

Spontaneous Social Behavior Can Implicitly Express ESP Information¹

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Abstract: We report a new procedure for accessing the implicit expression of psi information. The assumption that psi information can unconsciously inform the development of social interaction guided this research. Members of a quasi-therapeutic group carried out unstructured sessions while a distant experimenter randomly selected an ESP target (a picture). Immediately following each session, group members blindly rated the target and three decoy pictures for their degree of association to the session that had just transpired. Each person's ratings were independent and global, assessing congruence in mood, content, and significant session-events between session and pictures. Averaged ratings yielded one ESP score per session. A group of volunteers with evolving membership met weekly over a period of several years, accumulating 386 sessions (excluding pre-determined pilot trials). Overall, the group was able to correctly associate its spontaneous group processes with the days' targets to a significant degree. The group also rated sessions in terms of several qualities such as risk, helpfulness, and hurtfulness, immediately following the session and prior to viewing the day's pictures, and rated their moods prior to beginning the session. The group was most successful at expressing and identifying the target when sessions did not involve too much intimate self-disclosure, and when members began the sessions with moods low in anxiety and skepticism.

Keywords: First Sight, implicit psi, group process, ESP.

The implicit expression of psi information has received increased attention in recent years. For example, Radin (1997, 1998), Bierman and Scholte (2002) and others have demonstrated that a precognitive response to upsetting stimuli can be expressed by faint, unconscious physiological arousal, Bem (2011) has shown that processes of learning and esthetic appraisal may partly express unconscious precognitive information, Palmer (2006) has shown that participants' efforts to find order in strings of numbers may express patterns to which they will be exposed in the near future, and Carpenter, Simmonds-Moore, Moore, and Carpenter (2009, 2012) found that experiences of preferences for pictures varied as a function of extrasensory primes as moderated by theoretically-specified variables.

Theoretical Base

A theory of psi developed by the first author, *first sight theory* (henceforth called FST; Carpenter, 2004, 2005, 2012) asserts that this sort of implicit expression of psi is an indication that the mind employs psi information normally, unconsciously, and continuously, and uses it as an initiating part of the unconscious formation of all experiences and behavioral choices. From this point of view, psi is not rare, unpredictable, and anomalous; it is reliable and continuously employed while normally invisible. The aim of a psi experiment changes from an attempt to

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challenge and catch the expression of a rare ability, to an effort to specify procedures and variables in order to reveal an implicit, ongoing process at work. Although this study began when FST was only partially explicated, basic assumptions of FST guided our procedures and hypotheses.

Some Key Parts of First Sight Theory Pertinent to this Study

1. *From an FST point of view, psi prepares us for experience and is always expressed implicitly.*

FST assumes that the mind engages extrasensory realities and, with them, generates orienting, pre-conscious responses that prepare the individual to quickly apprehend the correct meaning in developing situations and respond to them in the most apt way. A normal function of psi is to prepare us for what will happen next. Psi is assumed to function the same way that subliminal perception does, by guiding the development of conscious experiences and actions, while never being directly available to awareness as conscious knowledge. What may be available to awareness is some of the implicit expressions of this unconscious orienting activity (for example, a relevant bit of imagery or shift in mood or physiological reaction or change in associative tendency).

Even if individuals consciously have in mind a wish to somehow express the content of an extrasensory target, as in a laboratory experiment or mediumistic reading, the expression of psi is inadvertent, because they still have no idea what the evocative information is or where it comes from, or precisely which utterances or other behaviors make reference to the target, or in what ways they might imply it. The situation is the same with the implicit expression of sensory subliminal primes. Experimenters can see the primes at work because they know the hidden stimulus, but experiencers cannot. This has become a familiar fact to psychologists engaged in cognitive, clinical, social, and neuroscience research (Mlodinaw, 2012). FST applies this principle of unconscious cognitive and affective processing to psi.

What we call conscious or explicit psi experiences then are those expressions of psi information that happen to be correctly interpreted as reflecting some reality that is outside the range of sensory experience. Many others presumably pass by uninterpreted and unnoticed.

Since psi engagement is assumed to be implicitly ongoing, FST suggests that many aspects of everyday life should be studied in order to see how psi processes play a part. Spontaneous interpersonal interaction is an obvious candidate for such study.

Theory holds that the patterns observed in using one kind of implicit information will generally obtain in others as well – for example, patterns seen in processing extrasensory information will tend to be similar to those seen in processing long-term memories, and both processes should tend to make reference to goals and situational appraisals in similar ways. FST also assumes that conditions that favor the inadvertent expression of unconscious sensory material should also favor the expression of psi material. This assumption of parallel patterns of unconscious cognitive functioning is called the *hypothesis of functional equivalence* in FST. Carpenter (2012) has discussed the evidence for this parallel functioning, as in the relation between psi and subliminal perception (Schmeidler, 1988), psi and long-term memory (Irwin, 1979), and psi and creative processes (e.g., Holt, Delanoy, & Roe, 2004; Moon, 1973).

The assumed parallel between processing subliminal sensory and extrasensory information is pertinent to the current study. Studies have found that people respond to subliminal sensory primes in many cognitive, affective, and behavioral ways (Bornstein & Pittman, 1992; Dixon,

1981; Hassin, Uleman, & Bargh, 2005). While most research has focused on cognitive and emotional effects, interpersonal behavior may also implicitly express subliminal primes in certain situations. For example, aggressiveness increased after aggressive subliminal primes (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996) and cooperativeness after affiliative primes (Aarts et al., 2005). In this study we used pictorial ESP targets as if they were subliminal primes, with the assumption that people can unconsciously process such information and express it implicitly in their behavior, given their wish to do so. Our group members carried out sessions of interaction and then afterward rated their own behavior in retrospect and associated it to target and non-target material, while being masked to the identity of the target.

