



AASC NEWSLETTER

Association for the Anthropological Study of Consciousness

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CRISIS INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES FOR SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES: WESTERN AND NON-WESTERN APPROACHES

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When I originally began working on this paper I had expected to go to the literature and read about how other cultures responded therapeutically to individuals having spontaneous psi experiences. What I discovered was that there was nothing written about this topic, just as there is almost nothing written in our culture, as well. What I did find were general therapeutic approaches to individuals in distress. This paper consists of those approaches that lent themselves to psi-type explanations, seemed helpful to the types of emotional and social responses that resulted, and could be applied in a crisis intervention setting or very short term counseling setting.

A few parapsychologists with clinical backgrounds have addressed the psychological component of psi (see Ehrenwald (1978), Eisenbud (1970), Ullman and Krippner (1973), and Schwartz (1965)). Usually, however, these accounts describe psi experiences occurring between therapist and client, or long-term deeply involved cases where psi is intermingled with neurotic or psychotic disorders. Arthur Hastings (1983) has published the one piece on the

immediate, short-term counseling of individuals after they have had a perceived psi experience.

Individuals having psychic experiences often find themselves in a circumstance which suddenly challenges their very deeply held psychological and spiritual beliefs. This results, needless to say, in great distress and requires an immediate effective response.

Over the past few years I have noticed that the majority of people who seek help as a result of a perceived psi experience have reacted in one or a combination of the following six ways to their psi experience: (1) The fear of personally being hurt; (2) The fear of going crazy; (3) The sense of responsibility or fear of someone else being hurt and hence, feeling responsible; (4) The fear of losing control; (5) Feeling divine or specially gifted; or (6) Wanting to develop their abilities. These responses can often be very deep and complex, causing a re-examination or shattering of previously held foundations of self, reality, and spiritual truths.

Many factors must be taken into account in determining what approach or combination of approaches should be taken. Some similarities can be found between Western and non-Western therapeutic approaches, but Metzner (1984) feels the underlying philosophical differences result in different outcomes. He believes therapeutic systems in non-Western societies offer as their goal or purpose sacred knowledge, alignment with nature's laws, and/or enlightenment. The therapeutic systems available in Western society offer the psychosocial adjustment of the individual. The most effective system would seem to be a combination of their two approaches.

The first step is to make a rapid, yet accurate assessment of the individual's personal psychological and social make-up as it relates to their psi experience. The biggest help in grasping what the individual's needs are is by hearing how they label or interpret their experience. This gives a strong reflection of their own personal psychology and the cultural values surrounding such occurrences. For instance, someone reporting simple telepathy with their partner might have concerns about being crazy. Another individual might fear or feel being intruded upon. Each of these responses reflects something

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very different about each individual and say something about the culture they are from. For example, the individual who has concerns about being crazy is telling you that they consider their experience very unusual, unhealthy, uncontrollable, and unpleasant. They are also relating that socially there is something about them now that is unacceptable and sets them apart as an outcast in society. The individual feeling intruded upon is sharing deep seated concerns about personal power, self-worth, personal boundaries, and the level of control they have in their lives. Additionally, this concern may reflect culturally held beliefs that there are those who have more power than others and that knowing someone's true thoughts will reveal weak or flawed spots in a person's character, rendering them vulnerable to social rejection or judgment and possibly harm or death.

The individual "label" provides a map to follow in knowing what emotional and social aspects need direct attention. These situations, as in most, would require a response to the individual psychological needs as well as societal support. Socially, a support system is essential. So often, the individual experiences a strong sense of alienation from their society, or at times, feels as if society had turned against them.

The perceived or actual isolation and alienation that can occur as a result of psi experience can result in a sense of frustration of primary emotional and spiritual needs. This distortion of meaningful relationships intermingled with the threat of harm, undue responsibility, and loss of control causes very strong anxiety. The combination of prolonged emotional stress, social isolation, and sometimes interference with sleep, financial needs and health can lead the person to heightened suggestibility (Halifax-Grof 1974). This can result in an escalation of anxiety and perception of more psi events occurring. This type of response can occur even if the community views psi experiences as a special, unusual gift. Whether they are scorned or revered makes no difference in the degree of alienation that can be felt.

Both Western and non-Western societies have built-in systems to address feelings of social isolation. In Western society support groups are a very common and highly effective technique. While we have support groups for many situations, unfortunately support groups for psi experiences are rare. However, whenever possible, individuals having experiences and feeling isolated in any way should be strongly encouraged to find others who accept and are comfortable with psi reality. Groups such as local metaphysical groups, Unitarian churches and the Spiritual Frontier Fellowship are very good referrals. In other cultures there is often a spiritistic religious community, or respected wise person -- such as a shaman or priestess that this person goes to.

What often occurs when unusual experiences take place is that the individual will seek out someone or a social system that they feel is more powerful than the "forces" causing the effects. Again, in

non-Western cultures this might be a shaman, priest, witch, or religious group. In our society it tends to be scientists, governmental bodies, psychics, and/or religious organizations. Therapists need somehow to have that person feel that they are not working on this alone, that your support and that of others is indeed strong enough, and that they will be protected enough while the "healing" takes place (if protection is an issue). They also need to believe on a very deep level that whatever you are recommending can work.

Deep seated belief may come from what Ehrenwald (1978:544) describes as a

combination of three interlacing and mutually reinforcing factors: a) [the client's] faith in the efficacy of [the therapist's/healer's] ministrations; b) the client's corresponding trust in the therapist/healer and his hope to be cured; and c) the client's/patient's friends and relations as participant observers, sharing both the anguish and hopes.

