and that the educational challenge of ESP lies in its elucidation of "the use of scientific method in the nature of scientific controversy." For example, "While scientists welcome minor changes in their thinking they vigorously oppose major changes." The history of science, from William Harvey to Albert Einstein, is honeycombed with dramatic examples of the scientific

communities' opposition to significant change. McConnell stated that "The wide acceptance of a revolutionary scientific idea will depend primarily upon philosophic belief or practical application, but scarcely at all upon laboratory evidence." This has certainly been true of acupuncture, aspirin and electricity. Their practical application in society has far exceeded any laboratory evidence elucidating the nature of their function. Our understanding of psi may also be preceded by its practical application in society if the lightning flashes of spontaneous phenomena and the static discharges derived from statistical analysis of laboratory data can be harnessed in some yet to be discovered generator.

I was impressed with McConnell's approach. The possibility of exploring parapsychology in the context of scientific history and methodology was appealing. This approach would give wide-eyed but restless youth an opportunity to learn something about the processes of science. They would also learn, as McConnell suggested, that while "the research problems seem limitless, research is restricted by present understanding and techniques upon which we must build" and "revolutionary scientific research is often slow and unexciting, requiring painstaking attention to detail."

The study of scientific research and methodology, not to mention history, is as much an anathema to most high school students as I expected parapsychology might be to the administrators who would have to approve my course. However, when I submitted the syllabus for approval, the administration was pleased to see a controversial subject, of obvious interest to the students, presented in a framework they found acceptable. Once the syllabus was approved, the title *ESP—A Challenge for Science,* was enough to bring the students flocking to sign up for the course. When the course is offered, some of the students may be surprised to find that in addition to learning about ESP they will also learn something about science.

The preparation and approval of the syllabus in parapsychology for my own school's science curriculum gave impetus to the development of the module proposal for the Human Behavior Curriculum Project. With the assistance of Joanna and Bob Morris and the many helpful suggestions of the PA members, the proposal was completed and submitted to the Curriculum Project Headquarters on February 1, 1975.

A PROPOSAL FOR THE HBCP's MODULE IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

In a letter to the HBCP director which accompanied our proposal, the reasons for the importance of this module were stated as follows:

First, it deals with an area in which the need for careful experimentation is paramount and can thus serve as a tool for teaching principles of scientific methodology and statistical inference, as well as the dangers of ignoring them. Second, it attempts to fill a need for information which is not now adequately met in the schools or society at large.

We pointed out that recent media coverage of parapsychology, usually intermixed with other "occult" topics, has increased the necessity for providing guidelines to educators. High school teachers interested in answering their students' need for information in this area are groping for guidance and asking for help in selecting materials which will present a balanced view.

We indicated that most parapsychologists are aware of the problems created by increased public interest in the field and pointed out that psychologists and other professionals are being offered a more informed treatment of the field through parapsychological symposia that have been presented at the last two APA conventions and at four recent AAAS conventions and by increased publication of articles in reputable scientific magazines, books and journals.

Though space does not permit the inclusion of the module proposal in its entirety some of the main features are described below: In our description of the Module topic, we stated that: "besides dealing with the research in parapsychology, the module would attempt to use parapsychology as a vehicle for illustrating the importance of careful experimental design and statistical methodology in the behavioral sciences, and the necessity for critical judgment in the student's daily life."

Some of the objectives of the module were:

1. To create an understanding of the need for scientific investigation of any poorly understood or unexplained phenomena by a brief look at the history of the development of new concepts in science.
2. To acquaint students with the methodological requirements for scientifically sound research and the qualities of a good investigator (curiosity, open-mindedness, critical judgment, and the ability to suspend judgment).
3. To increase the students' openness to the possibilities of new discoveries about human behavior, while at the same time helping them develop the tools of thought they need to make cautious evaluations regarding the evidence and claims for the paranormal.
4. To identify the kinds of phenomena being investigated by parapsychologists and to distinguish between these phenomena and those popularly believed to be paranormal for which there is no scientific evidence.

5. To summarize the methods, findings, and implications of current experimental parapsychology, emphasizing that psi effects in the laboratory have typically been slight, transient and often difficult to interpret.

