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# Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Experimental Research Project into Out-of-Body Experience

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**ABSTRACT:** This work reports some of the significant results obtained from two OBE research experiments using opportunity sampling to generate data. These experiments took place during two workshops conducted in Évora – Alentejo, Portugal, and in Segovia, Spain, respectively. The core focus of this research project is to establish more consistent and systematic information related to the way in which the consciousness perceives, interprets and recalls the information learned through out-of-body experiences, including processes such as extraphysical perception, cognition, and memory; transference of information to the physical brain; and the interference or influence of individual cultural and personal background in the interpretation of perceptions. Suggestive findings and conclusions are discussed.

**SUMARIO:** Este trabajo presenta algunos de los resultados significativos obtenidos durante 2 experimentos que utilizaron un muestreo de oportunidad para generar los datos. Estos experimentos acontecieron en 2 talleres realizados en Évora – Alentejo, Portugal y en Segovia, España, respectivamente. El foco central de este proyecto de investigación experimental es identificar, de un modo más sistemático y consistente, los aspectos relativos al mecanismo a través del cual la conciencia percibe, interpreta y recuerda las informaciones captadas durante las experiencias fuera del cuerpo, incluyendo procesos como la percepción, cognición y memoria extrafísicas; la transferencia de información al cerebro físico; y la interferencia o influencia que la formación cultural y personal del proyector pueda ejercer en la interpretación de las percepciones. Las conclusiones y hallazgos inferidos a partir de este trabajo son discutidos.

**RESUMO:** Este trabalho apresenta alguns dos resultados significativos obtidos durante 2 experimentos que utilizaram como amostragem casos observados na oportunidade de 2 *workshops* realizados em Évora – Alentejo, em Portugal e em



Segovia, na Espanha, respectivamente. O foco central deste projeto de pesquisa experimental visa a identificação, de modo mais sistemático e consistente, de aspectos relativos ao mecanismo através do qual a consciencia percebe, interpreta e recorda as informações captadas durante as experiências fora do corpo, incluindo os processos relativos à percepção, cognição e memória extrasfísicas; à transferência de dados para o cérebro físico; e à interferência que o *background* cultural e pessoal do projetor possam exercer na interpretação das percepções. Conclusões e descobertas sugestivas são discutidas neste trabalho.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Out-of-Body Experience (herein referred to as '*OBE*' or by the technical term '*conscious projection*') has historically attracted the attention of researchers seeking to prove its existence by empirical means – a number of experiments employing a variety of empirical techniques have been conducted in the past (Vieira, 1999, pp.944-979).

Had this research been related to analysis of a different phenomenon, the results could be said to conclusively corroborate its existence and properties; nonetheless, due to the nature of the OBE, the collection of objective physical evidence is not easily achieved and satisfaction of the demands of positivist, conventional scientific community remains impracticable.

The subjective character of most OBEs makes personal experimentation the method of choice for validation of the phenomenon. A worthy analogy relates to the validity of dream research methodology – dreams are experiences of a variety that are even more subjective than OBEs, lacking any objective elements at all.

The only indications of the existence of dreams are indirect and take the form of the electroencephalogram trace and the observable REM of an individual during sleep – but research on dreams still requires correlation with a report of the dream and no objective verification can be made of the specific content of the dream itself. Proving the existence of dreams to the satisfaction of conventional science would require the existence of a device capable of recording dreams and making their contents available to impartial observers thus allowing verification of the dreamer's report of their experience.

Yet the fact that all (or most) of us experience and recall dreams allows us to be certain of the existence of dreaming as a phenomenon, and research does not strive to prove the 'dream' experience but rather

to amplify understanding of it. Hence, it can be appreciated that in instances of research into subjective phenomenon, personal experience plays a vital role.

Whilst the results of this experiment may contribute to the body of evidence supporting the notion of the OBE as a factual phenomenon, this research project is not primarily concerned with *proving* the existence of such experiences. It moves forward with the investigation of the phenomenon, focusing on the research question of how the 'mind' perceives, interprets and recalls the information learned through OBEs.

