

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Psychedelic Telepathy: An Interview Study

PETTER GRAHL JOHNSTAD

University of Bergen, Norway

Submitted June 18, 2019; Accepted February 13, 2020; Published September 15, 2020

<https://doi.org/10.31275/20201747>

Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC

**Abstract**—This article presents an interview study of ostensible telepathy experiences induced by psychedelic drugs, with the aim of broadening our understanding of the nature and characteristics of such experiences. Of 40 anonymous psychedelics users interviewed about their experiences, 16 reported some form of psychedelic telepathy. Respondents were recruited at various online fora for individual interviews via private messaging. They reported three main types of telepathic communication: 1) an information-exchange type of telepathy that often enabled people to communicate in images as well as in words; 2) a state sometimes referred to as telempathy that allowed for the direct exchange of feeling-states; and 3) a state of self-dissolution and telepathic unity where one could not differentiate one's own thoughts and feelings from those of the friend or partner. Some participants complained about the lack of privacy especially in the more intense forms of telepathic states, and were hesitant to repeat the experience, while others claimed they had become accustomed to such states and experienced them regularly. The article concludes that further studies are warranted, and suggests a strategy for an experimental study of psychedelic telepathy.

**Keywords:** psychedelic; interview; qualitative; telepathy; self-dissolution

### INTRODUCTION

The term telepathy was coined by the early psychical researcher Frederic W. H. Myers from the Greek *τῆλε* (*tele*), meaning distant, and *πάθος* (*pathos*), which in this context means feeling or experience.

Myers defined his neologism as “the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognized channels of sense” (1896–1897, p. 174). Psychedelics for their part are a group of drugs named by psychiatrist Humphry Osmond after the Greek ψυχή (psyche), meaning soul or mind, and δηλείν (delein), to reveal or manifest, and are known for their powerful effects on feelings, thoughts, and perceptions (Nichols, 2004, 2016). The classical serotonergic psychedelics include mescaline (the active constituent of peyote), psilocybin (the active constituent of “magic mushrooms”), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), and N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT).

Telepathic communication between research subjects in experimental settings is documented in parapsychological literature, although this literature has not found much acceptance in the mainstream academic world. In the past decades, most telepathy research has taken the form of so-called ganzfeld (a German word meaning ‘total field’) studies, where research subjects are flooded with unpatterned sensory stimuli in order to achieve an effect analogous to sensory deprivation (Cardeña, 2018). The state of mind that results from ganzfeld stimuli has been found particularly conducive to telepathic receptivity, and the most recent and comprehensive meta-analyses of such studies found support for a telepathic effect (Storm et al., 2010; Williams, 2011), although skeptics have challenged these findings (Alcock, 2010; Hyman, 2010).

These ganzfeld studies indicate that an altered state of consciousness may be supportive of telepathic receptivity, and perhaps of paranormal experiences in general. As psychedelics are known for inducing powerful alterations in consciousness, with effects that include increases in mental imagery, empathy, alertness, awareness, attention, spontaneity, suggestibility, openness, intuitive thinking, and emotional flexibility (see review in Luke, 2012), there is reason to believe that the psychedelic state could be conducive of telepathic experience. Neuropharmacological research has demonstrated that, perhaps counterintuitively, these psychedelics-induced alterations in consciousness correlate with general decreases in brain activity (Carhart-Harris et al., 2012), while also increasing the number of long-range cortical connections (Petri et al., 2014). Thus, a human brain affected by classical psychedelics will be both relatively quieter and more integrated,

with an increase in topologically long-range functional connections. Carhart-Harris et al. regarded their finding of a psilocybin-induced decrease in overall brain activity as being consistent with the reducing-valve model of the brain that Aldous Huxley (1954/1994) developed on the basis of Henri Bergson's work (1896/1990), which posits that the brain has an active filtering mechanism constraining our experience of the world to that which has value for immediate survival. The observed reduction in brain activity during psychedelic influence may therefore involve a reduction also in filtering activity, enabling a state of unconstrained cognition that is perhaps beneficial for experiences of telepathy and other psi phenomena.

