

# TRAINING IN A METHOD OF PSI RESPONDING

A Research Proposal

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## A. Introduction

A basic assumption of this proposal-with regard to "the-nature of human nature" is that psi ability is a potential in everyone (but see Wheatley.) How this potential is distributed among people is not known. It might be distributed in a manner similar to other, more usual abilities; and, of course, many believe that-it is\$ not distributed for the simple reason that the-potential does not exist. It is my assumption that the potential exists in everyone (that is, it is not restricted to a few "freaks") but through the usual processes of socialization, the "wee small voice" never develops or becomes actualized, but lays suppressed or dormant, except in certain rare cases which, indeed, have given people the impression of "freakishness." If this assumption is correct then one approach to the study of psi ability is to discover procedures and processes by which this potential-may be actualized, especially in average people.

The process of actualization is conceived of as basically an unblocking or uncovering approach coupled with the development of a communication means or a method of psi response. One can use the following analogy to illustrate: Suppose that a person has acquired a block to music so that he is tone deaf. In order to become a musician he must first remove this block. However, in order to play an instrument he must practice. Just removing the block will not result in his immediate ability to play. The same can be said for psi ability. The mental blocks acquired must first be removed or made less potent. however, in order to perform psi abilities in any consistent manner one must practice them.

It is thus necessary to increase the sensitivity or reduce the interference ("cognitive noise") in regard to psi signals and also establish and learn a response mode so that the signals can be tested for their accuracy. The first task involves a therapeutic model and the second task a learning model. Both are necessary for optimum performance.

## B. An Overview of Approaches Seeking to Improve Psi Scoring

As an indication of how the proposal fits into the general area of parapsychology, the following outline is offered (the research area falls in part "3" below):

### An Overview of Approaches Seeking to Improve Psi Scoring

#### 1. Personality and Psi Scoring.

- a. Search for, and study of, "sensitives" (mediums, seers, real magicians, etc.; Birge and Rhine)
- b. Study of personality variables (Schmeidler; Schmeidler and McConnell; Warren, 1954) Rao, 1966; Mangan). Intelligence (Eason and Wysocki; Brier); Creativity (Anderson; Mayne; Moriarty and Murphy; Murphy); personality

tests; blindness (Price; Price and Pergram); mental health (Rivers; West; Zorab); attitudes -- sheep vs. goat;

## 2. Situational Factors in Psi Scoring (Warren, 1954; Journal of Parapsychology, Editorial, 1938)

a. Environmental influences: social, physical and emotional environment (Rhine, 1938; Pratt, 1961; Rao, 1966) Sensory deprivation; distractions; pleasant-relaxed; music; game like situation. Friends vs. strangers; observers; experimenter-subject relationship; sender-receiver relationship. Type of psi task; type of target material; speed of calling; Novelty (Pratt and Woodruff); Spontaneity (Ross, Murphy and Schmeidler) Reward for hits (Tart, 1966a)

b. Temporary states of the person (Nielsen; Rao, 1966) Expansion-constriction (Schmeidler and McConnell; Mangel) Hypnotic trance; post hypnotic suggestions (Casler; Gkela; Honorton; Rhine, 1946; Ryzl, 1962) Detached states (Rusch); Meditative states ("empty mind"); Relaxation (Murphy and Dale) Sensory-motor frustration (Rusch) Visualization and sensory imagination (Ryzl, 1966; White) Drugs - Stimulants (Rhine, Humphery and Averill), depressants (Averill and Rhine), psychedelics (Cavanna and Servadio)

## 3. Training Procedures to Increase Psi Scoring (Psi Actualization) (Beloff)

Many of these procedures seek to produce and bring under voluntary control the temporary states conceived of as improving psi scoring or allowing the psi faculty to manifest itself.

Basically two steps are involved. For maximum effect and efficiency both are necessary.

Step one: Removing impediments and blocks to psi ability (Murphy, 1944); heightened sensitivity or lowered threshold; eliminating the "cognitive noise" to allow psi signals through; reducing resistance to psi phenomenon (attitude change). This step is conceived in terms of a therapeutic model.

Step two: Establishing a "mediating vehicle" (Tyrrell, 1947a) or a response mode which taps the "subliminal self" (Tyrrell, 1947b, 1947c) or "psi level of personality" (Ehrenwald) or sub-conscious processes in a more direct fashion than usual verbal means. This step involves a learning model.

Among the procedures are: (Rao, 1957; Warren, 1965; Underhill; Asagioli) Religious techniques: Yoga,(Behanan; Mishra), Zen, (Maupin; Watts) Huna (Long), Kabbalism (Waite), Orage and Gurdjieff techniques (King), Theosophy (Judge), (Sorokin) Hypnosis and trance states (Ryzl, 1966; Fox) "Popular literature" (Kimball; Sherman; Williams; and others such as advertised in Fate).