The model employed to approach the OBE in this research specifies that the individuality (the consciousness) actually leaves the body and can act in an extraphysical dimension; i.e., it adopts the hypothesis of the OBE as an objective phenomenon. As such, consciousness, is considered to be a synonym of the individuality rather than just an attribute of the physical brain; therefore, surviving bodily death (known in parapsychological studies as the Theta phenomenon).

## OBJECTIVES

The relative knowledge we have amassed nowadays about how our five senses perceive, identify and comprehend sensed information can help individuals and scientists alike to better understand the process of information acquisition.

Similarly, conscienciological and scientific research into 'non-physical' phenomena would benefit greatly from a more in-depth understanding of how the para-brain 'senses' extraphysical reality and how this information is translated and incorporated into the physical brain.

Other related questions such as (1) are there any personal characteristics that interfere in this process?; (2) do environmental conditions in some way affect the "transference" of information to the brain?; also come to mind as issues that would be helpful if they were better understood.

The experiment was designed to establish details of how the projector (OBEer) perceives the physical world from a non-physical perspective (seeing a physical image while projected) and how he/she organizes their framework of ideas or beliefs in order to understand and describe the reality perceived.



The main objectives of this research project are:

1. To begin systematic collection of data related to the process of acquiring visual information in the extraphysical dimension;
2. To identify the variety and features of physical images that are most noticeable to the projected consciousness (OBEer);
3. To understand the factors that influence the interpretation of the image perceived;
4. To search for elements that may help to understand the mechanisms that are involved in the 'translation' of the extraphysical perception into intraphysical language and to look for indications of the method of recall used by the physical brain to recover information stored in the para-brain;
5. To collect data related to the way in which individuals construe their experiences and the extent to which their mental and cultural framework interferes with or otherwise influences their interpretation of a perceived image;
6. To verify how and to what extent environmental, cultural, physical, mental and emotional idiosyncrasies interfere with the individual's capacity to carry out and recall the OBE;
7. To establish if particular categories of projective techniques improve extraphysical acuity.
8. To amass further elements to facilitate analysis of extraphysical lucidity and intraphysical recollection.
9. To expand conscientiological knowledge about extraphysical cognition and interpretation in order to identify more effective means to support (1) conscientiological research into para-cognition and (2) the creation of new pedagogic strategies by conscientiology instructors to teach individuals to produce the OBE phenomenon at will.

Completion of the research question and objectives, theoretical evaluation and statistical and qualitative analysis will be facilitated by the gradual, ongoing accumulation of data until achieving a desirable number of experiences to allow conclusive results.

The information and conclusions presented here are based on the results of analysis of data derived from the two experiments conducted to date: in the first instance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2001 in Évora, Portugal, at the Évora Hotel and later from 14 to 16 of December 2001 in Segovia, Spain, at the Puerta de Segovia Hotel.

## THE EXPERIMENT

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The experiments took place during two weekend workshops in which 'students' endeavored to accomplish lucid, willed out-of-body experiences. Several countries (Portugal, Spain, Holland, England, Brazil, Scotland, New Zealand, and Switzerland) were represented at those events. The first experiment, realized in Portugal, had 84 participants whilst the second, in Spain, had 21.

Both workshops and the experiment as a whole were sponsored by the International Academy of Conscientiology (IAC), a European conscientiological research center established in Portugal.

The experiments were conducted during practical courses (workshops) open to the public, adding to the extent of the inherent complexity of such a task. Firstly, the experiments did not revolve around the experiences of a single subject capable of producing OBEs at will (i.e., unlike other historical experiments conducted with Alexander Tanous, Keith Harary and Robert Monroe) – in this instance several persons with neither experience of a conscious projection nor any real information related to the subject took part in the research. Most of the participants were simply individuals with an interest in the phenomenon and a desire to learn techniques that might enable them to produce an OBE. Secondly, because the experiment was not conducted in a laboratory, less control over the physical environment was available and as a result, some conditions were less than ideal and did not allow for the desired level of physical comfort of participants, so helpful in facilitating disconnection from the body – participants used mats placed on the floor, unexpected noises in the surrounding areas of the hotel periodically interrupted proceedings, and some participants were untiring snorers. Thirdly, the main activity facilitating the experiment itself was the execution and management of the workshop and thus much of the attention of key personnel was dedicated to giving instructions to the students and commenting on their experiences.