In support of the view that psychedelics could be beneficial for telepathy, there is a substantial anthropological literature on indigenous psychedelics use resulting in ostensible psi phenomena (Luke, 2010), as well as a number of surveys on psi experiences among modern psychedelics users. One review of surveys of paranormal experience in relation to psychedelics use found that "of those reporting the use of psychedelics, between 18 and 83 percent reported ESP experiences—most commonly telepathy but also precognition—actually occurring during drug use, with heavier users reporting more experiences" (Luke, 2015, p. 156). On a more anecdotal basis, an Internet search will obtain a number of trip reports from modern psychedelics users describing telepathic experiences as one of the effects of psychedelics use.

Despite this promising foundation, parapsychologists have not been very successful in demonstrating telepathy and other psi phenomena with psychedelics under controlled conditions (see overview in Luke, 2012). Most of this research took place in the psychedelic pre-prohibition era, but when parapsychologists picked up this line of research during the 1990s findings remained generally unconvincing (Bierman, 1998; Don et al., 1996; Tinoco, 1994; Wezelman & Bierman, 1997). It has been suggested that the traditional symbol-guessing procedure employed in some telepathy studies is too dull a task for psychedelics-affected participants, and that dosage may have been too low to induce telepathic effects (Luke, 2012). Furthermore, it appears that most ganzfeld studies have been set up without consideration of the sender–receiver relationship (Roe et al., 2003), although at least one study by Honorton et al. (1990) reported improved hit rates when

participants brought their own senders. Finally, Luke's (2012) review of psychedelic telepathy studies found that most such studies were set up with a sober sender together with a psychedelics-affected receiver. By contrast, the reportedly very successful psychedelic telepathy experiences discussed in this article took place between friends and partners who were simultaneously affected by (generally) high doses of psychedelics.

The purpose of this interview study of psychedelic telepathy experiences was to gain insight into how psychedelics users themselves describe the state of telepathic contact. The study aimed for a deeper understanding of the characteristics of such experiences that might allow for a tentative categorization of different types of psychedelics-induced telepathic communication. It also asked participants to describe the transition into the telepathic state, and to suggest factors that might facilitate or abet a telepathic connection. Finally, the study aimed to identify challenges or difficulties with psychedelic telepathy.

## METHOD

Current or past psychedelics users were interviewed about their experiences in two phases of the study. In the first phase, 26 users of psychedelic drugs in spiritual contexts were interviewed either individually or in groups about a broad range of aspects relating to their psychedelics use. These interviews dealt with psychedelic experiences in general, and only two of the participants had a telepathic experience to report. In order to gain more insight, a second phase of the study recruited 14 users specifically on the basis of their reports of psychedelic telepathy experiences posted on Internet discussion fora. These prospective interviewees were approached with a private message stating the following:

Hello [username]! I read your post from [date] about your telepathic experience. This is interesting to me as I am starting up an academic interview study of telepathic experiences with psychedelics. Would you allow me to quote your post anonymously in my study and answer a few follow-up questions?

Follow-up questions engaged with matters such as dosage and setting, the transition into the telepathic state, whether their recollection of the experience agreed with that of their partner, and the long-term consequences of the experience, all of which were asked as open-ended questions in a non-judgmental manner. In addition, the study was informed by a number of reports posted on discussion fora by users who were either currently unreachable or who did not reply to recruitment attempts. These reports were often of considerable value to the study. In order to preserve privacy, however, only reports from authors who signed (anonymous) informed consent forms have been quoted from in this article (with ID numbers after the quotes).

Interviews were asynchronous and Internet-mediated, and participants were encouraged to interact with the interviewer via anonymized email or messaging that protected their identity from the researcher. The study was designed in conformity with Norwegian Social Science Data Services ethical guidelines. It emphasized the preservation of participant anonymity, and aimed to ensure that no participant would be identifiable either to the researcher or to readers of published material. Statements have been edited for brevity and relevance, and insignificant details have sometimes been altered to preserve anonymity. Participants were asked to read through and verify the use of their narratives. As interviews took the form of written communication, transcription was unnecessary. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) procedure for meaning condensation, and themes were constructed in an open-ended, exploratory, and data-driven comparative analysis of participant narratives. The interview process allowed for the resolution of ambiguities through follow-up questions. No attempt was made to verify that the participants' narratives were truthful, with the one exception that interviewees were asked about how their telepathic partner later talked about the experience. This question was asked with the intent to identify non-reciprocal and possibly imagined telepathy experiences, but none of the participants indicated that there was a disagreement between themselves and their alleged telepathic partner about the nature of the experience.

