

# **30<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Society for Psychical Research**



**Established in 1882**

**Abstracts of papers**

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## **Introduction from Programme Chair**

Bernard Carr

Welcome to the 30th International SPR Conference. This is the first time the conference has been held at Liverpool, but the venue is particularly appropriate since Liverpool Hope University has one of the most active parapsychology research groups in the UK. This booklet contains the abstracts for the papers to be presented. Many thanks to Peter Johnson who - besides being conference organizer - has put them into the required format and collated them. The abstracts are given in the order of presentation, with the time of each talk being indicated on the programme sheet. When there is more than one author, an underline indicates who the presenter will be. The author's address is not included, but the University Department where the work was carried out is indicated, if applicable. The title on the programme is sometimes an abbreviation of the title above the abstract itself.

Delegates at the SPR conference come from many backgrounds and represent a variety of different approaches to the subject, so this is reflected in the selection of talks. In particular, the speakers include both professional parapsychologists (interested in the experimental side) and field investigators (interested in the spontaneous side). Although there is sometimes perceived to be a schism between these two groups, the great strength of the SPR is that it incorporates both of them and brings them together at these conferences. Note that the talks are grouped into 90-minute sessions, each focusing on a particular theme, so delegates who are not interested in every topic can take a short time off to explore Liverpool. However, topics frequently recur, so they should not do so for long!

This year, for the first time, we have some invited talks. Rupert Sheldrake, whose is currently supported by the Perrott-Warrick scholarship, will be discussing the latest results of his research on Saturday morning. Harald Walach, the new professor in the field at the University of Northampton, will be giving his perspectives of the changing fortunes of parapsychology in the after-dinner talk on Saturday. Les Lancaster, who runs the MSc in Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University and is the first professor in this area in the UK, will discuss neurocognition and psi in the final slot on Sunday. There will also be a special session on Saturday in memory of John Beloff, who sadly died last June. John was a former SPR President, who made an immense contribution to the field and attended nearly all our previous conferences.

Finally I would like to thank the other members of the Programme Committee - Tony Cornell, Alan Gauld, Chris Roe and Donald West - for all the hard work they have put into selecting the papers and, where appropriate, improving them. As usual, there were more submissions than could be accepted for presentation, so I hope the people whose papers were rejected will not feel too disappointed. I must also, of course, thank the contributors themselves since, without them, there could be no conference.

## Suggestions for an academic spontaneous case program

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Periodically there are calls for spontaneous case research to be given a higher priority in contemporary parapsychology (Colborn, 2004, Alvarado, 1996, White, 1985). Here I outline several suggestions for the implementation of a modest academic study of spontaneous cases.

The current state of spontaneous case studies (SCS) is rather disorganised, with many amateur groups collecting cases in piecemeal fashion, and some relevant academic work being performed. To be successful, I believe that an academic SCS program should encompass the following:

Positive eyewitness testimony studies: Several university groups study eyewitness testimony already, but the emphasis is often on the its fallibility (i.e. French, 2003). Whilst this is very important, most spontaneous case investigators want to know how to get the most accurate statements possible from witnesses. We need more investigation of the use of cognitive interview techniques when interviewing witnesses of the anomalous. Also badly needed are studies of how best to apply forensic methods to investigations (i.e. to guard against fraud).

We need an agreed classification system for researchers to use when studying spontaneous cases. At the moment there is no real agreement on how to sort and classify a large variety of anomalous experiences; the Exceptional Human Experiences website (White, 2001) lists over three hundred very diverse experiences relevant to spontaneous cases studies. One serious problem is that classification systems are theory driven. Is a poltergeist a noisy spirit, an electric storm (Budden, 1998), RSPK (Roll, 1972), some or none of these things? Rousseau's (2000) phenomenological classification system goes some way to addressing these issues, and is advantageous because it allows for non-anomalous elements in anomalous experiences, and focuses on 'symptoms' rather than root causes, which may be contentious.

The urgent need for a publicly accessible, comprehensive database of anomalous spontaneous phenomena comparable to the UFO databases (i.e. CUFOS). Such a database is crucial for testing theories like the decline hypothesis (Comell, 2004).

Hypotheses in urgent need of testing are being left to amateur groups, which is not a bad thing but often means that the results are sidelined by academia. For instance an independent research group and not an academic department has initiated a major study of the EM theories in Bristol (Psychic Research Foundation, 2003). There needs to be more cooperation between academic/non-academic groups, and more effort at securing funding for joint ventures.

SCS is naturally interdisciplinary, and there should be more cooperation between schools of psychology, anthropology, sociology, biology and physics. More links with religious studies and theology would be especially desirable, as a wide variety of spontaneous psychic experiences occur in a religious context (McClenon, 1994).

Several of the suggestions have already been implemented by individual academics in parapsychology, but the author will invite wider discussion on how to renew this valuable, diverse field of study.

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## Is Spontaneous Field Research a Waste Of Time?

John Fraser

The purpose of this provocatively titled presentation will be to review both the shortfalls and the strengths of the numerous spontaneous research techniques that are used by an every increasing band of paranormal investigators both trained and new to the subject and to try to discover whether the collective knowledge of the conference can add some knowledge towards best practise in the area.

Referring firstly towards the impact of visiting a paranormal site may have on an investigator's objective perceptions (as tested by Lange and Houran amongst others). There is nevertheless no other way by definition to investigate phenomena that due to our lack of understanding appears spontaneous in its nature other than outside the laboratory.

The SPR itself has a fairly strong tradition in such research most famously through the Enfield Poltergeist case and the Scole experiments

Even though the need for spontaneous field research may be accepted, there appears to be no standard way on how to do this. There has been an evolution of high tech equipment replacing the mercury thermometers, chalk whistles and plachettes of the classic twentieth century investigators without perhaps a true understanding of why we are trying to measure what we do.

Examples of this include the now famous and popular EMF meters which are used primarily for detecting the presence of 'Ghosts' by looking for a change in levels. When any evidence (e.g. research by Roll and Nicholls) apparently points to a high background EMF reading from natural causes actually increasing the likelihood of a paranormal experience this is an entirely different thing.

A further example is the possible red herring of orbs which appear to possibly be largely a naturalistic phenomena of the digital camera, as is well argued by the researcher and photographer Phillip Carr (In his video, and Fortean Times article *Riddle of the Orbs*).

Having provided these and other examples that the procedure involving Spontaneous Investigations is far from perfect, I would point out that this is largely not due to lack of care of investigators but to the spontaneous way such procedures have developed. Looking at key features such as optimum team size, amount and variations of scientific equipment, usage of resources which rely in themselves on theories of the paranormal (e.g. Plachettes / mediums/ Dowsing etc) and of course pre- and post- investigation research I would hope to involve the audience both through their comments and through a questionnaire in which they can give their thoughts both through their experiences and scientific abilities as to best practice in the field.

If there is sufficient input both during the meeting and via any questionnaire, these would be developed into a short post Conference report which would take a small step to ensuring that the question posed in the title of this presentation is one that can be invalidated.

## **Psychic Lottery Project - A Conference Attempt to win the Lottery jackpot!**

Mick O'Neill

As I have explained the details of the Psychic Lottery Project at three previous SPR conferences, this year we will only make a conference attempt at the lottery experiment itself. Lottery tickets will be bought and any winnings will be shared amongst participants and the SPR. It is free to take part.

Instructions will be given before the experiment and an instruction sheet distributed. A rough idea of what is done can be ascertained from the below.

### Project Description:

The on-going Psychic lottery project has so far attracted about 500,000 psi attempts in 40,000 sessions by 1,250 participants in five continents over seven years. As such, it may possibly be the most wide-ranging psychical research study ever carried out. A total of about 17,000 experimenter hours and £26,000 has been expended (80% on lottery tickets), £3,000 of it from SPR grants.

The project's overall aim is to find out whether and how it may be possible to use psi to predict lottery numbers. If it is, we plan to win the UK National Lottery twice!

The principal bases of this research are the PEAR precognitive Ganzfeld results (1989) and the work of Zilberman (1995). This latter research suggested that the number of people who win lottery prizes varies dependent on certain factors, most importantly, geomagnetic disturbance.

The project involves people being invited to try to predict winning lottery numbers during a short period of visualisation. The experiment currently consists of about 100 participants independently attempting this for each Saturday draw. The participants pay nothing, but simply email or phone their chosen numbers to me. All the participants' predictions are then input into a computer program that saves them and calculates which tickets to buy. Then, about £60 worth of tickets are bought per draw. Prior to the lottery draw, participants are emailed with the numbers on tickets purchased and the information necessary for an unambiguous division of any prizes among participants. After the draw they are emailed with their results and those of the group including any prize division.

So, it's designed to be a free, easy and fun opportunity to test one's psychic abilities against the lottery, help psychical research and possibly get rich. You are invited to take part in this conference attempt and/or join the ongoing experiment. (Email: m.on@virgin.net)

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Thanks are due to the SPR for support grants amounting to £3,000. Without their help, non-academic research like this will usually be impossible.