Some of the specific points that would be made in the presentation of this instructional unit were described in the module proposal as follows:

1. Phenomena claimed to be instances of psi do not seem to be rare or isolated. They have been reported in many cultures throughout history, and therefore deserve careful and critical scientific attention.

2. Scientists involved in parapsychological research do not necessarily endorse all the claims of cultists, faddists, and other popular proponents of the paranormal. This will include a clear definition of psi phenomena with a distinction between those kinds of phenomena that are lending themselves to investigation and those that are not.

3. We need to be open to the possibilities of different ways of perceiving the world. New conceptions of reality, from Copernicus to Einstein, have been the result of exploration beyond the boundaries of conventional interpretation of reality.

4. Science is not a monolith pronouncing truisms, but an ongoing process of disagreement, discovery, synthesis and resolution of conflicting positions and ideas. Controversy thrives at the frontiers of knowledge, and controversy stimulates research to satisfy the need for evidence to support, modify or correct hypotheses.

5. Since we filter and structure incoming stimulation, it is important that we be aware of the many factors that influence our perception and interpretation of information, including expectations, needs, cognitive sets, and previous experiences.

6. Parapsychology has had difficulty being accepted as a legitimate area of scientific investigation for a number of reasons that are important to understand. These include, among others:

   a) Lack of an acceptable theory that will harmonize its apparent findings with known facts.
   b) Lack of a consistently repeatable experiment.
   c) Reputation for irresponsibility brought about by its association in the minds of many people with the occult and unscientific groups.

7. Today new concepts and techniques are enabling investigators in this field to explore the parameters of psi and study the possible channels of transmission in relation to psychological and physiological variables.

In introducing the activities in which the students might be engaged, we stated that:

Activities are envisioned as the core of this module. They will be designed to fulfill the objectives and illustrate and elucidate the main points. In the module, there will be a sufficient selection of activities covering a broad enough range to enable a teacher to adapt the material to the diverse needs and interests of various groups of students. Some of the activities we suggested for inclusion in the module were:

1. As a way of making students aware of their susceptibility to deception we suggested the use of stage magic in the classroom and included descriptions of several demonstrations of pseudo-telepathy.

2. In order to give the students the opportunity to experience being both subjects and experimenters and deal with the problems of executing a carefully controlled experiment, we suggested the replication of a few fairly simple ESP experiments using both standard ESP cards as well as pictorial material.

3. Since many high schools offer computer courses and have computers available for student use, a number of computerized ESP games were recommended.

4. It was also suggested that the module packet include a tape cassette designed to assist the students in relaxation techniques which could be used with interested groups during the course. ESP scoring could be measured before and after several weeks of daily relaxation sessions and students could be asked to give a report of their subjective reactions to the relaxation experiment as well.

5. Since it is necessary for students to have some knowledge of the concepts of chance and probability in order to know whether an apparent correspondence between two events is sufficiently meaningful to be labeled psi, we suggested the inclusion of activities such as coin tossing, dice throwing or use of a commercially available hexastat which dramatically demonstrates normal distribution patterns.

6. Since personal reports of ESP are often criticized as examples of inaccurate reporting, we suggested that students be given activities that would enable them to experience how our memory of information and events often suffers from selection and distortion. One suggestion was the staging of an "accident ruse" in which unsuspecting witnesses to a dramatic event are polled for their description of what happened.

7. Library research would provide an excellent activity for individuals who are interested in exploring specific topics in greater depth. The module could be enriched by students presenting research findings for class discussion. Suggested topics accompanied by

provocative questions and a bibliography of suggested resources would be included in the module handbook.

8. Surveys conducted by students to discover the attitudes and opinions regarding psi; frequency of psi experiences in a population, or the kinds of phenomena most commonly reported would provide an excellent activity for individuals or small groups. The module would provide guidelines for compiling and administering such a questionnaire effectively.

In addition to the teacher's manual and the student handbook another instructional component we recommended for inclusion in this module was a standard tape cassette containing interviews with leading scientists in the field. The tape, prepared specifically for this module, would focus on topics relevant to the students' educational experiences. We were also asked to include a statement on instructional strategy. One of the problems we addressed ourselves to in this section was the teachers' probable lack of training or experience in teaching both parapsychology and scientific methodology. We feel it would be necessary to structure the module in such a way as to minimize this problem and to provide the kinds of information and guidelines that would make a teacher feel comfortable with the subject area.