Torrey (1973) also feels that a shared world-view and the practitioner's personal characteristics are essential aspects to effective healing.

An attunement to the client's cultural belief system is very helpful, if not essential, as well. To respond to someone outside of their deep sub-conscious belief system will often prove ineffective. Halifax-Grof (1974) feels that responding in a culturally consistent way is essential. In her work on hex death, she found that an effective remedy must be specific and culturally appropriate. She cites the fact that experienced Western clinicians and medical doctors often fail to prevent the consummation of a hex and save lives. This contrasts sharply with the therapeutic success of indigenous healers to remove a curse put on an individual. She feels their success is due to their understanding of the complexity of the situation.

Freeman (1984) offers another reason why working with the individual's cultural beliefs is so important. He believes that the client must not feel too rejected, unacceptable, or beyond the help of their own community. These negative feelings, along with fear of being seen as excessively demanding and dogmatic will most likely outweigh any positive expectations and the therapeutic value will be lost. Outside support from someone in the client's own cultural community can help the client feel a sense of connection. Freeman (1984) found that if a patient finds a non-medical source of help on their own it greatly increases their chances for successful recovery. Outside sources of support that proved most valuable to Freeman's clients were

individuals with a sensitivity to the . . . culture from which the patient came, appeared to be more accepting of the patient's dilemma and provided comfort and familiarity with the new culture. [These helpers] placed the cultural conflict or dissonance in a larger, more acceptable context where the patient could feel

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FROM THE EDITOR . . .

Once again the *AASC* has had another stunning annual conference due to the superb organization of conference chair and coordinator Cynthia Siegel. This year Cynthia assembled a wide range of both scholarly papers and experiential sessions which provided a participatory counterpart to the ideas and research discussed in the papers. Special thanks are offered to the following experiential workshop leaders.

The first evening was devoted to Sufi dancing led by members of the Center for the Dances of Universal Peace. Board member Leslie Conton provided a shamanic drumming experience the second evening which introduced conference goers to shamanic dancing and journeys. Friday afternoon, board members Matthew Bronson and Dan Hawkmoon Alford facilitated the experience of intuitive speaking, a topic which they have in past meetings only approached through scholarly papers. That evening was probably the most startling to the conference attendees who went to Katherine Wersen's Tibetan bell concert. Most of us were expecting an exotic musical experience but instead learned the powerful effects of such bells for altering consciousness. Ms. Wersen provided a similar experience the next afternoon with Peruvian whistles. Saturday evening Lester Jake, a shaman of the Yurok Nation performed a Native American healing ceremony around a campfire. Many of us were powerfully affected by these experiential sessions and were drawn together into the closeness which the *AASC* conference creates among the attendees. There are few conferences which are either as fun or as transformative. For more details of the conference see "Pinnacles of Power" in this issue.

This issue is devoted to comparative cross-cultural issues concerning psi phenomena. The first paper given by Cynthia Siegel at last year's *AASC* conference explores Western and non-Western healing strategies for dealing with spontaneous psi experiences. She deals with the important issue of how therapists are beginning to develop therapies for helping people whose lives are turned upside down by such experience and compares these therapies to those employed by shamans and other non-Western healers. The second paper read by George Sniegowski at this year's conference similarly discusses Western and non-Western approaches to the poltergeist, a particularly disturbing form of psi phenomena.

AASC NEWS

AASC Annual Business Meeting

The *AASC* Board of Directors held its annual business meeting at the March annual conference at Pacific Palisades, California. A new board of directors and society officers were elected at the meeting. The new officers are as follows: President: Jeffery L. MacDonald (New School for Social Research), President-elect: Geri-Ann Galanti (University of California Consortium), Secretary: Dan Hawkmoon Alford (California Institute of Integral Studies),

Treasurer: Cynthia Siegel (John F. Kennedy University). The new board of directors is as follows: Dan Hawkmoon Alford (California Institute of Integral Studies), Matthew Bronson (California Institute of Integral Studies), Leslie Conton (Fairhaven College, Western Washington University), Sharon Franquemont (John F. Kennedy University), Geri-Ann Galanti (University of California Consortium), Sidney Greenfield (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), Ruth-Inge Heinze (University of California, Berkeley), Jack A. Kapchan (University of Miami), Joseph K. Long (Plymouth State College of New Hampshire), Jeffery L. MacDonald (New School for Social Research), Kay Rawlings (San Francisco), Cynthia Siegel (John F. Kennedy University), Michael Winkelman (Cross Cultural Consultants, Irvine, CA).

The directors also appointed Cynthia Siegel and Michael Winkelman as program co-chairpersons and C.J. Stuart as conference coordinator for next year's *AASC* conference. Dan Alford will take care of next year's conference publicity. Preliminary details of the conference and a call for papers will appear in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.

AASC Membership Fees

The board voted to increase annual *AASC* membership dues by five dollars for regular members, students, and institutions. The new fee schedule is \$25 for regular members, \$20 for students, and \$35 for institutions. The additional charge for overseas airmail has been increased from \$4 to \$5. The additional charge for a spouse remains the same at \$5. The new charges are to cover increased postage charges and production costs for the *Newsletter*. The new charges will begin on June 1, 1988. All subscriptions and renewals received before this date will be accepted at the old rates. So **RENEW TODAY!**

BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

The Indian Peoples of America Series

The *Indian Peoples of America* series from E.J. Brill focuses on American Indian shamanism, religion, and spirituality. Reviews are solicited of the following books to be published together in a future issue of the *AASC Newsletter*.