# Evolution and Spontaneous Cases: Updating the Two-stage Model of Receptive Psychic Experiences

Richard S. Broughton

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The quest to understand receptive psychic experiences (those in which a person appears to receive information) led early researchers to propose two-stage models of the process. Pioneers such as Gurney and Myers (Gurney, Myers, & Podmore, 1886; Myers, 1903) were aware that psychic experiences involved normal mental processes, but it was Tyrrell (1946) who first formulated a clear two-stage model of receptive psi. Tyrrell drew a distinction between *process* and *product* in what he termed paranormal cognition. The *process* is the “reception” of the telepathic (or otherwise paranormal) information, which he notes is always unconscious. The *product* is the elaboration of the information into conscious awareness. Tyrrell notes “*The product of the paranormal cognitive process is not paranormal... The product of the paranormal cognitive process is also the product of cognitive and other processes which we are not in the habit of calling paranormal*” (Tyrrell, 1946, p. 68, italics in original). Later, Louisa Rhine adopted a similar two-stage model to understand the spontaneous cases in her collection (Rhine, 1978), and to a large degree the two-stage model has become accepted as a reasonable starting point for explanatory theories (Irwin, 1999). The *process* (in Tyrrell’s terminology) or first stage by which the anomalous information that constitutes a psychic experience enters the human system remains a mystery and a challenge for science (and most likely for Physics, in my estimation), but understanding the other half of the psychic experience involves identifying the pathway of this anomalous information through the *normal* operations of the brain and perhaps other systems of the organism.

Previously I suggested that if we wanted to understand psychic experiences (or psi in general) it would help to know what they are for (Broughton, 1988). I suggested that, as a start, we should look to the same process that has shaped homo sapiens into the most successful species on the planet—evolution. An important key to the evolutionary fitness of homo sapiens has been our ability to acquire and store information, and to use it to plan future action based on our assessment of likely outcomes. *We are essentially a future-oriented species*. If evolution were to endow humans with an ability to capitalize upon anomalous information (e.g., Josephson & Pallikari-Viras, 1991) then it would be reasonable to expect that this ability would be built upon and tightly integrated with brain systems that serve this crucial fitness characteristic.

One of evolution’s distinguishing characteristics is that it is a remarkably economical process. Evolution tends not to devise new systems where existing systems can be adapted and extended to serve new needs and confer new advantages. The human brain is built upon the substrate of a reptilian brain which now remains a crucial part of what it means to be human. New functions are typically “piggybacked” on existing systems that they can enhance.

This paper shall explore two candidates for such brain systems based on the rich information of spontaneous cases. The human memory system has already been identified as a brain system that is crucially involved in psychic experiences (Irwin, 1979; Roll, 1966; Warcollier, 1939) and this can be seen in many spontaneous cases (as well as in experimental data). Recent developments in neuroscience suggest that a second brain system may be involved, the emotional system, which is evolutionarily designed to work in close conjunction with memory to facilitate human planning and decision-making (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996). Re-examining a wide range of spontaneous cases in the light of current understanding of the joint roles of the emotional and memory systems in dreaming, hallucinations and intuitive experiences, suggests that both of these sub systems may be instrumental in translating whatever happens in stage one into human experience and adaptive human behaviour. Furthermore, the somewhat neglected class of intuitive spontaneous cases suggests that the emotional system may be the fundamental component of stage two.

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## **The best ghost photograph ever taken? Re-assessing the “Brown Lady of Raynham Hall” photograph**

Alan Murdie

The photograph of the “Brown Lady of Raynham Hall” taken on September 19<sup>th</sup> 1936 is probably the most famous alleged ghost picture ever taken. Captured by two photographers working on behalf of the magazine *Country Life*, the picture shows a curious luminous image, suggestive of a hooded figure on the staircase of Raynham Hall, Norfolk. It has been reproduced in numerous books, articles, broadcast and on web-sites as a genuine ghost photograph.

SPR archives contain a file dating from 1937 on the photograph. (1) The then research officer for the SPR, Mr C.V.C Herbert conducted an investigation into the picture which the Society decided not to publish in either its *Journal* or *Proceedings*. The file indicates no evidence of deliberate fraud but points to serious photographic defects which have gone otherwise unnoticed – so far as is known – since 1937.

Such a finding is compatible with the conclusions of the early SPR that apparitions are hallucinatory phenomena which cannot be photographed. Although many photographs are submitted to the Spontaneous Cases Committee of the Society very few show anything resembling a human-like apparition. Most of these photographs appear to show smudges, blotches or patches of luminous mist open to interpretation. This paper does not examine the issue of what these foggy or luminous patches may represent, although they are certainly considered worthy of further research. Rather, it considers the apparent failure by audiences to notice the defects in the Brown Lady photograph.

Attention is drawn to the views of G.N.M Tyrrell, one of the leading 20<sup>th</sup> century theorists on apparitional experiences. Best known for his book *Apparitions* (1942), Tyrrell’s hypothesis on the assessment of evidence is proposed in two of his lesser known works, *The Personality of Man* (1948) and *Homo Faber* (1951). Tyrrell suggested that the human mind contains a subconscious barrier which hinders the rational and dispassionate examination of any purported hard evidence for psychic phenomena. The operation of this barrier can be seen in either an over-arching scepticism or, alternatively, a gullible acceptance of evidence which deters further exploration of the subject. In both cases, the effect of the barrier is to discourage conscious exploration of the psychic dimension which Tyrrell argues interacts with the subconscious mind. Both reactions can effectively undermine the critical assessment of evidence and thwart greater understanding of psychic phenomena. Tyrrell suggested this boundary was an evolutionary development to protect the human organism and the conscious mind which is physically adapted to operate within a material world rather than in a non-material dimension.

Apparent failure to recognise defects in the Brown Lady photograph may illustrate Tyrrell’s barrier mechanism in operation. It is also further evidence that the interpretation of physical evidence, particularly photographs, is shaped by subconscious mental attitudes. It is suggested other examples include the faked Buguet spirit photographs (1873-75) (2), the Cottingley fairy photographs (1917) (3) and hoaxed pictures by George Adamski published in 1953 (4).

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## **The Social Psychology of Anomalous Experience. The Analysis of Experience.**

Fiona Campbell, Part-time PhD student University of Liverpool/ Liverpool Hope University. Supervisor:  
Dr. Matthew Smith

Mention 'the paranormal' to a group of individuals, and it is possible to gain several anecdotes of experience. In a survey of students Usha and Pasricha (1989) found that about a third claimed to have had anomalous experiences. The reaction of the confidant to a report of experience could lead to a person being institutionalised unnecessarily, or not receiving medical help, which they may require. This reaction could all depend on the knowledge, prior experience, professionalism and objectivity of the interviewer.

Gold and Weinberger (1995) found diagnosis of schizophrenia has required the discovery of hallucinations and delusions as the main symptoms. In a study of 'internet psychosis' Margolese, Choulnard, Beauclair and Miller (2002) include in a ratings scale, 'paranormal experiences' as delusions. Had such symptoms been reported to a party, unaware of schizophrenic research, could misinterpretation have been detrimental to the health of the individual? Conversely, had a general anomalous experience been misinterpreted by a professional as a symptom of schizophrenia could the effect have been similarly detrimental to the individual?

Gold and Weinberger compare schizophrenia with temporal lobe epilepsy, suggesting with subtle differences between the two disorders being rarely studied, this limits current testing models for schizophrenia.

Michael Persinger (1984) found sufferers of temporal lobe epilepsy often reported anomalous type experiences, correlating these with anxiety and depression (Persinger, 1989)

Had Usha and Pasricha's students reported their experience to a doctor, how would the doctor have dealt with the experience, and how many would be sent home for wasting time, or sent to a psychologist? How many cases will need more professional help in the future, and how many just need someone to listen objectively, and understand?

Zusne (1989) reviewed the case of a subject who had been termed psychologically disturbed, suggesting his experiences may have just exhibited his 'fantasy proneness'.

There appears a fine line between diagnosis of mental illness, and a mere anomalous experience.

A case can be misinterpreted, as Rieber, Takooshian and Iglesias (2002) found, with a large sample of psychology teachers regarding a case subject as having Multiple Personality Disorder, when further study found this analysis to be wrong.

In comparison of culture the anomalous experience might be interpreted differently (Neppe and Smith, 1982), as one culture's suggestion of a need of professional help is another's revered shaman.

The development of a second study for this PhD involves an open questionnaire, asking what experiences have been had, who these have been reported to, and what followed the report. This will then be analysed through discourse analysis and grounded theory to find common themes.

William Roll (1972) found that many subjects involved in 'poltergeist' type phenomena were sensitive to stress and that the exhibition of phenomena was a release of that stress. It seems pertinent for professionals to take these experiences seriously, and realise that some may just need explanation and someone to listen, and some may be showing a 'symptom' of an illness which needs consideration. It may be important for parapsychologists to be more involved with some investigative groups to help analyse the experiences reported.

