

**THE
RHINE
ONLINE**

The Rhine Research Center's Quarterly Newsletter

Spring, 2012

**The Extraordinary Life
of
Adam Linzmayer,**

By Nancy Linzmayer Stuart



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Contents

Letter from the editor:	1
Psi Chronicles - by Sally Rhine Feather, Ph.D.	2
The Extraordinary Life of Adam Linzmayer - by Nancy Linzmayer Stuart	3
Robert McLuhan's Book Review: <i>Fringe-ology</i> - by Steve Volk	7
Whither Our Results Wither? A Commentary on the Decline Effect	9
UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE RHINE, April and May, 2012	15
Wise Words from our Recent Speakers	16

The Rhine Research Center's Quarterly Newsletter
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Letter from the editor:

Dear friends,

I am excited to bring you the spring, 2012, edition of the Rhine Research Center's quarterly newsletter. Please forgive the break we took in publication in the past months – my daughter was born at the end of July, 2011, and I have been taking time off from work for this first period of her life. What a teacher she is to me in her constant reminders to stay present with the wonder of each new experience!

The Rhine Center has been gifted with so many extraordinary speakers during this time. For those of us who live in Durham, NC, we are fortunate to attend these talks both for the inspiration and information presented. For those of you who do not live nearby, on our website we do have some past presentations available in our [video library](#) and some teleconferences available in our [audio library](#).

This newsletter is special in that we bring to you a remembrance of J.B. Rhine's most famous documented demonstrator of ESP, Adam Linzmayer. Linzmayer's daughter, Nancy Linzmayer Stuart, has written a beautiful recollection and description of her father's ordinary, day-to-day life outside of the lab – a life that you will likely find, upon reading, to be extraordinary and exceptional due to his gifts. As is often the case with psi, the day-to-day occurrences typically supersede anything that a scientist can record in a lab.

Additionally, in this newsletter we have our regular Psi Chronicles column in which Sally Rhine Feather, Ph.D. comments on a mind-matter interaction. Robert McLuhan gives a book review of *Fringe-ology*, written by Steve Volk (who recently spoke at the Rhine), and Bryan Williams of the University of New Mexico presents an article furthering the discussion of the decline effect that I started in our last [newsletter](#). Williams comments on numerous possibilities that might cause the effect as well as noting the similar pattern of the decline effect across various fields of study, refuting skeptics who imply the phenomenon points to a flaw in parapsychology.

Please note our upcoming April and May events with Bill Bengston, Ron Papallardo, and Norm Shealy. Additionally, in June the Rhine Center will be having a tribute to the late esteemed parapsychologist Bill Roll – I would be grateful for any descriptions and remembrances of him for the summer newsletter. Send these and any other letters or commentaries to Jennifer@Rhine.org (I always welcome Letters to the Editor to print in the next newsletter).

With hopes that this newsletter and the work of the Rhine inspires courageous and authentic living to you all!

- Jennifer Moore, editor



Psi Chronicles - by Sally Rhine Feather, Ph.D.

Mind-matter interactions have been studied in controlled experiments for many years, but only recently have we begun to collect reports of how they may occur in everyday life. In an earlier issue we shared a report about what happened when a group of young boys met as a group to affect the movement of an object by their intention alone. In this issue we share a much different type of event. A woman whom I will call Sharon writes about the unusual physical events she recalls observing around her mother after the passing of a family member, possibly as a communication from the deceased.

Sharon writes: *My mother came from an Italian background that felt there was something special about the seventh child of a seventh son as she was. Sometimes when she communicated with the dead, things would move and float in the house.*

One time my brother and I were first hand witnesses to that. We were sitting at the kitchen table waiting to eat, heard mom let out a startled exclamation and then we saw the glass coffeepot slide off the back burner of the stove, move toward the kitchen table, all this time it is suspended in the air, continue in its journey to suspend itself at eye level in front of mom, who by now was standing. She reached out and took the coffeepot by its handle and returned it to the stove.

Later that day, we went with Mom to visit my grandmother. Mom left her car keys and purse on a hall table while she visited Grandmother and drank some coffee with Grandmother in the kitchen. When she went to get her things on the way out, she would find her keys on the floor next to a package. This same thing happened in more than one visit to my grandmother's. Naturally, she thought someone was playing tricks on her. We were questioned and we did not do anything like that. My parents were strict and we did not play jokes on them.

In the meantime, at our own home, things were still floating around. The coffeepot still floated and now magazines would slowly travel across from one room to the next, with the pages fluttering as they passed by.

One day, while at my grandmother's house, my brother, grandmother, mother and I were going to the hall table so mom could get her purse and keys to go home, when all of us saw movement on the hall table. The car keys slid away from her purse by themselves and fell to the floor next to the package again.

That night, my mother said that my newly deceased uncle had come to her and asked her to please send a Christmas card to his wife and his children and sign his name to it with love. (He was a young man who died unexpectedly from a kidney disease and left his widow with three small children). He also told Mom to send their gifts as they would not have anything for Christmas. My uncle had passed away in December before Christmas. The package that Mom's keys kept falling by was a package full of Christmas gifts that my mother had put together for his family but had been delayed in getting it to the post office. The day after her conversation with my uncle, she took the package to the post office and sent it to his family. After that all floating things ceased.

My mother did have a gift and many times we saw it in operation although she did not refer to it as such. The gift also gave her a tremendous amount of pain when deaths were revealed to her.

We always kept these things to ourselves. I only mention this to you as I am still trying to understand it and you deal with things like this. I would like to understand it more so if there is a child born generations from now with the same abilities, they will accept it and not feel like a freak.

As I replied to Sharon, we don't yet understand these puzzling experiences or why they occur to some people and not to others. However, we are, as she says, a place that "deals with things like this," and a place where one can feel safe in sharing when such an event occurs. We at the Rhine are working to understand psi phenomena more so that a child "born generations from now with the same abilities" will indeed feel confident and perhaps learn to use the abilities for the greater good of the world. We are indebted to those who, like Sharon, understand that the first step in this process of change is having the courage to share one's own experiences, and we will continue to do our part and pass some of them along in our newsletter or our website to illustrate some of the paranormal reports that we receive from normal people in their everyday life, and keep the conversation – and the scientific scrutiny – moving.

The Extraordinary Life of Adam Linzmayer - by Nancy Linzmayer Stuart

Editor's introduction:

We are fortunate to have this reminiscence by Nancy Linzmayer Stuart discussing her father's uncanny abilities.

J.B. Rhine, in his 1937 book, *New Frontiers of the Mind*, describes his experiments with Linzmayer in this way: "When Dr. Zener and I had tested a class of more than a hundred students, Linzmayer had turned in the best score of the group," he says. When Linzmayer came to the lab at a later time because he was interested in hypnotism, Rhine thought he would try "a run or two of the cards." Linzmayer correctly called nine cards in succession! The next day, Rhine says, Linzmayer again "made a run of 9 straight accurate calls, and I realized that here was a subject who had what amounted to a genius for extra-sensory perceptivity." Linzmayer had to leave Duke to return home soon after, but agreed to spend a day testing with Rhine. He felt he did his best work when he had a slight diversion, like looking out the window, so they decided to drive in a car to allow him to focus on other things as they ran the tests.

