

Things That Go Bump, By Day and by Night: An Expectancy Effect?

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Abstract: This is a report of a further self-test using a Schmidt Random Number Generator—the tenth such study in the series. The experimenter-participant is prone to experiencing unusual percussive or vibratory phenomena (usually occurring in his feet or on his back). Hypothesising that a psi element may be involved, the experimenter-participant conducted 856 runs (100 binary trials each run) under six different conditions, before the percussive phenomena abruptly ceased. An early dramatic within-session decline effect led to the incorporation of a test for this effect in all sessions individually and combined. Magnitude scores were analyzed in addition to deviation scores. The main results were overall decline effects from the first-half of a session to the second-half of the session, for both types of score. In the case of magnitude scores, the second-half mean run-score was significantly below chance. The author attributes these effects to a general expectation of significant results.

Keywords: Kundalini, psi, psychopraxia, Random Number Generator, RNG.

INTRODUCTION

More so than many psi researchers, it seems, I apparently experience spontaneous psi phenomena to a degree that surprises other people. Moreover, I have tested myself for a total of nine studies using a Schmidt Random Number Generator (RNG), and have obtained marginal or definitely significant results in each study, though the exact form of the results was almost impossible to predict in advance (Thalbourne, 2006; 2008). Nevertheless, I take these formal results to be consistent with the hypothesis that I experience genuine psi phenomena in everyday life.

Some of these phenomena, such as surprising coincidences, are well known to the researcher, and there is a whole literature on this phenomenon (Thalbourne, Moore & Storm, submitted). But some of the apparently

paranormal physical phenomena that I experience are *so* strange that for a long time I have procrastinated about disclosing them in a more public forum. However, I am now ready to make the attempt.

The phenomena may be described as percussive. Five major manifestations may be distinguished:

1. Whether shod or unshod, with my feet on wooden or concrete floor, myself standing or sitting, I experience a rapid tapping on my soles, *through* my shoes if I am wearing any; I have verified that this phenomenon occurs both within my house and also outside on concrete;
2. When lying lengthwise on my sofa, with the soles of my feet pressed against the broad arm rest, there is almost always a tapping rhythm which seems to emanate from within the arm rest, though at a slower pace than the preceding phenomenon; there is also, occasionally, the sensation of the whole sofa rocking rather quickly forwards and backwards, and I have observed movement of the top of the sofa back and forth, in the order of two centimetres; I am aware of both phenomena for the hour that I watch TV;
3. There is frequently a tapping on my feet, usually upon my first getting into bed; these taps may persist during the first part of my morning meditation and be a distraction for a while until they eventually cease; in the evening, in addition to these phenomena, there seems to be tapping along the side that I am lying on, in contact with the lower bed sheet;
4. There is what I call “the phantom masseur”: when a part of my body is sore (e.g., my back, from sitting too long at the computer, or sometimes my legs, particularly behind the knees), I lie down at the foot of my bed, head on pillows, and straightaway or before very long, I feel the sensation of being pummeled, or perhaps better, pushed, apparently from up within the mattress, *but only in the sore area*; when the pummeling seems to have done its work, it ceases, but if there is no soreness at all on that day I experience no pummeling at all; of course in this case we might have an example of a placebo effect; I note that I sometimes have a similar sensation on my back when lying on the sofa;
5. When seated on my office chair or the furniture in the lounge, or sitting propped up in bed, I often experience tapping (sometimes pushing or knocking) sensations on my back, the impulses feeling as if they come from the backrest; this phenomenon was introduced into the study to be described below at nearly the half-way point.

While the phantom masseur is obviously useful, I do not know what meaning, if any, is conveyed, by the other four categories of percussive phenomena, nor can I specify their source. I live rather near a heavy-duty construction site where a tunnel is being dug, and it might be suggested that that is the cause of some or all of the phenomena. However, I went to the site on a Saturday morning, only to find no one there, and thus no heavy machinery in operation. This was true also of the next day. I thus took full advantage to experiment almost non-stop that weekend, and the percussive phenomena were present. However, I cannot rule out persistent low-level seismic activity in the region.