Shamanism and Art of the Eastern Tukanoan Indians by G. Reichel-Dolmatoff
Elements of Southeastern Indian Religion by C. Hudson
Prairie and Plains Indians by A. Hultkrantz
Songs of Life: An Introduction to Navajo Religious Culture by S. Gill
Pueblo Cultures by B. Wright
Hopi Indian Altar Iconography by A. Geertz
Indians of Northeastern North America by C. Feest

Readers interested in reviewing these books or other books relevant to areas of interest of the *AASC* should contact Book Review Editor **Michael Winkelman** at AASC, P.O. Box 4032, Irvine, CA 92716-4032.

CONFERENCES

The Fayetteville Chapter of the American Society of Dowsers will sponsor a **Mid-South Dowsing Conference and School** on the campus of the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville on April 20 through 24, 1988. Lodging and meals will be provided by the University for an additional fee. For information contact **Harold McCoy**, Rt. 7, Box 270, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

Helping Heal the Whole Person and the Whole World, a global conference sponsored by the John E. Fetzer Foundation, will be held June 23-25, 1988, at the Kalamazoo Center Hilton Inn in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The conference will focus on planetary health issues and the intrinsic relation between personal and global well-being. Among the speakers will be Sen. Claibourne Pell, Norman Cousins, Dr. Robert Becker, Dr. Bernie Siegel, Madam Jehan Sadat, Laurance Rockefeller, and John E. Fetzer. For information contact **Dr. Michael A. Morton**, John E. Fetzer Foundation, 9292 West KL Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49009, (616) 375-2000.

The International Conference on Paranormal Research will be held July 7-10, 1988 at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. Colorado State is co-sponsoring the conference with the Rocky Mountain Research Institute and the Association for Past Life Research and Therapy. Among the topics to be covered are reincarnation, near-death experiences, aliens, non-traditional healing, and predictions of the future. For information contact **Dr. M.L. Albertson**, Room 203 Weber Building, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, (303) 491-5753.

The Fifth International Conference on the Study of Shamanism and Alternate Modes of Healing will be held at St. Sabina Center, San Rafael, California, September 3-5, 1988. Cost is \$110 for registration, two nights accommodations, and all meals or \$75 just for registration and all meals. Enrollment is limited. For information or to register send a check to **Dr. Ruth-Inge Heinze**, 2321 Russell, #3A, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 849-3791. The published *Proceedings* of the previous four conferences are available. The 1984, 1985, and 1986 *Proceedings* are \$20 each while the 1987 *Proceedings* is \$25. Please add \$1 for postage for each book ordered. Send a check for the correct amount to **Dr. Heinze** at the same address.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The **Parapsychological Association** will hold its 31st Annual Convention, August 17-21, 1988 at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal, Canada. Deadline for submission of previously unpublished papers on empirical, theoretical, or methodological topics is April 15, 1988. Papers must be accompanied by a 300 word abstract and sent to program chairman **Dr. Rick Berger**, Science Unlimited Research Foundation, 31-D Spencer Lane, San Antonio, TX 78201. For information on attending the conference contact **Fannie Knipe**, American Society for Psychical

Research, 5 West 73rd Street, New York, NY 10023

WORKSHOPS

Sound as Healer, Sound as Transformer, a women's and men's training co-workshop, will be facilitated by Katherine Wersen and Keith Thomson, April 21-24, 1988, at Motel Spa, Desert Hot Springs, California. The women's group will focus on feminine intuitive energy with Wersen demonstrating the use of Tibetan bells and bowls. The men's group will focus on masculine assertive energy with Thompson and a shaman using drums/rhythm. Men's and women's groups wnge facilitators. For more information contact **Katherine Wersen**, 66436 12th St. #A, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240.

The **Fairhaven Mysteries Project** is an experiment in education dedicated to exploring a variety of wisdom traditions from cultures around the world. Weekend workshops with internationally and locally known teachers explore the ancient rituals of shamanism, the mystical practices of contemporary religions, and the modern quest of the scientist, scholar, therapist, and artist. Upcoming workshops will feature John Steele, Michael Harner, and Deborah Hay. For information contact **Dr. Leslie Conton**, The Fairhaven Mysteries Project, P.O. Box 4345, Fairhaven Station, Bellingham, WA 98227, (206) 671-4561.

Two workshops organized by Ruth-Inge Heinze will be offered in Berkeley, California. The first by **Dr. Belford do Nascimento** will be "Trance Dance," June 3-4, 1988. The second "Trance and Posture," will be given June 17-19, 1988, by **Felicita Goodman**. Cost for each workshop is \$120 general or \$60 student/senior (this does not include meals and accommodation). Enrollment is limited. For information or to register send a check to **Dr. Heinze**, 2321 Russell, #3A, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 849-3791.

PUBLICATIONS

The *Fortean Times* is a British publication established "in 1973 to continue the work of American iconoclastic philosopher Charles Fort (1874-1932), collecting and circulating current accounts of strange phenomena and experiences in an informal but factual manner, spiced with a droll sense of humour." Issues contain 70-80 pages each and are published quarterly. Joint editors are Bob Rickard and Paul Sieveking. For information contact *Fortean Times*, 96 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX, England.