They would drive a bit then stop and do the tests. Rhine says that at the first stop, "When he had called fifteen cards in succession without a single mistake, both of us were too amazed for a while to go on with the rest of the run. No conceivable deviation from probability, no 'streak of luck' which either of us had ever heard of could parallel such a sequence of unbroken hits. We both knew that the thing Linzmayer had just done was virtually impossible by all the rules in the book of chance, but he had done it" (78). He finished out that run with a total of correctly calling 21 out of 25 cards. Rhine also adds that on this last day of testing he tried to purposefully make the conditions poor to test the theory that conditions matter for psi ability. He hurried Linzmayer and made him work under pressure and against his will. As Rhine says,

With the same tools – the cards -- and in conditions which were physically unchanged, by applying pressure and doing things in a way which I knew to be wrong, we had been able to get a new series against which to check the earlier one, a series in which the results were no better than chance itself would have produced, and in fact below the chance average. Indeed, the less-than-chance average suggested the possibility of creating negative block of some sort in the mental path of the extra-sensory process. (81-82)

J.B. Rhine certainly documented Linzmayer's abilities, but few people in the world, however, aside from Linzmayer's family and close friends, could truly understand his "genius for extra-sensory perceptivity." Here, then, in the words and memories of his daughter, we get a glimpse into the greatness of this man – one who demonstrated his extraordinary psi ability in the laboratory, and who, as is often the case with psi, proved to be even more astonishing in his day-to-day, "ordinary" life. I hope you enjoy this glimpse into the life of a remarkable family, here in the words of Nancy Linzmayer Stuart:

I am often offended and perplexed when people insist there is no such thing as ESP, primarily because I had watched my father, Adam Linzmayer, demonstrate his own remarkable ability hundreds of times. He would even set up long-distance, hand-written letters to demonstrate ESP. For example, in 1961, I asked him to do something to demonstrate ESP for the girls in my small dorm. He mailed this handful of my college friends an envelope (with the postmark of course) and inside there was a paper with written instructions for them. The instructions were to find any deck of cards, shuffle, and spread them out face down. He then went on to say that, one person should pick any card and we would all see that it would be (for example) the Queen of clubs. Then a second person would pick a different random card which would be the 3 of hearts. The third would choose another and so on. I do not recall how many he predicted--maybe six or seven--but they were all correct. I was elated because it meant a lot to prove to others that ESP existed.

He also predicted the exact license plate number that one of them would see on her date's car, when going out on a blind date on Saturday night. He simply said something like, "One of the girls in this group will have a blind date on Saturday night and his license plate will be...NJ3456."



I was pleased to see that this too was exact, and my dorm mates were very impressed. Adam had mailed these instructions days before, and we all knew he had no way to cheat. I recall that he told me he and some friends often did this type of experiment using the mail.

Another example of his precognition was over the phone when we were about to meet a group at the racetrack for an outing with my husband's office. My father initially rather refused to give us the winning horses, but we were in a hurry and therefore put our 5 year old on the phone to get just a few names. My Dad told Tommy to read the list of names in the first three or four races. Each time my son read the winning name, my father would stop him and say, "That is the one. Read the next list." Well, we missed the first race, but the horse was correct, and we played the remaining names, who also won. We wanted to call my father and tell him and ask for more, but there were, to our amazement, no phones at the track in the early 70's.

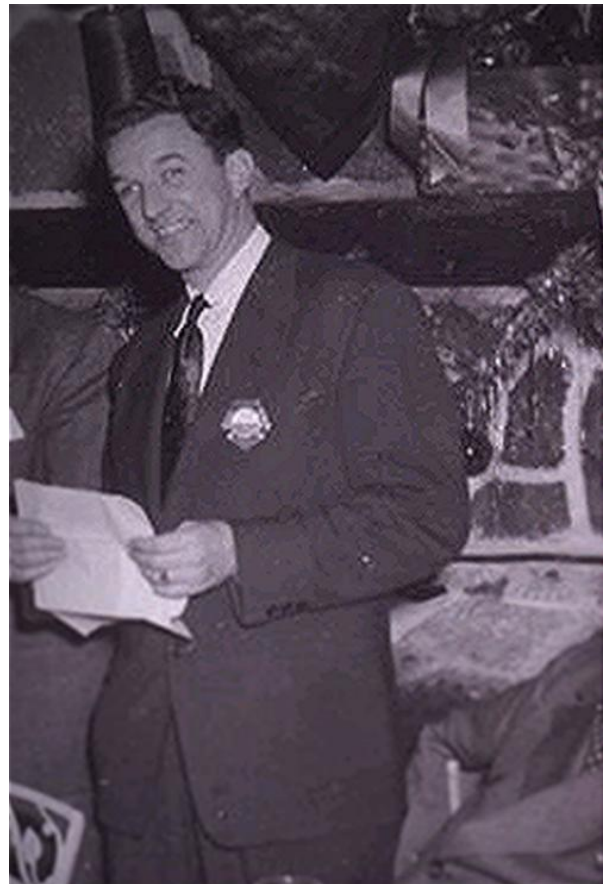
During this same period, I was home from Glassboro State College for a weekend visit in Atlantic Highlands, NJ. It was in the spring of 1962. When I got up on Saturday morning my parents were arguing about whether to tell me something. I insisted that since I heard that much that they had to be decent

enough to tell me the rest. My father described being awakened at 2:15 a.m. by my boyfriend's frantic yelling for my help. It was something about being unable to get up. He awakened my mother and went out on the porch where he could hear most clearly, and she said no she heard nothing. Yet, he believed Wayne was still desperately calling me. My friend risked our lives driving her sports car at about 90 mph to reach campus, and I ran all over asking everyone had they seen Wayne. This was a small college, and it was fairly easy to find someone. Finally, I found Roy or Ray and he was amazed that I was asking about Wayne's having been injured. He was with him after both boys were at a party and it was around 2 a.m. when they drunkenly tried a short cut in the woods, in the dark, and in the rain. They got lost, but Wayne tried to get through a stream and slipped on a rock. Roy thought he must be knocked out because he was not moving or speaking for a brief period. When he did begin moving, he was in agony and was drunk enough to be yelling for me to help him. He had a concussion I believe and was fine. Why my dad heard this I do not know since it was not a brush with death or anything so special. The one thing about it was that Wayne and my father had a deep bond for some reason. My father really liked him and they would play little ESP coin flipping games, etc. To this day, Wayne has psychic ability and has told me about his many gifts such as using long-distance healing. He is a Buddhist living in Montana, and we talk every six months or so. He does remember the incident. I have not seen him since college when I broke up with him because he did not seem motivated toward his future. After the breakup, he continued asking me to ask my father for information, and the one thing I recall clearly is his asking my father whom he would marry. My father said, "There is a Nancy in your life that you care deeply about but will not marry." (He was dating Nancy Diamond as I recall.) "You will marry someone with the initials 'D.U.'" (probably not intended to stand for Duke U.) Debbie Urdang was married to Wayne sometime after college. They are divorced but friends. He is now very happily married to a Japanese woman whose first initial is A. Wayne neglected to ask for his second wife's initials.

Living with my father, whom my brother started us all calling "Adam," was often entertaining because, as a rule, he would tell us who was calling as soon as the phone rang. This meant none of the three children needed to race to answer the phone, and we could answer, "Hi Fran, or Jimmy or Terry." He was an early walking model of the caller ID I guess. This occurred regularly throughout our lives.