*This research forms part of the author's PhD research. The SPR is gratefully acknowledged for funding towards this project.*

## **Visual gems from the Permutt Collection and rare video footage**

Melvyn J Willin

First of all let me say from the outset that this will not be a paper but will consist of a totally visual presentation of photographic material (converted into slides) taken from the Permutt Collection currently residing in the SPR archive at Cambridge University Library.

Black and white and colour slides will allow delegates to see mainly unpublished photographs of strange lighting effects, mediums in action, strange apparitions and miscellaneous phenomena. They will be invited to comment on the authenticity and interpretation of the images they encounter.

Video footage, transferred from old reel-to-reel format will present extremely rare images of Sai Baba producing large quantities of vibuti, Arigo undertaking operations at close contact and early sensory deprivation experiments taken from my own collection of films.

It is hoped that lively discussion will form part of this presentation.

## Assessing the roles of the sender and experimenter in dream ESP research<sup>1</sup>

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J. B. Rhine's advice to those who hoped to study psi in the laboratory involved an analogy with making rabbit stew; "If you want to have rabbit stew, first catch the rabbit" (Stanford, 1993, p. 129). Thus if we are to study the action of psi in the laboratory we need to ensure that all aspects of the laboratory situation are arranged so as to facilitate (or at least not inhibit) its occurrence. Psi phenomena are not renowned for their experimental reliability (see Shapin & Coly, 1985 for an extended discussion), and all too often we have been left to feed on scraps. It might be naïve to expect replication on demand given the effect sizes typically involved (cf. Utts, 1991), but nevertheless there must be a suspicion that psi is sensitive to some factors that have not been adequately explored or typically are not controlled for effectively. If different laboratories differ in these subtle respects it could lead superficially similar experiments to generate different outcomes, as some enjoy rabbit stew while others settle for vegetable broth. Efforts to identify potential confounding factors promise to inform us of the necessary conditions to capture psi more consistently as well as perhaps offering some insight into its *modus operandi*.

In looking to map these necessary conditions we have recently been especially concerned to consider the sender-receiver-experimenter dynamic as a factor (or collection of factors) that moderates psi performance in ganzfeld ESP trials (Roe, Sherwood & Holt, 2004; Sherwood, Roe, Holt & Wilson, 2005). In the first of these studies (Roe et al., 2004) we attempted to distinguish between the active contribution a sender might make and the positive effects of simply believing that a friend was viewing the target. The direct hit rate was exactly at chance (25%) and, although this was slightly better for sender trials than no sender trials (26.1% versus 23.5%) and better for trials on which the receiver believed there was a sender than when they believed there was not, irrespective of whether there actually was one (33.3% versus 18.2%), there were no significant differences between conditions based on z scores of target ratings (for sender status  $p = .632$ ; for sender expectancy  $p = .765$ ). In a subsequent study we explored whether participants' perceptions of the experimenter and of the experimenter's attempts to generate a warm social ambiance were predictive of performance (Sherwood et al., 2005). Here both participants and the experimenter completed an interaction questionnaire that asked about their mood, expectations of success and sense of rapport with the other participants. Responses on the interaction questionnaire suggested that participants were typically in a good mood, fairly relaxed, optimistic about the trial — though not confident of success — and had a positive perception of the experimenter, all of which were expected to be psi conducive features. Nevertheless, the direct hit rate for this study was nonsignificantly worse than chance (21.1%). However, although relationships between these variables and trial outcomes (in terms of Z scores for similarity ratings) did not exhibit a clear pattern, they did offer some promising overall relationships, such as with receiver mood, sender optimism and confidence of success, which we felt warranted further work.

We planned to follow up these findings by conducting a further study that would investigate the effects of both sender and experimenter upon the receiver's ability to identify a target video clip based on correspondences with their own mentation. However, using the ganzfeld as a method of eliciting psi has proved to be very labour intensive, and may have deterred some participants from volunteering because of the time commitment required and the coordination necessary when involving a sender and receiver. In looking for an alternative method we were encouraged to reconsider dream ESP as a paradigm, since there is evidence of above chance scoring among post-Maimonides studies using experimental designs using a simplified method that does not require REM monitoring or access to sleep laboratories (e.g., Dalton, Steinkamp & Sherwood, 1999; see Sherwood & Roe, 2003, for a review).

In considering previous dream ESP research we can derive some encouragement for suggesting that sender and experimenter effects might be evident here too. For example, Ullman, Krippner and Vaughan (1973), in reflecting on the very successful Maimonides dream ESP series commented that "[T]he active involvement of the agent [sender] is an important ingredient for success." (p. 212), and the majority of

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank the Perrott-Warrick Fund, Trinity College, Cambridge for their support of this project.

Maimonides studies investigated telepathy rather than clairvoyance, which might be interpreted as a tacit acknowledgement that a sender can facilitate success in a dream ESP task. However, this presumption was not supported in Sherwood and Roe's (2003) summary analysis, which suggested that overall the clairvoyance studies in this series had been more successful than those intended to study telepathy. Of course, making comparisons across studies may be misleading, since they could have differed in other ways besides whether or not they involved a sender, and we expected that a direct comparison within a single study should clarify this relationship.

There is also some suggestion in the database of post-Maimonides dream ESP studies that some groups of researchers have been markedly more successful than others (see Sherwood & Roe, 2003, pp. 102-4). Given the diversity of approaches used in these studies it is difficult to attribute these differences to one particular cause, but it may be worthwhile to consider whether differences in experimenter-participant interaction have some effect.

In this presentation we will describe the results of a repeated measures study that was intended to assess the role of the sender in dream ESP research, with each of 40 participants completing a sender and a no sender trial night. Participants remained blind as to which night was which but were asked to nominate on which night they felt there was a sender so as to allow us to consider expectancy effects. Potential psychological experimenter effects were assessed by correlating participant and experimenter ratings of their interaction against task performance. In all cases the dependent variable was pre-specified to be the z score of target clip ratings.

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**Assessing the role of the sender as a PK agent in ESP studies:  
The effects of strategy ('willing' versus absorption) and feedback  
(immediate versus delayed) on psi performance**

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Many ESP experiments adopt a telepathy design in which psi is conceived as a dyadic interaction between one person ('the sender') who is aware of some randomly-selected target information and one person ('the receiver') who is unaware of that information by normal communication channels. The sender's task is to attempt to convey target information psychically while the receiver adopts a relaxed, passive state that might be sufficiently labile to allow psi-mediated information to come to conscious awareness. In this presentation we will describe the fourth study in a series that uses a novel method to explore more directly the contribution that the sender might make in such a dyad. This method has utilised a random number generator (RNG) to act as a 'virtual receiver' that might be analogous to a 'live' receiver in providing a fluid, random system by which to select impressions that could be related to target information, but might avoid some of the difficulties of working with complex and idiosyncratic human systems (see Roe, Holt & Simmonds, 2003).

In the first two studies (Roe et al., 2003; Roe & Holt, in press) the RNG 'virtual receiver' ran in the background during a standard ganzfeld ESP study, in which a 'human receiver' was relaxing and producing 'free-associative' mentation. During the sending period, the RNG selected descriptive statements from among a pool of 768 to give a 20-item 'RNG mentation', and this was used by an independent judge (JW) to select the target clip when presented alongside three decoys. In Study I a suggestive effect was obtained, with a 32.5% hit rate. Study II was intended to replicate this effect but also to compare sender and no sender trials to explore whether the original finding might be attributable to the performance of the judge rather than any sender effect — if the effect persisted on trials where in fact there was no sender then this would be strongly indicative of a judge or experimenter psi effect. Some support was obtained for the hypothesis that senders would exert an influence on the virtual receiver, as psi success (using two independent judges, JW and RD) was higher in trials with a sender than those without.

In Study III of the series, which we presented at last year's conference (Holt & Roe, 2005), the protocol was simplified by using only a sender and the virtual receiver, obviating the need for a human receiver and allowing for immediate feedback, since the sender could be accurately briefed. In addition, the lability of the target system was manipulated. Twenty-four statements were selected for each trial, from a pool of 416, eight by each of the following processes: a random number table; a pseudo random process; and a live RNG. It was predicted that the greatest psi effect would be found with the most labile target system (following Braud, 1981, 1994). Further, drawing upon Stanford's (1978) conformance behaviour model, it was predicted that senders with the most 'stable' trait characteristics would achieve higher psi hitting. This expected interaction effect between target and sender lability was found, as senders with lower trait lability achieved higher psi scores in the highest labile target condition and vice versa. However, the overall psi outcome was lower than for Studies I and II. We speculated that this may have been due to the overt nature of the RNG task here, which contrasted with the design of previous studies in which the sender's attention was concentrated on the human receiver rather than the RNG. Not only was the sender's goal to influence the RNG made more obvious in Study III, which may heighten any skepticism effect, but also participants were able to receive immediate feedback, and were asked to rate the descriptive statements as they were selected. It was presumed, after Parker (2000), that such feedback would be beneficial, but this generalization may not have been valid. Post-experimental interviews gave participants the opportunity to describe the sending strategies they had used in attempting to influence the virtual receiver and their experience of participating in the study: 17.5% found that the rating and monitoring of descriptive statements (immediate feedback) inhibited them from becoming absorbed in the target video clip, and they found it difficult to continually switch between the screen playing the video clip and the screen showing the statements; 17.5% found the statements frustrating or de-motivating, which suggests that receiving ongoing feedback while sending might have a negative effect upon their perceptions of success on the PK task and/or absorption in the task.