2. *Psi functioning is bi-directional, sometimes approaching and including information in implicit expression, and sometimes avoiding and excluding it. Predicting the direction of psi expression is one primary task of the theory.*

FST holds that approaching or avoiding some extrasensory meaning is an unconscious choice, made in the light of several factors including the content and desirability of the information, its degree of congruence with long-term goals and current tasks, and the degree of openness to liminal experience on the part of the person.

Psychotherapy and Psi

One reason that we believed that this situation would promote a positive direction of psi-expression came from observations reported by several psychotherapists of apparent expressions of psi influence in the context of psychotherapy sessions. Psychodynamically oriented psychotherapy is a situation intended to facilitate the expression and recognition of unconscious mental processes. Certain conditions often employed in psychotherapy to facilitate the conscious recovery of such things as forgotten memories and unconscious conflicts may be psi-conducive as well. In fact, much research suggests that this parallel functioning does obtain. For example, hypnosis, dreaming sleep, and free associations in a state of reverie have all been used as “roads to the unconscious” in psychotherapy, and they have been fruitful in parapsychology as well (Carpenter, 1988, 2012; Child, 1985; Stanford & Stein, 1984; Storm, et al., 2010). That psychotherapeutic conditions may yield extrasensory expressions along with the normally expected expressions of other unconscious processes has been confirmed by a number of therapists (e.g., Fodor, 1942; Hollos, 1933; Ehrenwald, 1970; Eisenbud, 1946, 1970; Mintz, 1983; Nelson, 1988; Rosenbaum, 2011). This expectation has been expressed in FST in its *Liminality Corollary*, which asserts that situations and states of mind conducive to the expression of unconscious processes in general should also be conducive to the expression of psi (Carpenter, 2012).

Some have argued that the therapeutic relationship should be especially psi-conducive because of its recapitulation of an infant’s trust and closeness (Ehrenwald 1955, 1970), and its amenability to close, penetrating observation (Eisenbud, 1969). For these reasons, we intended to create a situation that permitted not only spontaneous social interaction, but also qualities of trust and intra- and inter-personal exploration that psychodynamic therapists consider “therapeutic.”

Method

Nature of the Group

A small, congenial group interacts for an hour in a leaderless fashion while a separate experimenter randomly selects an ESP target elsewhere. The group’s focus is that of an experiential

therapy or support group, attending to personal concerns and interpersonal issues as they arise among the participants. There is no effort to consciously retrieve the target, as by guessing or associating to it, but all have “in the backs of their minds” the hope that their developing group process might somehow allude to the target in identifiable ways. At the end of the session the target is presented (blindly) to the group in a field of 3 decoys and each picture is assessed independently by each participant in terms of its degree of accord with the session that had just transpired. Only after assessment is completed, a member of the group obtains the identity of the correct target with a second phone call. Psi expression is indicated by high averaged group ratings of the actual target picture. No ethical review board existed at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (FRNM) when this project began. However, customary ethical considerations were observed, including thorough pre-briefing of participants as to procedure, voluntary participation, and the right to discontinue at any time without penalty, the maintenance of confidential and anonymous records, and anonymous reporting of results.

Pilot Sessions

We began this project with three pilot sessions carried out with a group of volunteers from the Summer Study Program of the Rhine Research Center (then called the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man, FRNM). The first author conducted gestalt therapy exercises while a target was being selected randomly and viewed by an agent in another part of the building. Participants were told that the instructor was assuming that an ESP target might function like a subliminal stimulus whose effect may be expressed subtly by a person’s mood, spontaneous speech, or associations. Participants were asked to have “in the backs of their minds” the idea that the target might have a similar effect on them as they engaged in the play-like therapeutic exercises. The results were intriguing. In one session, for example, the target was an advertisement picturing a shiny red telephone with text about a worldwide network of affectionate connections among people. Two people entered most vividly into the exercises. The imagery of one centered upon very bright, shiny red fingernails, which matched the color and sheen of the most prominent feature of the target. The other became immersed in the fantasy of being a tree, with very large outstretched branches, and imagined his limbs reaching out to connect him lovingly with the whole world. This was congruent with the target’s message. When the target was presented with a field of 3 decoy pictures it could be easily discriminated before learning that it was the target. All three pilot sessions garnered strong associations and successful identifications by majority votes.

Formal Project

We created a leaderless, quasi-therapeutic group that began meeting in 1986 and continued on and off, with some changes in membership, until June 1998, when it ended by prior mutual consent. The group accumulated a total of 386 sessions.

Participants

Over the span of the project, 18 participants (10 women) took part for varying lengths of time. All were supportive to strongly supportive of the psi hypothesis. One was Asian-American, two were Canadians, the rest were Caucasian-Americans. All were educated to a college or post-graduate level. Twelve had previous involvement in parapsychological research, one was a professional psychic. Ages ranged from 24 to 56. Nine were experienced therapists who shared a generally humanistic orientation, with experience of psychodynamic therapy, client-centered therapy and gestalt therapy. However, no one ever tried to “be the therapist” for other members.

An observer watching the group would think it represented the interaction of a support group made up of good friends who valued emotionally honest communication and shared a commitment to being helpful to one another and working through relationship issues as they arose. Only the two authors (a psychotherapist/parapsychologist and a psychiatric nurse/massage therapist) took part in the entire project.