## C. The Major Features of the Proposal

The following are the points of this proposal which incorporate relatively new approaches to research in parapsychology.

### 1. Method of Response to Targets.

White has criticized much of modern experimental work in the field of parapsychology (especially psi gamma-clairvoyance, telepathy, GESP) for using insensitive response methods so that the results are covered up with "noise" (using the information theory type concept: the psi signal is smothered in "cognitive noise" eventually resulting in very slight deviations from chance in signal detection). The response methods described in the White article (in the section titled "The way the response enters consciousness") I feel are too complex. They mainly involve producing some type of visual image or "hallucination". I feel a simpler response would be more desirable although the simpler response eliminates the richness of the imagery type (see Rusch's ideas on the associative aspects of the Psi response. The simpler response, however, would be easier to train and could be used by a wider spectrum of people.

Thus, one of the basic aspects of this proposal is the training in the use of a response mode (or "mediating vehicle" Tyrrell, 1947a, 1947c) which bypasses the conscious mental processes (such as guessing behavior, decisional processes, logical reasoning, etc.) and taps in a more direct fashion those subconscious processes which most people in parapsychology feel to be closely related to psi ability. C. W. Erickson has discussed something similar in his notion that which is "unconscious" depends on the response mode one is considering. Thus, things which are "unconscious" using a verbal response mode are not "unconscious" using, for example, a physiological response mode.

The response mode to be used for testing psi ability should be simple enough so that practically everyone can use it (the ability to visualize or have hallucinatory type imagery is a rather special ability and/or requires training which is too elaborate for the general use desired here; see the use of hypnosis by Ryzl). Also, the response mode should not require elaborate apparatus (such as the physiological measures which have been used, (Tart, 1963; Assailly): GSR response -- Otani; Woodruff and Dale. Plethysmography -- Dean; Figar. EEG -- Stanford).

The response mode I propose is the simple pendulum swing. It fulfills the above qualities of relative ease of learning and is certainly very simple. In addition it has a long history of use in the non-experimental aspects of parapsychology (dowsing is one of the major uses of the pendulum; There was a journal titled Pendulum which has now been combined with another journal. For some investigations of dowsing techniques see Osis; Cadoret; Rhine, 1950; Editorial Journal of Parapsychology, 1952. For popular uses of the pendulum response see also Hypnotism School; Kreskin; Mystic Heart; Progress; Venture Book Shop).

This response mode is reasonably clear-cut (less ambiguous than the matching techniques used in free response material but more ambiguous than the verbal response call of a card). It is important to firmly establish the convention as to what the pendulum swing means. Typically a vertical swing signifies "yes", the horizontal swing, "no" and a circular swing means "don't know." This reduces, but does not totally eliminate, the problems of judgment as to what the call is.

My introduction to the possible use of the pendulum swing as a response mode was through reading M. F. Long's works. Long has done extensive work in translating and testing an ancient "psycho-

religious" system called Huna (which is Hawaiian for secret). This system was quite active in Hawaii up until 1850 or so when it began to die out due to political and religious opposition. Long was able to do some limited study under several "khunas" (keepers of the secret) who had managed to survive and has been decoding and testing the system for some time. The Huna theory which underlies Long's training procedure would be totally unacceptable to most of psychology at this time but the training procedure itself, reasonably simple, specific and clear cut and thus testable and usable for research. This is all I ask.

## 2. Number of trials Needed for Significance.

I feel it is necessary to attempt to reduce the number of trials and thus increase the degree of absolute deviation from mean chance expectation (MCE). It is true that a small deviation from MCE in many trials is just as significant, statistically speaking, as a larger deviation in fewer trials. Nevertheless, the reliance on a great many trials which exhibit small deviations overall gives rise to two problems: (1) the question of the practical significance of psi when it makes so little absolute difference and (2) more importantly, the problems which arise in the application of the probability model. When so many trials must be run to attain significance, this produces doubt as to how applicable the probability calculus is to the situation (Brown; Warren, 1959; Wilson). This research involves attempt to reduce this number by reducing the "noise" produced by conscious processes interfering with the psi processes, such as exists in a typical symbol guessing experiment. Thus, the sensitivity is in the manner of response and not in the subsequent statistical analysis.

I have personally been somewhat unhappy when high-powered statistical analyses must be used to demonstrate effects. I thus place my methodological bias in with B. F. Skinner and the "eye ball test." In general, the reliance on an elaborate analysis indicates that many uncontrolled factors are operating in the experiment obscuring the results and a more fruitful approach is to make the experimental set up (or response mode) more precise and powerful while still studying the original problem.