Participants also reported preferring different sending strategies: 30% described consciously attempting to influence the random process at some point during the trial, focusing on particular ideas/words or emotions and ‘willing’ them to appear within the statements; 65% described their activity as ‘just doing’, simply watching the clip and rating the statements, often with a range of embedded techniques, such as trying to notice something different in the clip each time, free associating or focusing on memories and emotional reactions to the clip.

In relating these findings to those reported by other researchers, it appears that volitional strategy and the presence or absence of feedback may affect sender success, but that these relationships are not straightforward and may interact with one another; perhaps conditions that enable the participant to gain optimal enjoyment and a lack of performance anxiety or frustration in the task are key factors, or the cognitive demands of different aspects of the task might cause interference. These factors may in part explain why psi performance was lower in Study III where the shift of the sender focus changed from being non-intentional to intentional.

In Study IV we intended to investigate more directly the effects of having direct feedback, by manipulating both this variable and the sending strategy employed (focused ‘willing’ directed at the virtual receiver versus absorption in the video clip and association forming process). In addition, we revisited Study III’s interesting findings by keeping the three data generation methods (random number table, pseudo random process and live RNG) to attempt to replicate the sender trait lability x target lability interaction. In this presentation we will describe the results of a 40-trials study that adopted this design.

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## Observations on the Embodied Use of Target Objects in the Telepathy Virtual Environment

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The University of Manchester and Liverpool Hope University have been collaborating on a project which uses immersive virtual reality (IVR) as an experimental environment and medium for telepathy. IVR denotes the use of three-dimensional computer graphics technology to generate artificial environments that afford real-time interaction and exploration. These are intended to give the user an impression of being present ('telepresence') or immersed in a computer-generated world. A sense of immersion is promoted through the use of head mounted displays (HMDs). These present stereo images and sound to create a perceptually encompassing computer environment. An instrumented data glove allows participants to interact with virtual objects. We argue that IVR has a number of features which make it well suited for the study of telepathy, including a higher degree of experimental control, the co-location of senders and receivers, and the opportunity for more 'natural' and meaningful (to participants) experimental trials.

A further possible benefit of IVR in telepathy research is its facilitation of embodied attempts at telepathy. If the Sender (S) and Receiver (R) in a telepathy trial are allowed to interact with the target pool (such as a book, a vase, or a chair) this might also facilitate both the acts of sending and receiving. This would also go some way to addressing some of the problems with telepathy research identified by researchers who argue against a purely visual transfer model of telepathy, and would be a further move to more complex (on a number of levels) target material now widely supported in the research literature. Personal handling of target pool objects by both S and R might be expected to add other aspects to the telepathic communication process usually absent in the methodological design of research on this topic: indeed there are anecdotal accounts in the research literature of research participants who spontaneously try to act out aspects of the pictorial content of targets. As the relationship between S, R and the target pool objects becomes more interactive this might facilitate the transfer of emotions, meanings and experiences that better convey what these are. An object which can be handled might be expected to make accessible the personal meanings, purposes of use, and so on, of the object for S and R than might possibly be achieved via a static (or even moving) image or written name (which are more commonly used in telepathy research studies). Such a view would find support from work in ecological psychology, particular work on optical flow and affordances.

In this presentation we will focus on the qualitative observations of the telepathy IVR system in use, and in particular on (1) the occasions when participants interact with target pool objects in an embodied manner and (2) participants expressions of 'like' and 'dislike' of certain objects, and the reasons which they provide. We believe such qualitative observations are valuable in aiding the refinement of future experimental telepathy studies, including the types of target objects used. The presentation will include an audio-visual presentation of the telepathy virtual environment in use to illustrate our qualitative findings.

## **Automated Tests for Telepathy**

Rupert Sheldrake

The commonest kind of apparent telepathy in the modern world occurs in connection with telephone calls, where people think of somebody who then rings, or where they know who is ringing as soon as they hear the phone. A similar phenomenon occurs with emails. Tests on email and telephone telepathy involving four senders, selected at random in a series of trials, have given highly significant positive hit rates of over 40%, compared with the chance expectation of 25%. One advantage of telephone and email telepathy tests is that participants can be many miles apart, even thousands of miles apart, ruling out any possibility of direct sensory information transfer. Doing these tests however is time consuming and I and my colleagues have been developing a series of automated tests for telepathy, which can take place through the internet or through text messaging telephone systems. I will summarise these procedures and the results so far. Some of these methods are suitable for use in schools and colleges as homework assignments and they introduce students to the principles of controlled experiments and statistical methodology, as well as enabling them to take part in research at the frontiers of science.

## Event-related EEG correlations in separated human subjects

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### Introduction

The hypothesis of telepathic interactions between closely related people is a common assumption still present in our culture. Very often, people are not consciously aware of the emotional or cognitive correlations between them and their partners. We have tried to measure the physiological correlates of those commonalities. Such an experimental proof was first attempted by Grinberg-Zylberbaum et al. (1993). He reported experiments in which one of two subjects were spatially separated by sitting in two sound-proof Faraday chambers three meters apart. One was stimulated by simultaneous light flashes and a train of 100Hz sounds; previously subjects had established direct communication. He found that when subjects had established direct communication the EEG potential evoked by the stimuli in the stimulated subject was 'transferred' to the EEG of the non-stimulated subject, i.e. the waveform of the 'transferred potential' was in some kind similar to the waveform of the corresponding evoked potential.

This type of study was replicated similarly by Radin (2003) and Wackermann et al. (2003, 2004) where subjects were seated in two adjacent Faraday chambers and one subject was presented alternating checkerboard patterns in random intervals.

Here we report another replication, however, with emotionally affective and neutral picture stimuli, as we assumed that a connection between participants depends on the relevance of the events.

### Method

20 Pairs of human subjects (16 males, 24 females, age 18 to 51, mean 27 years) were spatially separated by being seated in two separate non-neighboring rooms. One group consisted of ten pairs having a close relationship with each other (spouses, partners, friends). The ten pairs of the second 'unrelated' group were formed by inviting two subjects simultaneously who did not know each other and who additionally did not know of the presence of a second person.

Two identical, completely separated EEG systems (Hinterberger, 2005) were connected to each of the two participants and synchronized. Seven channels electroencephalogram (EEG) and the electrooculogram were recorded from both subjects simultaneously. One of the two participants was presented with alternating checkerboard stimuli or pictures of the International Affective Picture System (IAPS) while the other participant relaxed without stimulation. The checkerboard stimulation condition was thought as a replication of the study done by Wackermann et al. (2003, 2004). The control condition in which no effect was expected was defined as the would-be stimulated participant being not stimulated. This was achieved by covering the stimulating monitor with a black cardboard (covered condition). 80 stimuli of each condition (affective, neutral, and checkerboard) were presented. Therefore, three 80 stimuli runs were conducted in the visible and also in the covered mode. Each stimulus epoch consisted of a one second pre-stimulus interval, a one second picture presentation or respectively 1.2s checkerboard presentation. Inter-stimulus intervals varied randomly from 3 to 6 seconds. The picture stimuli were randomly chosen out of a set of 80 affective and 80 neutral pictures.

The analysis was performed on the data of the non-stimulated participant. Data were corrected for eye-blink artefacts and controlled for high amplitude artefacts. The grand averages of the time-series as well as the spectral power density were analysed in the time interval from stimulus onset to two seconds after. A non-parametric approach, similar to the method of Wackermann et al. (2003) was used. This approach ranked the activity of the time series EEG or spectral amplitudes after averaging all stimulus onsets into the average amplitudes from the same data file but using 1000 sets of random stimulus onsets. Ranks above 975 and below 25 were considered as significant higher or lower amplitudes on a 5% level. For pooling the results from all participants the ranks are converted into z-scores. This was done for the related, the unrelated, and all participants. The analysis was also conducted separately for the affective, neutral and the pooled affective and neutral picture conditions.

## Results

Table 1 shows the z-scores of the correlations between the EEG of the non-stimulated participant and the stimulus times of the picture presentation.