Stages of Group History

There were different stages in the development of the group. We break its history down into three major, structural parts, in terms of emotional quality and membership. Two of the stages were rather brief. The numerical findings discussed in the Results section all pertain to all three parts combined. We discriminate them here only to give more understanding of the evolution of the group as such.

Group A. The first author collected a group of 7 colleagues who were willing to commit themselves to a series of group sessions with the dual aims of enriching their own personal adjustment, while also exploring how ESP targets might be found to influence therapeutic process. All were research workers in parapsychology who also had experience with psychotherapy. Fifty-two sessions were carried out by this group, held at the FRNM. Targets were randomly selected as before, but no one viewed the correct picture during the session, or knew of its content before the number identifying it was given to the group post-rating. This feature continued throughout the project. Thus, in the language of parapsychology, all the data reported here represent implicit clairvoyance, not telepathy. This group disbanded on prior agreement when two members moved away and scheduling became a problem for some others.

Group B. After the initial group stopped meeting, six months passed before we assembled another. This group contained several people who had participated before, as well as four others who were interested in the parapsychological aspects of the project but who, in retrospect, should not have participated in the study since they had no experience with group psychotherapy and were not prepared for the emotional intensity that others expected. This group carried out 22 sessions and ended a few sessions after a meeting in which one member experienced considerable emotional distress following a confrontation. The first author and another clinical psychologist then decided that the project should be halted until the group could be more carefully composed.

Group C. About a year later, a new group of eight was assembled. All members were experienced with psychotherapeutic group process as well as interested in exploring psi. With a few changes in membership, this group conducted 312 sessions.

Conduct of Sessions

After the pilot sessions, the group functioned without a formal leader, although different members might suggest certain agendas at times. Although it was understood that a target would be randomly selected and recorded by someone outside the group, there was *no effort to retrieve its contents* as by, for example, guessing or free associating to it. Instead the group members settled quickly down to creating a lively and productive session for their own purposes, as if no ESP target were involved, by focusing on their current concerns and their developing relationships with one another. The interaction varied in emotional tone, sometimes intense and revealing, sometimes riotously funny, occasionally conflicted, but generally playful, cheerful, and warm. As in a therapy group issues would often be carried over from one week to another (e.g., "How is your brother

doing?” -- “Something you said last time has bothered me all week.”). One member, a massage therapist, might quietly treat someone’s hurt back or neck as the talk progressed. After the initial sessions, the ESP aspect of the situation became less novel and we rarely mentioned it until the end of the meeting when the time for rating four pictures came. For the most part we largely seemed to forget it in the engaging interactions.

Targets

Four hundred pictures taken out of popular magazines served as targets and decoys. They were assembled in sets of four intended to be as internally varied as possible, and the sets were kept in 100 numbered manila envelopes. During each session an independent experimenter at the FRNM used a PDP-11 computer to select two numbers, the first (1-100) to pick an envelope, the second (1-4) to select a target within the envelope. These numbers were drawn “next –up” from the queue of random numbers used for all studies at the laboratory at that time.

Target rating. At the end of each session, one member retrieved the number selecting an envelope, and the 4 pictures inside were spread out in front of all members for rating. After some discussion if any desired it, each member silently ranked the pictures from 1 to 4, with 1 being their choice as the picture most reflected in the day’s session, and also rated each picture on a scale of 1 to 100 for its degree of association to the session. We considered the session’s emotional tone, themes, notable events, and distinctive semantic and behavioral expressions as bases for rating a holistic impression of “fit.” It is as if we were asking: “If today’s session could be given a pictorial illustration, which of these four would best do the job?” After all ratings of the pictures and group process, the group obtained the second random number and the correct target was disclosed. After this disclosure, the session disbanded.

Periodically all data were entered into a database for analysis, and all entries were later double-checked by an assistant not otherwise connected with the study. All subsequent computations were then done with SPSS software. Each session yielded one primary ESP score, which was the rank of the average rankings given by all members to the correct picture. Following the convention then in practice at the FRNM, we considered averaged rank scores of 1, 1.5 or 2 a binary hit, and 3, 3.5 or 4 a miss, for a simple index of success or failure. In a few cases an average rank score of 2.5 was obtained. By prior agreement, the average *ratings* were ranked, and, with one exception, this permitted a classification of the session as either a hit or a miss.

Continuous, roughly normal ESP *z*-scores (Stanford & Mayer, 1974) were also calculated from each individual’s ratings by subtracting the (0 to 100-point) rating given to the target from the average of ratings given to all 4 pictures, and dividing this difference by the standard deviation of the 4 ratings. All members’ *z* scores were then averaged for a single group score for the session. Since to a large extent the composition of the group included the same persons, these data should be thought of as a time-series of repeated testing, which creates the possibility of autocorrelation over time. If significant autocorrelation exists, the standard assumptions for significance testing may not be met. In order to assess this possibility, an expert in time-series analyses (Adrian Ryan) subjected the distribution of ESP *z*-scores to a standard correlogram analysis. This determined that a significant autocorrelation problem does not exist in these data. He concluded that the scores were suitable for parametric analyses and therefore were used for testing relations with other variables.

Ratings of Session Quality. After the first few meetings, it became clear that sessions varied considerably in terms of the quality of group process, with some feeling rather strained and

awkward while others were “deeper,” more spontaneous and flowing. This difference in session quality appeared to be related to the group’s success at identifying the ESP target. For this reason, a global rating of the session was added to the procedure at Session 19. At the end of the session, but before seeing the day’s pictures, each member made a rating on a 5-point scale that was loosely defined as indicating overall satisfaction with the session. These were averaged as well, for one overall “session rating”.