The bold circumstances under which the experiments were performed ratified that the experience can be learned by individuals with an interest in the subject and that producing a conscious projection involves (plagiarizing Edson) 1% predisposition and 99% determination. A total of 37.5% of those who had never before experienced an OBE claimed to have had an OBE during these workshops. These individuals account for 11.43% of the total number of participants.



At the beginning of the event, instructions regarding techniques to leave the body and the specific conditions of the workshop were given. Participants were provided with a description of the technicalities of the research and were invited to take part – each was free to participate in the experiment or to join only in the ‘training’ part of the event. Each individual’s agreement to participate and permission to use data collected from their experiences were provided in writing to the researchers. Participants were also shown the room in which the target image would be displayed on the screen of a computer.

The experiment was designed in accordance with rigorous scientific principles and conducted under the most controlled conditions possible, given that total closure is never possible when dealing with human subjects and complex phenomena.

To warrant the ‘rigor’ of each step of the experiment and to account for reliability, an external inspector with no association with the IAC, IIPC or any of its affiliated organizations participated in the experiment as an auditor. In both experiments the role of ‘auditor’ was filled by professional journalists each agreeing to follow the research throughout the weekend. Contact was established with the auditors in advance of each experiment, in order to make them aware of previous research on the theme and to prepare them for the practicalities of the experiments in which they would take part. Their understanding of the research design was appreciable and demonstrated by their performance, remaining committed throughout all sessions.

The auditor monitoring the experiment conducted in Portugal was Ms. Carla Pereira, a reporter of EuroNews, a newspaper based in Portugal and distributed in Europe. During the experiment in Spain, the auditor was Mr. Josep Guijarro, a reporter and correspondent of the *Más Allá de la Ciencia* magazine.

As an ethical consideration and to respect participants’ privacy, their names were kept anonymous; however, the original research documents collected from each of them have been retained by the researchers. In addition, as the primary reason for individuals joining the event was their interest in producing conscious projections, the educational aspect of the workshop received the priority requiring considerable attention from the instructors and members of staff. One researcher was charged with responsibility for monitoring the experiment and this did not interfere with the main objective of the workshops: OBE training.

## The Workshop

The workshop within which the experiment was conducted, entitled *Projective Field*, was conceived by Wagner Alegretti, aiming at providing participants with optimized conditions to experience conscious OBEs. In order to allow for a broad understanding and replication of the conditions of the experiment, the basic strategies employed to achieve optimization are detailed below:

1. *Extraphysical*: installation of a super-specialized bioenergetic field that acts as a catalyst for non-physical perceptions, and keeps the non-physical environment within a specific energetic pattern that supports the production of OBEs. This energetic field is created and maintained by the energizer-epicenter's bioenergy and holochakra.

2. *Physical environment*: every detail is prepared in such a way as to focus participants' attention on the extraphysical reality and on the out-of-body experience. This includes the use of posters and text phrases placed in prominent positions in the room where the projective exercises took place and in participants' rooms; watching video(s) related to the subject of projectiology; discussion between sessions; etc. This constant exposure to ideas and images associated with the OBE acts as a kind of positive mental saturation, assisting the production of projections – a condition that is difficult to replicate in typical, everyday life.

3. *Physiological*: careful control of factors affecting the individual's physiological state, such as the schedule of times of OBE attempts (sessions), hours of sleep, length of breaks in the workshop, the types of food provided, the temperature of the room, lighting, relative silence, etc.