Z-scores	All Participants		Related			Unrelated		
	All Pix Visible	All Pix Covered	All Pix	Affective Pix	Neutral Pix	All Pix	Affective Pix	Neutral Pix
<b>All electrodes</b>	1,25	1,51	0,09	-0,82	-0,10	0,39	-0,69	1,33
<b>Cz-mastoids</b>	0,75	0,93	0,08	-0,74	0,57	0,11	-1,45	1,63
<b>C3-mastoids</b>	<b>2,49</b>	0,62	0,99	-0,35	0,92	1,06	0,42	0,41
<b>C4-mastoids</b>	-0,55	0,96	-0,87	-1,21	-0,01	-0,23	-1,11	1,35
<b>Fz-mastoids</b>	0,80	-0,68	0,30	-0,15	0,44	-0,36	<b>-2,18</b>	0,69
<b>Pz-mastoids</b>	1,61	0,99	0,09	-1,12	-0,76	0,90	-0,29	1,14
<b>Oz-mastoids</b>	1,22	0,01	0,52	-0,40	-0,74	-0,02	-0,19	1,05
<b>Delta</b>	0,70	0,48	1,51	-1,10	<b>2,22</b>	-0,07	0,19	0,01
<b>Theta</b>	1,58	-1,73	<b>2,34</b>	<b>2,23</b>	0,92	-0,98	-0,17	0,02
<b>Alpha</b>	0,91	-0,20	<b>2,14</b>	<b>2,38</b>	0,28	-0,27	-0,45	0,73
<b>Beta1</b>	-0,29	1,61	-1,39	-1,26	-0,03	-0,58	-0,19	-1,17
<b>Beta2</b>	0,39	-0,46	0,91	0,07	1,08	-0,55	0,63	-0,61
<b>Gamma</b>	<b>-2,06</b>	<b>1,69</b>	<b>-2,95</b>	-1,43	-1,24	-0,65	-0,61	1,29
<b>Vertical EOG</b>	<b>1,78</b>	-1,22	-0,70	0,51	-0,98	0,90	-1,14	1,11

The time series analysis revealed significance only for the pooled participants with all picture stimuli at the C3 electrode position and the affective pictures for unrelated subjects. A clear cluster of significant values is achieved for the Theta and Alpha band especially for affective pictures. A significant decrease of Gamma activity in the visible condition was accompanied by a marginally significant increase in the covered condition. Most significances were in the probability range between 0.05 and 0.01; only the Gamma oscillations showed a  $p < 0.002$ . In the result table containing 112 variables we expect 5% to be significant by chance already. Here we find about 10% significant values. It is still the question which ones of the 10% can be regarded as real.

The results of Wackermann et al. with the checkerboard stimulation could not be replicated.

### Conclusion

We found some significant correlations in the EEG signal of the 'non-stimulated' subjects corresponding to times of stimulus presentation of the stimulated subject. The covered screen control condition did not show more significant values than expected. However, as the significances are not very high the effect, if there is one, seems to be very weak. We found the most significant values in the visual presentation of

affective pictures which is in line with the assumption based on many peoples' experience that emotional relevant events are more likely perceived telepathically.

A tendency towards an opposite behaviour between visual and covered condition shows up which may support the weak quantum theory of entanglement.

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## **Abnormally High Amplitude Supply Frequency Electromagnetic Fields as a Factor in Reported Paranormal Activity Within a Cheshire Farmhouse**

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In early 2003, the authors were asked to investigate alleged paranormal phenomena at a remote farmhouse in Cheshire. The case presented a wide range of reported phenomena – including visual and aural anomalies, sense of presence and an undiagnosed illness with symptoms similar to myalgic encephalitis within the teenage son. With the exception of the father, all family members reported varying degrees of personal anomalous experiences.

Interviews with the witnesses indicated that whilst the phenomena were spread throughout the house, the rooms at the front of the house were producing the majority of the reports.

An extensive series of physical measurements were undertaken by the authors and subsequently by Bristol University, Department of Human Environmental Studies. The authors also conducted extensive physiological and psychological tests on the household members and also on members of the investigation team.

The physical measurements showed an abnormally high amplitude Electro-Magnetic Field (EMF) concentrated within the front half of the house.

Furthermore, the measurements showed that the overall amplitude of the domestic supply frequency EMF was dependent upon the electrical demands placed upon the common supply of both house and farm, with the highest measured EMF levels occurring during periods of greatest electrical load.

The source of the high amplitude EMF was traced to an electricity supply cable attached to the gutter board below the eaves at the front of the house and immediately outside the son's bedroom window. The cable ran the full length of the front of the house prior to entering a ground floor distribution box, which supplied both the house and the farm buildings. The homeowners described a number of electrical malfunctions that occurred during periods of high electrical demand.

Interviews with the witnesses revealed that the family spent the majority of their time, including sleeping time, within the front half of the house. This was particularly apparent in relation to the son who spent up to 15 hours each day within his room as a result of his medical condition.

As part of the extensive period of investigation, additional members of the Para.Science investigation team, who were at all times unaware of the witness experiences and the results of the physical measurements, spent many hours in all the rooms within the house. This group of people, all experienced investigators, had not previously displayed any increased tendency toward the reporting of paranormal activity at other locations. All of them independently reported anomalous experiences when in the son's bedroom. Several reported anomalous experiences in other rooms at the front of the house. None reported anomalous experiences when in other parts of the property. These experiences were primarily visual hallucinations, a sense of presence and in one case an out of body experience. Also reported were numerous instances of sudden onset headaches whilst within the son's bedroom.

The homeowner commissioned an independent environmental EMF survey to be conducted by Bristol University Department of Human Environmental Studies.

This survey confirmed the authors' previous measurements and strengthened within our own minds the idea of an environmental causative mechanism in this case.

The Bristol survey showed that the high amplitude EMF was time linked to periods of the highest instances of reported anomalous experiences. The mother kept a detailed diary that showed herself to be the most frequent reportee of unusual experiences. The diary revealed that she also spent the greater part of each day within the front of the house. The father, whose work kept him out of the house for the majority of each day, was the only family member not to report any unusual phenomena. A daughter, whose bedroom was situated at the front of the house, had recently left home as a result of her own experiences. The second daughter, who slept at the rear of the house, reported comparatively few phenomena. It was not possible to fully interview the son due to his condition but his mother reported that he had had many unusual experiences within his bedroom.

The homeowner, based upon the Bristol survey and discussions with medical professionals, arranged for the electricity board to promptly replace the damaged cable. Subsequent measurements by the authors indicated that the environmental EMF within the house had fallen to levels considered to be normal.

Witness interviews carried out subsequently, along with the continued diary, showed an immediate marked decrease in the instances of reported paranormal activity by the family and also an immediate improvement in the son's well being. Subsequent visits by the investigation team provided no further reports of any unusual phenomena within any part of this location.

The authors noted the similarity between this case and a previously published investigation report carried out by Persinger et al (2001) in which the occupants reported various paranormal phenomena when in the presence of an amplitude fluctuating supply frequency EMF. In that case, it was noted that increased instances of unusual experiences appeared to coincide with increased supply frequency EMF amplitude.

They suggested that transient, complex temporal patterns of power frequency magnetic fields generated within the building might be sufficient to evoke experiences within the brains of the individuals that resided therein.

Our own investigation noted that the occupants of the Cheshire farm reported strikingly similar paranormal phenomena within the presence of an abnormally high amplitude supply frequency EMF. However a number of significant differences indicated to us that the amplitude of the EMF may be an important factor toward determining which individuals are more likely to have experiences that they may report as being of a paranormal origin.

This ongoing investigation has led us to suggest that some individuals may be more likely to experience and report paranormal phenomena as a result of their prolonged exposure to a high amplitude domestic supply frequency EMF. Further, that even short-term exposure to high amplitude EMFs may be sufficient to induce paranormal experiences within some previously non-affected individuals.

The measurements additionally suggest that as the overall EMF amplitude increases, more individuals may be more likely to report unusual experiences.

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## Variations on a Theme: Further thoughts on JOTT

Mary Rose Barrington

Since introducing a classification of jottles some 15 years ago and publishing examples of six varieties in the *Paranormal Review*, I have received a quantity of further reports, some of them detailing witnessed events, an unusual feature in what is generally a solitary experience (typically, an article is placed in an obvious position from which it unaccountably disappears, turning up later in a strange place or sometimes being found 'restored' to its original position).

These are trivial incidents, and frequently brushed aside as due to faulty memory or inattention - and rightly so unless there is very good reason for the person concerned to reject this natural explanation. Equally trivial is an article that rises into the air at a sitting or projects itself across the room in a poltergeist outbreak, but the implications - gravity suspended, extra dimensions, group hallucination, and the like, are far from trivial, constituting a threat to the accepted scientific paradigm.

The banalities of jott are even more threatening because they take place in the course of ordinary life, not requiring the presence of a physical medium or of whatever force it may be that powers a poltergeist incident. And like the physical phenomena of mediumship and poltergeist activity, jottles can in many cases be related to the mind and subconscious needs of the person witnessing and, as will be contended, causing them.

The role of the jottle witness and the further implications of jott will be considered.

## **Trauma and memories/images of a past life**

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Three psychological studies of children in Sri Lanka and Lebanon lead to several interesting findings. Some of them confirm earlier informal observations, such as that children speaking of previous-life memories develop a larger vocabulary at an earlier age than their peers, and tend generally to be more gifted. Other findings reveal hitherto unrecognized aspects of the “cases of the reincarnation type”, particularly that as a group they show the major signs of a post-traumatic stress disorder, without apparently have been exposed to any life-threatening situations in their life. This findings begs for an explanation. Could this syndrome have been developed by the images of a violent death that about 80% of these children have and that they repeatedly speak about and go through in their mind at a very young age?