Foundations of Integral Linguistics by Dan Hawkmoon Alford contains chapters by Alford and Matthew Bronson on Benjamin Whorf, telepathy, clairparance, relativity, Brazilian spiritist healers, illness and dispossession, and a complete collection of *Not Just Words* newsletter. To order, send \$15 (postpaid) to **Dan Hawkmoon Alford**, 31318 Carroll Avenue, Hayward, CA 94544.

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PINNACLES OF POWER: PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE 1988 AASC CONFERENCE

by **Dan Hawkmoon Alford**, Urban Shaman—Linguist, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California

For you readers who shared early March with me in Pacific Palisades, I hope to reflect back to you here even the palest reflection of the profound power, healing and other experiences of those five days, letting you fill in all the emotional colors with your own memories. And for the rest of my readers, both your task and mine is more difficult here as I try to create for you, out of mere words and their suggestions, a subjective picture of this complex and highly satisfying interdisciplinary gathering that to me, after nine years of meeting with key individuals and even having an organization die right under us, has become a second family as we join together once a year to share what we've experienced and how we've grown since last we hugged.

Most of all for me, the yearly gathering of the *Association for the Anthropological Study of Consciousness* is the ideal audience for any consciousness researcher. I have been writing and lecturing about language and consciousness topics ever since 1979, when Joe Long made me aware that an audience actually existed that wanted to hear my thoughts after four years on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation; I was a graduate student and U.C. Berkeley at the time, and so therefore not used to finding educated people who wanted to talk about consciousness issues. Because of my experiences with the Human Beings, I found myself an unwitting maverick in higher education, in a place where the only professor who dared to use the word consciousness in class defined it as an alternative to the phrase "short-term memory." How refreshing it was, then, to find an open-minded audience of academics who wanted to hear about "The Origin of Speech in a Deep Structure of Psi," or "The Effects of Literacy on Cognition and Being in the World," (which one UCB professor wanted to give me an "F" for) — an audience even mildly curious about whether Benjamin Whorf's Principle of Linguistic Relativity had anything to do with Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

This is still that same curious audience, which over the years has developed deep bonds of friendship and mutual respect among its ever-growing number of members, including psychologists, parapsychologists, healers, shamans, linguists, UFO researchers, hypnotherapists, archaeologists, teachers, and just plain interesting people who could fall under all kinds of labels — oh, yes, and then there are a few anthropologists. So this is an open invitation to all consciousness researchers in all disciplines who are looking for an audience for their thoughts or looking to be an audience for such thoughts.

"So what happened at the conference?" comes a shout from the balcony. Well, we could talk about

the academic papers, the experiential workshops, the ceremonies and concerts, or even the setting and socializing — so let's talk about all of them.

Paper Presentations

Difficult as it is to pick and choose from the excellent papers presented this year, a couple stand out in my memories by their intense emotional feeling tones.

Dr. Leslie Conton, for instance, gave a gripping personal account concerning how her second, recent trip to Papua New Guinea, was dramatically different from her first trip years ago as a fresh-out-of-graduate-school anthropological-fieldworker. She sees now how on her first visit she was enveloped by perhaps the most effective invisible shield possible against the native sorcery and evil spirits: she simply didn't really believe in them, and therefore escaped relatively unscathed while still learning some valuable lessons which shaped her present course — as a shaman. On this recent trip, being now a shaman, she could scarce afford to adopt a soul-disguise of blissful ignorance about the spirits as she had before; being now a shaman, she had to voluntarily submerge herself in the cultural terror and justifiable paranoia which was the daily tenor of her host's lives — which ultimately frightened Leslie and caused her to have profound soul-searching experiences. Here was a powerful example of transpersonal research at its best, telling not only what was "out there" but also what was perforce happening inside the participant/observer. And it actually brings home a very telling point made by Dr. Marilyn Silva a few years back as she was explaining to a friend who these "transpersonal" people were that her husband hung around with: "Well, mainstream anthropologists study witch doctors. Transpersonal anthropologists BELIEVE in them!" Looks pejorative at first, but fairly true on reflection, what?

Another story told from the inside similarly gripped me as Sylvia Dunsworth described what it's like to be what is usually called a "multiple personality," and what it's like to ultimately achieve some order in that realm, harnessing and channeling those energies into healing purposes. If found her legal timesharing contracts with her personalities an inspired and elegant response to the tragic chaos of her early life. And she brought right home again my deepest response after reading *Sybil* — we are ALL Sybil, or Sylvia, or any other multiple, showing different personalities in different situations, except most of us have the central organizing screw tightened down a little more than the multiples do, so that all our subpersonalities tend to enter and exit through the illusion of a fixed unitary personality rather than swinging wildly from one subpersonality to the next.

And for high drama, what can beat Matthew Bronson's dramatic announcement after years of working intimately in Brazilian spiritism that he hereby renounced his former role as an incorporating medium for dispossession work on cancer spirits, and that he had decided that other, less intrusive ways of helping and healing were now more appropriate

for his life's work.

I appreciated greatly all the other papers as well which space prevents me from mentioning -- and after all, this is meant as a mere taste of remembrance for participants, and a pointing of the way for potential ones. So besides all these wonderful paper presentations, there were also slide shows, a video presentation about Spiritist painter Luis Gasparato, and longer workshops.

Workshops

Here is where certain AASC Conference presenters really show their stuff in participatory, experiential ways. As usual, we had this year a number of powerful Native American fire, healing, and shamanic journey ceremonies led by Lester Jake and Leslie Conton. Such ceremonies are traditional with us, and provide a rare opportunity for sharing and understanding the Earth-centered spirituality native to this continent for those who have not yet understood how Native Americans are an untapped spiritual wealth of this country and of the world.