The "Instructional Strategies" section states that:

"Since the material contained in this module may be unfamiliar to most teachers, their role should be viewed as that of participants in the learning process. They should function not as teachers in the traditional sense but as learning catalysts, facilitating and orchestrating a meaningful educational experience." Though carefully structured, the module would be open-ended and while the material itself is intriguing enough to hold interest, student involvement in the suggested activities, experiments, and library investigations would enhance the module and assure a high degree of motivation and participation by all involved.

The guidelines for preparing the proposal also suggested that we include a reference to the "Principles of Human Behavior on Which the Module Will be Based." Two points made were:

1. A module on parapsychology provides an excellent forum for discussion of the need to achieve a cognitively coherent world view. Purported psi phenomena have in the past been either rejected a priori, reinterpreted in religious terms, or uncritically embraced, depending on how well they fit into the belief systems of the society or individual.

2. Motivational and situational factors as well as personality variables are known to affect subject performance in psi experiments just as they do in other experiments in the behavioral sciences.

This proposal included a list of audio-visual materials, a well balanced bibliography which included resources critical of research in parapsychology, a statement of the qualifications of the team's personnel, and a budget that was well within the guidelines given in the Module Design Handbook.

Appended to the module proposal were: 1. a copy of the survey of the student attitudes, knowledge and opinions along with the results obtained; 2. the syllabus for the course, ESP—A Challenge for Science, which had been approved for inclusion in my school's science curriculum; and 3. three sample responses from PA members with their suggestions for module content (included were the responses of a well known psychiatrist, a physicist and the much appreciated response we had received from Dr. Gardner Murphy).

CONTROVERSY

Subsequently we received a letter from the Director of the project in which he detailed the reviewing process that all proposals would undergo. The proposals were first to be reviewed by the project director and his staff. Some proposals would be rejected and others that were potentially acceptable, but found to need further work, would be returned to the authors for revision or modification. When this occurred, the rewriting would become a joint effort of the module team and the staff at project headquarters, involving a cooperative effort designed to put the proposal in what was described as its "Sunday best" before it was sent to the Steering Committee for final approval. The Steering Committee was made up of 15 leading authorities in the field of psychology and included such men as Donald O. Hebb, Ernest R. Hilgard, Jerome Kagan, and others. It was the Steering Committee itself that had suggested the 30 module topics for the Human Behavior Curriculum, including the one on parapsychology.

A proposal was not ordinarily sent to all members of the Steering Committee. Usually only two of its members were asked to approve a particular proposal. Considering the careful and thorough work of a competent staff at project headquarters whose stated job was to work with the teams to polish the proposals and put them in an acceptable form, it was unlikely that the Steering Committee would receive many proposals they could not approve.

Funding for module development was to be forthcoming in June and the modules were to be developed during the summer. Our proposal was not returned for revision or modification. At the end of April, we received a letter from the project director stating that our proposal had been reviewed favorably by Project Headquarters and

"sent to the Steering Committee for review" and that they were hopeful "that a decision (on funding) could be made within two weeks." In regard to funding he stated that "There appears to be no need at the moment for pessimism."

Though a decision had been promised within two weeks, a month passed without further word from project headquarters. In early May, when we contacted the Director by phone, he indicated that some problems had developed regarding the funding of our proposal: the Steering Committee members who had received our proposal for review had decided to solicit the comments of a reviewer not associated with the HBCP. This independent reviewer had reacted to our proposal "less favorably" and though the HBCP guidelines for proposal development had specifically requested a specialist in the field for each module topic, this reviewer had recommended that the module on parapsychology be written by someone *outside* the field of parapsychology. The project director was assured that if this was a real concern, our team would be happy to work with any objective and informed consultant whom the Steering Committee might wish to recommend.