Because psychedelics use is generally illegal, not all respondents were willing to provide demographic information. In order to reduce

participation stress, only a minimum of such information was requested. Of the 27 participants who provided their gender, 24 were male and three female. The median participant was in their early 30s, with an age range from 18 to late 50s. Four were married (two with children), six were in stable relationships (one with children), seven were single, and one was in the middle of a break-up. Twelve held steady jobs in retailing, education, music teaching, journalism, industrial services, IT consulting, carpentry, investment client support, and as a hospital worker, five were students, one was unemployed, and one used to work as a kindergarten assistant but was recently disabled because of an inherited condition.

## RESULTS

### Setting and Dosage

In all the reports available to this study, psychedelic telepathy experiences took place between friends or partners who were tripping together in the same room or area. None of the reports described experiences of telepathic contact with news presenters on television, strangers in the streets, or anyone else external to the group of trippers. With a few exceptions, the telepathy experiences were all reciprocal, involving two or more people who both felt that they were in telepathic contact with each other. Of 20 reports that mentioned which drug was taken, 15 involved LSD as the main psychedelic drug, while two involved psilocybin, two 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), and one d-lysergic acid amide (LSA). Doses were generally described as strong, although we should note that it is difficult to ascertain the amount of LSD in a blotter without access to a chemical lab. Nevertheless, about 300 mcg of LSD seemed to be a median dose for telepathic experiences, with a reported range from 100 mcg to 8 blotters. Some reported combining LSD with cannabis, which is often said to intensify the psychedelic effects.

Most of the reported psychedelic telepathy experiences took place with a single friend, often described as a close friend or a partner or spouse. In some reports, however, the telepathic pair was among a group of 3–5 friends, the rest of whom were not involved in the telepathic experience. A few other reports described telepathic communication

between three or more people, but none of the authors behind these reports was available for follow-up questions.

When interviews did allow for follow-up questions, I always asked whether the interviewee had talked to his or her friend about the telepathic experience, and whether this friend confirmed that it was a shared experience. With a few exceptions, everybody confirmed that they had talked about their telepathic experience over the days and weeks—sometimes for years—after it happened, and that they both agreed it was a telepathic experience. The most noteworthy exception was one interviewee who first described the experience as involving telepathy in a Reddit post, but who later changed his mind about it and now considered it an experience of communication via face reading and body language rather than telepathy. When I asked this interviewee about how the friend he shared the experience with thought about the experience today, I did not receive a reply. Another participant also failed to respond to such a question at the start of the interview, and was not heard from again.

### Transition

With one exception, the telepathy experiences in this study all occurred spontaneously. The transition into the telepathic state was sometimes a noticeable event, where the trippers suddenly discovered that they could communicate telepathically, and sometimes a more gradual process that they did not recognize until it was well-established. One participant was on a heavy dose of LSD combined with cannabis, tripping with a single friend around a bonfire at an isolated cabin, and suddenly found his mind behaving in unexpected ways:

My mind started to say things that I didn't expect, things that were in my voice and had my tone quality, but were not what I was expecting myself to say. So I said to the voice: Is that you talking to me, or is that me talking to myself? And the voice said: I think you're talking to me, dude. (IDo6)

He responded with astonishment and resistance, jumping up and running away. Then he heard the sound of something like a firecracker going off:

I felt my head crack, like something gave way. The crack happened at the height of my astonishment when I ran to the other side of the bonfire to get away from my friend. It was like a pressure-release valve blowing. It seemed to be in the very center of the head, and as soon as it happened I felt different and I accepted what was happening. It was like my worldview had expanded. (IDo6)

Others described a more gradual transition. In some cases, they reported being engaged in conversations that gradually changed from vocalized to telepathic without anyone noticing. In other cases, the conversation seemed to be fully telepathic from the start, but for a while the trippers believed they were talking in the usual way:

My girlfriend and I were talking to each other. After about a 20-minute conversation, I said something out loud, and only then did I realize that during the entire conversation I hadn't ever actually said a word. To put it simply, my girlfriend was actually reading my mind and responding to my thoughts as if they were words I spoke. She noticed at the same time that I did. We were both amazed by it and ran to the living room to tell our other roommates about it. (IDo8)