Perhaps you will not be offended if I modestly mention my own workshop with Matthew Bronson. We realized recently that we have for years always given papers with a smattering of experiential stuff, or (in the previous two years) let our *Reality, Mind & Language* videos do our talking for us about our current projects, whether "The Rise of White Collar Growth Cults" or "Frank Talks about Channeling." But giving papers and showing videos is not how we treat our students at California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, so we decided to pull out the stops and do one of the experiential exercises we do with our students -- thus was born our 2-1/2 hour workshop on "Intuitive Speaking," consisting of a prolonged and profound trance induction which includes a beautiful chakra-cleaning technique, followed by participants pairing up and doing various intuitive readings on each other. We got some intense feedback after the workshop, ranging from people saying it was the deepest trance induction they'd ever experienced to one saying that it pulled together and made real various not-fully-grasped ideas and concepts from over the past few years. And as a result of the '88 Conference, I now have an appropriate theme song (thanks to Ruth-Inge Heinze's "urban shaman" paper) set, appropriately enough, to a Gilbert-and-Sullivan-esque tune: "I am the perfect picture/of an urban shaman-linguist, with my moccasins, bad tie, and corporate suit!/Now let's do some things together that make language rather strange/and along the way we'll have some kicks, to boot." Well, you had to be there, I guess.

Experiences

The Grand Mistress of Timeless Consciousness-Altering Experiences for this conference was our new and dear friend Katherine Wersen, formerly of Berkeley and San Mateo but now residing in Desert Hot Springs. When I received the conference program, I saw her name next to "Tibetan Bells Concert" -- sure, sez I, I'd like to hear

some Tibetan Bells. What I didn't understand until Katherine started playing was that one does not simply "hear" Tibetan bells: one's body responds to Tibetan bells with profound altered states of consciousness! Each person that I heard discuss it later, and we're not talking states-of-consciousness lightweights here, reported totally different internal experiences from others, but all agreed that something amazingly powerful had happened, and some said it was the most powerful event they had ever experienced in their lives. During one sequence of bells I actually visualized, saw something clearly with my eyes closed, for the first time in my adult life.

Beyond all that, I saw in Katherine from her first words a true woman of wisdom, one whose words and presence emanated a serenity and deep knowing, one around whom clairparlant events cluster, and about whom the word "charisma" must be often used. Okay, so I immediately fell in love with an older woman -- there, I said it! But I knew we were really in for something when she paused after playing for a while and said, "You're really a good group -- I think I'll cut loose!" Then she led us on a guided imagery meditation to our "own monastery," which she had never done before but felt like it was the right thing to do, ending with a powerful sequence of sending love and healing to suffering people on the planet, to the planet itself, and then back to the stars.

By the way, I purchased one of Katherine's audio tapes (\$10.60 -- 66436 12th St. #A, Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240) and give it my highest recommendation. Order one today!! And remember that the warning in red on the front, DO NOT PLAY WHILE DRIVING, is really -- Katherine knows the power of these sounds and is quite rightly urging safe sonics.

Now if that had been all Katherine Wersen had to offer, I would have considered myself satisfied and lucky. But no, she showed up the next day with sounds from other high places -- first the Himalayas and now the Andes as she carefully unpacked almost two dozen Peruvian whistle pots, the concerted blowing through of which causes not only whistling but also other sounds (technically a binaural beat effect and frequency-following effect, according to Jeff Mishlove) which are created by the brain trying to make sense of these frequencies and cannot themselves be picked up by an oscilloscope in the same room. This sound seemed to be stronger in the right ear for most people, and the whole sound/energy movement seemed to go in a clockwise direction. One participant, Cynthia Siegel, remarked in a later *Reality, Mind & Language* video conference report that at the moment of hearing these whistle pots, she realized that all the sounds she had ever heard in her life sounded two-dimensional, but that these sounds seemed three-dimensional!

Two outstanding aural experiences, and I don't even have time or space here to do more than mention the Sufi dancing. Beyond the fact that we plan to

have Katherine back next year, what I want to impress on people considering joining us for our next conference, however, is this: AASC members do not merely talk about experiencing altered states of consciousness -- we DO it in whatever ways we can while we're together. And that brings up my final point.

Setting and Socializing

We are surely blessed to have found such a congenial setting in the Presbyterian camp in Pacific Palisades for the past two years and next year. It's a rustic piece of wilderness, complete with coyotes, owls and other critters -- a total joy to stay in. I might even go so far as to say that the setting adds a flavor to the conference that most previous conference sites have simply not had. I hope to situate the conference in Northern California in a couple of years, if for nothing else than to reinforce the attendance of our northern colleagues -- but it's clear that the environs will have to at least match our Southern California site.

And concerning the social side of the yearly AASC conference, I can only suggest that how many friends you personally make during a particular conference is totally up to you, because this group is ready, willing and waiting to enfold more serious consciousness researchers into its inner core of friendship, as a constant contributor to our mutual quest. Sometimes people show up for the first time just to scope out the group, and then really begin interacting at the next conference -- just personal styles, I guess, and actually a type which lends itself to the best way of being at this kind of conference: giving a paper, preferably near the beginning, so that participants have something to talk to you about for the rest of the time; at least, that's my own time-honored tradition for getting the most out of a conference.

As virtually everyone knows who was at this '88 Conference, though, we try our best to fulfill people's Hug Quotients when we get together: if, as has been suggested, human beings need on the average four hugs per day to survive, 10 h.p.d. to feel okay, and 19 h.p.d. to absolutely flourish, then even random participants tend to pick up a few weeks worth of quality hugs in a few days.