Shortly thereafter we received a letter from the Project Director which stated that "because of disagreement among the Steering Committee members about the advisability of funding the proposal on parapsychology . . . it would take some time before a decision could be made." He went on to say that what he wished to do "was to contact other members of the Steering Committee to get their views [and that] this might take as long as three weeks." As will be noted "he did not see his way clear to funding the proposal very quickly." Realizing the committee concern that the module should receive critical and objective guidance during its development, we forwarded papers written by our consultants that would familiarize the Committee with the high quality and critical nature of our consultants' work. The papers included an address delivered by Dr. Morris at a 1975 AAAS symposium which was devoted entirely to the dangers of fraud and deception in a field in which the strictest controls and most careful experimentation are of acknowledged importance. Also included was a paper delivered by Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler, at the same symposium, in which she debunked the claims of a popular mind control group that has grossed millions from gullible youth who are easily enticed by promises of expanded mental powers. The paper detailed the carefully controlled double-blind experiments that supported her criticism. Also included was an unpublished manuscript by Dr. Irvin Child which described his own quite recent encounter with research in this field.[7]

This paper reflected the kind of cautious, critical open-mindedness that would be expected from a man of his stature in the field of psychology. It is important to note that with the papers a letter was included in which we restated our willingness to work with any outside consultants the Steering Committee might wish to recommend, including critics of the field.

On June 25, 1975 we received the following reply:

June 23, 1975

Mr. James E. Morriss
P.O. Box 292
Babylon, New York 11702

Dear Mr. Morriss:
I am at last able to report that a decision has been reached on the support of your proposed module on *Parapsychology*. I am sorry to report that the decision is not to provide the necessary funds.

You are aware, I know, that the decision has not been an easy one. Indeed, the proposal was more extensively reviewed than any other we have received to date. I shall try to explicate the reasons for the decision in the remainder of this letter.

While your position on psi is apparently not that of a believer, the members of your team and the consultants which you have selected must be so described, and their papers which you sent me confirm that description. Given the goals of the project, it would appear that at a minimum the module should be developed by those who are open-minded on the phenomenon. Neither believers nor non-believers can make that claim. To extend that thought, what the student would appear to need, based even on your data, is at least the amount of skepticism that the scientist usually has, particularly if he is to become more sophisticated about the care and caution required in arriving at any conclusion. The high school student would appear to accept beliefs uncritically, and several reviewers saw a need to try to change that tendency.

A second concern is that there are areas of behavior in which there is considerably more understanding and which appear as well to have the potentiality of considerably more impact on the lives of students, particularly in their social interactions. It was perhaps this that the Steering Committee had in mind at their last meeting when they decided not to include this topic in the 25 which had the highest priority for development.

Finally, some reviewers felt that some of the methodological issues would be too difficult for the target audience. One that comes to mind is whether one can talk about separating out the treatment from the error variance in the absence of a treatment.

I am sure you will be disappointed and I hesitate to consider the opinions that this decision will engender in some. Our decisions, necessarily of a go, no-go kind, cannot easily reflect the variety of considerations that enter into them.

Sincerely,

In our letter of response we thanked the project director for his effort is seeing that our proposal had received such an extensive evaluation, and pointed out that our experience with high school students had convinced us of a profound need for an educational program that would offer the kinds of experiences that would help youth develop a healthy skepticism, and give them some insight into the ways in which their belief systems are structured without "turning them off" or nurturing a negative attitude toward science by a closed-minded approach to a subject they find exceedingly attractive, and expressed our belief that with his advice this could have been accomplished in the module on parapsychology.

We pointed out that the potential problems he had mentioned, such as "methodological issues too difficult for the target audience" could have been resolved during field testing and revision. As for their objection to our consultants, we reminded him that we had offered to include as advisors any objective and informed "outsiders" the Steering Committee might wish to recommend and pointed out that the Steering Committee's description of the module topic was misleading, since it indicated that they believed parapsychology was a legitimate field of research. If this were the case, the only difference between the Steering Committee and our consultants, derisively characterized as "believers," was that our consultants had acted on their belief in the legitimacy of this field by doing research in it.

We expressed our shock at the Steering Committee's lack of commitment to a topic they themselves had recommended. Had they ever seriously intended to fund this module, or had they included this topic as a ruse to detract from their bias against a burgeoning field of research they felt uncomfortable with but were unable to ignore?

We suggested that it was not the module that had been submitted, but the whole field of parapsychology that was being rejected as too threatening for inclusion in the Human Behavior Curriculum for Secondary Schools. Since our proposal had been found acceptable by project headquarters and had even caused disagreement among Steering Committee members, their solution had apparently been to eliminate parapsychology from the list of topics in line for funding by tardily relegating it to a position of low priority. However, parapsychology was not alone in being designated as a low priority

project. Fourteen other topics that appeared on the original list or were being considered for inclusion were not among those the committee felt would be the most important to include. The list of topics to receive funding had been reduced in apparent anticipation of possible cuts in National Science Foundation funds during the coming year.