A similar telepathy narrative involved two friends who were using LSD together. During the trip, one of them entered the room where the other was sitting with some friends, and the two had a long conversation. After the first one left again, it occurred to the second that they actually had not opened their mouths during this exchange. He asked the other people in the room about this, one of whom was sober, and they said that from their perspective the first person had entered the room, stood there quietly for a while, and then left again. Another interviewee described a different form of unconscious transition, where he was lying on the floor sleeping or passed out after taking 300 mcg of LSD, and then woke up in a state of telepathic contact with his friend. While all of these experiences occurred spontaneously, without any conscious intention to explore telepathy during the psychedelic trip, there was also one report of a telepathic experiment. This proto-parapsychologist

had taken MDMA and amphetamines, and suddenly felt inspired to do a little experiment in telepathy:

We sat down in a room and I said to my friend something along the lines of ‘let’s see if I can telepathically send a word’, and he was up for the experiment. Always willing to challenge my own perception of reality, I looked deep into his eyes, but rather than send a word I chose to ‘send’ a noise rather than a word, and that was a sort of nya sound. I then asked him what word I had ‘sent’ and he replied: ‘it wasn’t a word, but a sort of nya sound’. (ID27)

Other participants who had experienced telepathy sometimes tried to recreate the experience, but found that these intentional attempts to make telepathy happen failed to work. Several participants did describe having further spontaneous telepathy experiences, however, which usually took place with the same person as their first experience. Furthermore, a few reported that telepathic experiences were something they had come to expect from deep psychedelic trips. Having learnt from their first experience how to enter the telepathic state, they found it possible to repeat this maneuver in later psychedelic trips. Unfortunately, the skills involved in this task were not easily communicated. One described it as becoming aware of a subtle “sliver” that it was possible to slip through, and having once recognized this subtle mental phenomenon spontaneously, his awareness became attuned to it and this made subsequent recognition easier. On a somewhat more practical level, others recommended that trippers hoping for a telepathic experience should look deeply into one another’s eyes, which they claimed serve as a gateway into other people’s consciousness. Another participant whose intentional attempts at recreating the telepathic experience always failed, found that his three occasions of spontaneous psychedelic telepathy with the same friend had the following in common:

We were completely absorbed in something else, relaxed, distracted, and in sync. I believe a personal relationship is very helpful to the process. (IDo6)

## Telepathy and Telempathy

Several different forms of telepathic contact were described by the participants in this study. In its most common form, telepathy was about a direct, two-way exchange of information. As we saw above, participants sometimes reported that they were engaged in a telepathic conversation for a long time before they noticed that they were not talking in the usual sense, and in these experiences the telepathic conversation clearly resembled an ordinary conversation. Such states of telepathic contact typically lasted for several hours.

For the rest of the night we talked telepathically, and it was effortless and instantaneous. When he went to pee outside, we were still talking to each other through the walls. (IDo6)

The experience lasted about 3–4 hours. I was blown away by how long it was. When I realized it at first and confirmed it with my roommate, I burst into tears for the gratitude of being able to experience such a wonderful thing. We went outside and smoked a cigarette, thinking that was the end of that. Then we went back inside and continued to talk telepathically for the next few hours. (IDo5)

One important difference between this type of telepathic conversation and ordinary conversations, however, was that participants often found they could communicate in images rather than words. This was usually found to improve the information exchange, since trippers who struggled to find words could convey their ideas in pictorial form:

When I was explaining what I believed to my friend, I was doing it telepathically until I came to something I couldn't describe. When this happened I could picture what I was trying to say and I would ask, 'do you see the circle with the point in the middle?' etc., and my friend would say, 'yea I see it' and finish saying what I was trying to say. He could find the words to explain what I couldn't. (IDo5)

We could talk without words, transmitting feelings and picture-ideas directly. (ID19)

Furthermore, as indicated in the last quotation above, the telepathic exchange sometimes extended beyond thoughts and ideas into the realm of feelings. Reports of such experiences sometimes referred to them as ‘telempathy’ in order to differentiate this direct exchange of feelings from the more ordinary exchange of ideas. One described such telempathic exchanges as communication on the soul level, taking place on a level beyond words. Another person similarly found telepathy to be too mild a word for such communication, which was described as being able to know at a deep level what the other person means.

Finally, three interviewees described telempathy experiences that were of such intensity that they felt themselves dissolving into a state of unity with their partner. In these experiences, participants allegedly shared their feelings so intimately that it was difficult or impossible to identify which feelings belonged to whom.