So, this is one person's incredibly positively-biased participant-observations about what a great time he had at the conference, and I hope you've gotten a good hit off of my words, either reflective or projective. If the '88 conference, the best in my nine year's of participation, if any indication of what the '89 conference in Pacific Palisades will be like, then mark out the first week of March for something that you really owe to yourself: five days with some of the most wonderful people -- creme de la creme -- that this planet has to offer, in a wonderful wilderness setting, with thought-provoking academic papers, workshops, and experiences. Excuse me: was there something more fulfilling you wanted out of a vacation? See you there!

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A COMPARISON OF WESTERN AND NON-WESTERN APPROACHES TO THE POLTERGEIST PHENOMENA

by **George Sniegowski**, John F. Kennedy University, Orinda, California

This paper will be a comparison of Western and non-Western approaches to the interpretation, investigation, and resolution of the poltergeist phenomenon. Originally, the word poltergeist came from the German language, meaning "noisy ghost." Today it is defined as the strange and unexplained movement or breakage of object man 1977:930). Some examples of the phenomena include such things as kitchenware suddenly flying across the room; a vase falling from a shelf, apparently all by itself, and crashing onto the floor; doors opening and closing, slamming shut and then hen opening again, with no one there; electric lights flickering on and off; a picture frame falling from the wall; electronic equipment malfunctioning one minute and working just fine the next.

These physical events are quite often associated with other strange, more subjective experiences like hearing unusual noises; the feeling or the sense of a presence; or feeling a cold breeze carrying an unusual fragrance moving through a closed, sealed room. These experiences are more suggestive of an apparition or haunting; but since many of the events occur together, it is difficult to identify a specific cause.

The general Western interpretation among parapsychologists is that the poltergeist phenomena originates from a living human agent and is unconscious psychokinesis, or PK, motivated by repressed feelings of frustration, fear, anger, or blocked impulses (Hastings 1983).

In most non-Western cultures, poltergeist activity is considered the actions of an angry spirit.

The Western concept of psychokinesis suggest that the mind influences external objects or processes without the mediation of known physical energies or forces (Wolman 1977:931). There are many theories for PK and they can be simply organized into four categories, physical, non-physical, non-existent, and external. Physically, from the new physics we have theories which include the concepts of retro-causation, quantum tunneling, and the influence for a state vector collapse (Toben & Wolf 1983). Also we have a theory that suggests electromagnetic waves of extremely low frequency, E , L , E , or ELFS for short, are responsible (Persinger 1974:232-35).

Some theories postulate a unique form of energy created by the body, that can be used in healing, and is called Ki, Chi, and Prana in other cultures, and bioplasma by the Soviets (Vilenskaya 1981).

Non-physical theories of PK suggest another dimension or level of existence which can include the soul or etheric body. This other dimension can

be accessible through altered states of consciousness. Interactions between consciousness and other dimensions that transcend time and space can provide for information transfer, or set objects or events into motion (Murphy 1970; Progoff 1963:129).

Another explanation for the poltergeist is that it doesn't exist at all, not the noisy ghost nor PK. Instead, what is really going on is fraud, trickery, or just the misinterpretation of normal events (Gauld & Cornell 1979).

External theories for PK, and specifically for the poltergeist, are those that postulate the existence of a discarnate entity, one that actively disturbs a particular place or works through a person such as a medium or the possessed, or perhaps even someone with multiple personalities (Stevenson 1972:3; Krippner 1985).

Currently in parapsychology, the two most popular interpretations for the poltergeist are, first, that a particular living human agent, with repressed hostile emotions, is releasing energy in a psychic outburst which disturbs the physical surroundings. The second is that the central nervous system is responsible through an energetic discharge associated with epilepsy or similar nervous disorders (Solfvin & Roll 1976). Other researchers have criticized both of these theories on the grounds that sufficient testing, using scientific methods, has not been done (Taboas & Alvarado 1981). Based on the scientific paradigm, even though we have strong evidence to support these theories, without solid research to back it up nothing conclusive can be said.

The majority of non-Western interpretations of the poltergeist phenomenon are Spiritistic in origin. The poltergeist is seen as a troublesome spirit that disturbs a particular person or place.

In non-Western cultures poltergeist activity is often accompanied by other types of paranormal phenomena or unusual events such as a possession, a sudden illness, or a disaster. The reason that these things are happening to an individual or family needs to be determined, so a shaman, healer, or priest may be asked in to help. For example, in Peru a large estate was besieged by rocks falling on the rooftop. A Spiritist was called in who examined the rocks and determined they were from a nearby cemetery. A seance was then held to determine the cause of the disturbance. During the seance the medium incorporated a spirit who claimed to be the deceased friend of the owner of the estate. The owner, a prominent lawyer, had made a promise to the friend which he had never fulfilled. The rocks stopped falling immediately after he had followed through with his agreement (Bendezu 1988).

In Mexico a shaman may supervise a psychedelic mushroom ceremony for divination and spiritual revelations to determine the reason for the events (Eliade 1972).

In the Native American tradition a sudden rash of bad luck or severe personal disaster is considered to

be the work of a vengeful spirit. A medicine man or shaman would be called in to do a ceremony to find out what is causing the problem and what needs to be done about it. He might do journey work, or a direct communication with the poltergeist spirit; or he may call down another spirit, a nature spirit or a power animal, to intervene or dispel the poltergeist (Siegel 1988a).