# The Perceived Accuracy and Persuasiveness of Psychic Readings

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Considerable academic debate and research has been given to the study of ostensible psychic communication. One strand of research has examined claims by psychics and mediums to be able to provide accurate information about a person unknown to them by paranormal means. O’Keeffe and Wiseman (2005) conducted an experimental test of the perceived accuracy of mediums’ readings for participants or ‘sitters’. In this study sitters were then provided with summaries of 5 readings, including their own (although they were not told which was their reading), and asked to judge the accuracy of each reading as it applied to them. It was found that none of the sitters rated their actual reading as any more accurate than the ‘decoy’ or alternative readings. The research to be described in the present paper was designed to build upon this study to explore real and pseudo-sitters perceptions of how accurate and persuasive readings provided by a psychic were, as well as the so-called ‘Barnum effect’ wherein the use of vague statements often results in the endorsement of those statements as accurate by a greater number of people. The present study was also interested in the audible linguistic character of such statements (e.g. intonation, pauses, etc.) and therefore had one important procedural difference to the study by O’Keeffe and Wiseman (2005); namely rather than providing sitters with transcripts at a later date, sitters heard and saw the psychic via an audio-visual link. For five participants this was a personal or ‘real’ reading; for a further 24 participants this will an audio recording of a ‘real’ reading. All participants were led to believe that they were watching and listening to a real-time reading. Further methodological and procedural detail regarding the intended study can be found below.

## Methods

**Participants:** Thirty students at the University of Manchester took part in return for credits ( $n=5$ ) which they were required to earn via research participation as part of their degree course.

**Materials:** A female Psychic provided 5 readings. These readings were visually and audio recorded and served as the stimulus material for the remaining 25 participants. The five participants who received a ‘real’ reading were asked to provide a personal object of their choice and permission was gained to use these objects for the remainder of the study. Prior to hearing the psychic’s reading participants completed a Belief in the Paranormal questionnaire (Musch and Ehrenberg, 2002). Following the Psychic’s reading, participants were asked to rate it for (i) its persuasiveness and (ii) its perceived accuracy on a 7-point Likert scale.

**Procedure:** Two cubicles were made available for the purpose of the readings, one for the Psychic and one for the Sitter. An experimenter remained with the medium during the course of the day, and was blind to the details of the ‘real’ sitters taking part. The Psychic was informed that the purpose of the study was to examine people’s perceptions of the accuracy of psychic readings, and that as well as the participants who acted as sitters, visual and audio recordings of the readings would be heard by other research participants.

Over the course of the day the Psychic gave 5 participants a reading lasting 20 minutes each. These participants are referred to here as the ‘real’ sitters. Each reading was spaced at 1 hour intervals. Participants were met by a second experimenter at a previously arranged location and time, and they were accompanied to a cubicle within the Psychology building. This was a separate physical location to that of the Psychic, and they did not meet the Psychic in person, either before or after the experimental period. The reading for these ‘real’ sitters were relayed via a visual-audio link.

Prior to the reading participants were asked to handle an object (which they were told would be passed on to the Psychic for use during the reading) for a five minute period, while reading the participant information sheet and completing the consent form. Next participants placed the object in a provided box and completed the Belief in the Paranormal Questionnaire while the experimenter left the room. In

the case of the 'real' sitters, the experimenter then knocked on the door of the cubicle in which the Psychic was situated, and the second experimenter then took the box and invited the Psychic to open it and take out the object. In the case of the remaining participants, the experimenter left the room with the box and locked it in the same cubicle in which the Psychic had been present in the earlier trials.

In order to ensure close comparability for the context in which the reading takes place the sitters will hear the reading of the 'real' sitter on the same day of the week, and at the same time as that experienced by the 'real' sitter. As the aim was to have all participants believe they were listening to a real time personal reading, this helped avoid any specific day (e.g. "I hate Mondays") or time references (e.g. "I'm getting hungry now. It must be nearly lunch time") violating this perception.

Following the Psychics reading, participants were asked to rate it for (i) its persuasiveness and (ii) its perceived accuracy. The following part of the experiment was then audio-recorded. Participants were first asked to recall details or statements made by the Psychic that they remembered as being accurate, then those which they remembered as being inaccurate.

**Data analysis:** Data analysis is under way and will be complete for presentation at the conference. Data will be analysed for overall differences in ratings on persuasiveness and accuracy given to the psychic reading by 'real' sitters and those participants or sitters who heard the same reading. The data collected from real and pseudo-sitters following the psychic reading will be compared. Data will be analysed to identify the types of information which participants recall as being accurate and inaccurate.

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# **Anomalous Affect: Time-Reversed Preference of Pictorial and Semantic Stimuli after Priming of Automatic Vigilance and Affective Reliance**

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## **1. Overview:**

According to the recently developed „precognitive habituation“ (PH) protocol (Bem 2003), there is a complex relationship between visual perception and affective arousal and time-reversed reactions to visual stimuli. For example, both the valence and arousal dimensions of the stimuli and the reactivity of subjects have been implicated as mediators of the effect; also, it has been shown that subliminal and supraliminal exposure of the stimuli produces different outcomes, depending again on the complex interrelationship between stimuli and personality characteristics. The purpose of this study was to (a) replicate the basic PH-effect and (b) to add a few refinements to the experimental procedure with the intention to generate not only stronger findings, but to also add to the theoretical understanding of the effect.

Thus in the first German speaking replication attempt of Time-Reversed Affective Reactions (TRAR) in Vienna, a number of modifications of the original experimental protocol were introduced:

- (a) a priming manipulation in order to alleviate the role of individual differences in emotional reactivity was added to the experimental procedure.
- (b) Instead of using only pictorial stimuli, we also used words as stimuli, closely following Dijksterhuis & Smith's (2002) original affective habituation procedure.
- (c) Furthermore, besides the valence and arousal dimension, we also distinguished between the functional aspects of the stimuli in order to being able to differentiate between mood regulation effects (Forgas & Ciarocchi, 2002; Erber 1996) and more basic, evolutionary adaptive processes (such as disease avoidance) as driving forces behind the effect.

## **2. Procedure and Rationale:**

As a cover story, subjects were informed that they were to take part in three short and independent experiments. These consisted of:

### **(a) Questionnaire**

Subjects were given Bem's original questionnaire, measuring belief in ESP and general affective style.

### **(b) Priming Task**

'Priming effects' refer to the process by which activated mental constructs can influence individuals' affect or cognitions by subtly (unconsciously) heightening the accessibility of concepts, mind-sets and behavioural and cognitive "action tendencies".

In order to further investigate the role of situation x person effects in time reversed preferences, subjects were subtly primed (with a sentence scramble task) with concepts fostering both a mindset of reliance on affective processing and automatic vigilance.

While automatic vigilance does not necessarily entail the full concept of emotional reactivity, but only heightens the tendency to pay attention to undesirable information or stimuli, we suspected both constructs (reactivity and vigilance) to share important common denominators applicable to the affective reactions to negative stimuli. In order to additionally generate a similar priming effect for the positive stimuli, and more generally in order to prompt subjects to rely on their „gut feelings“ during the preference task, we also primed reliance on affective, i.e. heuristic processing.

### **(c) Picture and Word Preference Task**

Immediately after the Priming Task, subjects took part in a Picture and Word Preference Task, presented again as an independent study conducted by another experimenter. The potential role of anomalous affect and cognition was either downplayed or not mentioned at all in order not to interfere with the subtle priming effects. Rather, the purpose of the study was presented as an „intuition and picture preference task“. The preference task consisted in actuality of an adaption of Bem's original precognitive habituation program (supraliminal version) with new stimuli.

Instead of using the relatively broadly defined „negatively arousing“ or „positively arousing“ pictures displayed in the majority of studies (with the exception of Savva, Child & Smith, 2004), we used not only pictures, but also words, drawing on a recently developed standardized Austrian „affective word list“. The rationale behind this was that we wanted to see whether TRARs extend to words and concepts, too, which would be in accordance with Dijksterhuis & Smith's (2002) original (normal) affective habituation study. These authors have shown that subjects (subliminally) exposed to positive and negative words subsequently tend to rate those words as less intense than words to which they had not been exposed before.

Importantly, we also conducted a content analysis of stimuli. We chose concepts (both semantic and pictorial) which we believed to be both evolutionary and psychologically adaptive in an attempt to generate stronger findings (e.g. appetitive stimuli vs. threatening stimuli, etc.). In order to add to the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, we attempted to distinguish between stimuli more oriented towards evolutionary adaptive processes and those which are primarily related to intra-psychic processes, such as mood regulation.

The results of the study will be reported. Additionally, some suggestions for new experiments within the same paradigm and preliminary results of a pilot study with a cognitive load (dual task) manipulation with diverted attention will be presented.

