

Reprinted from the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*
Volume 66 — July 1972 — Number 3

THE ESP CHANNEL—OPEN OR CLOSED?

BY

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ABSTRACT: In three clairvoyance experiments, two experimenters sat with the same targets: four columns each containing twenty-five nature postcards laid face down on the floor. The subjects worked at home. Instructions sent to them focused their attention on one of the experimenters; they were unaware of the other. Both experimenters rated their moods during the sessions and ESP scoring correlated only with the moods of the unknown experimenter. Correlations of experimenter moods with subject scoring on the columns did not depend on the distance of each experimenter from the columns.

INTRODUCTION

The ESP channel may be defined as that part of the ESP process which extends outside the boundaries of the percipient's organism and links him to the person or object perceived. Within the percipient, further processing of the ESP information takes place, as it is transmitted to awareness. The channel enables the percipient to perform remarkable feats of orientation in unknown territory; e.g., distinguishing clairvoyance targets halfway around the world from billions of other existing objects (8).

Despite this precision of orientation, as a rule only a small fraction of the desired information actually gets transmitted. It may be that much of this information loss occurs in the channel; that the ESP channel is a "leaky" one. In the Osis, Turner, and Carlson long distance experiments (8) one possible source of information loss in the channel was identified: the influence of persons in the vicinity of the targets.

There is much anecdotal evidence for this sort of effect; e.g., that the presence of aggressive, skeptical persons suppresses ESP, while the presence of warm, accepting persons facilitates it. A differential effect between two experimenters (*Es*), Pratt and Price (9), was shown in the 1930s. Woodruff and Dale (14) found indications that *E's* temporary state of mind could affect subject (*S*) scoring.

In these studies, *Es* interacted directly with *Ss*, and the effects could have been due to *S* reaction to sensory cues. However, in an experiment by West and Fisk (13), *E* effects occurred despite the fact that it was conducted entirely by mail. Total *S* scoring was significant on targets prepared by Fisk, the more genial and outgoing of the two *Es*, and not on targets prepared by West. In

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another study, Feather and Brier (2) found *E* effects across the time barrier in precognition tests: Scoring depended upon which *E* did the checking and also upon which one the *Ss* expected to do the checking, a sort of social psychic effect.

In a few experiments, voluntary influence on scoring was tried. Soal and Bateman (11) had telepathic agents work either in conjunction (sending the same targets), or in opposition (sending different targets). *Ss* in both conditions apparently chose one agent and ignored the other. Schneider (10) had persons rated as compatible or incompatible with *Ss* wish for *S's* success or failure in a clairvoyance test. A wish for failure by an incompatible person resulted in high scores.

In our last two distance experiments (8), a traveler (*T*) took the targets to their stations and remained with them during the ESP sessions. *Ss* had been given psychometric objects from him, and his photograph and description. They were instructed to reach the targets, from their homes, using the psychometric objects. Although the task was a clairvoyance one, the *T's* moods during the sessions clearly seemed to affect *S* scoring. A similar effect was found later in a small-scale experiment at the A.S.P.R. (1), where K.O. sat with the targets.

What part of the ESP system might be affected by the moods of a person near the targets? Since the distance experiments used clairvoyance tests, we can eliminate the possibility that the target information itself was affected. The remaining alternatives are an influence on the channel or on *Ss'* internal ESP processing.

In the report on the distance experiments, it was suggested that there were at least three possible types of mood influence on the channel. Two of these—changing the noise level or changing the strength of the signal—should be reflected in the amount of ESP scoring on a variety of measures. The third, the introduction of systematic dispersion, should result in a shift of scoring from direct hits to displacements.

Rather than influencing the channel, the mood of a person with the targets could affect *Ss'* internal ESP processing if *Ss* encountered the person and his mood by ESP, and reacted to this. If so, it is possible that the total amount of ESP scoring would be affected, but the authors gave reasons why it seems more likely that in the distance experiment the direction of scoring—to psi-hitting or psi-missing—would be changed. Scoring shifted to psi-hitting if *Ss* found *T* in a positive mood, and to psi-missing if *T's* mood was found to be unpleasant. On the basis of the results it was concluded: "Our tentative impression is that gating is more affected by *T's* mood, than the amount of psi information" (8, p. 280).