However, suggested normal, physiological causes include an involuntary muscle tremor, tic or spasm, or sometimes a very rapid throbbing; pins and needles, or “going to sleep”; or the possibility that I am experiencing my own pulse. However, the major feature is that the sensation is *rhythmic*, and it must be said that the rate of vibrations can be very rapid indeed, and considerably more than my resting pulse rate. Furthermore, I have queried a psychiatrist-parapsychologist as to the possibility that I am experiencing merely hallucinations of touch (often called haptic hallucinations), but he was inclined to think they were *not* haptic hallucinations (the most common example being the sensation of insects crawling under one’s skin). Thus, it is *possible* (but by no means certain) that the manifestations may be connected with the paranormal: they perhaps originate in my subconscious, or conceivably I am experiencing certain poltergeist-like phenomena that may or may not have a discarnate source.

Now since I am in possession of a portable RNG it occurred to me, after long and continuous experience with these five categories of percussive phenomena, that I might be able to record evidence of a concomitant psi effect on the RNG, at least under some circumstances.

I therefore, when next experiencing the phenomena, conducted a small pilot study: I used three classifications of run: (1) the rapid pummelling of the feet; (2) the slower pummelling or pushing through the mattress as if to massage; and (3) runs where, in a series of percussive phenomena, it happened that neither of the phenomena were adjudged to be occurring, though they often resumed.

The RNG was first set in motion, and after a little more than half a minute it delivered a score on its LED. The score for a run (100 binary trials each run) was first of all hidden beneath a special opaque flap, so that the category of run was always recorded first *before* the flap was raised and before the score was ascertained and recorded. Eventually, after perhaps half an hour, the phenomena had waned toward imperceptibility, at which point I finished the pilot session with a control run to verify the disappearance, finishing with a total of 30 runs.

The results of this pilot test were somewhat encouraging: (1) for the control condition, the mean run-score for the four runs was -3.50 ($SD = 5.51$), which deviates from the chance figure of zero to a nonsignificant degree; (2) for the masseur condition, the mean for the 12 run-scores was $+1.17$ ($SD = 8.42$), and this too deviated nonsignificantly from chance; (3) but for the feet condition, the mean for the 14 run-scores was $+4.57$ ($SD = 6.68$), $t(13) = 2.56$, $p = .024$, two-tailed; in fact, 12 of the 14 run-scores were positive, just two being negative, and this is itself significant, $p = .012$, two-tailed. Thus, though the sample was very small, there seemed to be suggestive above-chance scores during the time when my feet experienced the tapping or pummelling sensation.

It was thus decided that a full-scale experiment would be conducted, amassing the usual 1,000 runs. The principal dependent variable was run-score (deviations either positive or negative from chance of 0.00). However, it was also planned that, once the analyses of the deviation scores had been concluded, the same analyses would be run on the magnitude scores (that is, the absolute value of the deviation score from 0.00, which has an MCE of 7.97), as recommended by Palmer (1997). The two scores have an essentially zero correlation between them.

The author should give a few words about when the analyses were conducted. In previous work the experimenter-participant has usually waited until the results for the 1,000 runs had been collected. "Peeking" at the results, even quite close to the end, can apparently have an adverse effect on the final scores (see Thalbourne, 2006, Confirmatory Experiment; cf. Broughton & Alexander, 1997). Despite that outcome on one occasion, the experimenter-participant in this study decided to analyze the results as the data came in. There was enough significance at an early stage to act as motivation to continue the task so that 1,000 runs would eventually be conducted.

METHOD

Participant

I was the experimenter-participant. I am 53-years-old, male, Caucasian. According to the Australian Sheep-Goat Scale I was a strong believer in psi at the time of this experiment—a score of 36 out of 36. For my bipolar illness I was taking lithium carbonate, quetiapine fumarate, klonazepam, and sodium valproate. None of these drugs is known to have psychological consequences (such as hallucinations or blurriness) or parapsychological consequences so far as we know that would prevent me from being a reliable experimenter.