4. *Techniques*: a number of techniques are taught to the participants. The techniques provide opportunity to provoke the OBE through the application of the participants' will, helping eliminate suggestion and imagination. Participants are free to select and apply the technique(s) of their choice provoking their own experience through the application of their will. Continuous attempts to provoke OBEs, by following a carefully planned schedule provides improved results due to the accumulation of relaxation and awareness of the extraphysical process.

## METHODOLOGY

The general research plan consisted of monitoring individuals' accounts of their attempts to reach a pre-established, remote target



during their OBEs and later analysis of the accuracy of their description of that target. The experiment involved teaching various OBE techniques to the participants who were invited to attempt to 'fly' to a locked target room where an unknown image was displayed in a computer screen.

The target image was displayed on the 14" TFT (active matrix) screen of an IBM Thinkpad notebook computer model A20m and was selected at random by a computer program written by Rodrigo Medeiros (transcribed below). To avoid any possibility or claims of telepathic influence, this was a 'triple blind' experiment – students, researchers and the auditor were unaware of the image being displayed. The script was designed to display a randomly selected image on the screen precisely two minutes after it was initiated.

Projections were attempted simultaneously by all participants in repeated sessions and, following each session, participants were instructed not to converse with one another nor to leave the room prior to completing and signing a questionnaire designed to collect details about their experience.

From Friday evening to Sunday afternoon of each experiment, participants took part in six controlled projective sessions. The room in which the participants physically remained lying and applying techniques to leave their bodies is hereinafter referred to as the *Experiment Room* and the locked room where the computer displaying the randomly selected image was placed is referred to as the *Target Room*. In both experiments discussed here the Target Room and the Experiment Room were located on the same floor of the building, between 40 and 60 meters apart.

### **Documents used to register and collect data**

1. *Authorization from Participants* – a statement signed by the participants acknowledging their consent to their experiences being examined in this research.

2. *Questionnaire: General Information About the Participant* – a self-administered questionnaire to collect personal information about the participants, such as their age, gender, cultural background, health condition, previous OBE experiences, etc.

3. *Questionnaire: Results and Evaluation of the Experiment* – a self-administered questionnaire designed to be completed at the conclusion of each projective session, detailing personal descriptions of the occurrences, perceptions and sensations experienced by the participants during that session.

4. *Record of Environmental Conditions* – notes defining the physical conditions of the Experiment Room during each session (temperature, humidity, position of the participants' bodies in relation to the cardinal points, the lunar calendar, meteorological conditions, and any special occurrences).

5. *Certificate of Authenticity of the Computer Program Script* – a document declaring the authenticity of the computer program script employed (to ensure that the program - transcribed below - was the software run during each session of projective attempts), signed by the auditor and one of the researchers each session.

6. *Declaration of Reliability and Neutrality* – a document, signed by the auditor and one of the researchers at the conclusion of each projective session, describing in sufficient detail the image displayed on the computer screen during the preceding session and confirming that (1) the Target Room remained locked closed at all times during the experiment, (2) that no individual was able to physically view the image, (3) that the auditor remained sitting outside the locked door of the Target Room for the duration of the experiment and (4) that the image had not been displayed on the screen of the computer until after the researcher and the auditor had left the room and locked the door.

7. *Declaration of No Suggestion Received* – a document signed by participants at the conclusion of each workshop, formally declaring that they were not informed by any means of the nature, type, or description of the images in the image bank stored on the computer and used during the experiment.

Note: Every document listed above was dated and identified with the experiment (workshop) and the session to which it referred.

## **Description of the Target Room**

- The room was largely empty, containing only a small table covered with a white tablecloth upon which was placed the notebook computer.
- The windows were completely sealed with two sets of thick curtains. To ensure that the windows were completely obscured, all curtains were secured to the adjacent wall at their edges using adhesive tape. The auditor checked that the room was locked and that it was impossible to see into the room from the outside.
- The door was kept locked at all times and the only key to the door remained in the possession of one of the researchers throughout