Our consciousness, our thoughts, our feelings merged into one. This might be hard to visualize if you haven’t experienced it, but it gives the effect that you literally ARE the other person. That they may be a projection of your own mind. I had melded into this person, and he was effectively a projection of my own mind. (ID13)

The difficulty was when some shadow stuff started coming up, as there was absolutely no boundary and no way to close myself off from my friend. He experienced all that was coming up for me directly and I experienced his stuff. Frankly, I don’t know whose stuff it was, because there was one mind only. (ID10)

Differentiating actually became really difficult. In the early part of the experience it was easy, as the thoughts I would ‘think’ I recognized as my own and the thoughts that I ‘knew’ I recognized as being my roommate’s. But as the night wore on it became increasingly difficult to differentiate my separate identity from my roommate’s. (ID05)

Such states of telepathic unity were sometimes described as frightening. Psychedelics users who had experienced telepathic states cautioned against taking high doses of psychedelics with people one has unresolved issues with, claiming that relationships that are not ready for such a radical state of emotional openness might be harmed by it.

### **Privacy Issues**

This piece of advice with regard to emotional readiness for telepathic experiences brings us to the main challenge reported for psychedelic experiences, namely the lack of privacy. One participant described how this feature of psychedelic telepathy made him uncomfortable with the experience:

You can't hide anything when you are telepathic with someone, and that I didn't like. Understanding how easily a person can know what you are thinking and infiltrate your mind really made me uneasy and really really really appreciate sobriety. People want to know everything, and they want to know how to be telepathic and that is great, but everything has a dark side. Ignorance is bliss. Having privacy is awesome. (ID05)

What was the most difficult for this participant was that his roommate, with whom he shared three telepathic experiences, turned out to be gay, and in the last experience this roommate started pressuring the interviewee for homosexual relations. Their earlier telepathic experiences had convinced the two that, on some level, all humans are in truth 'One', and this became an argument used to try to persuade the interviewee to agree to having sex. The interviewee did not appreciate being pressured by this argument, and the telepathic connection between the two made the situation especially uncomfortable, since there was no way to escape from the roommate's pressure.

The last time was a negative time for me though because he was gay and I am not, although I've played around with the idea. The entire time he was pressuring me into being gay. I

repeatedly told him that I did not want to, I did not find the male body attractive and just did not want to. And he said things like ‘well you know we are all One so what is the big deal?’ I replied ‘it isn’t a big deal except for the fact that I don’t find men attractive and I don’t want to, I don’t care how One we all are, right now we are not one and I prefer women.’ That night was awful because I had no way to escape his peer pressure and wanted it to end. (IDo5)

Another participant had a similar story. He shared three telepathic experiences with a friend who was a closeted homosexual and, as it turned out, interested in the interviewee. In their last telepathic experience, the interviewee could overhear his friend’s romantic scheming telepathically, which the interviewee found to be dishonest and not forthright. He nevertheless maintained that the fear of losing one’s mental privacy during telepathy experiences is overstated, because you would always pick up people’s thoughts from a place of understanding and acceptance:

You may worry when you speak telepathically that maybe they will hear thoughts you don’t want them to hear. But you feel everything in the context of their history and personality. It is very difficult to judge someone’s thoughts when you experience that thought as if you are them. (IDo6)

A third interviewee experienced a similar dynamic from the opposite perspective. He went into a state of telepathic communication with his tripping friend, but this turned out to be a challenge when unexpected sexual desires rose up:

At some point I told him that I love him. He refused, but quickly realized that yes this was actually real love. We admitted love to each other (in no homosexual way at this point, mind you). But a little later, I started associating the whole thing with sexuality, started projecting my own sexuality onto it. Everything seemed very erotic, and I told my friend what I saw and that I did not want this. At this point, I

was getting really confused and our connection was broken. He stayed grounded and kept reminding me that these are only my thoughts, but I was really afraid. For days or even weeks afterwards I had this slight paranoia that everyone can hear my thoughts and feelings. I didn't feel safe in my own mind. (ID10)

Some others, however, did not regard the resultant mental nakedness of the telepathy experience as a problem. These people felt they had nothing to hide, and sometimes appreciated the increased openness:

I never felt threatened by the lack of privacy. In fact, it was a very nice feeling being able to be vulnerable around those I care about since I'm always so closed up. (ID08)