From the University of Edinburgh I have a Ph.D. in psychology, specializing in parapsychology, and have been conducting psi research for 32 years. I have conducted nine previous self-tests with my Schmidt RNG, all with the same basic structure: the first five self-tests are reported in Thalbourne (2006), numbers 6 and 7 in Thalbourne (2008), and all seven have had marginally or fully significant results of one kind or another. Thus, I have had much previous experience with the experimental set-up used, and quite a good deal of evidence of statistically significant results.

Materials

There were several dozen copies of the score-sheet, with space on each for page number and date. On this sheet were printed 50 pairs of boxes: in the left-hand box the code for the percussive phenomenon was given: (1) feet on sofa; (2) feet on the floor; (3) feet in bed; (4) lying on one's back; (5) vibrations from chairs; and (6) transitional runs when the phenomenon was disappearing or had disappeared. In the right-hand box the run-score was entered.

The RNG was the same as that used in all the previous studies, and the reader is referred to Thalbourne (2006) for a complete description, together with results of tests of randomness, which were entirely satisfactory.

Procedure

The experimental procedure was somewhat different from that used in the previous nine self-tests, because some of the percussive phenomena occurred at unpredictable times and for an unpredictable duration. There were five codes for indicating each phenomenon: (1) feet flat on the surface of the sofa arm-rest; (2) feet flat or touching the floor; (3) feet at the foot of the bed; (4) the "phantom masseur", while lying on my back, calves and feet hanging over the edge of the bed; (5) while seated on specific chairs or propped up in bed; (6) the code used when percussive sensations appeared to have stopped.

As soon as any of the first five phenomena commenced, the RNG and score sheets were brought to the site in my house (and phenomena occurred in all parts of the house, including the bathroom). The RNG was set going, and the experimenter-participant relaxed as completely as possible and introspected with focused attention in order to determine whether any percussive phenomena were occurring for at least part of the run. The RNG's circular light display was on, but the experimenter-participant did not look at it except to determine that the run had ended,

when the light display stopped. Thereupon, the code was recorded, after which the RNG's flap was lifted, and the run-score was likewise recorded. It is worth mentioning that the process of interacting with the RNG was a potential disruption to the ongoing percussive phenomena (especially the masseur, for which the experimenter-participant needed to rise up from a supine position and attend to recording the relevant data). However, the phenomena were surprisingly robust despite such interruptions.

In previous self-tests it was usual to gather 50 run-scores per session. However, in this case, the phenomenon petered out quite often rather earlier than 50 runs. Thus, the sessions ranged in length from 13 to 112. As in the pilot study, when the phenomenon faded and became virtually imperceptible, the session was terminated after two more runs to confirm that the phenomenon was no longer occurring. Sometimes, however, the phenomenon revived, and the session continued until the phenomenon had quite definitely ceased (for the time being).

Very occasionally, two sorts of phenomena occurred simultaneously. The experimenter-participant focused on the phenomenon for which there were fewer runs accumulated at that stage.

A gentle (and visible) jolting motion (of the sofa and of the bed) was sometimes seemingly in evidence, as well as an occasional mild earthquake effect,¹ but these were not systematically studied at this point. I suspect I need technical assistance if I wish to investigate these apparent phenomena further.

It was also noticed in one session (#3) that there was an obvious decline from first half of session to second half, $t(42) = 3.15$, $p = .003$, two-tailed. Indeed the mean run-score for the first half was almost significantly above chance, $M = 3.55$ ($SD = 8.23$), $t(22) = 2.02$, $p = .056$, two-tailed, while the mean run-score for the second half was significantly below chance, $M = -4.27$ ($SD = 8.24$), $t(22) = 2.43$, $p = .024$, two-tailed. It was therefore decided to test for a difference between first half-session and second half-session for the two earlier sessions and all the remaining sessions, the predictions being (1) a decline in run-score both within an individual session, and (2) for all sessions combined. An alternative hypothesis (3) was that the decline effect would itself decline: that is, the decline effect might be more in evidence in the earlier runs than in the later runs.