It is perhaps inappropriate to search for blame, for, as the Project Director pointed out, "it frequently lies, often hidden, in the world of human interactions."

CONCLUSION

With the rapid expansion of research and increased public interest, it is inevitable that parapsychology will find an acceptable gateway into public education, but, until this occurs, nothing is gained by becoming discouraged with the roadblocks that seem to inhibit progress. While we may disagree with the gatekeepers who guard the doors of education and protect the citadel of scientific tradition from sudden change, we must realize the importance of their role. Perhaps the time was not yet right.

The forces that shape policy in both science and education are far more complex than they might appear. In the confluence of events there is a time for everything and everything is fulfilled in its time. One possible reason for our failure to receive funding concerns timing, and may reflect more favorably on the Steering Committee's decision. A few days after I had replied to our letter of rejection I became aware of the running controversy that was reported in several articles in the *Monitor* (the newsletter of the American Psychological Association).[8] The articles described a storm that was raging in Congress over government funding of educational programs that were said to have a questionable effect on the minds of our youth. The curriculum in question was the widely publicized and increasingly popular innovation in social studies called *Man, A Course of Study.* This curriculum had been designed for elementary schools by a Harvard University team headed by Dr. Jerome Bruner, a leading figure in psychology and education. In the heated debate over this issue, some Congressmen were criticizing the National Science Foundation for funding a program that was said to be causing serious psychological problems for some students, problems that apparently ensued from the way this course openly and vividly exposed children to the customs, ideals and morals of other cultures. This encounter with mores that often conflicted with those of our own society, had apparently caused some of the youngsters to question the validity of parental authority and the belief systems of our own culture.

It doesn't require much imagination to see the scenario that might have developed if parapsychology had been included in the Human Behavior Curriculum for Secondary Schools. A Congressman caught up by the fears of a conservative constituency could, in a fire of political oratory, burn at the stake the American Psychological Association and the National Science Foundation for having funded the development of a controversial instructional unit that would cast spells of enchantment on the minds of innocent youth. He could flail, with well chosen words, the reputation psychologists have, which is already shaky in the minds of some people, accusing them of trying to poison our children's education with what he might mistakenly but effectively portray as a module on magic and superstition.

Public interest in parapsychology and a general awareness of progress in the field during the past few years has been considerable.[9] However, it takes only a few firebrands to ignite a conflict, and many people are confused by occult propaganda and are still ignorant about what constitutes science. Unfortunately, parapsychology still suffers from its identification in the minds of many people with pseudo-scientific cults and the "lunatic fringe." This is clearly demonstrated in almost any book store or library where serious research in parapsychology is still shelved with esoteric titles under the general category of "OCCULT." Perhaps the Steering Committee felt they had no choice. The stakes were too great to chance another Scopes trial in the House or Senate chambers where science education, already 20 years behind the times, could be set back another decade or so. Could this be the real reason that a possibly well intended recommendation by the APA for the inclusion of parapsychology in the secondary school curriculum was rescinded in the final hour? We do not know for sure, but, if the political implications were a consideration, their decision is a bit more understandable. However, considering the rapid rate at which new knowledge is increasing in all fields, particularly in parapsychology, their decision was unfortunate. It has been calculated that "by the time a child, born today, graduates from college, new information will be four times as great . . . and by the time the same child is 50 years old . . . 97 percent of everything known in the world will have been learned since the time he was born."[10] We have not yet felt the full impact of the information explosion, and man has no precedent in his history that can forecast its effects on society, but as Margaret Mead has said, "We must educate people in what nobody knew yesterday and prepare people . . . for what no one knows yet, but which some people must know tomorrow."[11]

Today our young people enjoy few of the old certainties. There is no longer a stable order of things to provide them with a sense of security.