We became dissatisfied with the vagueness and poor consensuality of this global measure, so at Session 53 we shifted to 8-point ratings on several more specific dimensions: How meaningful was today’s session? How engaging was the session? How connected do you feel to others in the group? How revealing were the most involved people today? How much risk was taken today? How spontaneous and surprising was interaction today? How anxious were you left feeling? How helpful for you was the session? How hurtful was the session? These ratings were done for 334 sessions. Still other dimensions were added later, but they were used in so few sessions that we have not included them in correlation and regression analyses.

Analyses

We measured overall expression-of-psi with a chi-square analysis comparing the hits (ranks 1 and 2) to misses (ranks 3 and 4). Based on an assumed parallel between extrasensory information retrieval and the achievement of information and insight in psychotherapy, we began with the assumption that variables we associated with “good” psychotherapy sessions might also yield positive access to extrasensory targets. However, with no prior experimental results to guide us we did not pose directional predictions and planned to use Pearson correlation coefficients with 2-tail tests for testing relations between psi success and the ratings of specific dimensions. We planned to use multiple regressions to help clarify what relations were most pertinent to psi expression and in what direction. We framed the hypothesis that these measures would predict ESP scoring at the time we began collecting them. We made ratings of group process at the end of the session, but before displaying pictures for rating. Group means were calculated later for each session variable.

Measures. At session 136, the group decided to add pre-session ratings of mood to our procedure. Before beginning each session, each member present filled out a Nowlis Mood-Adjective List, Short-Form (Nowlis, 1965). This is a quickly administered list of 33 adjectives that yields scores on 11 dimensions of mood: Aggression, Anxiety, Surgency, Elation, Concentration, Fatigue, Social Affection, Depression, Egotism, and Vigor. Based on prior research (Carpenter, 1991) and general findings in the literature (e.g., Palmer, 1977), we expected that pre-session moods of anxiety and skepticism would be negatively related to psi scoring. We framed this hypothesis just before beginning the collection of mood data. Because no work on mood and ESP in group settings has been reported before, we ventured no predictions on other dimensions of mood but intended to analyze them as well in an exploratory, hypothesis-generating way. Mood ratings were collected for 221 sessions.

After this project was completed, some other measures involving the data were selected, and analyses involving those measures carried out. These measures were: 1. The level of global geomagnetic activity for the time periods of the sessions, as well as the periods immediately preceding and following them, 2. The average ESP *extremity score* for each session, independent of hitting or missing scoring direction, 3. The emotional negativity of each of the 400 target pictures used in the study. Since each of these measures involves issues that are secondary to the primary concerns of this study, each of them will be reported upon separately in later reports.

Hypotheses

1. Based upon the success of pilot sessions, the group's average ranks of association between targets and sessions were expected to show significant psi-hitting. This hypothesis was posed at the inception of the project.
2. Ratings of session quality were expected to relate meaningfully to hitting.
3. Based upon prior research, pre-session moods of Anxiety and Skepticism were expected to predict psi-missing, as tested by Pearson r ; one-tailed probabilities.
4. We report some descriptive analyses in order to permit a qualitative sense of the sessions.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

1. Quality of Sessions. The means of the various dimensions, including those less-often rated, are given below in order of mean values. Meetings tended to be experienced positively, with high levels of connectedness, meaningfulness, and engagement, and relatively little conflict and hurtfulness.

