

Intimacy and Psi: A Preliminary Exploration

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ABSTRACT: The psychology of intimacy provides an important perspective on both the theory and data of telepathy. It also suggests a new approach to the design of telepathy experiments. Spontaneous telepathy occurs primarily among intimates, especially when the bond of intimacy is threatened, as in life crises or in the presence of secrets. Even laboratory telepathy crosses the boundaries of privacy to reveal the secrets of laboratory personnel, thus creating unexpected intimacy among the participants. Telepathy is innately an intimate experience because the exchange of information occurs directly between the participants' internal realities, requiring no known sensory portal. Unlike the senses, which can be "shut" to prevent access, there are no obvious ways to prevent telepathic exchange. Furthermore, telepathic information is not distinguishable from subjective experiences of memory recall, imagining, or normal thought processes. Thus, telepathic influence from another person can masquerade as indigenous imagery events. Because it confuses or violates personal boundaries in so many ways, telepathy raises fears similar to those associated with uncontrollable intimacy. It is valuable to view voluntary telepathy as an extension of empathy, a key ingredient in intimacy. Empathy may extend to resonance, a fusion of boundaries, and thus to telepathic or direct communication.

A novel experimental procedure called the "Getting to Know You Game" is described. A group of receivers listens to a voice sample from an agent (target person) reciting a nursery rhyme and the alphabet. The receivers focus on the sound of the agent's voice and observe any and all internal events during the target person's recital. Receivers then disclose their personal observations. Purely subjective responses show surprising relevance to the objective facts concerning the target person's personal life and appear to go beyond matters of temperament and mood to recognize facts in the agent's (distant) environment. Receivers often have personal reactions that they are too shy to share, and sometimes they have impressions that reveal things about the vocalist that were not meant to be known. This procedure provides many ways to further explore the interpersonal context of telepathic events and serves as a research paradigm for the functioning of "psychic" readers or the processing of intuitive impression formation.

A basic tenet within the psychology of intimacy is that we desire an optimal amount of it: too little and we feel lonely, isolated, and fearful of death through abandonment and loss of life support; too much and we feel invaded, engulfed, and fearful of death through annihilation of our identity (Fisher & Striker, 1982; McAdams, 1989; Solomon, 1989). We strive to regulate intimacy to keep it within an optimal range. When faced with intimacy that is threatening, we try to create distance or erect barriers to protect ourselves (Solomon, 1989). An analogous situation may occur

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when we are confronted with psi; in fact, the psychology of intimacy may provide an important perspective on psi, especially as regards telepathy.

Although the public believes in ESP according to surveys (Greeley, 1987; Haraldsson & Houtkooper, 1991), people nevertheless seem to need to keep it at a distance. Media portrayals suggest it is easier to accept ESP as bizarre or limited to extraordinary circumstances than as a natural, everyday phenomenon. Sociologist McClenon quotes an anonymous parapsychologist as follows:

The media is [*sic*] doing a great deal of harm. They emphasize an aspect of psychic phenomenon that corresponds with images that people are comfortable with. These types of images enable people to put a distance between themselves and the psi phenomenon. It seems scary, but also safe and fun. It's like finding diamonds or oil or some other precious entity. But psi is viewed as some entity, a thing outside of ourselves. (quoted in McClenon, 1984, p. 199)

Why would we need to keep psi safely at a distance? Many of our social institutions require the assumption that it is possible to maintain control over information, including secrets. To let go of that assumption would require a total rethinking of our approach to daily interactions. Does the specter of ESP mean our lives are not private? Against our will or without our knowledge, can others gain telepathic access to our private thoughts and learn our secrets? The anticipated loss of boundaries to ESP would be a concern at all levels of society, including that of the parapsychologists who study psi.

Of relevance here is the research of Tart and Labore (1986). It was proposed in an interview with college students that scientists had developed an ESP pill. When a person took the pill, he or she would be able to read the minds and feel the feelings of anyone within 100 yards. The students were then asked how many of them would be interested in trying this pill. No one was willing to volunteer. Interviews revealed that the students feared being confused by everyone's thoughts and feelings and not being able to distinguish their own thoughts from those of other people. They expressed fear of knowing things they couldn't handle, such as perceiving other people's unspoken criticisms of them. Others mentioned feeling uncomfortable with the prospect of knowing the intimate details of people's private lives. They didn't know if they could refrain from condemning people for their weaknesses, and they were sure they didn't want other people to know similar secrets of their own. ESP seemed to be a threat to what we hide protectively in shame. This research indicates that there does seem to be an element of fear concerning psi that parallels ambivalent feelings concerning intimacy.