¹ The earthquake effect was observed particularly with D. D. Home: William Crookes said that "Very strong vibrations of our chairs, then the table and floor, and at last the very walls and windows seemed to shake" (Medhurst, Goldney & Barrington, 1972, p. 150). I call my effect "mild" because, though I apparently see multiple objects shaking, none are ever dislodged or broken. I have not been lucky enough to have witnesses at the time.

Of course it must be mentioned that the participant was not naïve to the hypotheses, and any significant results might be due to demand characteristics or expectancy effects. It must also be noted that the experimenter-participant was very strict with himself as regards terminating a session: there needed to be two runs with the tactile phenomena clearly absent. Otherwise, since run-by-run feedback was available, a critic might suggest that there is a problem with optional stopping.

Psychopractic Chart

As is the author's habit, a psychopractic chart is suggested in Table 1.

Table 1
Psychopractic Chart for Study 10: An RNG/Percussive Phenomena Self-Test

SELF
+
Pro Attitude for obtaining significantly high RNG scores during percussive phenomena
+
A suitably random Schmidt machine
A goal of a total of 100,000 trials (1,000 test runs)
Knowledge that previous studies have given significant results
Confidence that the present experiment could yield significant results
Percussive phenomena of one of five types
V_1 to V_n
↓
Goal-state
(RNG run-scores for the five types of condition are significantly different from chance; a significant within-session decline effect)

Note that " V_1 to V_n " is a *ceteris paribus* clause, referring to all the necessary variables that in fact applied but that were not thought of by the experimenter and that were thus not mentioned explicitly in the chart.

RESULTS

After a highly fruitful weekend of almost continuous testing (August 23 and 24, 2008), the experimenter-participant found that the day after (Monday August 25), all the percussive phenomena had ceased. Their absence was very striking. In the circumstances, he decided to declare a halt to the experiment, at what turned out to be session 24, run 856. Thus, the remaining 144 runs were not able to be collected.

Deviation Scores

For the 24 sessions, the overall mean-run score was +0.07 ($SD = 9.59$), $t(855) = 0.22$, $p = 0.83$, two-tailed, which is at a chance level. However, there was a decline effect: the mean run-score for the first half-session was +0.77 ($SD = 10.02$), for the second half-session the mean was -0.66 ($SD = 9.13$), $t(842) = 2.17$, $p = 0.030$. Neither half-session mean is significantly different from chance. It should be mentioned that of the 24 sessions, 16 showed the decline, 8 an incline, though this distribution is not significant. A Spearman rho showed that there was no decline in the number and size of the individual 24 difference-scores, $r_s(24) = -0.04$ ($p > .05$), and thus no change in the declines over sessions. As already mentioned, just one session (#3) gave significant results; we would normally expect 330 sessions to be conducted before obtaining a p -value of .003, so this result (together with its significant psi-missing) stands in its own right.

Results for the Experimental Condition

The results for condition 1 through 6 for the deviation scores may be found in Table 2.

In the upper part of the Table the results concern the deviation, for each of the six conditions, of the mean run-score from chance. There were no significant deviations. But because of the overall decline effect, it was decided to look for this in each condition also, in addition to pooling the data for the six conditions. These results may be found in the lower part of the Table.

Although there were no significant changes in scoring from scores obtained during the first half of their session to scores obtained for the second half-sessions, we may note that the mean first-half run-scores for all six conditions are positive (Binomial $p = .032$, two-tailed), and for the mean second-half run-scores were negative for five of the six conditions.

Table 2
Deviation Scores For All Six Experimental Conditions

	<i>N</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>2p</i>	<i>M</i> _{1st}	<i>SD</i> _{1st}	<i>M</i> _{2nd}	<i>SD</i> _{2nd}	<i>t</i>	<i>2p</i>
Condition 1	65	64	-0.22	8.43	-0.21	0.84	0.59	9.47	-1.13	7.30	0.81	0.42
Condition 2	205	204	0.62	9.68	0.92	0.36	0.90	10.20	0.18	8.95	0.51	0.61
Condition 3	257	256	0.33	9.73	0.55	0.59	0.68	10.02	-0.05	9.43	0.60	0.55
Condition 4	152	151	-0.51	10.40	-0.61	0.54	0.81	9.98	-2.13	10.59	1.74	0.08
Condition 5	67	66	-1.04	9.16	-0.93	0.35	0.57	10.60	-2.21	7.92	1.23	0.22
Condition 6	110	109	0.09	8.88	0.12	0.92	1.08	10.37	-0.02	8.49	0.53	0.60