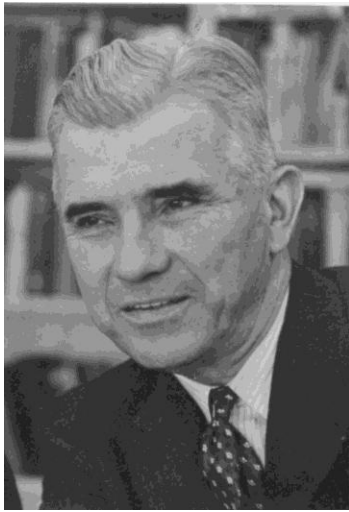
Yes, there were times when he did not feel like doing ESP. He said he was tired or used a different explanation. It was only in retrospect that I became fairly sure he would not try to guess at times when he appeared depressed. Back in the 1940's, and still in the 1960's, people were not educated about the symptoms of clinical depression. Later in his life, I finally convinced him to take antidepressants. I had done my Master's Thesis in Psychology trying to determine how antidepressants worked. Even in the 60s, I found very little by way of clinical research on the inner working of antidepressants. Even today, the standard beliefs about antidepressant efficacy do not claim to offer proof.

A wonderful Ph.D. who studied at Princeton and taught at Duke interviewed my father on tape. This is when I first listened, as my father described how he just could not continue with Dr. Rhine's experiments, even though he was paid a stipend, because he could barely stand the pressure. He hated the feeling of expectation that he produce or perform on demand because he knew he could not do it. I think these experiences took place in the 1940's. My father was ashamed and extremely frustrated when he could not achieve or finish something. He did not know why exactly but he told this interviewer that he had to "feel confident" when he demonstrated his ESP--he also needed to feel relaxed, although he reiterated that it was mainly with reference to confidence. "If I felt confident, there was no doubt I could come through with the right answers." It reminds me of how he was never sick, even with a cold, in his entire life. He often told me that we have not begun to discover the enormous power of the mind. He was always saying, "Sickness is in your mind. If you believe you will be healthy, then you will be healthy." I have wondered if the Alzheimer's or clinical depression might have been outside of Adam's mind-control ability because they were not the same as an illness, carried by a virus or bacteria. We appear to know that there are genetic components to such diseases. Adam and I both suffered from depression, and I am quite concerned for myself that I will also have Alzheimer's disease.



One very dramatic display of his gift was when Adam felt suddenly compelled to go home immediately from Asbury Park where his "Insulation and Siding" business was. This was a half-hour drive. He became very apprehensive, since he knew something dreadful was happening at our home. Once home, he ran all over the house, finding nothing. No one was home. Even our old basement was fine. But as the feeling got worse, not better, suddenly he felt it was mandatory to check the front porch. He found our neighbor lying on the porch, but not responsive. Dennis, my friend from high school, had been working on his car in his closed garage. It was very cold out and the car had been running for a long time. Once he began to feel the effect of the engine's carbon dioxide, a heavy colorless, odorless, and deadly gas, he used all of his energy to make his way across the street. He could barely climb the stairs and could not ring our doorbell. His forehead was bluish grey, as were his lips, and he was no longer conscious. My father had been a volunteer fireman and knew what to do. He and the first aid squad revived Dennis with oxygen. My father looked very proud and happy, but was quite shocked. He later said, "What if I had not paid instant attention to the urgent need to go right home? Dennis would not be with us." He was shaken for several days.

A less serious, but similar incident involved me in 5th grade, when I was sent to my room by my mother after a schoolmate's mother came to my home and told a lie about my allegedly upsetting her daughter, Donna. I was not guilty and wanted to go on a picnic, so I foolishly decided to somehow escape out my second story window. My friend Eva was there with me and helped me to hang out the window; we thought I could safely jump. There were rocks below me and although we had thrown lots of pillows to soften the fall, I froze with fear (that I now attribute to my having ADHD), which amended my plan. Eva tried to call for help when my father came speeding up in his car a few yards from where she and I were just about to give up. He pulled me in and all I can recall is sitting alone on my bed shaking uncontrollably – I imagine from producing so much adrenaline. I have no idea where my father came from. No one was speaking to me. I never knew what prompted him to race home.



My father seemed to turn his ESP off and on, but he did not know how to explain this. He told me about how when at Duke – Dr. Rhine had used many experiments to see how putting him in a wide range of settings would affect his ability to produce correct answers. For the rest of his life, Adam was extremely proud that Dr. Rhine was his mentor. At times Dr. Rhine would see how well Adam performed when sleep deprived, or after getting drunk, or taking a vigorous hike in the woods. He had him skip meals as well as over-eat. I remember my Dad saying he did not like these experiences. He felt it was foolishness. I doubt that he expressed that directly to Dr. Rhine, but when he told me, he confided that he still felt somewhat irritated as he recalled the details, even though he greatly admired Dr. Rhine. It was unlikely that Dr. Rhine himself administered these experiments, but I am guessing

Although Adam could not intentionally turn his ESP ability off and on, he was fully aware that no one else could either. Moreover, no one told my father what to do. He was extremely independent and stubborn. This may not seem related, but I have wondered these past years if he might have been somewhat Bipolar. He was often moody. Even when I was a little girl, his depressions used to shatter my heart. I would

pull him up by his hand and persuade him to go out for a walk to the harbor with me, or get involved in some other activity. I suspect I have been somewhat of a little psychologist all of my life. Helping troubled people was my favorite way to spend my time and often it still is. I wish I knew more about Adam when not depressed, but I do distinctly recall Adam running and playing vigorously with me in the snow. He would pull me on my sled forever. We would swim and play in the ocean for hours. He was very proud that I was a tomboy. I loved running to the back door to greet him when he came home from work because he would throw me up in the air repeatedly. He played jokes on us every day, such as making orange juice from a frozen OJ can, which he then hid. He would then artistically arrange pits, orange skin and orange bits around our mechanical orange-squeezer on the counter. The idea was to fool me into thinking I was having the fresh orange juice he often made for me. He fashioned different OJ productions. He kept at that game forever, determined to win. My point is that I remember a happy and fun Adam, and also a very sad Adam. I believe it was sometime in the 60's that he would lock the bathroom door and stay there quietly, literally for hours; even after the sun went down he did not turn on the lights. We did not disturb him because it was obvious that he sought privacy. And, we had another bathroom if needed. He would come for dinner but would be irritable and quiet.

As for mania, he expressed quite a bit of what I would call hypomania. He always went to second hand stores in the very wealthy neighborhoods and bought "Hicky Freeman" cashmere coats, or Burbank suits, "for pennies" he would say. He often looked for matching pictures of these same coats in ads, which he put in his pocket to show friends and family while wearing this or that item. He wore things like very tasteful subtle green leather shoes. My father was very careful of money but indulged himself in this compulsion to dress well. It was not until the early 1960's that my husband pointed out, to my amazement, that my father changed his clothes five or six times a day. I bet my husband that he was wrong, and our family watched continually for a full week. This may be off the topic, but he would wear a silk bathrobe to breakfast, changing later into casual slacks to walk to the corner store. Next he would perhaps dress for work, and upon coming home, he would put on work clothes to work in the yard. Even my Mother was not fully aware of this. He did not mind being teased about such things, and would chuckle. One Sunday at the dinner table, we all decided that he had at least 400 shirts. He was certain that we had all gone mad. We counted the shirts and we won. He was meticulous with everything, and all shirts were in their dry cleaning bags. This dry cleaning part seemed such an unnecessary expense for a man who watched every cent.

I wondered about the hypomania because he did some over the top stuff. My mother used to shudder if Adam had a paintbrush in his hand, "because he will paint everything in sight with that one color until the paint is gone." We had an entire room of antiques that he carefully painted a lovely blue; that became the "blue room." When he painted the many slabs of slate around the outside of our large home, he used as many different "but sophisticated colors" as he could find. Then he painted the small stumps left over from where he had excessively pruned dozens of trees. Next, having some leftover paint, he painted the vertical part of the back stairs ---each a different color. He would tell everyone his home looked like something from "House and Garden. These were happy days.