Psychics experience this fear of their presumed abilities from other people all the time. In an interview for *Venture Inward*, a group of psychics discussed the reactions they received from others in social situations (Smith, 1989a, 1989b). They report that for their own peace of mind they

have had to learn how to turn off their psychic sensitivity. Tart (1986) interviewed people training to become professional psychics and found that they had similar experiences and fears of rejection by others.

ESP stimulates the fears we have about unwanted intimacy. Fundamentally, intimacy is a matter of boundaries. It is not simply a matter of voicing vulnerable feelings, sharing secrets, or touching one another's bodies. Intimacy involves allowing someone to cross over a boundary that we have created as part of the developmental process of forming an identity as an individual self. We use boundaries to maintain privacy and to protect ourselves. The degree to which we suspend our boundaries and invite another person inside them is the degree of intimacy we experience with that person. However, it is legitimate to ask if the suspension of personal boundaries is always under our control?

As Ehrenwald (1971, 1978) and others have theorized, telepathy seems to originate in the early fusion of mother and child, prior to the infant's creation of a personal boundary of self-identity. ESP suggests that these boundaries between us are illusory or that perhaps they are not as firm or as easy to control as we assume. Although we can regulate intimacy and protect our boundaries by controlling eye contact, maintaining silence, or avoiding certain situations, ESP seems less under our control and threatens our ability to maintain our boundaries.

How can we fight the threat of uncontrollable intimacy that the existence of ESP suggests? Some people just deny outright that ESP exists. Labeling a subject as taboo is one way to magically make it disappear, and this is perhaps the only psychological boundary we can create against the intimacy of ESP. Tart (1984) has outlined 10 ways of dealing with the fear of psi.

The loss of the safety and security of one's boundaries is frightening. We assume that our actions stem from our own thoughts and feelings, and the possibility that they may also be prompted by the subliminal, telepathic influence of other people's feelings is a frightening prospect. Believing that the craziness that prompts a sniper to gun down children exists only within the boundaries of the sniper's head is less disturbing than considering the possibility that the sniper is acting out the hatred and hostility that is "in the air" among us all. Considering the possibility that the rest of us might be unconsciously infected by the sniper's anger is also disturbing. Our fears that ESP might create unwanted intimacy are not unfounded. Our imagination touches on realistic aspects of psychic functioning. We will briefly explore some of the actual connections between ESP and intimacy.

ESP THRIVES IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Tales of ESP-type coincidences are much more likely to arise among intimates than among strangers or acquaintances (Rhine, 1981; Stevenson, 1970). It may be that intimates are more likely to detect such ESP-like coincidences, for strangers would not be likely to have the opportunity to

discover matters they have in common. Intimates have been found to do better as partners in ESP experiments than do strangers (Honorton et al., 1990). Is there a connection here?

Our language is full of metaphors for the bonds of intimacy. These terms describe connections created through love, closeness, and togetherness that may contain a psychic component as much as anything tangible. Blood ties and the bonds of friendship are intuitively real. They may be invisible to the senses, but we can feel them. We speak of being "attached" when referring to our emotional "connection" with people important to us. We refer to severing emotional "ties." We also recognize the importance of the period of "bonding" between parents and their newborn children. Mothers invariably feel that their children are a part of them. Is there a psychic umbilical cord?

It is not just that parents are sensitive to their children's needs. It also seems that when there is a bond of intimacy between people, anything that threatens that bond may stimulate an ESP-type of coincidence. A frequent threat to the bonds between persons are crises that threaten a loved one's life. Ian Stevenson indicates that somewhere between 50% to over 80% of cases of spontaneous ESP involve some kind of serious crisis (Stevenson, 1970).

Another threat to the bonds of intimacy is separation. It can happen through death or through estrangement. Couples or family members become separated through upset, argument, strife, and death. The feelings about these relationships go on, but there is no obvious form of communication.