Everything is changing around them. The old social ideals, the old religion, the old matter-of-fact assumptions about how to live are not enough. Today's youth are keenly aware of the possibility of atomic holocaust or ecological disaster in their lifetime. They face far more questions and uncertainties than they should have to face on their own, but today's education offers few answers and little guidance. However, in some vague intuitive way, our youth are catching fleeting visions of a better world. They are interested in exploring consciousness and probing the varieties of human experience which our society had previously ignored. From the drug culture of the 60's, with its communes and mystical unions of cults, today's youth are moving in a new direction. They are still in search of a new paradigm for life, but they are seeking answers that will provide a touchstone with reality, answers that may alter our image of man and offer new hope for the future of humankind. Our challenge and responsibility as educators in parapsychology is to help them ask the right questions.

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DISCUSSION

SCHMIEDLER: This is a sophisticated module which you are going to have taught, which is going to inculcate skepticism without rejection and openness, etc. How would you prepare teachers to teach this sort of thing?

MORRISS: When the teachers of my district heard that I was developing a syllabus in parapsychology a number of the teachers in our teachers'

union came to me and asked if I would be willing to offer parapsychology as an inservice course. Well, I was very busy but I thought it was a good idea, and so I did. The course was titled "New Frontiers in Mind Research" and our main focus was on parapsychology.

We had thirty teachers in the course, and a local university which worked with us, gave three graduate credits for the course. Many of the teachers told me the course was the most exciting experience they had ever had. "We'll never be able to teach the same," they said, "you've opened new doors for us, expanded our horizons." I would like to explore the possibility of packaging such courses on video tape so that they could be made available for a wider audience.

SCHMEIDLER: In pre-testing this program, you'd need to get the second generation's response—the response of your students' students in order to find out whether what seems so exciting is objectively effective.

MORRISS: That's a problem that I don't have an answer for.

ROGO: I have a quick question and then a more general comment. I was wondering if you have faced any resistance from the parents of students involved in the high school program that you're teaching.

MORRISS: No I have not yet and I don't anticipate any. In fact, I even had the PTA come to me and ask if I would teach a course in parapsychology for the adult education program.

ROGO: Secondly: In Los Angeles, the high schools are very active with parapsychology and during each semester the local *psychic* society does get several requests from high school groups and high school courses asking for people to come up and talk. I have been very active in that over the years. This year it was the first time that I had ever been requested by a junior high school class, and I had very mixed feelings about trying to discuss parapsychology with children that young. The only reason that I did agree to do it was when I found out that the material being covered in a course labeled "Parapsychology," was drawn from *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain,* and the last two weeks of the class had been devoted to pyramid power. So I thought a little hard-headed approach to the subject might be in order. However, the issue that raises is just when do we start educating people about parapsychology? Is it the high school arena? Shall we go to the junior high school level? Or the elementary level? That's an issue which I hope can be brought up during the course of the next two days: just when should we start teaching our kids about parapsychology?

MORRISS: Do you want to know how I feel about that?

ROGO: Yes, please. I would.

MORRISS: I think it should begin very early except that I think that with it you need to have the safeguards of developing critical thinking on the part of the students. There is the problem of chaff with the wheat. As Dr. Schmeidler said, "There's gold in them thar hills, but there's a lot of iron pyrite, too."

BELOFF: I'm very puzzled as to who might have been the guilty person on your Steering Committee. I mean, you mentioned a number of very distinguished names: Hilgard, Bruner, D.O. Hebb, etc. Certainly it couldn't have been Hilgard; it couldn't have been Bruner as far as I could imagine. Was It Hebb? Was it someone you haven't mentioned? Have you any suspicions yourself. Could you enlighten us?

MORRISS: That might make a very interesting guessing game. I'll give you the complete list if you'd like.

BELOFF: You have no concrete suspicions as to who . . . ?

MORRISS: I have no idea. I would certainly appreciate knowing if anyone has any inside information . . .

BELOFF: . . . no idea who would want to veto it?

MORRIS: . . . I would love to know what went on behind those closed doors. I think it might have been a very interesting session . . . .

VAUGHAN: Mr. Morriss, do you think that if the colleges were to incorporate parapsychology programs on the undergraduate level that this would be sufficient recommendation for putting the course into secondary schools? Do you feel that that is probably the main difficulty? That we don't have a standard parapsychology course on the college level.

MORRISS: I'm not sure that the same type of curriculum needs to be designed for the two. I think that the teenagers need a far more critical approach. They are tremendously gullible and they are, I think, in need of becoming far more cautious than the college age group who are perhaps more mature in their thinking.