The dramatic physical effects of sorcerers and witches in many cultures are attributed to their having control of spirits and powers used through magic and ritual.

In India the poltergeist is considered a nasty spirit, and a yogi or shaman would perform an exorcism on the affected person or location. In the mystical traditions, yogis train for many years to control their energy and develop a vast array of PK abilities. Perhaps the poltergeist is on a continuum of energetic phenomena that goes from spirit influences to unconscious human discharges, to energy channeled for healing, to the highly controlled yogic powers.

In the West, the investigation of the poltergeist phenomenon can be divided into three main steps. The first is to interview all of the people involved to get as clear a picture as possible of the events and of the people. The second is to determine the authenticity of the events by weeding out those with a normal explanation and then scientifically testing the activity if it is ongoing. This is often extremely difficult or impossible since the activities are very sporadic, spontaneous, and a bit shy of strangers. (Imagine, a poltergeist afraid of strangers!) And finally a search for an agent is done; a check is sometimes made into the history of the location for clues to a possible angry entity, if apparition or haunting events have been reported. If a human agent has been suspected, perhaps by noting any strong or obvious emotionally charged interpersonal dynamics between the individuals involved, or by the identification of someone who is always present during the disturbances, then in-depth personal profiles are taken to discover the precise hidden or emotional tension that may be at the root cause of the disturbances.

A counselor trained to handle psychic disturbances will tend to use a phenomenological, client-centered approach, honoring the belief in psychic functioning. The emotional and psychological needs of the individual will have the highest priority (Morris 1970; Hastings 1983; Ehrenwald 1977; Siegel 1988b *supra*).

Research parapsychologists will often bring to an investigation a trained counselor or a psychic. However, the counselor will almost always see repressed emotional tensions, while the psychic will almost always see a bothersome spirit. This seems to have more to do with how we perceive reality than what is actually going on.

At times, just the action of an investigation is enough to get the activities to stop. It may be that the people involved need someone understanding to talk

to, to express their personal and emotional needs. If the events turn out to have a normal cause, this knowledge can then reduce their fear and confusion. However, they may also have hoped for a supernatural explanation and may resist a normal explanation.

If the interpretation is of a human agent, giving an explanation of the subconscious motivations and emotional causes for the psychic events may open up communication that will allow for more socially acceptable ways of self-expression. However, it can also lead to blaming and resentment which may further aggravate the situation. For deeper emotional or interpersonal issues, ongoing individual or group counseling is recommended.

A change in the circumstances or living arrangement of the people involved may also shift the interpersonal dynamics enough to quiet the activities (Hastings 1983). For example, from a case investigated by Arthur Hastings in 1978,

... The agent was a 19-year-old man in a business office. He was low man on the totem pole; and in addition to his typing work he had to run errands, make coffee and wash cups, he was harassed by another typist, was made to toe the line by the boss, and he had just recently gotten married. He was under much emotional pressure, and was of a personality type that could not be assertive or extroverted. When he was in the office, typewriters malfunctioned, coffee cups broke, phones did not work right, and things fell off of desks. When he was not in the office, nothing happened (Hastings 1978).

The explanation of the events as frustration expressed through some form of psychic energy or PK was discussed with the young man

... and other members of the office. They were supportive of this explanation (perhaps because they realized their role in putting pressure on him) and arranged that he would take his work home, rather than do it at the office. The poltergeist disturbances halted at the office and did not occur at his home (Hastings 1978).

Non-Western intervention approaches are woven into their investigations, some of which have already been discussed.

In Brazil a strong belief is held that discarnate spirits are in constant contact with the physical world. A spirit may interact through a medium as in a trance possession, act on a person as in an obsession, or even take over a person as in a possession (Krippner 1985).

During a panel discussion at the 1986 Parapsychology Convention, Matthew Bronson told of his encounter with a spirit in a Brazilian healing session (Bronson 1986).

A shaman had seen an obsessing spirit hovering around a woman who had a large tumor on her face. He asked Matthew to act as a medium to incorporate the spirit. As the spirit spoke through Matthew it was discovered that she was the woman's mother in a past lifetime. She had braved a terrible snowstorm to find food for herself and her daughter but got lost in the blizzard, and when she finally made it back to the hut she found her daughter dead of exposure and hunger. At this point in the narrative she screamed and Matthew's whole body tensed with profound grief, anger, and the guilt she felt as she held the limp body of her dead daughter. She vowed never to leave her daughter again and carried the body out into the snow where she too soon died. An assistant spoke with the spirit in a firm but compassionate tone and got her to realize her state and to accept that it was time for her to move on.

The day after the disobsession the woman looked uncharacteristically radiant. Her tumor had visibly shrunk and she reported feeling more energized than she had in a long time. She had not known they were going to perform the disobsession on her and was not present at the session. After being told what had happened she replied that for much of her life she had sensed a 'presence' shadowing her but had never thought much about it. Interestingly enough, in her current life she was dealing with a senile mother who was confined to a rest home.

We see here a powerful interaction between the spiritual and physical planes. Through the physical (the medium) the spiritual is healed (the obsessing spirit) which in turn heals the physical (in this case the woman's tumor) (Bronson 1988).

The Spiritistic perspective works toward healing the social, psychological, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of both the individual and the entity by sharing sacred knowledge through an alignment with nature's laws and forces.

The Western counseling approach offers the psychosocial adjustment of the individual and directs the client on a path of self-discovery and personal spiritual growth.