I am focusing on these quirky Adam behaviors thinking they may connect to the feeling of confidence that Adam spoke of, to the symptoms that I recognized as hypomanic. Not a bad thing to have, as long as it is in control, and not at all destructive. However, when the eventual depression would blow through, it would wipe away all of his energy and joy. Not many people were discussing depression in the 50's, and it was not on TV like today. In my 30's I gave in and began taking antidepressants for my first unrelenting depression, and have continued throughout most of my life. What seems relevant here is the genetic link. Depression runs in families. True bi-polar does as well, but my Dad's

hypomania seemed to be his alone—and did not expand to mania. Many very successful people can attribute their success to hypomania, which I believe is currently being labeled as hyperthymia.

When my father was in the early stages of dementia/Alzheimer's, probably sometime in the 60's, his heart would break repeatedly as he would give an account of seeing someone whom he felt he had known his entire life, yet had no idea who he was or where he knew him from. He learned to fake his way through conversations and stopped talking about how painful it was. His ESP was no longer expressed, and he gradually lost his balance. (When I mentioned the cuts and bruises on his legs, he proudly told me, "But I know how to take a fall, you know.") It took years to destroy him. He kept asking my Mother what was wrong with him; did he have Alzheimer's? When my mother asked me to tell him that he did, he said, "Don't be silly girl. That is not possible." Denial can be very protective. He did not ask again. He died in 1989. My mother took wonderful care of him, and it was easier than it might have been because he was so much more at peace than he had been prior to Alzheimer's. He did not seem to suffer in the middle and late stages at all. I cannot resist adding, that even in the late stages he would watch every Duke game on TV. He had lost his speech and balance and could no longer walk. We did not think he understood the game any more, but one of the sweetest moments I recall (and which must have taken enormous physical exertion for him) was when he stumbled into the kitchen after one of his Duke games, to tell us: "Duke won!"



Nancy Linzmayer Stuart

Rhine, J. B. (1937). *New Frontiers of the Mind*. New York, NY, US

Robert McLuhan's Book Review: *Fringe-ology* - by Steve Volk

I have mixed feelings about journalists' books about the paranormal. There's a tendency to think they can get to the bottom of it by talking to a few key people, but they only really scratch the surface, and lose interest as soon as they've got enough material to write up. Volk is a Philadelphia crime reporter, and *Fringe-ology: How I Tried to Explain Away the Unexplainable and Couldn't* might have been that sort of book, based as it is on interviews and encounters with researchers and experiencers of various kinds. In fact it's excellent, and as an introduction to science/religion topics is one of the best I've read. Volk has a deeply personal interest, from his memories of the poltergeist that haunted his home as a child and from the impact of the deaths of close family members, and gives a strong sense of caring about the subjects he investigates: near-death experiences, psi research, consciousness, UFOS, poltergeists, mystical experience, neuroscience and lucid dreaming, which he typically explores through the work of key figures. The narrative fiction style is lively and empathetic, and shows a novelist's eye for people, places and situations.

A worry for journalists especially is to seem credible and objective while tackling subjects that many people find suspect. Unlike some writers, Volk is not defensive about this and is keen to be as inclusive as possible, while steering clear of the margins on either side.

We live in a world of false certainties: Whether we are discussing politics, religion, or economics, when we flip on our televisions or open our Web browsers to a news site, we encounter the often strongly held opinions of others - opinions that lead us into a series of binary choices: conservative or liberal, believer or atheist, capitalist or socialist. My argument, simply, is that these are false choices - that there are middle paths that bear more fruit.

All of the figures he describes, in their way, are chipping away at the barriers raised by dogmatists and helping to found a new worldview "in which science and spirituality serve each other." At the same time he avoids some of the more controversial areas: psi-research is covered quite cursorily, and there's little about mediums and psychics, apart from a tense phone conversation with Uri Geller, which quietly makes the point that he is keeping such people at arms length (he also admits to incredulity when Mitchell shows him a bag of bent spoons he watched children twisting out of shape merely by stroking them.)

But the problem of the Paranormal Taint, as he calls it, remains a strong theme throughout the book. Volk makes the point well in the first chapter while discussing the case of Kübler-Ross. The Swiss-born psychiatrist might have broken the news about the near-death experience after coming across it frequently in her work with the terminally ill. However she didn't mention it at all in her book *On Death and Dying*, and it was left to Raymond Moody to publicize the discovery a few years later. A good thing too, Volk points out: the work that helped break taboos and alleviate suffering

might have been ignored completely if it had been tainted by a hint of superstitious belief. (Sadly, Kübler-Ross did later go to the other extreme, showing a level of credulity that wrecked her reputation.)

Elsewhere Volk describes an atheists' conference attended by the likes of Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Patricia Churchland, where Stuart Hameroff offered his ideas about quantum consciousness. Anything that smacks of dualism would go down like a lead balloon in such company. Dawkins in particular seemed so upset he could not even look at Hameroff and stared sulkily in the other direction. Generally, says Volk, the talk was greeted with the "hushed whisper of fabric, of one hundred butts shifting uncomfortably in their seats."

This sort of classy writing is one of the book's strong points. I liked the discussion of Andrew Newberg in trying to test the idea, promoted by hard-line atheists, that religious faith is obviously connected to mental disorder.

Would some sort of *malfunction* show up that explained the spiritual experience? Or would he somehow get a glimpse of God as a kind of ghost in the machine? In his pursuit of an answer, Newberg has become a curator of human spiritual life - taking snapshots of various transcendent states and hanging them on the walls.

I also enjoyed the chapter on the astronaut Edgar Mitchell, who famously experienced a powerful sense of the interconnectedness of all things on his journeying in space and later founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS). It seems astronauts as a species are known for undergoing profound shifts in their thinking and priorities, and it's a smart idea to explore mystical experience in relation to such a highly contemporary activity. Here too there's a sense of a perceptual boundary being bumped up against, as the idea of space tourism, touted by entrepreneurs like Virgin's Richard Branson, suffers from the 'giggle factor' - when people hear an idea that is disturbing or challenging they laugh. The implications of this for the paranormal are obviously great, Volk points out. 'Yes, some people want to embrace every New Age idea. But others laugh, just as automatically, before even considering what they're laughing at.'

There are some fascinating examples of the interaction between science and the media. Volk describes the case of a researcher who discovered a statistically significant tendency in people who had experienced an NDE to show the same altered brain firing patterns as people with temporal lobe epilepsy. The study was small and no serious conclusions could be drawn. Nevertheless, it drew a disproportionate amount of interest from the media, with articles in the *New York Times* and *Discover* which effectively stigmatized these people as dysfunctional, when actually they rated more highly than the controls on measures of active coping. The study's author meanwhile received letters from believers earnestly thanking her for proving that it the NDE is real, and from scientist colleagues for proving that religious belief is a brain disorder.

One of the most interesting chapters concerns a new mental therapy being pioneered by Allan Botkin. This is based on the recent discovery by psychotherapist Francine Shapiro, which she calls 'eye movement desensitization and reprocessing' or EMDR which actually involves nothing more complicated than getting the patient to move his or her eyes from side to side, as if they were watching a ping-pong match. EMDR faced a good deal of skepticism at the outset, but now seems to be thriving. However Botkin, a specialist with war veterans, stumbled on the further discovery that the procedure can conjure up an image in the patient's mind of the key person in his mental flashbacks - perhaps a buddy he was not able to rescue, or someone he killed in battle - who he can then engage with and receive a kind of closure. Botkin calls this Induced After-Death Communication (IADC) and uses it in therapy, apparently with considerable success.