VAUGHAN: It's been my impression that the college students in California could benefit very much from your course because they're just as gullible.

FRANKLIN: I'm wondering about the senators. I understand that Senator Proxmire and his aides listed some topics that they didn't deem were really supportable. I'm wondering whether it was Senator Proxmire and other people that you know of who may have influenced the support of parapsychology. A number of proposals for grant support have been turned down this year in the field of parapsychology research. I think it's a disservice to society, and I was wondering if you know who in the Congress and who in the Senate, are associated with Proxmire and his attitudes.

MORRISS: No, I can't give you any names now. I don't recall which senators were involved.

PALMER: I was very interested when you mentioned this survey that was conducted in various high school classes. I was wondering if you would summarize briefly what you learned from the survey about where high school students seem to be getting their information about parapsychology, and what kinds of attitudes, etc. they have.

MORRISS: This varied, depending on the part of the country. For example, I was quite surprised that in the East, the major source of information was radio, whereas, in the mid-West, more information came from reading, on the West coast I believe it was TV. If any of you would like to see the survey, I do have a copy of it with me and you are welcome to see it. I haven't had time to analyze the results. I'm presenting them because I'm hoping somebody will find it interesting and carry it further. The results include a good deal of information about the students themselves; their religious affiliations, their parental backgrounds, their education, their interests, and things of this nature, and I imagine somebody could do an interesting study with the questionnaire results, but I myself haven't had the time.

PALMER: I just wanted to add something in relation to Dr. Franklin's question. There's a Congressman, I believe his name is Borman, from Maryland, who was or seemed to be on the side of Proxmire, who actually sponsored an amendment to a bill that would have required a congressional review of all topics for any science proposals submitted to, I believe, the NIMH—so he would certainly be one individual.

FRANKLIN: Thanks.

MORRISS: One of the questions on the survey was, "Have you had or has someone in your family—had an experience that you think could only be described as an ESP experience?" Close to 50 per cent of the students surveyed had. I asked them, those that wanted to describe this

experience, to do so. We categorized their responses and tried to determine what categories the experiences would fit in. What surprised me was the fact that precognition was the most common experience, and usually precognition in dreams. Responses such as, "I dreamed that my aunt died, and then we heard the next day that she did." Or, "I had a dream and I met a character in it the next day." This was very very common in the high school students' reports of their personal experiences.

FRANKLIN: I was wondering about the scope of your course. Do you include, or do you think it's appropriate to include things like numerology, astrology, and witchcraft, together with things in the realm of telepathy, precognition, and psychokinesis? Where do you draw the line—if you draw any?

MORRISS: I steered entirely in the other direction. I know that many courses offered on the high school level do go into these things, I used parapsychology as a vehicle for exploring scientific methodology and history. Its content may change over the years as it is taught but this is the way I designed it.

STANFORD: I have just a brief comment regarding some questionnaire results you have there. When I test subjects individually in the lab, I routinely ask them about possible psychic experiences they have had, and I have a distinct impression, as you got from your survey, that most of them were reporting precognitive experiences—at least that would be the greatest proportion of cases. However, in probing those, particularly where they have said they were precognitive dreams, I have found that perhaps 80 percent of those cases are what I would call inferential, a person has had what we would call a déjà vu experience and immediately interprets that as having come from a precognitive dream and often reports it as that and you don't know that unless you probe and find out the nature of the relationship.

RHINE: Mr. Morriss, many years ago a publisher that puts out books and materials for high schools came to us with the idea of developing such a module—at least it sounds much like yours—for commercial use in the high schools. There was quite a bit of interest among the high schools in the country, promoted somewhat by the school publications reporting some of the experiments going on. We went so far as to try to see who could do this thing for them; they were ready to go, but it wasn't carried through because we didn't have the right person to design what was wanted, so it fell through. The point is you don't have to get the funding from just one source if you're ready.

MORRISS: Yes, that's true. As I said, at this time I'm more excited about the possibility of exploring sources of funding for developing a course like the one I've just given to teachers which explored some of the new research in the mind sciences. In our course we went into biofeedback, left-right hemisphere function, hypnosis, meditation, and, of course, parapsychological research.