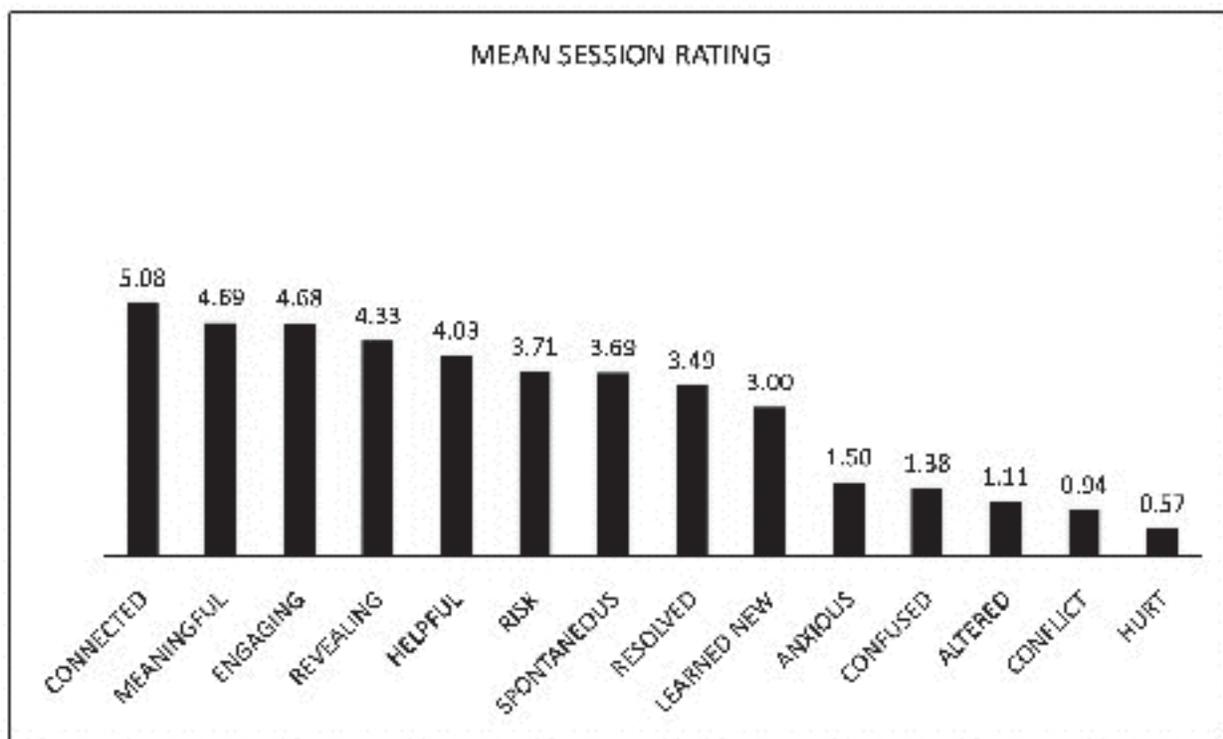


Figure 1. Averaged Ratings of Session Quality

Ratings on the more-often rated dimensions were all positively correlated, most of them fairly strongly so. Only *Anxious* and *Hurtful* were unrelated to the other dimensions, and they were most strongly related to each other. See Table One for the matrix of correlations among the primary measures.

Table 1

Intercorrelations of Session-Quality Ratings

| | Meaning | Engage | Connect | Rev | Risk | Spont | Anx | Hurt |
|---------|---------|--------|---------|-----|------|-------|-----|------|
| Engage | .85 | | | | | | | |
| Connect | .65 | .71 | | | | | | |
| Rev | .79 | .75 | .61 | | | | | |
| Risk | .65 | .62 | .49 | .80 | | | | |
| Spont | .64 | .67 | .48 | .70 | .71 | | | |
| Anx | .15 | .14 | .08 | .25 | .28 | .24 | | |
| Hurt | .07 | .09 | .002 | .16 | .17 | .16 | .42 | |
| Help | .70 | .69 | .59 | .58 | .58 | .48 | .09 | .11 |

Note: Meaning = meaningful, Engage = engaging, Connect = connected, Rev = revealing, Risk = risk taken, Spont = spontaneous and surprising, Anx = anxious, Hurt = hurtful, Help = helpful.

2. Average pre-session mood. Members approached sessions in moods marked by warmth and seriousness, moderate energy, and relatively low levels of negative affect, as shown in Figure 2. Scores could range from 0 to 9.

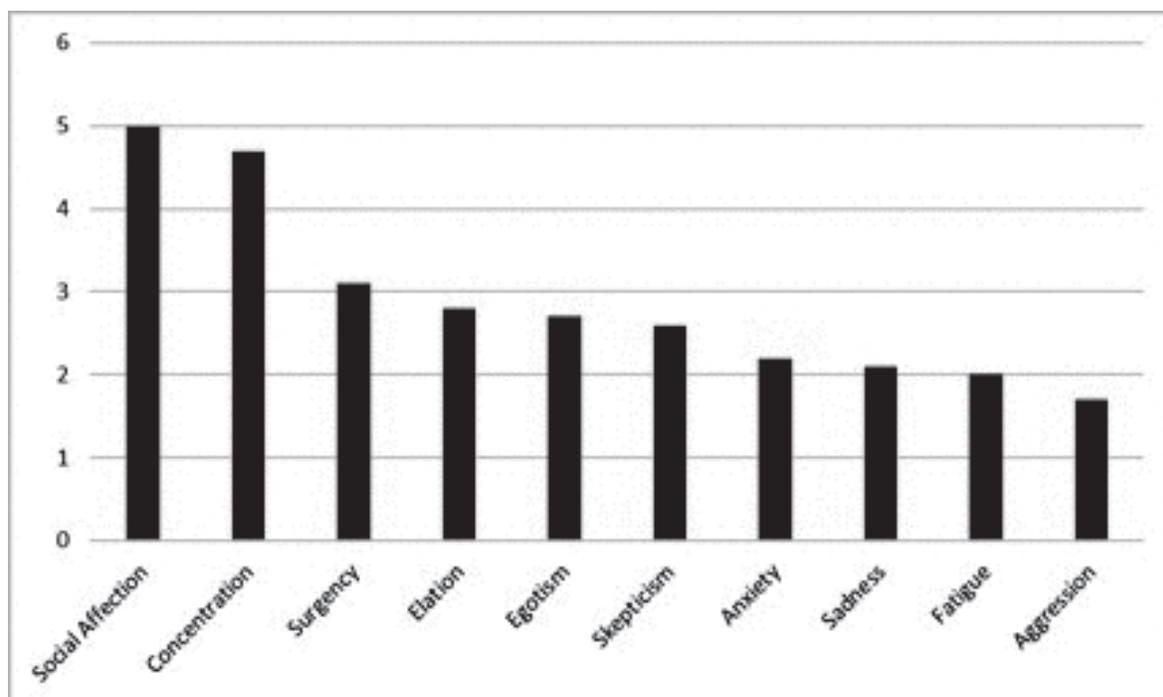


Figure 2. Average Pre-session Mood

Hypothesis-testing Analyses

1. Overall Hitting and Missing. Altogether, 225 binary hits and 160 misses were observed. This 58.4% hit rate is significant, $X^2(1) = 11.00$, $p = .001$, $r = .17$.

In an exploratory analysis we examined the data to see if this overall hitting tendency changed over time. When the life of the group is broken up into three epochs described earlier (A, B, and C), no change in hitting rate was observed, $X^2(2) = .26$, $p = .88$. As another test for a linear

change over time, a correlation was computed between z scores and year, Pearson's r ($df = 384$) = $-.03$, $p = .63$. For those concerned with security (or interested in the effect of distance on psi), it might be worth noting that the efficiency of the effect did not decline when several miles were interposed between the act of target selection and the group session, when Epoch B ended and C began.