## DISCUSSION

This study has explored psychedelic telepathy experiences among participants recruited from online discussion fora. Taking no stand on the veracity of the reports, the aim of the study was simply to explore how the psychedelic users themselves describe states of telepathy, and to categorize and compare the main elements of their narratives. All the narratives of telepathic communication involved communication between two or more partners or friends—often described as close friends or best friends—who were tripping on psychedelics together in the same room. All except two of the experiences were described as reciprocal. If telepathy is a real effect, it seems reasonable to expect it to run parallel to other forms of connections between people, which implies that it should be stronger and more easily identifiable between people who are emotionally close; this is congruent with tentative findings by Honorton et al. (1990) and with Roe et al.'s (2003) analysis. Indeed, one factor that seemed to facilitate telepathy in the reports available to this study was the wish or desire for a closer connection. There were several reports of telepathy with one's partner or spouse, and the three narratives that involved unrequited homosexual love stood out as noteworthy. Although there are not enough reports included in this

study to draw valid inferences, future telepathy researchers seem well-advised to study the role of romantic or erotic desire in establishing a telepathic connection.

The study identified two main forms for transition into a telepathic state and three main types of telepathic communication. Some experienced the transition as abrupt and somewhat challenging, while others described a transition so smooth as to be unnoticeable. It should be remembered that all the reports in this study were from people who experienced telepathy while tripping on, for the most part, heavy doses of psychedelic drugs, and the temporary inability to differentiate between spoken conversations and telepathic conversations that some reported should be understood in this context. It was not possible to identify any explanation for why interviewees experienced the transition phase so differently.

The three types of telepathic communication were not discrete states, but rather appeared to lie on a continuum. In its weakest form, telepathy seemed to resemble an ordinary spoken conversation, allowing simply for the exchange of verbalized ideas. This information-exchange type of telepathy often enabled people to communicate in images as well as words, however. A more intense form of telepathy was sometimes referred to as telempathy, and reportedly allowed for the direct exchange of feeling-states. Such experiences were often described in spiritual terms. Finally, the most intense form for telepathy was a state of self-dissolution where one could not differentiate one's own thoughts and feelings from those of the friend or partner. These experiences were often regarded as very challenging. Several interviewees also reported feeling uncomfortable over the lack of privacy that characterized the telepathic state. For some, this lack of privacy was sufficient reason to not want to repeat the experience, but others eventually grew accustomed to it. A few reported a normalization of telepathy experiences, regarding them as simply one of many fascinating features of the deep psychedelic state.

Another noteworthy characteristic of the telepathy narratives in this study is that they were often colorful and remarkable experiences. This characteristic contrasts with the standardized ganzfeld experiments conducted in parapsychological research, where the receivers are reported to pick the correct visual target one out of three times, rather

than one out of four times as chance would predict. While this effect, at least according to some studies and meta-studies (Storm et al., 2010; Williams, 2011), may lie outside the boundaries of normal statistical deviation, a relatively minor discrepancy in probabilities is not the type of effect that captures one's imagination. As the philosopher C. D. Broad emphasized back in 1949, spontaneous cases of psi are often

much richer in content and more interesting psychologically than the results of experiment with cards or drawings. In comparison with the latter they are as thunderstorms to the mild electrical effects of rubbing a bit of sealing-wax with a silk handkerchief. (Broad, 1949, p. 297)

However, it should be noted that the present study is subject to a range of obvious limitations. The study is based on Internet-mediated conversations with psychedelics users who claimed to have had telepathic experiences, but it was not possible to independently verify these reports. While the author had no reason to doubt the sincerity and truthfulness of the interviewees, neither of these is assured in principle. Some readers might even find that the fact that respondents were in a state of psychedelic intoxication while allegedly experiencing telepathic contact is in itself good reason to doubt the veracity of their reports.

### **Further Studies**

In conclusion, further studies of psychedelic telepathy are clearly warranted. Furthermore, seeing that the ganzfeld experimenters, even when they can point to what appears to be solid statistical results, seem to have largely failed to convince the academic mainstream about the reality of psi, it might be advisable for parapsychologists to diversify their approach. In the following, I will therefore outline a research strategy for a study aiming to bring psychedelic telepathy into the laboratory. The final goal of this proposed study is to demonstrate telepathic communication between two experienced subjects within a controlled space. This is not an easy study to conduct, however, and will require long-term commitment from researchers.