MORRIS: I'd like to mention one thing that happened recently which may help to focus attention on just what was bothering the APA here or perhaps what is not bothering it. At our next APA convention there will be two symposia, I believe, on parapsychology, and there were two last year and one the year before. Also, Joanna Morris just recently got a letter addressed to her as editor of the *Proceedings* of the Parapsychological Association accepting that publication for abstracting in *Psychological Abstracts*. So, it's okay for believers to be editors of publications to get abstracted, but not to interact with, perhaps, high school students. In other words, there is no global discrimination on the part of the APA as an organization. There may really be something highly specific about the high school situation here.

DOMMEYER: I'm going to ask, I think, a kind of gadfly question here. I know that there has been a tendency to push back, say, college subjects into the secondary school level. They've been doing it to some extent in my field, which is philosophy. They have been attempting in some cases to put logic back into the high school situation. I just wonder how wise it is to do that kind of thing, and I'm raising the question as to whether it is wise actually to put parapsychology back on the high school level. I know the experience that I have at the college teaching level and it's this: Most of our students—and I'm willing to say *most of them*—don't know how to write and don't know how to read, and I'd rather see them come up to the college or university level with an ability to read and write than with a knowledge of telepathy or clairvoyance. And I'm just wondering whether the high schools shouldn't put their efforts into giving students the basic tools in English and mathematics instead of trying to teach them Aristotelian logic or the logic of Whitehead and Russell or parapsychology.

STANFORD: It may be I'm the only one in the whole group who has had the unique experience of living in a part of the country where there's a great deal of religious fundamentalism, and it's sometimes dubbed the "Bible Belt." I've had some experience in regard to this. I vividly remember when we had a parapsychology foundation that was established down in Texas and someone there who had some money was proposing to set up a building. We actually selected the lot. But

there was actually some talk about burning down the building if it was established. The rumors in the neighborhood were that we were going to put people in that building and cause them to become spirit-possessed and things of this kind. Now this sounds utterly impossible to us, perhaps, but I really believe that parapsychology introduced particularly through government funding in the public schools and high schools could be one of the sorest political spots we've come across in a long time. I now think you're probably right, Jim, about some of the implications of this, and I really wonder, if you're going to pursue this kind of work, whether it may not be a good idea to try to get some other funding than government funding, because this could conceivably, if there's a furor, reflect back on funding for parapsychological research, from the government.

MORRISS: I agree with you. Of course, I didn't suggest the topic as part of their curriculum; they suggested it themselves.

STANFORD: I know.

ROGO: I meant to bring this out earlier. Mr. Morriss said there might be some specific resistance to parapsychology at the high school level. Again, to bring in a little bit of local politics, in Southern California there is a problem with occultism getting on the campuses. Along with parapsychology we have a lot of astrology courses, we have a lot of numerology courses, and a lot of witchcraft courses. This has caused such a tremendous problem with parental objection that last year the state legislature held hearings about the possibility of banning anything dealing with the occult from the high school campuses, because this had caused a considerable problem. I think that to resolve the problem, we might think in terms of educating not only for instance, the students, and the teachers as well, but to hit the high school administrators with education about what is responsible parapsychology. Then those administrators can keep occultism off the campus and make the situation a little easier for us and parapsychology to get on.

MORRISS: This is at the high school level?

ROGO: Yes.

FRANKLIN: In my opinion, at this stage, we should try to make the advance and I think it's very good to see the potential for that taking place. As you say, there are genuine areas of the occult and parapsychology which we can advance and my comment, I guess, is if we don't begin to make that advance, then it just will not be made. We

have a fifth grade in which parapsychology is taught in the Kent school system and we have one teacher there who does the experiments in ESP with the children. She's done these experiments for years and it's accepted, and everybody approves of them. So I think it's probably the manner in which it is handled, the individual that handles it, and the manner in which it is tackled, which is the important thing. It's good to see that some progress is being made.

MORRISS: Well, Wilbur, my concern is not that they're going to get exposure, but it's what they're going to get exposure to, and if it's going to cause confusion about what is valid and what is not; what is pseudoscience and what is science. There is this confusion today and that's why I'm very concerned that we have the kinds of experiences in the educational process very early—maybe before the secondary school level, which will help students develop the kind of critical thinking and judgment that they need to deal with the exposure they're already getting in the media—whether we give it to them in the classroom or not.