2. Relations between Psi and Session Ratings. The 9 rating dimensions for session quality are referred to briefly as *meaningful*, *engaging*, *connected*, *revealing*, *risk*, *spontaneous*, *anxious*, *helpful*, and *hurtful*.

All the correlations between session ratings and ESP were negative, three were significant by a 2-tailed test: Meaningful, Connected and Revealing (see Table 2).

Table 2

Process Ratings and ESP Success

| Variable | r | p |
|----------------------|------|------|
| Meaningful | -.11 | .04* |
| Engaging | -.09 | .09 |
| Connected | -.11 | .05* |
| Revealing | -.13 | .03* |
| Risk | -.05 | .15 |
| Spontaneity/surprise | -.08 | .15 |
| Anxiety | -.08 | .15 |
| Hurt | -.07 | .20 |
| Help | -.04 | .54 |

Because the relations given in Table 1 are somewhat redundant due to the intercorrelation of the variables, we placed the three that showed independently significant relations into a stepwise multiple regression analysis as predictors of the averaged session z scores. Only *Revealing* emerged as an independent predictor. We examined the relation between ESP and Revealing further by comparing different ratios of hitting-to-missing sessions at different levels of Revealing. We divided sessions by scores on Revealing into three sets: the lowest fourth, the middle half, and the highest fourth. Scoring was highest when Revealingness was lowest (62.7 % hits), still positive but less so when it was middling (60.5 %), and near chance (51.2%) when it was high.

3. Psi and Pre-Session Mood. Both pre-session ratings of Mood/Anxiety (as opposed to session-quality Anxiety) and Skepticism were predicted to show a negative relation to psi, and both expectations were confirmed with small correlations, Anxiety, $r(209) = -.12$, $p < .05$; Skepticism, $r(209) = -.11$, $p < .05$. The other mood/psi relations were examined in an exploratory way, using two-tailed tests, but none approached significance.

Qualitative Examples of Hitting Sessions

Our measures tell some of the story, but there is also the question of how psi-expression in this situation is qualitatively experienced. We offer descriptions of a few sessions that produced hits. In one session early in the life of the group, two men who had been old friends but whose

lives had grown apart reflected on the years in which they had been close and the issues that had led to their distance. As the talk proceeded, there was a sense of resolving some old problems and reanimating an important relationship. They reminisced at length about a college hangout where they had spent many happy hours with friends. The target that day was of a seedy café that looked much like that place that the two had frequented together.

Two women who had become quite important to the rest of the group discussed in another session how they would be stopping soon. Some conflict between them had been part of their decision to stop, but that was largely now resolved. This led, however, to two other members revealing their built-up resentment with the first author, for his non-directive approach to group leadership. This exchange led to an airing out of conflict between the leader and one other member that they had been unable to deal with before. By the session's end they were embracing in light of the new understanding they had created. Everyone then addressed again the issue of the departing members, in a spirit of deep affection and appreciation. The target that day was a picture of two children walking away down a railroad track. Everyone rated it highly, but some for different reasons. Some thought of the children as the departing members, while others associated the children to the first author and his prior antagonist, now heading off to play.

A younger man discussed his feelings toward an older male member in an early session. He was urged to explore, in a gestalt therapy way, his responses to the man, which included admiration, affection, and intimidation. This gestalt exercise led, as they often do, to a series of behaviors that were unusually spontaneous and impetuous. At one point he stood facing the older man when he was urged to "do something now!" He said, rather out of the blue, "I want to rub your bald head." Then he stood behind the older man and did just that, talking about the feelings that emerged from his surprising choice. The target that day was a drawing of a bull in a china shop, with a shiny check-mark on the top of its head. The father-like bull, the shiny, check-marked head, and the sense of reckless behavior all resonated to the session and permitted an easy identification.

The most striking material of another meeting involved one man talking with exuberant animation about resolving a grinding, longstanding conflict with his stepson. This event included successfully asserting both his love and his authority to a new, very satisfying degree. As the group cheered, another member called out, "You're a champ!" The target that day was a triumphant picture of an athlete receiving a trophy before a large crowd. Another easy identification.

In another session fairly late in the life of the group we talked about death, age and loss, and discussed various memories of disappointments with sadness and humor. The target picture that day was of two people standing in a ruined room ravaged by floodwaters. Although this congruity is subtler than the other examples, it was also more typical, in that associations tended to rely upon general tone and theme more than specific dramatic events.

In general, the group came to experience the target, not as influencing our process so much as being a relatively successful or unsuccessful *illustration* of our process. We felt we were doing whatever we wanted and needed to do, and came to expect that the target would frequently cooperate by giving us a decent representation of the situation we developed. In parapsychological terms, the associations we found seemed subjectively more like a PK effect than an ESP effect, as if the group's process had influenced the random target-selection process. Since our targets were determined by a pseudo-random number queue standing in a computer circuit, this possibility seems unlikely.

Discussion

In this section we go beyond the tentative ideas with which we initiated the project and discuss the findings as if first sight theory had been formalized already. This will allow us to illustrate how hypotheses may be drawn from FST and tested in data such as these. We discuss the major analyses in turn.

Overall Effect

FST proposes that each person continuously makes unconscious reference to an extended surround of meaning and expresses this reference implicitly in constructing experience and making behavioral decisions. Sometimes the psi reference is positive (included in experience and behavior) and sometimes negative (excluded). This expression is assumed to always be implicit, and its direction is determined by unconscious intention in the context of the situation in the moment. Its expression may be seen by examining the meanings inadvertently implied by experiences and actions.