By focusing *Ss'* attention on the *T*, we had made such an

encounter more likely. Research on influence of task-set, or *Aufgabe* (3, 12), and on incidental learning (4) indicates that Ss are little concerned with peripheral stimuli; i.e., stimuli on which their attention has not been focused by instructions or other means. A better test of whether persons near clairvoyance targets produce channel effects on scoring would feature a person unknown to Ss, whose presence they did not expect.

The experiments reported here featured two Es present with the targets during the ESP sessions. One of them (M.L.C.) was unknown to Ss; they had no contact with her and were not informed that she would be with the targets during the sessions. For purposes of comparison, the other (K.O.) took the role previously filled by the traveler in the distance experiments, and served as the focus of Ss' attention. If K.O. was able to exert a mood effect on scoring, it would give some indication that the ESP channel is a closed system, not susceptible to the influence of persons near the targets, and that his mood effect was probably the result of Ss' encounter with him and took place in their processing of the ESP information. An effect by M.L.C. on scoring, whether or not K.O. had such an effect, would give some indication that the channel itself is open to the influence of persons near targets. The two Es did not switch roles because K.O. was already well known to the Ss.

The physical arrangement of the targets (four columns of postcards on the floor) enabled a test of the role of short distance in such mood effects. K.O. sat nearest the first column and M.L.C. nearest the fourth, so we tested the relationship of scoring on these columns, as well as total ESP scoring, to the moods of both Es. The power to affect the channel may be limited to a few feet around the body, and this could be linked with the tradition of an aura extending at most only a few feet around the body.

PROCEDURE

The experiments in which the above hypotheses were tested also served the purpose of screening Ss for a later long-distance experiment. The procedure followed closely that described for the preliminary tests in the report on the Osis and Turner long-distance experiment (7).

Ss were A.S.P.R. members who had volunteered in their membership questionnaires to take part in research, and other interested persons known to these members and to the staff. There were 107 Ss in Experiment I, 139 in Experiment II, and 49 in Experiment III. Ss first completed several different ESP tests at home for practice. Targets were five types of nature postcards.

Next they got impressions, from their homes, of the order in which the same target cards were set out in K.O.'s office at the A.S.P.R. Targets were laid out face down on the floor in four columns of twenty-five cards each. "Closed decks" were used; i.e., there were equal numbers of each type of target in each column. M.L.C. randomized the targets and usually set them out.

Ss were told that K.O. would be sitting in his office during a four-hour period, and that they could begin making their calls at any time during that period. Each S was given four index cards which K.O. had carried with him for some time, and was instructed to use them in reaching the four target columns. Ss were told that K.O. would not act as a sender, but that the psychometric objects (index cards) from him would aid their ESP in reaching the targets. Ss also received a picture and a brief biographical sketch of K.O.

Both K.O. and M.L.C. rated their moods during the sessions once per hour, on four scales on the dimensions of Relaxation, Elation, Vitality, and Freedom from Anxiety. These scales are reprinted as scales 4, 6, 7, and 8 in Appendix I of the report on the last distance experiments (8). Ss also completed a ten-item questionnaire about their moods and task attitudes after finishing their ESP task; the results will not be reported here.

It was planned to carry out two experiments of four sessions each (Ss usually took part in only one session). However, K.O. was unable to come to his office for the third session of Experiment II. For that session, one set of targets was laid out at his home, while M.L.C. sat with another set of targets in identical order at his office. Data from that session were analyzed separately, and it was designated Experiment III. There was a different target order for each session. Thus, for Experiments I and II there was a large enough number of targets to minimize possible stacking effects. In any event, a stacking effect would be more likely to distort the overall level of ESP rather than correlations with independent measures; only the latter are of interest here.

EVALUATION METHODS

As in the distance experiments, six ESP measures were used: psi-hitting and psi-missing scores for direct hits (0), forward displacements (+1) and backward displacements (-1). The psi-hitting score for a run was its positive deviation from chance (if there was no deviation from chance, or a negative one, the score was zero). Likewise, the psi-missing score for a run was the negative deviation. The psi-hitting and psi-missing scores for the session

were the totals of the psi-hitting and psi-missing scores for the four runs.