Table 3
Magnitude Scores For All Six Experimental Conditions

	<i>N</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>2p</i>	<i>M</i> _{1st}	<i>SD</i> _{1st}	<i>M</i> _{2nd}	<i>SD</i> _{2nd}	<i>t</i>	<i>2p</i>
Condition 1	65	64	6.62	5.17	-2.11	0.04	7.29	5.92	6.07	4.09	0.95	0.35
Condition 2	205	204	7.79	5.76	-0.46	0.65	8.32	5.92	7.05	5.45	1.53	0.13
Condition 3	257	256	7.83	5.76	-0.38	0.70	8.05	5.96	7.57	5.58	0.66	0.51
Condition 4	152	151	8.33	6.22	0.71	0.48	8.36	5.42	8.26	6.90	0.10	0.92
Condition 5	67	66	7.61	5.12	-0.57	0.57	8.71	5.82	6.82	4.47	1.51	0.14
Condition 6	110	109	6.96	5.46	-1.93	0.06	8.08	6.37	6.61	5.28	1.15	0.25

It should be noted that a One-way Analysis of Variance was used to examine the differences between the mean run-scores for the six conditions, but no significance was found, $F(5, 850) = 0.48$, $p = 0.79$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$.

Magnitude Scores

We now turn to the magnitude score, being the absolute value of the deviation score with which we have hitherto been dealing. The reader is referred to Table 3.

We deal first with the single-sample t tests, to see if there is a significant deviation from the MCE of 7.97.

First, for all six conditions combined, the mean magnitude score was nonsignificantly below chance, $M = 7.69$, ($SD = 5.72$), $t(855) = 1.44$, $p = 0.15$.

However, there was a significant decline from the mean magnitude score of 8.17 ($SD = 5.84$) in the first-half runs, to a mean score of 7.27 ($SD = 5.59$) in the second-half runs, $t(854) = 2.37$, $p = 0.018$. Moreover, the mean of 7.27 is significantly low, $t(421) = 2.69$, $p = .007$, two-tailed. The meaning of this finding will be examined in the Discussion.

As before, the data were broken down by the six conditions. Condition 1 (feet on the sofa arm rest) gave significantly low magnitude scores. Condition 6 (dwindling runs) gave a low mean that was marginally significant ($p = .056$).

The comparison of first-half runs with second-half runs for the six conditions yielded no significance, but it may be mentioned that the first half gave a higher mean magnitude score in all six conditions.

A comparison of the six mean magnitude scores using ANOVA was not significant, $F(5, 850) = 1.24$, $p = 0.29$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$ —a very small effect size.

Previous Self-Tests

A summary of the main outcomes for the previous seven published experiments is presented in Table 4.

Note that Kundalini is an hypothesised body energy, and its presence or absence was examined in relation to the output of the RNG. Three tendencies in the results are noteworthy: the first is that deviation scores gave more significance than did magnitude scores, so much so that eventually magnitude was not examined. Second, there is a tendency for non-Kundalini scores to deviate significantly from chance, contrary to hypothesis (three of seven studies). And third, there is some tendency for

there to be significant or marginally significant results of one kind or another in this series (five of seven studies). We will compare and contrast these outcomes with those of the present study in the Discussion.