FST assumes that, in general, patterns of functioning found to characterize “normal” preconscious functioning should tend to apply to psi functioning as well. For example, it is known that subliminal sensory perceptions may prime emotions, choices and behavioral tendencies, and we expect that a pertinent extrasensory target could have the same effect. This is why we expected that we would express the pictures that served as our targets in this study by our spontaneous behavior. In fact, we did seem to do that. To take the examples cited in turn, the seedy café may have primed a sense of nostalgia over lost friendship in the two former friends and facilitated their taking up the issue in the group. The prime of two children walking away hand-in-hand may have implicitly reminded the antagonists of their deep regard for one another and encouraged them to work through the conflict that they had neglected up to that point. The impetuous bull prime may have facilitated an unusually spontaneous symbolic gesture on the part of the normally constrained man who rubbed the other’s bald head. The prime of the cheering crowd may have implicitly reminded the man who had successfully worked through something with his stepson and enjoyed the victory, that he would enjoy telling the story to the group. And the subtle prompt provided by the storm-ruined room facilitated sensitivity to personal themes of loss. According to FST, this is how the mind employs extrasensory information all the time as an aid to unconsciously constructing experience and behavior as it is most needed in that moment.

Although we identified the targets a significant proportion of times, we also misidentified it frequently. The various corollaries of FST specify hypotheses about variables expected to affect the direction (positive or negative) of psi expression. In general, FST expects a positive psi reference when the meanings to be apprehended are important to the individuals and when expressing the information is congruent with their goals in the situation, when the people involved are creative and are comfortable using unconscious sources of information, when they think of psi as a valid source of information, when they are not frightened, and when their activity is playful rather than cognitively arduous. Since these things are all generally true of this group situation, it should be conducive to positive expression of psi meanings.

Initial Mood

Of the eleven dimensions of the Nowlis scale, two were expected to relate to scoring based on previous research, and both were drawn from FST, which holds that a state of anxiety should

make psi-missing likely. FST also asserts that the participants' understanding that psi represents a valid source of information will tend to promote psi-hitting, whereas the contrary belief will switch scoring in a negative direction. We reasoned that in the context of this study, endorsement of the mood items assessing *Skepticism* should predominantly imply a skeptical feeling toward our ESP task.

At the time the mood hypotheses were first posed for this study, they were drawn inductively from past research (e.g., Lawrence, 1998; Palmer, 1977, Schmeidler & McConnell, 1958) on psi performance in relation to the "Sheep-Goat" dimension and various measures of anxiety. FST has incorporated these observations and framed them in terms by which they can be understood, and it can be specified more precisely in what contexts they are expected to be reliably present and in what contexts they are not.

Session Ratings

Our initial guess, that hitting might be better when sessions showed more intense process (meaningful material, self-disclosure, risk, and confrontation), was based on an analogy to experiential psychotherapy and proved to be wrong. We thought that more intensely probing process might yield more extrasensory access, although without empirical background, so we did not venture directional predictions, and as the group proceeded the wisdom of that grew clearer. Had FST been formalized at that time, the expectation would have been different. FST assumes that the mind will unconsciously orient toward whatever it senses to be most important and useful in the moment in the light of unconscious intentions, and expresses this implicitly, while avoiding less salient alternatives. At interpersonally intense and sensitive times, as indicated by high levels of Revealing, the targets should become relatively unimportant and less alluded to by group process. Although analyses of the individual correlations with session qualities were not corrected for multiple selection, we think that the multiple regression gives assurance that the relation with Revealing is genuine. In any case, without prior predictions, we regard this finding as exploratory.

As the group proceeded, it occurred to participants that the idea that we were testing something analogous to psi in psychotherapy was incorrect in one important respect. All the observations of apparent psi in psychotherapy refer to material that is emotionally pertinent to the therapeutic concerns, such as traumatic memories, important secrets, and unconscious emotional reactions to other parties in the therapy (see, e.g., Eisenbud, 1970, Mintz, 1983). In this study our ESP task required us to express information that was not primarily personal, but determined randomly and carried by arbitrary pictures. In more intense sessions, our therapeutic and our experimental tasks came into conflict. It came to subjectively seem to us that during particularly intense sessions our psi was still active, but it shifted to the important personal issues that were ongoing, for example by sharpening our empathy for personal concerns that might be difficult to articulate, as opposed to the impersonal material in the target pictures. This would be consistent with the anecdotes of apparent psi spread across the psychotherapy literature, but we have no measure of this possible interpersonal deployment of psi in this study, so this must remain as a good question for future research. However, we can examine the effect on target-related psi of changes in interpersonal intensity. In this case, as the focus on personally sensitive disclosure increased, scoring declined.

We have confirmed the expectation of first sight theory that extrasomatic information may be expressed implicitly in spontaneous social interaction and then recognized as such after the fact, given the underlying wish of the members to generate allusions to the targets. Someone wishing to

replicate this effect might choose to use a group situation without an explicit therapeutic agenda. FST holds that unconscious intention determines the direction of psi-expression, and therapeutic goals should sometimes put participants at cross-purposes regarding impersonal target material. Sessions that are playful, cheerful and spontaneous, with free-floating agendas that are not so intensely probing would be expected to best express psi. This implies an intriguing parallel to the work of Iris Owen and her collaborators who created the faux ghost “Philip” and observed his psychokinetic noises and levitations (Owen & Sparrow, 1967). They noticed that many of their best sessions were spontaneous and party-like, with “horsing around,” singing and joking. We expect that for psi to be expressed in behavior (either of persons or things) a process characterized by uncritical playfulness and trust will work best.