Two kinds of correlational analysis were performed to relate *E* mood scores to ESP scores. Pearson Product Moment correlations were computed between *E* mood scores and *S* ESP scores for the session and also for the first and fourth columns. A Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis (SMRA) was also performed, using only the ESP scores for the session as a whole. SMRA is described by Morrison (5), and is also explained in the report on our first distance experiment (7). SMRA lets us deal with the fact that K.O.'s and M.L.C.'s mood scores are intercorrelated. In this experiment, M.L.C.'s mood effects are of primary interest, therefore K.O.'s mood scores were entered into the analysis first so that any overlap between their mood effects would be attributed to him. This gives a more stringent test of whether M.L.C.'s moods had any effect because it is quite possible that some of this overlap was due to her moods.

RESULTS

None of the total deviations from chance for each experiment on direct hits and forward and backward displacements reached significance. There was suggestive scoring in Experiment III: a deviation of +54 on direct hits ($CR = 1.93, P = .054$) and a deviation of -52.8 on forward displacements ($CR = 1.86, P = .063$).

Table 1 gives the correlations between the two *E* moods and the total ESP scores for the three experiments. The mood scores are intercorrelated among themselves, as are the ESP scores, so it is impossible to determine how many correlations between mood and ESP scores would be expected by chance. In M.L.C.'s data, there are twice as many correlations at the .05 level or above than would be expected by chance if this difficulty were ignored (four times as many correlations at the .01 level). However, there is only one significant correlation in K.O.'s data. Any interpretations of the results of these experiments must be made with caution. The distribution of correlations shows some regularity in the predominance of M.L.C.'s mood effects, all but one of which are with forward displacements.¹ In Experiment III, where the two *E*s were

¹ There is variation from experiment to experiment in the signs of the correlations and whether psi-hitting or psi-missing was affected on forward displacements. From earlier research we have come to the conclusion that a given independent (non-ESP) variable may be reliably associated with ESP although the particular ESP measure affected may vary. Our interpretation was that at least one subsystem of Ss internal ESP processing, the "gating" mechanism (6; see

Table 1
SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ESP AND EXPERIMENTER MOOD VARIABLES

Experiment	K.O. Mood Variable				M.L.C. Mood Variable			
	ESP Variable	Relaxation	Elation	Vitality	Freedom from Anxiety	Relaxation	Elation	Vitality
I	Missing Hitting Missing Missing Missing Hitting		- .23*			-.19*		
II	Missing Hitting Missing Missing Missing Hitting					.22**	.26*	.20*
III	Missing Hitting Missing Missing Missing Hitting					.38**		.37**

* $p = .05$, ** $p = .01$.

separated by twelve miles, it appears that Ss reached the targets in K.O.'s office, where M.L.C. sat, rather than the targets with K.O. in his home.

Was each E's influence stronger on the column nearest him than on the farthest column? Excluding K.O.'s data from Experiment III, where he sat perpendicular to the columns, we have twenty significant correlations between E moods and ESP scores on the first and fourth columns (not reported in the tables). Twelve of these correlations are with ESP scores for the farthest column, and eight with scores from the nearest column. The E mood effect does not appear to operate only over a very close range.

Correlations between K.O.'s moods and M.L.C.'s moods did not reach significance, but were usually positive. Results from the SMRA, which attributed all overlapping influence of the two Es' moods to K.O., are shown in Table 2. M.L.C.'s mood effects survive this test, with five significant F ratios, one of which is at the .005 and one at the .001 level.²

DISCUSSION

To our question as to whether a person unknown to Ss but near to clairvoyance targets can exert a mood influence on scoring, the answer, as far as we can judge from these data, appears to be "yes." We found indications of such an effect in all three experiments, both in the correlational and SMRA results. This kind of mood effect does not appear to be affected by distances of a few feet.

Our interpretations of how such effects could occur must be very tentative, especially as regards the ESP channel, about which almost nothing is known. Nevertheless, we think it worth while to make such interpretations as a first attempt at understanding the processes involved.