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## **Creativity and ESP: Developing experience sampling methodology to explore ESP performance amongst an artistic population<sup>2</sup>**

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Holt (2005) reported on the relationship between multiple dimensions of creativity and subjective paranormal experiences (SPEs) amongst a sample of 211 (108 females; 101 males) which included 36 professional artists. Only one dimension of creativity – emotional creativity – demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with SPEs ( $r = .30, p = .00001$ ). In addition, reports of the use of certain styles of cognition in the creative process were significantly correlated with SPEs: heightened internal awareness ( $r = .43, p = .000001$ ); intuition, hunches and inspiration ( $r = .42, p = .000001$ ) and dreaming, day dreaming and hypnagogia ( $r = .41, p = .000001$ ). Professional artists in the sample had significantly higher emotional creativity scores than non-artists ('other professions',  $z = -3.15, p = .002$ , and scientists,  $z = -2.94, p = .003$ ), while mere involvement in artistic activities alone did not appear to be related to incidence of SPEs to a significant degree. The tentative conclusion of this study was that it is not cognitive flexibility (divergent thinking), creative personality or involvement in particular creative domains that relate to the reporting of SPEs, but an openness to and exploration of 'psychological space', with a focus on affect and internal imagery. This concurs with the idea that people who have 'internal sensitivity' are more likely to have psi experiences (Honorton, 1972).

Holt, Delanoy and Roe (2004) elucidated that between 1962 and 2003, 27 experimental studies explored the relationship between creativity and psi. These suggest that there might be something about artistic populations that is psi-conducive. Of ten free-response studies working with artistic populations, four had control groups, and found that compared to non-artists, artists obtained a significantly higher hit rate (e.g., Moss, 1969). The remaining six studies used the ganzfeld paradigm, each obtaining above chance psi-scoring, with hit rates between 30% and 50% (MCE = 25%), and an overall hit rate of 40% (e.g., Morris, Summers & Yin, 2003). These artistic populations obtained higher hit rates than the general populations of ganzfeld studies – for which a recent meta-analysis estimates a hit rate of 30% (Bem, Palmer & Broughton, 2001). It has commonly been suggested that the psi success of artistic populations is due to 'creativity', however, Holt et al. argued that creativity is a heterogeneous construct and that mere involvement in the arts is not equivalent to creativity. As yet, it is not known what it is about artists that has led to psi success. This may, for instance, be due to experimenter effects, open belief systems, self-confidence, extraversion, the ability to shift easily into or between states of consciousness or 'creativity'.

The study to be presented explores how well the dimensions of creativity used by Holt (2005) predict psi-success in a quasi-experimental paradigm that seeks to assess 'objective psi-hitting'. This study aims to facilitate understanding of what it is about artists that appears to be related to psi-success, testing the hypothesis that a heightened sensitivity to emotions and internal imagery, common but not exclusive to artists, explains the propounded link between 'artistic creativity' and psi. Further, the following personality and attitude variables will be measured in order to control for their potentially confounding effects: belief in psi, self-confidence, extraversion, and the extent to which participants report having unusual experiences in daily life. Rather than using a ganzfeld ESP design, experience sampling methodology (ESM) has been employed in order to avoid potential demand characteristics associated with the ganzfeld that might be preferential to artists (e.g. 'performing to an audience').

Experience-sampling methodology (ESM) is "a research procedure for studying what people do, feel, and think during their daily lives" (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1983, p. 41). It is a quasi-naturalistic method that involves participants providing self-reports about the nature and quality of their experience as they go about their usual activities. Reporting occurs either at random intervals over a set period of time (signal-contingent sampling) or at times triggered by a particular environmental or psychological stimulus (event-contingent sampling). ESM has three broad characteristics: participants record information in a 'natural setting', in 'real time' (i.e. as close as possible to a signal or event) and do so on repeated trials (Conner, 2005). As such, ESM is a systematic method of studying introspective experience that enables in situ, immediate reporting of cognition, affect and behaviour over repeated

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occasions, seeking to avoid problems associated with the fallibility of memory in the reconstruction of events (bias and distortion) and minimise confabulation. The goal is to capture direct information about internal states in an ecologically valid way, recognising the importance of the contexts in which psychological processes unfold, mapping thoughts, feelings and actions outside the laboratory and within the context of everyday life.

With the development of technology, over the last ten years there has been a movement towards using personal digital assistants (PDAs) and mobile phones to record experience rather than earlier paper and pencil methods with accompanying ‘beepers’ (see Feldman-Barrett & Barrett, 2001, for a review). The benefits of such technology include the recording and accurate storage of the exact time that a report was made (it is ‘time-stamped’), the recording of reaction times to questions, and the randomization of the presentation order of questions to help prevent boredom and stereotyped responses over time. In addition, (and especially pertinent to psi research where security is a sensitive issue) data can be stored so that the participant can not amend any information at a later date.

ESM offers exciting opportunities for studying psi experiences in their every-day context and developing quasi-experimental protocols to further assess the parameters of psi. The psi-outcome and its correlations with multiple creativity measures, controlling for potentially confounding variables, will be presented from a study with an event-contingent ESP-ESM design, amongst an artistic population. This design may be seen as an adaptation of the ‘ganzfeld’ protocol, except that instead of being in perceptual-isolation for 35 minutes, the ‘receiver’ mentates when, and as frequently as, they like over a 24-hour period. After each ‘mentation’ they complete a questionnaire on the PDA about their state of consciousness. It is hoped in this way to capture natural variations in states and to explore how these relate to psi-success. It is envisaged that participants will enjoy the control and flexibility that the methodology allows, where they can decide upon the time and setting in which they ‘mentate’. While ESM has not previously been applied to the study of psi, it has a precedent in research that has allowed participants to take part in their own space and time, such as Delanoy, Watt and Morris (1993) who developed a ‘take home’ clairvoyance psi task. As one explanation for the significant psi-hitting in this task ( $p = .01$ , 1-t, exact binomial,  $n = 9$ , trials = 366) they suggest that the choice and perceived self-control may have led to increased feelings of competence and motivation and hence suggest that such designs might be psi-conducive.

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# **Androgyny, femininity and masculinity in women: exploring how gender role and personality relate to paranormal experiences, beliefs and ESP**

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The relationship between gender and paranormal phenomena is not a new topic in parapsychology. For example, women often report more subjective experiences and beliefs than do men (cf. Blackmore, 1991). Gender role has, however, been relatively neglected as a separate variable to biological gender with regard to ESP. This is in spite of several authors noting that the social aspects of gender are a meaningful consideration in the development of attitudes toward the paranormal (e.g., Blackmore, 1991; Greyson, 1977). Some work has considered gender role and paranormal phenomena more explicitly, although this has focused mostly on its relationship with subjective paranormal experiences and paranormal beliefs (e.g., Spinelli & Reid, 2001-2002). This research project investigates the relationship between gender role and both subjective paranormal experiences and performance on a task designed to measure extrasensory perception. It also addresses how gender role interacts with personality (Hartmann's Boundary Questionnaire, BQ e.g., 1991) in its effect on ESP.

Gender role derives from a complex interaction between biological influences and conditioning from the cultural environment (e.g., Casey, Braebeck and Nuttall, 1995). Work on gender role (e.g., Bem, 1974) classifies individuals, irrespective of their biological gender, into four groups depending on how they respond to a series of adjectives which relate to the culturally accepted idea of what is feminine and masculine. The groups are Feminine for those who score high on femininity and low on masculinity; Masculine for those who score high on masculinity and low on femininity; Undifferentiated for those who score low on masculinity and femininity and Androgynous for those who score high on masculinity and femininity.

L.E. Rhine (1961) noted how attitude may be more important than gender in understanding differences in ESP experiences. She noted that cultural differences in upbringing between males and females may encourage such attitudes. Blackmore (1991) suggests that paranormal thinking becomes feminised as it falls outside of the dominant scientific (masculine) thinking. Similarly, Greyson (1977) suggested that those who believed in paranormal phenomena in his sample (psychiatric patients) did so because they had been socialized into the feminine gender role and had relaxed their body boundaries to accept the idea of extrasensory intrusion.

This potential relationship has been relatively neglected in the literature. However Coleman and Ganong (1987) found that the feminine gender role relates to irrational beliefs. Spinelli and Reid, (2001-2002) investigated the hypothesis directly and found that gender role was also related to paranormal belief and experience. Femininity has also been found to relate to fear of the anomalous (e.g., Lange and Houran 1999; Simmonds 2003).

It is proposed here that androgynous individuals who are both highly feminine, but also highly masculine may be of interest for parapsychology, however little work has directly focused on the relationship between psychological androgyny and paranormal experiences. The idea is supported by the observation that those who possessed *both* intuitive and rational thinking styles were more likely to have beliefs, experiences and subjective ability, than those who expressed intuitive or rational thinking in isolation (Wolfradt, Oubaid, Straube, Bischoff & Mischo, 1999). This sounds like someone who may exhibit both masculine and feminine thinking styles according to the Western world view, and who may be able to *make use of* a potential ESP signal.