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Abstracts in other Languages

French

Les comportements sociaux spontanés peuvent exprimer implicitement de l'information extra-sensorielle

Nous décrivons une nouvelle procédure pour accéder à l'expression implicite de l'information psi. Cette recherche est guidée par l'hypothèse que l'information psi peut inconsciemment influencer le développement des interactions sociales. Les membres d'un groupe quasi-thérapeutique participaient à des sessions non-structurées tandis qu'un expérimentateur, à distance, sélectionnait aléatoirement une cible de PES (une image). Immédiatement après chaque session, les membres du groupe évaluaient à l'aveugle la cible et trois images leurrées quant à leur degré d'association avec la session qui venait de se dérouler. Les évaluations de chaque personne étaient indépendantes et globales, mesurant la congruence d'humeur, le contenu et les événements significatifs survenus durant la session qui pouvaient être mis en lien avec les images. Les évaluations moyennes fournissaient un score de PES par session. Un groupe de volontaires avec une base de membres évolutive s'est rencontrée de façon hebdomadaire sur une période de plusieurs années, accumulant 386 sessions (en excluant les essais pilotes prédéterminés). Globalement, le groupe fut capable d'associer correctement les processus spontanés du groupe avec les cibles correspondantes à ce jour à un degré significatif. Le groupe a également évalué les sessions selon plusieurs critères, tels que le risque, les bénéfices, les inconvénients, immédiatement après chaque séance et avant de voir les images du jour, et notèrent leurs humeurs avant le début de la session. Le groupe fut le plus en réussite dans la tâche d'expression et d'identification de la cible lorsque les sessions n'impliquaient pas de révélations personnelles trop intimes, et lorsque les membres démarraient les sessions avec des humeurs faiblement anxieuses ou sceptiques.

German

Kann spontanes Sozialverhalten implizit ASW-Informationen ausdrücken?

Wir stellen eine neue Methode vor, um den impliziten Ausdruck von Psi-Informationen zu erfassen. Diesem Forschungszugang liegt die Annahme zugrunde, dass Psi-Informationen auf unbewusste Weise die Entwicklung der sozialen Interaktion beeinflussen können. Mitglieder einer quasitherapeutischen Gruppe trafen sich zu unstrukturierten Sitzungen, während derer ein räumlich entfernter Experimentator ein ASW-Zielobjekt (ein Bild) zufällig auswählte. Unmittelbar nach jeder Sitzung nahmen die Gruppenmitglieder eine blinde Einstufung zwischen dem Zielobjekt und drei Kontrollbildern in Bezug auf den Grad der Übereinstimmung vor, die sich in der Sitzung entwickelt hatte. Die Einstufung jeder Person erfolgte unabhängig und global, wobei die Kongruenz

in Bezug auf Stimmung, Inhalt und bedeutsame Sitzungsereignisse zwischen den Sitzungen und Bildern eingeschätzt wurde. Gemittelte Einstufungen ergaben einen ASW-Trefferwert pro Sitzung. Eine Gruppe von Freiwilligen, die allmählich zu Mitgliedern wurden, traf sich wöchentlich über eine Zeitspanne von mehreren Jahren zu insgesamt 386 Sitzungen, wobei vorher festgelegte Pilotsitzungen ausgeschlossen wurden. Im Ganzen gesehen war die Gruppe in der Lage, die in ihr ablaufenden spontanen Prozesse mit den jeweiligen täglichen Zielbildern in einem signifikanten Ausmaß zu assoziieren. Die Gruppe stufte auch die Sitzungen in Bezug auf verschiedene Qualitäten wie Gefahr, Hilfsbereitschaft und Verletzlichkeit ein, und zwar unmittelbar im Anschluss an die Sitzungen und bevor das tägliche Bild betrachtet wurde, und stufte ihre Stimmung vor Beginn der Sitzung ein. Die Gruppe konnte dann das Zielbild am besten beschreiben und identifizieren, wenn während der Sitzungen nur wenig intimes Material preisgegeben wurde und die Einschätzungen der Stimmungen der Mitglieder in Bezug auf Angst und Skepsis gering waren.

Spanish

El comportamiento social espontáneo tal vez manifieste de manera implícita información Psi

Presentamos un nuevo procedimiento para acceder a la expresión implícita de la información psi. El supuesto de que la información psi puede influir inconscientemente el desarrollo de la interacción social guió esta investigación. Los miembros de un grupo cuasi terapéutico realizaron sesiones no estructuradas mientras un experimentador distante seleccionaba aleatoriamente un objetivo Psi (una imagen). Inmediatamente después de cada sesión, los miembros del grupo clasificaron ciegamente el objetivo y tres imágenes de señuelo según el grado de asociación con la sesión que acababa de terminar. Las calificaciones dadas por cada persona fueron independientes y globales, evaluando la congruencia con el estado de ánimo, el contenido, y los eventos de sesión significativos entre la sesión y las imágenes. Las calificaciones promedio arrojaron una puntuación Psi por sesión. Un grupo de voluntarios con miembros que podían cambiar se reunió semanalmente durante un período de varios años, acumulando 386 sesiones (excluyendo los ensayos piloto predeterminados). En general, el grupo pudo asociar correctamente sus procesos grupales espontáneos con los objetivos del día en un grado significativo. El grupo también clasificó las sesiones en términos de varias cualidades tales como riesgo, utilidad, y daño, inmediatamente después de la sesión y antes de ver las fotos del día, y calificó su estado de ánimo antes de comenzar la sesión. El grupo tuvo más éxito para expresar e identificar el objetivo cuando las sesiones no involucraban demasiadas auto-revelaciones íntimas y cuando los miembros comenzaban las sesiones con estados de ánimo bajos en ansiedad y escepticismo.