Volk's own experience was convincing: it induced interactions with two deceased family members. But he is concerned about the name, which he points out may bring opposition, not least from fellow practitioners of EMDR already struggling to gain acceptance for what seems like a fringe idea. This might be a good instance of the value of the 'middle path' - to acknowledge the practical efficacy of a technique which transcends the boundaries of known science, but without insisting on its paranormality.

In other respects, I found myself constantly reflecting on the real meaning of this middle path. It's one thing to be open-minded and avoid being dogmatic. Readers will respond to these things in different ways and those of us who try to engage their interest have to defer to their sensitivities. But a path is not a destination, and detachment should not be seen as a virtue in itself, especially if it encourages the avoidance of any long-term commitment. If humans are biologically uniform - which I believe is a given - there's no sense in which, for example, it is both possible for certain gifted individuals to bend spoons by mental effort, and simultaneously impossible for anyone to do so; or in which it is both possible to remain conscious after the death of the body and to lose consciousness instantly and for ever. Unless we are going to argue that such things are themselves subject to a dual status, like Schroedinger's cat - and I don't think it's come to that yet.

In fact the middle path is a construct, a fudge that we create for practical and sensible reasons. It's a safe place where we can be comfortable, a tree house where we can observe the jungle around us without exposing ourselves to danger. In that sense, a book like *Fringe-ology* is an artifice, that draws readers deep into the unknown while providing constant reassurance - as indeed are many books about the paranormal, mine included. Involved as I am myself in this authoring business, and knowing how difficult it is, I can only admire Volk's extraordinary skill in pulling it off so well.

Robert McLuhan is author of *Randi's Prize: What skeptics say about the paranormal, why they are wrong and why it matters*. He blogs at www.paranormalia.com.

Whither Our Results Wither? A Commentary on the Decline Effect

- by Bryan Williams, University of New Mexico

In her article "Can Parapsychology Explain the Decline Effect?" (Summer 2011 issue of *The Rhine Online*, pp. 12 – 16), Jennifer Moore summarized and discussed several of the main points raised by Jonah Lehrer (2010) in an article from *The New Yorker*, which focused on an important issue currently arising within mainstream science: indications of an apparent decline in the magnitude of several experimental effects with time. As one example, Lehrer (2010, pp. 54 – 55) cites the findings of Danish zoologist Anders Møller and Australian biologist Michael Jennions. About a decade ago, Jennions and Møller (2002) published an analysis that examined the general patterns of several effects that had been reported in ecology and evolutionary biology journals up until the end of the year 2000. Their analysis indicated a significant decrease in the magnitude of these effects with the passage of time, a finding that had odds of about 249 to 1 against chance. As stated in the title of Jennions and Møller's article, this seems to suggest that the magnitude of some relationships may weaken or "fade with time."

And as Lehrer (2010, pp. 53 – 54) pointed out elsewhere in his article, a similar kind of decline has been observed in parapsychological experiments since the 1930s, when J. B. Rhine (1934, pp. 165 – 169) noticed that the scores attained by some of the people participating in his famed ESP card tests began to notably decrease over time. In addition, declines in scoring were found in the early tests for psychokinesis (PK, or "mind over matter") conducted by Rhine and his colleagues, in which participants attempted to mentally influence the roll of dice (e.g., Reeves & Rhine, 1943; Rhine & Rhine, 1943). The early and fairly common appearance of decline effects in the ESP and PK test data led Rhine to suspect that they may be a characteristic of psi manifesting within a test situation.

Analyses reported in the last decade by Dick Bierman (2001) of Utrecht University have revealed that, in the years since Rhine's work, decline effects continue to permeate experiments in several areas of parapsychology. As an illustrative case in point, I will take here the example of experiments on telepathy using the ganzfeld technique.

In a ganzfeld experiment, two volunteers – one acting as the "sender" and the other acting as the "receiver" – are each placed in separate, sound-proofed rooms. In one room, the receiver sits in a comfortable chair and is placed into a state of mild sensory reduction known as the *ganzfeld* state. This is done by covering the receiver's eyes with translucent eye shields (usually made of halved ping-pong balls, which are illuminated by a red light) and filling the receiver's ears with soft static noise (similar to that heard between radio stations) played through headphones. It is thought that by reducing the amount of ordinary sensory information coming in through the eyes and ears, there may be a greater chance for *extrasensory* information to seep into the receiver's conscious awareness through ESP.

While in this ganzfeld state, the receiver is asked to describe any images, sounds, or impressions that freely come to mind. At the same moment, the sender watches a randomly chosen video clip several times on a monitor screen in the other room. After about half an hour, the receiver is taken out of the ganzfeld state and shown a collection of four video clips, one of which was the target that the sender was watching. The receiver is then asked to rate each clip according how well it seemed to correspond to the images, sounds, and impressions that were received in the ganzfeld. If the video that the sender was watching is rated as having the highest degree of correspondence, then the experiment is considered a success (or a "hit"). With the probability of success being 1 in 4, the hit rate expected by chance is 25%.

The hit rates obtained in 92 ganzfeld ESP experiments carried out from 1974 (when the first experiment was reported) up to 2008 are shown in Figure 1. The downward slope of the black line indicates that, over the course of this 34-year period, there is a gradual trend of decline in the hit rate toward the chance expected value (red horizontal line).

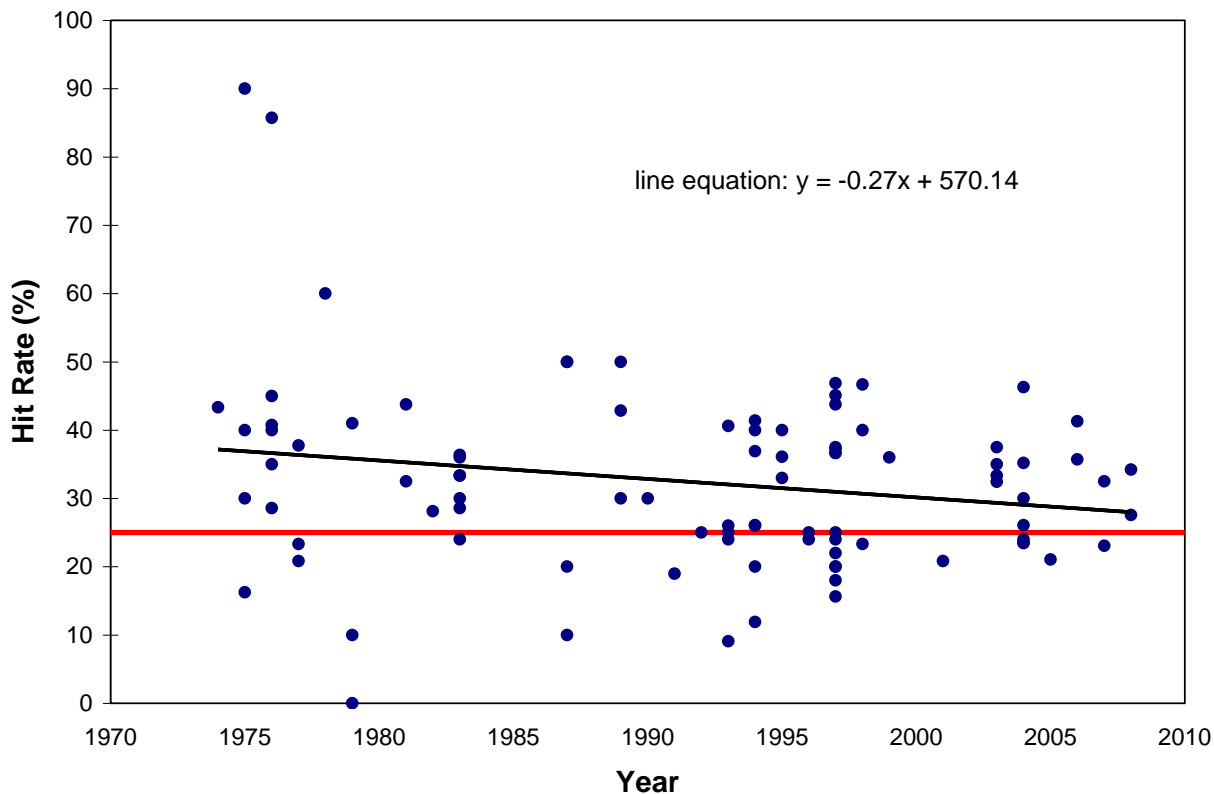


Figure 1. Decline effect in the hit rate across 92 ganzfeld ESP experiments from 1974 to 2008. Each dot represents an individual experiment, and the slope of the black line shows the pattern of decline over time. The red horizontal line at 25% indicates the chance expected hit rate.