The introduction of separation into a relationship can come from something other than death itself. Sometimes people outgrow each other or other circumstances come between them. Whatever the source, separation can leave one member of that relationship bereaved. I know of several cases of estranged lovers who had dreams that gave the impression that their relationship continued at a psi level.

Can we hide from our relationships simply by putting distance between ourselves and estranged others? ESP thwarts breaking off an unfinished relationship or keeping ourselves separate from one another. Our own thoughts and feelings affect others, as we in turn are affected by their thoughts and feelings. At an unconscious level, we may be aware of when someone is thinking about us, or feel the effect of their thoughts, as shown by several types of research studies. Douglas Dean (1966), for example, found plethysmographic evidence that a subject's physiology responds when another person is focusing on a name of a loved one. Braud and Schlitz (1989) found that an agent's act of focusing on a subject's physiology can affect, by visualization, whether that subject will become more relaxed or more aroused. The studies of "mental suggestion" performed by Vasiliev in Russia (Vasiliev, 1963) demonstrated that subjects can be made to fall asleep through telepathy.

The parent-child bond is another relevant area. Just how closely chil-

dren are attuned to their parents has been amply documented by psychiatrist Schwarz (1971), who presents the diary he and his wife kept of the coincidences that occurred between themselves and their children. His examples parallel the types of stories collected by Louisa Rhine, except they concern more ordinary, mundane events.

It was not uncommon, for example, for one of the Schwarz children to suddenly make a comment aloud that seemed as if in direct response to something a parent was silently thinking, including thoughts he or she was trying to keep secret. Most parents can appreciate stories of embarrassing remarks made by children. This suggests there may be another, much more common, motivator of ESP in the family than crises—secrets.

ESP BRÉACHES SECRETS TO RESTORE INTIMACY

A family is bound by intimacy, but secrets, whatever their nature, create boundaries between the individual family members. ESP can sometimes bridge these boundaries. Even though with intimacy comes increased knowledge and shared expectations, sometimes something more appears to be involved. Children have an uncanny ability to guess their Christmas presents. They also appear to know negative secrets. Parents often try to shield their children from their problems or worries, but the secrecy almost seems to act like a magnet to attract the child's attention.

Sometimes secrets consist of momentary feelings, such as anger, that the person does not feel comfortable about expressing. At a subconscious level, however, children and other family members may perceive the existence of such secret feelings as a threat to togetherness. That threat may motivate the use of ESP to learn the secret and restore intimacy. Often this is simply due to unconscious processing of subtle cues, but sometimes something more seems to be involved. I propose that secrets are one of the most prevalent stimulants to ESP. Laboratory research with nonintentional psi (Braud, 1975; Schechter, 1977; Stanford, 1970; Stanford & Stio, 1976; Stanford & Thompson, 1974) confirms this proposition. Although crises, such as deaths and accidents, may be the largest known source of ESP, secrets may actually be an even more prevalent, although unrecognized or unacknowledged, provocation.

Extramarital contacts, for example, seem to be a sensitive source of telepathic coincidences. One woman wrote me about how she uncovered her husband's affair through dreams. She had a dream where he told her that he loved another woman. She woke up from the dream crying and her husband comforted her, assuring there was no basis to the dream. Later, however, he confessed. When he did so, he used the exact words she had heard him say in her dream.

Another woman wrote that one day a good friend phoned her, quite upset, and relayed this story: After eight years of marriage, she fell in love

with her husband's brother. She kept these feelings to herself for a long time, but one day, the brother came over to the house and they had an intimate encounter. Within five minutes of their liaison, the phone rang. It was the woman's husband. He cried out over the phone, "Did you just make love to somebody?" The wife was overwhelmed with disbelief. All she could do was reply, "What?" The husband said, "I know this sounds crazy, but I just had this incredibly strong feeling that you were with another man." The phone call left the wife stunned, and she picked up the phone and confessed the whole story to her friend.

In relationships, keeping certain facts hidden can be a form of deception. It also is a barrier to intimacy. As a relationship is forming and curiosity is high, such secrets may be especially vulnerable to detection. I decided to search for examples, to see how hard it might be to find them. For my first attempt, I approached someone who I thought would have a number of ESP-type coincidences to share. I asked her: "Have you ever had an experience where your children or spouse made an off the wall comment, or perhaps told you a bit of a dream, and you realized that they, without knowing it themselves, had tapped into a secret of yours or seemed to be picking up on something that you wished they hadn't?" The woman looked at me, paused, and then her face became stern. She said, "Yes, that happened to me once, with one of my daughters." As she blushed, she said, "But it is too personal to tell you about!"