Although it is possible that M.L.C.'s moods might have affected Ss' internal information processing as they reacted to an ESP encounter with her, it seems less likely that they would encounter in this way M.L.C. and not K.O., upon whom their attention had been focused. Studies of sensory perception have found that the

model, p. 20) was unaffected by the independent variable in question and was free to be influenced by other factors. For example, in the present study, there were different Ss in each experiment, and M.L.C.'s moods also changed: the means on her four mood scales dropping an average of .9 on a nine-point scale from Experiment I to Experiment II ($t = 2.05$, 110 df; $P = .023$).

All probability values from the SMRA are conditional. Algebraic signs have been added to the F ratios to show the direction of the relationships; these were derived from the beta statistic, which is also produced by the SMRA.

Table 2

STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF ESP AND EXPERIMENTER MOOD VARIABLES: SIGNIFICANT F RATIOS

Experiment	K.O. Mood Variable				M.L.C. Mood Variable			
	ESP Variable	Relaxation	Elation	Vitality	Freedom from Anxiety	Relaxation	Elation	Vitality
I	Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting	6.4 4.2 4.2	5.3 7.4	7.5	—	—5.0	4.2	—6.6 12.2
II	Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting	6.4 4.2 4.2	5.3 7.4	7.5	—4.2	—5.0	4.2	—6.6 12.2
III	Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting Missing Hitting	6.4 4.2 4.2	5.3 7.4	7.5	—4.2	—5.0	4.2	—6.6 12.2

* $P = .05$. ** $P = .01$. *** $P = .001$.

incidental stimuli in the periphery of the visual field usually have little influence on Ss' responses (4). If this could be generalized to the ESP situation, it appears more likely that M.L.C.'s mood affected the channel itself.³ In retrospect, perhaps the traveler mood effect in the long-distance experiments was also an effect on the ESP channel.

Why did K.O.'s mood apparently not influence S scoring, in contrast to the results of the distance experiments? A possible post hoc explanation is that K.O. tried to keep his moods as constant (and favorable) as possible, so that all Ss would have the same opportunity to score well and thus to be selected for the later distance project. M.L.C. did not feel such a responsibility to keep her moods invariant, although she did not try to affect S scoring. The average SD of M.L.C.'s moods in the first two experiments was 1.30, as contrasted with .80 for K.O.

In Experiment III, K.O.'s moods showed as much variability as M.L.C.'s, but the fact that S scoring correlated with her moods and not with his may indicate that more Ss reached the targets set up at K.O.'s office than those at his home. In Experiment III, Ss in effect had conflicting instructions: they were to reach a certain person in a certain place, but the person was elsewhere. If Ss actually tended to reach the correct place rather than the correct person, this seems to contradict our conclusion from the distance experiments that ESP orientation is based on persons rather than scanning an area for landmarks. But in the distance experiments, Ss did not know where the targets were for a particular run or session; at most they knew the range of possibilities. It is also quite possible that K.O.'s office might have acted like a psychometric object, impregnated with his psychic influence, and might in itself have served to elicit Ss' ESP. If this occurred, personal rather than geographical factors are still indicated.

An improvement on the present design would feature a person in M.L.C.'s role who had no interest in the experiment, and little knowledge about it. Although neither E tried to influence S scoring, an unconscious attempt is possible. It would be interesting to learn the kind of effect a true bystander could produce, since

³ It has been suggested by a colleague that M.L.C.'s correlations might represent internal processing effects resulting from the influence of K.O., who might have wished M.L.C. to demonstrate a mood effect, and thus have directed Ss' attention to her. We feel this is unlikely because had the results been reversed (many correlations with K.O.'s mood, few with M.L.C.'s) they would have been in line with the traveler mood effects in the distance experiments and our interpretation of them as internal processing effects. Such results would also have given some, but different, indications about the nature of the ESP channel. The fact that M.L.C.'s correlations continued to dominate in Experiment III shows that the effect does not depend upon the simultaneous presence of an E to whom Ss are oriented.

it is this kind of influence which might affect nonexperimental ESP, and also many experiments.

The experiments reported here illustrate an approach to the ESP channel. They give some evidence that it can be affected by interested persons in the vicinity of the targets, an influence which is not affected by distances of a few feet. At least to this extent, it looks as if the ESP channel is open to the influence of its surroundings.

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