Over the years, there have been some skeptics and critics who have viewed the decline effect, and the challenges of experimental replication that are often associated with it, as a probable indicator that there is something inherently problematic about the outcomes of psi experiments (e.g., Hyman, 2008, p. 43). Such a view has likely been influenced in part by the long-held assumption that decline effects are uniquely limited to parapsychology. Of course, an important lesson that a reader could take away from Lehrer’s article is the realization that decline effects are likely to be distributed rather broadly across mainstream science, and that what has long been seen as a “problem” for parapsychology may actually be a commonly shared “problem” for mainstream fields, as well. If that is indeed the case, then it can be argued that parapsychology should not be singled out by skeptics and critics with regard to this effect.

There is another important lesson that could emerge from the revelation of decline effects in mainstream findings. Although it is not yet clear what is causing such declines, psychologist Jonathan Schooler (who was mentioned by both Lehrer and Jennifer Moore in their respective articles) suggests that one contributing factor could be the shrouded existence of unpublished experiments, some of which may show only chance results (Schooler, 2011). Often times it can be difficult to get chance results published in the mainstream literature, and for that reason, some may linger for a prolonged period in the researcher’s file-drawer. Some skeptics and critics have argued that a similar kind of “file-drawer” effect exists in parapsychology for a different reason; namely, that parapsychologists are trying to suppress the availability of chance results that could potentially count against the positive evidence for psi. In addition, some have argued that such a file-drawer effect can potentially inflate the outcomes for experiments like the ganzfeld, making them appear more successful than they really are (Delgado-Romero & Howard, 2005). But as Dean Radin (2007) of the Institute of Noetic Sciences pointed out, such arguments for a file-drawer effect in parapsychology are mitigated by the fact that the Parapsychological Association has maintained a policy against the reporting of only positive results since 1975, and the fact that because the number of active researchers in parapsychology is so small (compared, say, to the number of researchers in cognitive psychology, which is easily in the thousands), it has been possible to virtually identify every researcher who has conducted a ganzfeld experiment, and thus rather closely gauge the size of the file-drawer, at least with regard to this particular type of psi experiment. Statistical estimates of the number of unpublished experiments needed to cancel out the significance of the ganzfeld database are typically much larger than would be possible for such a small community of parapsychologists to produce (Radin, 2006, p. 121). In a field such as cognitive psychology, however, convenient ways to gauge the file-drawer are not possible given the much

larger community, and one can imagine, with so many researchers involved, how large any potential file-drawer might be within that community. If such thoughts do happen to amount to more than just imagination, then for large mainstream fields like cognitive psychology, this may also mean that, as Jennifer Moore states in her article, "... the decline effect is likely to be much more prevalent than published studies demonstrate" (p. 15). The point here is that, if Schooler is correct, then file-drawer effects could also be a critical issue in several mainstream fields, and could be much more of a concern with regard to the stability of certain findings within those fields. Again, one might argue on this basis that parapsychology should not be singled out by skeptics and critics with regard to this particular effect.

To help gain better insight on the extent of unpublished experiments within mainstream fields, Schooler (2011) suggests that researchers should work toward establishing an open-access experimental registry and results repository within their respective field, which would make it possible to keep basic track of any potential developing file-drawers and the status of replications, as well as allow one to see how unpublished experiments weigh up against published ones. This would naturally be a good effort for parapsychologists to invest themselves in as a way to better address issues concerning replicability and file-drawer effects that may be raised by skeptics and critics, and it is encouraging that there has been at least a preliminary effort to do so with regard to the experiments on precognition that Cornell University psychologist Daryl Bem (2011) has recently published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Returning to the central matter of the decline effect, it may be necessary to consider the possibility that some of the declines seen in experimental databases within parapsychology may actually be part of a larger overall trend in the data. Preliminary evidence for this possibility was initially offered by Dick Bierman (2001) when he found indications of a possible incline or "recovery" effect in three experimental databases: the ganzfeld ESP experiments, the PK experiments with dice, and PK experiments in which participants attempted to mentally influence the output of electronic random event generators. Researchers Lance Storm, Patrizio Tressoldi, and Lorenzo Di Risio (2010) have recently reproduced and updated this finding for the ganzfeld database in a recent meta-analysis of ESP experiments that they published in the mainstream journal *Psychological Bulletin*. An illustrative example of the kind of trend found by Bierman and Storm et al. can be seen in Figure 2.

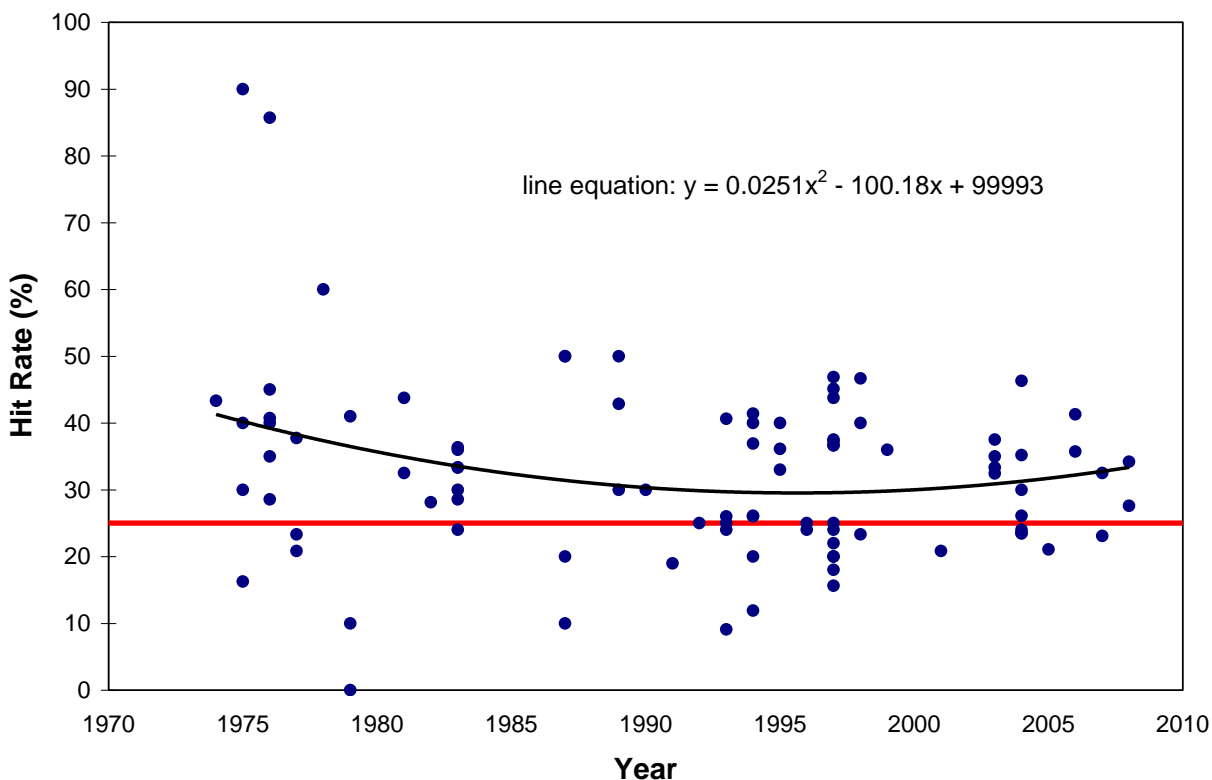


Figure 2. Illustrative example of a possible incline or "recovery" effect in the hit rate for the 92 ganzfeld ESP experiments shown in Figure 1. The black curve shows that the hit rate initially declines, then is followed by an apparent reversal of direction and a modest increase or "recovery" at the end. This example is similar to the kind of trend found by Bierman (2001) and Storm et al. (2010).