Before proceeding, we can examine some earlier advice for

parapsychological research with psychedelics. Such advice often centers on the importance of set and setting, or in other words on the psychological and physical contexts of psychedelics use. Luke's (2015) summary of factors to take into consideration included "the participants' expectations, attitudes towards themselves, idiosyncratic perceptions, and emotional orientation to the experiment," and he emphasized the need for researchers to be friendly and supportive and thereby engender trust and acceptance among the participants (p. 160). This seems like good advice, but I would like to point out that this set of advice was probably intended for researchers conducting experiments with telepathically (and perhaps psychedelically) naïve subjects. For the study I am proposing, I would instead recommend recruiting participants who have already experienced psychedelics-induced telepathy and, at least to some extent, have developed skills allowing them to recreate such experiences. If such participants can be found, it should be recognized that these participants, rather than the researchers, are the experts in determining which set and setting might facilitate a telepathic experience. In the early phase of the study, it seems advisable for the researchers to proceed more as anthropologists conducting a field study than as psychologists aiming for experimental control. Later on, if the field study phase indicates that the participants are capable of inducing telepathic states, the study could be moved into the researchers' laboratory and be repeated under controlled conditions.

The critical task for this study is to recruit suitable participants. Recruiting inexperienced participants into the laboratory and administering large doses of psychedelic drugs is not advisable, as the likelihood of untoward events rises with dosage (Nour et al., 2016; Studerus et al., 2012). In addition, the induction of telepathic states does not seem to be a sufficiently common effect of psychedelics use that such a straightforward approach is likely to succeed. Most of the interviewees in the present study found that they could not recreate the telepathic experience at will, but some of them claimed to have developed an ability to at least recognize and seize opportunities for a telepathic connection. The success of the proposed study relies on the supposition that these individuals were truthful and not deluded, and that they exist in sufficient numbers that a parapsychological researcher

will be able to recruit at least a pair of them. Recruitment might take the form of publishing notices at a range of online psychedelic communities, although this may result in much attention from pranksters and people hoping for free drugs. More fruitfully, perhaps, a prospective researcher may start by inviting online communities to a survey of psychedelic telepathy experiences, and at the end of the survey invite participants to follow-up interviews. Candidates for the experimental study may then be identified based on the information obtained in interviews. As an alternative, researchers may take a ‘spear-fishing’ approach where they monitor various psychedelic community fora and search through their archives in order to identify suitable candidates for the study, and then approach them individually via private messaging.

Assuming suitable candidates can be obtained, the researchers will need to engage with a gradual process of inserting themselves into the psychedelic practices of their subjects. This may be a delicate endeavor, as many psychedelics users regard the intoxicated state as a highly sensitive one, and may be uncomfortable with having strangers present. Unless the subjects are extremely proficient at inducing the telepathic state, simply transplanting them from their usual tripping environment into the researchers’ lab and supplying them with psychedelic drugs is unlikely to work. Instead, the researchers must gradually earn the confidence of their subjects, starting out with a minimal presence at psychedelic sessions and slowly allowing the study participants to get used to their new environment. At some point, it may be possible to bring neutral observers and recording devices into the experiment. If telepathy is a real effect, such a study might be able to demonstrate it in a manner that does not rely on statistical probability, but rather on interactions with subjects undergoing real-time telepathic conversations.

## REFERENCES

- Alcock, J. E. (2010). Attributions about impossible things. In S. Krippner, & H. L. Friedman (Eds.), *Debating psychic experience: Human potential or human illusion?* (pp. 29–41). Praeger.
- Bergson, H. (1990). *Matter and memory* (N. M. Paul & W. S. Palmer, Trans). Zone Books. [Original work published in 1896 in French]
- Bierman, D. J. (1998). The effects of THC and psilocybin on paranormal phenomena