## 3. Creating Optimum Conditions for the Occurrence of Psi

In the research and experimentation in parapsychology there has been a decline over the years in the absolute deviations and thus the statistical significance of the results as the rigor of the experiment increased. I believe that part of this is accounted for by the elimination of recording errors, cheating, and sensory leakage as the critics maintain. However, part of the drop in scoring success has been due to the rigor introduced into the manner in which the subject and experimenter behave. This research proposal is an attempt to have the maximum possible rigor in the controls over the target generation, and recording, the possibility of sensory leak and cheating while allowing the maximum of freedom of the actual manner the subject achieves his response. The target apparatus also allows a great deal of flexibility as to the type of target material available.

This I feel will help bridge the problem which has plagued parapsychology: the conduct of the experiment involves two separate aspects (1) the actual response behavior of the subject and/or the experimenter and (2) the production of the target, recording of the results and various security measures. Increased rigor and control has usually involved both aspects and thus the significance (absolute deviations) has decreased with increased rigor. This research would be an attempt to circumvent this problem.

Thus, when the targets are automatically selected by an automatic randomizing method and the results are automatically recorded and there is no opportunity for the behavior of the subject or the experimenter to influence these aspects of the experiment except in the predetermined fashion (through the subject-experimenter control console) then a great deal of freedom is possible in the manner in which the response is made or obtained. The experiment can be conducted as informally as desired with no fear that the crucial rigor will be lessened. This will allow variations in the "experimental atmosphere" to be tested and so we can vary the various aspects of the informality of the E-S relationship, the informality of the responding situation, etc. without fear of it contaminating the rigor of the experiment in its crucial aspects.

The goal is to maintain rigorous control over target production and selection, recording of results, possibility of sensory leaks and cheating while being flexible and informal in the manner in which the response is obtained. The aim is to suit the subject and allow maximum use of his optimum personal approach and style (use the approach which he feels will be most likely to produce results).

In addition, the use of the automated control over the one aspect of the experiment will allow the experimenter to test the effects of feedback, reinforcement and similar psychological variables which have been shown to influence more typical responses (Woodruff and Murphy; Tart, 1966a).

#### 4. Generality, Simplicity and Repeatability of the Training Procedure.

The aim in this study is to develop a response mode and training procedure which can be acquired in a relatively short time (3-5 hours), which can be mastered by a high proportion of an unselected and "untalented" sample of people, and which allows them to demonstrate and improve (actualize) their latent psi ability.

The problem with most training procedures such as Ryzl's is that they take a very long time and only a very few subjects successfully complete the training. Since the training procedures are complex, there is a problem of lack of repeatability (Beloff and Mandelberg; Stephenson). The problem of replication is one of the crucial problems in parapsychology (LeShan; Warren, 1965) and I feel this problem can be approached best by simpler training procedures with more modest aims. The attempt is not to produce psi virtuosi (outstanding subjects) but to raise everyone's Psi abilities up to a low, but noticeable, level of performance.

The music analogy of learning to play a piano might be useful here. What this training procedure seeks to do is to get everyone to be able to play "Row, row, row your boat" -- a definite tune but of low technical difficulty. To get everyone to be able to play Beethoven's "Emperor" concerto would probably be impossible, but maybe one out of several hundred subjects could be trained to this level. However, this would require a great deal of time and this is not feasible at this point.

The basic assumption underlying this approach (and one that is held by many parapsychologists) is that everyone has psi ability potentially and it can be actualized to at least a low level. However, if someone is psychically "tone deaf" this must also be handled in any training program.

Thus, the complete program of training should involve, ideally, two steps. The first one is an unblocking approach involving attitude change, relaxing defenses, restoring sensitivity, producing an "empty mind," "detached states," etc. This aspect is strongly emphasized in most training procedures, especially in the "popular literature" methods available (e.g., Sherman; Williams). The



second step is the establishment of a response mode to an acceptable degree of reliability and validity. The first step above has been a problem requiring considerable practice.

I feel that some of this can be circumvented and thus not be so crucial by training in a simple response mode in the second step. When the response mode is complex and requires a high degree of skill (for instance, being able to empty the mind of conscious thought so that the response mode of a visual image may appear in the "mind's eye") then the first step is crucial. This is where much of the lack of success resides in the training procedures.

Thus the psi task in this study is quite simple; basically it involves indicating whether or not an event occurred (e.g., a light on or off) and the response mode is directly related to the target condition in a one-one manner (e.g., when the pendulum swings vertically it means "yes -- light on" and when it swings horizontally, "no -- light off", and when it swings in a circle, "don't know").