Over time, the trend in the hit rate takes a form akin to a flattened U-shape, first showing an initial decline, then reversing direction and curving slightly upward into an incline toward the end, suggesting a kind of “rebound” or “recovery” in the hit rate as it slightly increases again.

One might note that the trend is somewhat reminiscent of similar U-shaped curves that have been previously observed in early studies in both psychology and parapsychology. For instance, in studies of memory, it has been found that when people are asked to recall a long list of words that they have been asked to memorize, they are often able to recall words located at the beginning and at the end of the list fairly easily. In contrast, they may have difficulty in trying to recall the words in the middle. When their recall performance is plotted on a graph, the resulting trend is often in the form of a U-shaped curve, as illustrated in Figure 3. This finding is known as the serial position effect (Ellis & Hunt, 1989, pp. 73 – 74; Thompson, 1994).

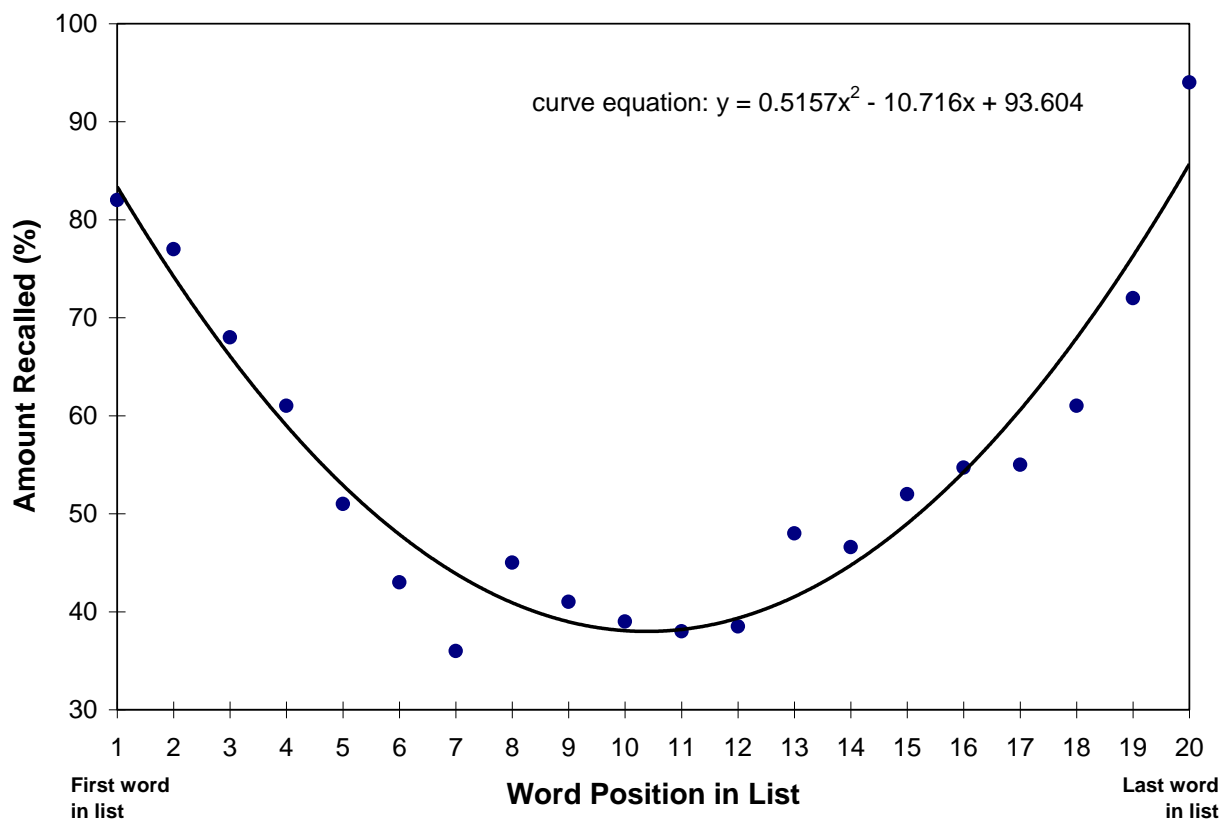


Figure 3. Illustrative example of the serial position effect in memory. When people attempt to recall a list of words, they are more likely to recall the words at the beginning, and at the end, of the list than the words in the middle.

J. B. Rhine (1969) found a pattern similar to the serial position effect in the results of his ESP card tests, noting that participants showed a tendency to score well at the beginning of the test, which was followed by a decline effect as the test progressed. Near the end of the test, their scores would sometimes “rebound,” displaying an incline effect. As with the serial position effect, this would tend to give the graph of their test performance a U-shaped curve.

A similar U-shaped trend was found in the early PK experiments using dice (e.g., Pratt, 1949, p. 15; Reeves & Rhine, 1943, p. 87), and again many years later in the results of the extensive series of PK experiments carried out at Princeton University by the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research group, using random event generators (Dunne et al., 1994). This suggests that the same kind of pattern may apply to PK, as well.

Rhine (1953) certainly recognized the apparent similarity displayed in the U-shaped graphical trends of the serial position effect and his psi test scores. While noting that the two are not directly relatable to each other, he did comment that “[t]hese salience effects ... in psychological sequences, in which the ends of the [test] run stand out, are much the same as in the psi tests. One finds there the same general tendency to declines. They suggest at least that some common principles are involved” (p. 122).

J. Gaither Pratt, Rhine’s research assistant and the Assistant Director of the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory, had also noticed the similarity between the serial position effect and the patterns in the ESP and PK test data. In commenting on it, he cited a relatable analogy:

This organizing tendency [reflected in the U-shaped pattern of the test data] is easily illustrated from everyday life situations. For example, the salience of the beginning and the end of the PK record column [i.e., the decline effect at the beginning and the incline effect at the end] has been compared to the gardener's experience in hoeing rows of vegetables. A new row is begun with marked zest and with other evidences of strong motivation. Subjectively, progress seems rapid at the start, and the feeling of satisfaction is strong. If the rows are long, however, the sense of accomplishment fades in the workman as he approaches the middle. His interest lags. But as he gets nearer the end of the row, his motivation again becomes stronger. Effort increases, and there is a return of the feeling of satisfaction which he had at the beginning.

The same general pattern of response might be illustrated by our experience in memorizing a poem or in listening repeatedly to a musical selection. We tend to learn first those items that come at the beginning, and next in order, we become familiar with the closing words or notes.

When we find this fundamental characteristic of normal behavior in ESP and PK data, we have ample reason for inferring that we are dealing here with established psychological principles showing themselves in only less familiar forms (Pratt, 1949, p. 14).