Psychological androgyny has been found to relate to increased spirituality more than femininity in isolation (Herman, 1996). Recent work (Sell, 2001) explored the experiences of 'third-gendered'

individuals in USA, those who fall into the middle ground in terms of their subjective gender identity, and found that 93% reported transcendent spiritual experiences or paranormal abilities, and many were working as healers. Sell (2001) suggests that this is due to their stepping out of conformity, which may allow for more unusual experiences. Androgyny might also relate to better ESP performance. Gender role may also interact with the personality variable boundary thinness (Hartmann, 1992) in terms of ESP performance, as it has previously been found to interact with subjective paranormal experiences (e.g., Spinelli & Reid, 2001-2002).

In summary, this research project seeks to replicate and extend previous work in the area of gender role and ESP. It seeks to address the relationship between gender role categorization (according to the Bem Sex role inventory) and subjective paranormal experiences, paranormal beliefs and performance at an ESP task (forced choice) in a group of women. This work also seeks to understand how gender role interacts with Hartmann's BQ in an effect on paranormal experiences, beliefs and ESP.

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## Parapsychology as a science of magick: An occult perspective on psi.

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Within the large and growing population of neo-pagans, Wiccan's, and occultists, occult practices such as divination and spell casting represent a practical, intentional application of ostensible psi, comparable to that studied by parapsychologists in the laboratory (Willin, 2000). In one survey 91% of occultists reported a belief in psi (Roney-Dougal, 1984), and these practitioners of the esoteric arts have hundreds of years of established doctrine to draw upon in their pursuit of their aims. Yet, despite this great repository of occult wisdom, there has been surprisingly very little overt scientific investigation of the traditions and lore of 'magick' (so spelled to differentiate it from stage 'magic'), and Roney-Dougal (1984) has lamented the lack of exchange between these two disciplines.

Roney-Dougal (1991) endeavoured to address this lack by building a bridge between these unjustifiably disparate areas in her book 'Where science and magic meet', in which she detailed much of the unstated overlap between traditional occult approaches and parapsychological approaches to psi. In particular, parallels were drawn between notions of magick and the psychological model of psi put forth by the parapsychologist Rex Stanford (1974a, 1974b), termed 'psi-mediated instrumental response' (PMIR).

The present paper extends on the work of Roney-Dougal by drawing distinct comparisons between the supposed psychological action of psi, as it is conceptualised by Stanford, and one particular philosophy of magickal operation, which has recently been very prominent among occultists and neo-pagans, termed 'chaos magick'. Specifically, attention is given to the work of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century British magickian and artist Osman Austin Spare, who is recognized as one of the most influential predecessors to chaos magick, and who once deeply impressed the SPR's Secretary at the time, Everard Feilding, with a demonstration of his apparent magickal/psi ability (Grant, 1972).

Between 1905 and 1927 Spare wrote and beautifully illustrated five books on his unique doctrine of magick, yet remained largely unrecognized for his talents as either an artist or a magickian until after his death in 1956 (Grant, 2003). The philosophy of chaos magick officially began with the publication of SSOTBME by Ramsey Dukes in 1974 (Illuminates of Thanateros, 2002), the same year that Stanford published his first PMIR papers. Following on from the lead of Dukes, chaos magick grew to fully incorporate Spare's (e.g. 1913, 1921) doctrine of magickal manifestation and perception, which, it will be shown, has a direct correspondence to both expressive psi (psychokinesis) and receptive psi (ESP) as they are conceived within the PMIR model proposed by Stanford. Nevertheless, the striking similarities between the thinking of Spare and the later Stanford, who was quite unfamiliar with the former's work, have so far gone apparently unnoticed (Luke, in preparation). In making these comparisons it is hoped that parapsychologists may find something of relevance to their research in the writings of occultists, and recognise that there is an unnecessary and limiting gap in the dialogue between science and magick.

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## Consciousness and Psi: a neurocognitive search for the link.

Les Lancaster<sup>3</sup>

Recent work in neuroscience has suggested that the balance in activity between so-called *feedforward* and *re-entrant* neural pathways holds the key for understanding the neural correlate of consciousness. In this paper I present a model of the ways in which these pathways are involved in perceptual processes. In brief, I argue that the re-entrant system limits the possible meanings associated with the bottom-up analysis of the feedforward system. Implications of the model for psi phenomena (and the way in which they are generally inhibited) are explored.

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S P R 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference - **Liverpool Hope University**  
 Friday 1<sup>st</sup> to Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2006

**FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup> September**

14:30- 14:45	<b>Welcoming Remarks</b>	
14:45 – 15:15	<b>Matthew Colborn</b>	SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ACADEMIC SPONTANEOUS CASE PROGRAMME
15:15 – 15:45	<b>John Fraser</b>	IS SPONTANEOUS FIELD RESEARCH A WASTE OF TIME?
15:45 – 16:00	<b>Mick O'Neill</b>	A CONFERENCE ATTEMPT TO WIN THE LOTTERY JACKPOT
16.00 – 16.30	<b>TEA/COFFEE</b>	
16:30 – 17:00	<b>Richard Broughton</b>	EVOLUTION AND SPONTANEOUS CASES: UPDATING THE TWO-STAGE MODEL OF RECEPTIVE PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES
17:00 – 17:30	<b>Alan Murdie</b>	THE BEST GHOST PHOTOGRAPH EVER TAKEN? RE-ASSESSING THE "BROWN LADY OF RAYNHAM HALL" PHOTOGRAPH
17:30 – 18:00	<b>Fiona Campbell</b>	THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCE
18:30	<b>PRESIDENT'S DRINKS RECEPTION -Restaurant</b>	
19:15	<b>DINNER</b>	
21:00 – 22:00	<b>Melvyn Willin</b>	VISUAL GEMS FROM THE PERMUTT COLLECTION AND RARE VIDEO FOOTAGE

**SATURDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> September**

09:30 – 10:00	<b>Louise Farrell</b>	ASSESSING THE ROLES OF THE SENDER AND EXPERIMENTER IN DREAM ESP RESEARCH
10:00 – 10:30	<b>Chris Roe</b>	ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE SENDER AS A PK AGENT IN ESP STUDIES: THE EFFECT OF STRATEGY AND FEEDBACK ON PSI PERFORMANCE
10.30 – 11.00	<b>David Wilde</b>	OBSERVATIONS ON THE EMBODIED USE OF TARGET OBJECTS IN THE TELEPATHY VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT
11:00 – 11:30	<b>TEA/COFFEE</b>	
11:30 – 12:15	<b>Rupert Sheldrake</b>	AUTOMATED TESTS FOR TELEPATHY
12:15 – 13:00	<b>Deborah Delanoy, Richard Broughton, Bernard Carr &amp; Donald West</b>	REMEMBERING JOHN BELOFF
13:00 – 14:30	<b>LUNCH</b>	
14:30 – 15:00	<b>Thilo Hinterberger</b>	EVENT-RELATED EEG CORRELATIONS IN SEPARATED HUMAN SUBJECTS
15:00 – 15:30	<b>Ann Winsper</b>	ABNORMALLY HIGH ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS AS A FACTOR IN REPORTED PARANORMAL ACTIVITY WITHIN A CHESHIRE FARMHOUSE
15.30 – 16.00	<b>Mary Rose Barrington</b>	VARIATIONS ON A THEME: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON JOTT
16:00 – 16:30	<b>TEA/COFFEE</b>	
16:30 – 17:00	<b>Erlendur Haraldsson</b>	TRAUMA AND MEMORIES OF A PAST LIFE
17:00 – 17:30	<b>Craig Murray</b>	THE PERCEIVED ACCURACY AND PERSUASIVENESS OF PSYCHIC READINGS
19:00	<b>DINNER</b>	
	<b>AFTER-DINNER TALK: HARALD WALACH "CHANGING LANDSCAPES IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY"</b>	

**SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> September**

09:30 – 10:00	<b>Astrid Erber</b>	TIME-REVERSED PREFERENCE OF PICTORIAL AND SEMANTIC STIMULI AFTER PRIMING OF AUTOMATIC VIGILANCE AND AFFECTIVE RELIANCE
10:00 – 10:30	<b>Nicola Holt</b>	CREATIVITY AND ESP: DEVELOPING EXPERIENCE SAMPLING METHODOLOGY TO EXPLORE ESP PERFORMANCE AMONGST AN ARTISTIC POPULATION
10.30 – 11.00	<b>Christine Simmonds</b>	ANDROGYNY, FEMINITY AND MASCULINITY IN WOMEN: EXPLORING HOW GENDER ROLE RELATES TO PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES, BELIEFS AND ESP
11:00 – 11:30	<b>TEA/COFFEE</b>	
11:30 – 12:00	<b>David Luke</b>	PARAPSYCHOLOGY AS A SCIENCE OF MAGICK: AN OCCULT PERSPECTIVE ON PSI
12.00 – 12:45	<b>Les Lancaster</b>	CONSCIOUSNESS AND PSI: A NEUROCOGNITIVE SEARCH FOR THE LINK

12.45 – 13.00  
13:00

<b>Closing Remarks</b>
<b>LUNCH</b>