The experimenter is an integral part of the experiment (McConnell, Crumbaugh, Rhine 1959) and indeed of all behavioral science experiments as documented by Rosenthal (1964, 1967) and Orne. Thus the behavior, attitudes, feelings of the experimenter must be also recorded and considered as part of the experimental and control treatments. The main limitation on both E and S is that they can in no way directly intervene in the production and selection of targets, the recording of the results or knowledge of the target condition except by those methods that are provided for by the experimental set up. In experimental parapsychology, West's statement that "...reproducibility depends as much on the experimenter as on the subject" (in Wolstenholme and Miller, p. 19) is doubly true.

It is unfortunate but true that "creating the optimum conditions" depends heavily on the vagaries of both subject and experimenter and so LeShan's guidelines for repeatability must apply to both.

#### 5 Relation of the Experiment to Perceptual Psychology.

Incorporated into the design of the study is a transition from standard (supraliminal) perception through subliminal perception to extrasensory perception (Eisenbud, 1961, 1965; Ericksen; Nash and Nash; Woodruff and Murphy). This transition is part of training the response to validly and reliably coincide with the target condition. A specified degree of accuracy or a stabilized hit rate is established on the supraliminal level and then the visual cues are reduced by stages until there is no sensory connection between the person and the target (ESP). Thus, one can plot the hit rate for various levels of visibility. It is my belief that extrasensory perception of the clairvoyant type is basically similar to ordinary perception and can be conceived on a single continuum of visibility.

#### 6 Automation and Security Measures.

It is vital that the generation of the target series and the recording of the results (targets, calls, hits) be totally automated. This, I feel, is a minimum requirement in this type of study. Several possible machines have been described in the literature (Cutten; Hunt; Kahn; Hahn and Neiseer; Rhine, 1939; Smith et al; Stewart; Tart 1966b; Taves; Walter; Webster).

In addition, as a consequence of reading Hansel's book, the issue of cheating is made salient once more. Thus, several copies of the record must be made, only one of which is available to the experimenter. Ideally, these records should be automatically sent to unimpeachable people and all records should be handled by an unimpeachable person, preferably one who is known to be

antagonistic to, or at least skeptical of, parapsychology and has no possible interest in having the experiment achieve positive results. The records must be such that any attempt to alter them would be obvious. On the critical trials the target apparatus should be supervised by an unimpeachable and/or antagonistic and/or skeptical person.

There is an interesting paradox in the "Research game" using parapsychology as a topic. In the usual empirical research there is considerable pressure to "get results" and this pressure leads to various desperate measures. The least harmful of these measures involve redoing the experiment until the results are obtained (this may clarify the conditions and limits of the phenomena under study) and performing all types of tricky analyses to "find something." However, fudging the data probably goes on even in the safest areas of study. These problems are compounded in parapsychology research by the non-rational attitudes aroused by this area of study. Thus, if the experiment in parapsychology does not "get results," this would be consistent with many people's a priori assumptions about what's what. If it does come out in the predicted direction then there also is trouble since many will suspect fudging and cheating. The more successful and spectacular the results the more suspicion and thus the more trouble for the researcher. The problem is how does one provide reasonable safeguards to make the cheating explanation of the results untenable. I feel it is impossible to construct an absolutely unfakable experiment since, if someone (e.g., Hansel) works long enough and hard enough he is bound to find some flaws where cheating could have occurred. (Stevenson, p.263). All one can hope to do is make reasonable safeguards which will convince reasonable people that cheating is unlikely. If a person's presuppositions are such that any hypothesis is more probable than that of ESP (and there are many of this persuasion) then I have nothing to say (except possibly go have some therapy to restore reason).

#### 7 Problems of Randomness. (Chari)

Since reading Brown's monograph and writing a paper on the problems of randomness and probability theory in psi research (Warren, 1959) I have concluded that many of these problems can be circumvented by using an empirically determined chance base rate for hits for the random target generating machine. It is impossible to prove that a machine has absolutely no patterns since this depends on what patterns you are looking for (it is logically impossible to have complete randomness, absolutely no order). What can be done is to require the subject to beat the bias which may be inherent in the machine by comparing the subject's hit rate with the hit rate of the machine when it is compared with itself (by running control runs immediately after the subject's runs and of the same length as the subject's runs). Furthermore, should the machine control hit rate be below the expected rate computed from probability theory one can use the theoretically expected chance rate as the basis for evaluating the subject's hit rate. This I think will satisfy most of Brown's criticisms and give a conservative estimate of the obtained hit rate.

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