It remains unclear as to whether or not the trend seen in the serial position effect and the trends in the psi test data really do share some common principles. Perhaps the most that can be said for now is that it is quite interesting that the two phenomena involved – one commonly considered “ordinary” (memory) and the other often considered “extraordinary” (psi) – seem to behave so similarly. At least in this respect, the finding offers the hint that psi may not be so different from other “ordinary” forms of behavior, such as cognition and sense perception. As Pratt (1949) had put it: “On the ground of the position effects alone, then, even if there were no other supporting evidence, we should be led to the conclusion that ESP and PK are normal psychological processes” (p. 16).

For the most part, the factors that lead to decline effects also remain unclear at the present time. Some skeptics and critics have argued that they are due to improvements in experimental control over time, such that as the quality of the controls improve, the hit rate in psi tests diminishes. This implies that the success in psi experiments is largely due to flaws in the experiment. This argument does not stand up very well, however, in light of the fact that decline effects existed both before and after many controls were added. As Storm, Tressoldi, and Di Risio (2010, p. 478) point out, this can be seen in the case of the ganzfeld experiments. In the mid-1980s, psychologist Ray Hyman and the late parapsychologist Charles Honorton (1986) had jointly proposed a set of recommendations for improving ganzfeld experiments, which included recommendations on improving controls. Declines in the hit rate were found both before and after many psi researchers began applying these recommendations to their experiments.

One possible factor could be the gradual shift in research focus that has occurred in parapsychology over time. Early on, the focus of many parapsychologists was to gather experimental evidence for the existence of psi. Later on, when the accumulated evidence began to produce a considerable case for psi, some parapsychologists began shifting their sights toward the question of how psi works. In order to examine that question, it was necessary for them to purposely modify their experiments from the initial design they used in the early evidence-gathering phase so that they could see if psi got better (or worse) under different types of conditions. This meant that, in doing such modifications, they faced the risk of getting smaller hit rates, or even chance results, much more often. In an analysis of the ganzfeld database that they had reported a decade ago, researchers Daryl Bem, John Palmer, and Richard Broughton (2001) found evidence to indicate that this is what indeed happens. Specifically, they found that experiments which stuck close to the initial ganzfeld design had positive hit rates that were statistically significant, whereas experiments that had purposely been modified away from the initial design produced hit rates close to the expected chance hit rate of 25%.

This suggests that the decline effect could be due to drops in hit rate that result from the increased number of modified experiments that are performed as more parapsychologists shift their research focus towards the question of how psi works. Researchers in mainstream fields often take the same course of action when they are attempting to learn more about the processes underlying the specific phenomenon they are studying, so it is at least plausible that this factor could apply to the declines seen in mainstream experiments, as well.

Other possible factors for consideration within parapsychology include long-term correlations with geophysical factors (such as geomagnetism) and the effects that researchers may consciously or unconsciously have on the outcomes of their experiments (the experimenter effect). In addition, if the decline effect is indeed a part of a much larger overall trend, as indicated by the flattened U-shaped curve seen in Figure 2, then it might be part of some sort of long-term behavioral fluctuation that occurs with time. Such a possibility would be in line with the suggestions that Jennifer Moore made in her article (p. 13) about how organisms, including humans, naturally change over time. Of course, it will take a lot more data, and a lot more time, to see if any of these factors do somehow play a role in the development of the decline effect.

Whither our results wither? For now, it seems, only time (and additional research) will tell.

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UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE RHINE, April and May, 2012

Friday, April 20th - 7:30 PM, Stedman Auditorium
Lessons from the Lab: Energy Healing Experiments on Cancer with **William F. Bengston, Ph.D.**

His research has documented the first successful full cures of transplanted mammary cancer and methylcholanthrene induced sarcomas in experimental mice by laying-on-of-hands techniques that he helped to develop. He has also investigated assorted correlates to healing such as geomagnetic micropulsations and EEG harmonics and entrainment.



William F. Bengston

Friday, May 4th - 7:30 PM, Stedman Auditorium
Modern Mediumship and Messages from Beyond With **Ron Pappalardo**



Ron Pappalardo

When his 17-year-old son, Joshua, committed suicide, Ron Pappalardo wanted to know what had become of his son in the afterlife. Through some gifted psychics and mediums, Joshua made contact in the form of detailed letters describing what happened to him and others when they made the transition to the other side, the people he met in the spirit world, and what life is like for those who inhabit these realms. In his talk, Ron will share his son's story, the revelations that came to him through the letters, and the spiritual adventure that he has had as a result.

Saturday, May 5th

Workshop: An Introduction into Modern Spiritualism and Mediumship Techniques with Ron Pappalardo

This workshop gives a more in-depth explanation of mediumship, its history, philosophy, and scientific experimentation surrounding Modern Spiritualism, and offers an explanation of how mediumship takes place.

Friday, May 18th - 7:30 PM, Stedman Auditorium
Energy Medicine: The Future of Health, with **Dr. Norman Shealy M.D., Ph.D.**

According to Dr. Norm Shealy, author of over 28 books, Energy Medicine is the future of health. Dr. Shealy will discuss his newest book, Energy Medicine, Practical Applications and Scientific Proof, and offer methods for health, longevity and pain free living, incorporating tools, methods and therapies in holistic and alternative healthcare ranging from Chinese, Auruvedic , homeopathic, and energy medicines, as well as nutrition and exercise.



C. Norman Shealy

Saturday May 19th - 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Alex Tanous Library, Rhine Research Center
Workshop: Energy Medicine: The Future of Health with Dr. Norm Shealy, M.D., Ph.D.

"Having worked with over 30,000 patients who have failed conventional medicine, I have helped 85% of them return to a comfortable and functional life. My experience in helping those with chronic pain and depression will be the focus of this workshop, emphasizing the energy tools and personal protocols that have been most effective." - Norm Shealy

(a sneak peak at June!):

Friday June 1 – 7:30, Stedman Auditorium

Jim Carpenter will be introducing his new book, *First Sight: ESP and Parapsychology in Everyday Life*

Friday June 29 and Saturday June 30, **A Tribute to Bill Roll**

Wise Words from our Recent Speakers

“When you encounter difficulties, look for what they are here to show you or for what you have to learn from them. Nothing is random, everything has a purpose. They are here either for a learning or for a purging of karma, in either case it is of benefit to you.”

- Josianne d'Hoop

"Healing is the process of working through the issues that separate our superficial self from our true Self."

- Tom Spector

(from *Our Two Gardens: How to Cultivate Healing*) <http://www.hathahouse.com>

"The wisdom of Mayan traditions doesn't come from far-off stars, nor from ancient esoteric understandings; the brilliance of Mayan ways comes from the earth itself and over one hundred generations of practical experience."

- Robert Sitler

<http://robertsitler.com>

“Through anecdote, reconstruction and detailed editing my video works and installations consider the world of the paranormal, the tradition of psychical research, the supersensory and ideas about perceptual phenomenon. I am interested in that which is on the periphery of the mainstream and which falls beyond conventional fields of science and psychology.”

- Susan MacWilliam

www.susanmacwilliam.com

"We have many latent abilities and skills ready to be awakened at the right time. When that time comes, dreams announce new opportunities for our development and expression. These include: leadership, teaching, writing, starting a new venture, and undertaking a new area of study. The inner being is calling, pushing, and directing the dreamer to grow. All dreamers are capable of attaining anything they have *dreamed of or visioned.*"

-- Jerry Lazarus

(from *Dreams: Listening to the Voice of God*) www.jerrylazarus.com