Table 4
Mean Deviation and Magnitude Scores For Seven Published RNG Experiments

Study	M _{dev} (Kundalini)	M _{dev} (Non- Kundalini)	Test of difference	M _{mag} (Kundalini)	M _{mag} (Non- Kundalini)	Test of difference
1	2.39 ^a	0.19	Marginal	7.96	8.01	n.s.
2	-12.00 ^a	-0.76**	.005	15.33*	7.72	sig.
3	1.71**	-1.15**	.00002	8.47	8.08	n.s.
4	-0.93 ^a	-0.82	n.s.	7.77	7.51	n.s.
5	0.48	-0.39	.08	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
6	-0.29	-0.16	n.s.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
7	0.04	1.03**	n.s.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: Single-sample *t* tests: ^a: .05 < *p* ≤ .11; *: *p* ≤ .05; **: *p* ≤ .01; n.s. = not significant; n.a. = not applicable; References: Studies 1 through 5, Thalbourne (2006); Studies 6 and 7, Thalbourne (2008)

DISCUSSION

Once again, this self-test paradigm has proved moderately fruitful as regards the yield of statistically significant results. Unlike the studies in Table 4 we did not here have an experimental versus a control condition. For the deviation scores, the early observation of a strong decline effect from first half-session to second half-session led to the framing of a hypothesis for this effect when all sessions were pooled, for both deviation (and magnitude) scores. There was a weak tendency for this effect to be the case when considering sessions individually, and a significant decline when the 24 sessions were pooled. The nonsignificant ANOVA and the nonsignificant first-half/second-half comparisons for the six individual conditions suggest that the psi effect is weak but also perhaps relatively uniform across conditions and consists of a decline affecting all runs.

The results with magnitude scores are harder to interpret. Condition 1 (feet on arm rest of sofa) gave significantly below-chance scores (*p* = .039, a 1 in 26 outcome), but considering the number of relevant analyses conducted (viz. 48) this may well be the result of multiple analysis artefact,

i.e., chance.² That is to say, the finding of one significant analysis amongst 47 nonsignificant analyses is not in itself particularly noteworthy.

As predicted, there was a significant decline from first-half to second-half for all conditions combined. Significantly below-chance scores ($p = .007$, a 1 in 143 outcome) were also observed for all conditions combined, and as one of only four relevant analyses (rather than one in 20 or more) this may be taken as suggesting that the magnitude of the deviations was indeed significantly low—a sort of low variance effect. The data from this experiment *may* be consistent with the experimenter-participant's expectation based on his early observation of significant results of this kind in the data—a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. In any case, it seems that it may be worthwhile after all to examine the magnitude scores in future, given this revival in significance.

In answer to the question how do the three valid significant results of this experiment compare to those in Table 4, we may say that they are probably superior (with respect to amount of significance obtained) to those of all the previous studies except the three in study 3. They are therefore encouraging for further experimentation should the percussive phenomena reappear (though see below).

The experimenter-participant suggests that this percussive effect, if genuine, may be dubbed the “Seismi-chthonic Effect” (pronounced “size-mee-k-thone-ick”), from a Greek word meaning “Earth-Shaker”—an epithet of the ancient Greek god of earthquakes, Poseidon. But the experimenter is inclined, after all, to attribute the percussive phenomena to bodily spasms or local physical vibrations (or a combination of both), rather than to an intrinsically paranormal cause. Why, then, did he get significant results? An answer: because he had *expectations* of getting those results, and the “bumps” therefore proved motivating. Future research could fruitfully delineate those expectations—general and specific—at the beginning of the study, and examine whether there is indeed a tendency for them to be borne out. If the expectations are *not* fulfilled, then they can be said to have exerted no causal influence over the results. But expectations that *are* apparently fulfilled need to be scrutinised, because it means that they may provide alternative causal explanations of the results—alternative, that is, to the experimental hypotheses that we put in place at the beginning of the

² It may be argued that a correction for multiple analyses is warranted. The author does not subscribe to such correction, such as the Bonferroni Correction, which he argues is too conservative and there is no consensus about its legitimacy and/or limits of its application. Instead, he subscribes to, and employs in the above analyses, a probabilistic approach according to which in N analyses ($N \geq 20$) we should expect approximately 1 in 20 to be significant at the 5% level by chance, 1 in 100 significant at the 1% level, and so forth. For a critique on Bonferroni Correction, see Perneger (1998).

study. Thus, the things that go bump may have been less important to the outcome of this experiment than the expectations entertained about their influence.

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