- [paper presentation]. *Psychoactivity: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Plants, Shamanism, and States of Consciousness*, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.
- Broad, C. D. (1949). The relevance of psychical research to philosophy. *Philosophy*, 24(91), 291–309. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819100007452>
- Cardeña, E. (2018). The experimental evidence for parapsychological phenomena: A review. *American Psychologist*, 73(5), 663–677. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000236>
- Carhart-Harris, R. L., Erritzoe, D., Williams, T., Stone, J. M., Reed, L. J., Colasanti, A., Tyacke, R. J., Leech, R., Malizia, A. M., Murphy, K., Hobden, P., Evans, J., Feilding, A., Wise, R. G., & Nutt, D. J. (2012). Neural correlates of the psychedelic state as determined by fMRI studies with psilocybin. *PNAS*, 109(6), 2138–2143. <https://doi:10.1073/pnas.1119598109>
- Don, N. S., McDonough, B. E., Warren, C. A., & Moura, G. (1996, August 17–20). Psi, brain function, and “Ayahuasca” (telepathine). *Proceedings of papers presented at the 39th Parapsychology Association Annual Convention, San Diego*, 315–334.
- Honorton, C., Berger, R. E., Varvoglis, M. P., Quant, M., Derr, P., Schechter, E., & Ferrari, D. (1990). Psi communication in the ganzfeld: Experiments with an automated testing system and a comparison with a meta-analysis of earlier studies. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 54(2), 99–139.
- Huxley, A. (1954/1994). *The doors of perception*. HarperCollins.
- Hyman, R. (2010). Parapsychology’s Achilles heel: Persistent inconsistency. In S. Krippner & H. L. Friedman (Eds.), *Debating psychic experience: Human potential or human illusion?* (pp. 43–52). Praeger.
- Luke, D. (2010). Anthropology and parapsychology: Still hostile sisters in science? *Time and Mind*, 3(3), 245–265. <https://doi.org/10.2752/175169610X12754030955850>
- Luke, D. (2012). Psychoactive substances and paranormal phenomena: A comprehensive review. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 31(1), 97–156. <https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2012.31.1.97>
- Luke, D. (2015). Drugs and psi phenomena. In E. Cardeña, J. Palmer, & D. Marcusson-Clavertz (Eds.), *Parapsychology: A handbook for the 21st century* (pp. 149–164). McFarland.
- Myers, F. W. H. (1896–1897). Glossary of terms used in psychical research. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 12(31, Supplement), 166–174. [http://iapsop.com/archive/materials/spr\\_proceedings/spr\\_proceedings\\_v12\\_1896-7.pdf](http://iapsop.com/archive/materials/spr_proceedings/spr_proceedings_v12_1896-7.pdf)
- Nichols, D. (2004). Hallucinogens. *Pharmacology & Therapeutics*, 101(2), 131–181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pharmthera.2003.11.002>
- Nichols, D. (2016, April). Psychedelics. *Pharmacological Reviews*, 68(2), 264–355.

- <https://doi.org/10.1124/pr.115.011478>
- Nour, M. M., Evans, L., Nutt, D., & Carhart-Harris, R. R. (2016, June). Ego-dissolution and psychedelics: Validation of the Ego-Dissolution Inventory (EDI). *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 10, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2016.00269>
- Petri, G., Expert, P., Turkheimer, F., Carhart-Harris, R., Nutt, D., Hellyer, P. J., & Vaccarino, F. (2014, December). Homological scaffolds of brain functional networks. *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*, 11(101), 20140873. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2014.0873>
- Roe, C. A., Holt, N. J., & Simmonds, C. A. (2003, March). Considering the sender as a PK agent in ganzfeld ESP studies. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 67, 129–146. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Considering+the+sender+as+a+pk+agent+i+n+ganzfeld+esp+studies.-a0104657313>.
- Storm, L., Tressoldi, P. E., & Di Risio, L. (2010, July). Meta-analysis of free-response studies, 1992–2008: Assessing the noise reduction model in parapsychology. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(4), 471–485. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019457>
- Studerus, E., Gamma, A., Kommer, M., & Vollenweider, F. X. (2012). Prediction of psilocybin response in healthy volunteers. *PLoS One* 7(2), e30800. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0030800>
- Tinoco, C. A. (1994). Testa de ESP empacientes sob efeito da ayahuasca [Controlled ESP test in patients under the influence of ayahuasca]. *Revista de Brasileira de Parapsicologia*, 14, 42–48.
- Wezelman, R., & Bierman, D. J. (1997). Process orientated ganzfeld research in Amsterdam. *Proceedings of the 40th Parapsychology Association Annual Convention held in conjunction with the Society for Psychical Research*, Brighton, pp. 477–492.
- Williams, B. J. (2011, December). Revisiting the ganzfeld ESP debate: A basic review and assessment. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 25(4), 639–661.