A uniquely effective and powerful system may be in the unification of these approaches that could have profound effects in other therapeutic settings.

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Continued from page 2

greater freedom to experiment with the new solutions, symbolic rituals and alternate possibilities (p. 187).

Another form of support comes from speaking with

someone who has had a similar experience and learned to integrate, alter, or overcome it. We see the effectiveness of this in all cultures. In shamanic cultures the shaman has experienced a very profound encounter with many forms of deeply affecting and threatening types of experiences — death, illness, madness, deprivation, severe isolation, etc. Shamans are deeply effective healers because of their profound understanding of what it is like to be in such circumstances. Healers fully trust the shaman to assist them since they succeeded at healing or transforming themselves from the same situation. In Western society we see this model in organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous and psychoanalytic training with mandatory analysis. There seems to be something universally effective about the heeler become the healer.

Shifting from a social perspective to a more psychological level, one important area to discover is if the experience is serving the individual in any way. A well-known example of this is the individual who is in low social standing in the community and is "called" to become a medium possessed by spirits. They then, for brief periods, experience elevation of their social status within the community. Dr. Pressel (1973) reported a case from Sao Paulo, Brazil where the possession served a woman who had trouble filling her expected role. A mulatto woman, raised in the country, moved to Sao Paulo and married at age twenty. Within her first nine years of marriage she had had three children, one of whom died when the mother was 28, had experienced the loss of her twin brother in a motorcycle accident, and had had to cope with her husband who had grown "quarrelsome" after losing his business. At the urging of friends she sought spiritual aid at the Umbanda center. There she became possessed by a Japanese spirit which was a prisoner in solitary confinement and very concerned with saving children from being killed. Clearly, this related to the woman's own tragedies and feelings toward her life's circumstances. As a result of having received the calling, this woman also found herself in the position of leaving her home several nights a week because of fulfilling her call of duty. Clearly, again this afforded the woman a solution to her psychological and social needs.

A more Westernized example would be a woman I did phone counseling with a few years ago. She reported intrusive, uncontrollable and highly frightening ESP impressions. Usually these involved children who were kidnapped or murdered, and other equally severe, gory types of events. When she had these experiences her field of vision would be replaced by the impressions and she would feel the full emotional impact as if she were the main character involved in the events. She reported these visions as occurring several times a day. When the visions would come to her she would cry quite heavily and experience deep sadness. This woman expressed deep concern by her inability to control her crying, as this was something she claimed she never allowed herself to do no matter how sad or upset she was. Upon further discussion, it was revealed that she was very unhappy with her life at that time, especially in her marriage, yet she had no outlet for her feelings.

Clearly, the psi impressions served as the catalyst for her to shed the tears and acknowledge the deep sadness she felt inside without her needing to take responsibility (so to speak) for breaking her own and possibly culturally imposed rule about not crying.

It seems a safe assumption that while some psi experiences may appear disruptive, they serve a very important function for the individual. The psi event may be the only way they know how at the time to achieve their goal — be it to allow expression of deeper feelings, forcing the individual to seek outside support, or make them feel unique in some way.

Another approach that is useful in understanding the function of the experience is a symbolic approach. For instance, using the same case study of ESP impressions, the fact that the woman's impressions primarily evolved around captured children might mean her own "inner child" felt trapped as if it were being destroyed. This may offer a direction for gaining further insights and allow the person to discover their needs and how to fill them.

Another psychological component that may be observed among psi experiencers is a response pattern known as the "giving up — given up complex" (Engel 1968, Halifax—Grof 1974). The features of this complex are: helplessness and hopelessness, feelings of worthlessness and incompetence, inability to obtain gratification from interpersonal relationships, and memories of earlier giving up situations not adequately resolved. This complex would leave an individual unprepared for taking action and they would experience it as hopeless. Empowerment through supporting the individual's feelings of value and focusing on any areas of competence are useful. Also, recalling how situations in the past were handled in which an originally overwhelming or difficult situation ended up with a manageable or positive outcome would help.

Another method is the use of myth. Myths are used therapeutically in some form or another by every culture. According to Malinowski (1954) myths transform an emotionally overwhelming foreboding, stemming from the fear of an inevitable and ruthless fatality. Myth serves two functions. First it represents a clear realization of the fear. Secondly, it brings down the vague, but great apprehension to a trivial, domestic reality. The myth represents the longed for power . . . which will give immunity and protection. It reflects this power as if it had been lost only by a small accident which even a child or a woman would have had the power to prevent. The myth can be used to reduce the situation to one that appears manageable by anyone. A modern day equivalent of the use of myth is Ericksonian hypnosis which utilizes story—telling to imprint the subconscious and bring about change. Eisenbud (1973) feels that non—Westerners use myth, religious rituals, and deep belief in spirits and the supernatural to symbolically cope with life's hardships and frustrations. Westerners, he believes, use telepathic and precognitive dreams and uncanny experiences to extract unconscious material into conscious usable form.

There are many more underlying reasons and responses an individual may undergo, the psychology of which has not been covered in this paper. However, I have tried to confine my comments to approaches and understandings that can lead to immediate helpful responses, appropriate to a crisis intervention or short term counseling condition.

In conclusion, there are several good methods of response to individuals found cross—culturally who report psi experiences and experience distress. These are understanding the function of the experience both on a psychological and social level, contextualizing the response within the cultural beliefs, reducing feelings of social isolation, integration back into society, having strong faith in the healing system, finding someone who has overcome the same situation and can provide support, symbolic interpretation, empowerment, and the use of myth.

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