Although this person gave me no story, her embarrassed reaction provided indirect encouragement for my idea, suggesting that there may be a large pool of personal experiences that may be suppressed due to embarrassment. I placed a notice in the magazine *Venture Inward* asking people to come forward with their stories about ESP uncovering family secrets, even if they did so anonymously.

I quickly received over 20 letters in reply, not enough for a quantitative analysis, but sufficient to provide a suggestive profile. Most letters concerned marital infidelities. The second most frequent category was composed of adults who dreamed of secrets their parents kept from them as children—I guess children never really grow beyond the ability to discover their parent's secrets. Two concerned the realization that someone was pregnant, and some involved health matters. Two involved undetected murders, and there were some miscellaneous topics. These letters suggest that there are many such stories. The subject of secrets or deception exposed through ostensible ESP is probably worth a study in itself. Getting people to divulge such secrets, however, is no small trick. Often embarrassment or shame prevents them.

If ESP serves to maintain subconscious, intimate contact among family members who might otherwise choose not to openly discuss certain matters, then it is likely that there are many ESP cases that never come to light. It would be ironic for parapsychology if one of the main stimulants of everyday ESP events also served as a powerful motivator to suppress the evidence (Reed, 1991).

COINCIDENCE: THE DENIAL OF INTIMACY?

Parapsychology recognizes that the personal bonds of intimacy favor the occurrence of spontaneous ESP (Broughton, 1991; Honorton et al., 1990), but parapsychologists have rarely attempted to probe more deeply into the subject. Perhaps there is a concern that the sentimentality involved may cloud scientific thinking. The experience of a coincidence suggestive of ESP is felt only by the person involved, and it makes the experience seem significant, but this factor makes it hard for others to evaluate.

Many people who have had ESP-type coincidences claim that the experiences express the direct connection they feel with their intimates. Sometimes their bodies react to the coincidences in dramatic ways, including excitement and arousal. The experiencers are convinced that these experiences are not “just” coincidences. On the other hand, some people involved in intimate coincidences may want to overlook the psychic bonding that is involved because the emotional closeness is hard to handle. They therefore prefer to dismiss these events as “just coincidence.”

What does it mean to say that something is “just” a coincidence? The concept of coincidence is a philosophically complex subject (Combs & Holland, 1990; Hardy, Harvie, & Koestler, 1973; Jung, 1973; Koestler, 1972; Peat, 1987). A skeptic about the reality of psi is not necessarily on firm ground when claiming that a coincidence means that there is nothing meaningful present. Saying something is a coincidence is certainly a way of saying there is no relationship, let alone intimate connection, between two events. It can be a way of denying the closeness that would otherwise be uncomfortable, as when people say about their lover that they’re “just friends” to minimize the intimate nature of their relationship. If the evidence for ESP can sometimes be too close for comfort, then perhaps using the concept of coincidence is an irrational trick of an apparently rational mind whose purpose is to erect a protective barrier against uncomfortable thoughts.

THE INTIMATE SIDE OF THE EVIDENCE FOR ESP

The laboratory evidence for ESP is such that it is very unlikely that coincidence can account for the results obtained by many independent researchers, but the laboratory research has a more intimate side to it that is not often considered.

Rhine conjectures (1967) that ESP functions unconsciously. The receiver doesn’t know how he or she does it or where the impressions come from. It is difficult to detect the presence of ESP because it comes from within one’s own self, dressed up as one of the mind’s normal activities—a thought, a feeling, an image, or a memory. It is an inner event that rarely announces its presence by any distinguishing quality. That means it can operate invisibly. It can be there right inside your head but you will not recognize it because it blends in so perfectly with the background of your

mind. It is like an invisible intruder, a visiting ghost disguised as a regular member of the family.

In remote-viewing experiments, for example, percipients have great difficulty telling whether they are “just imagining” things or picking up impressions from the agent (Targ & Harary, 1984). An internally generated mental image might not be very different from an image that is telepathically generated. In Ganzfeld experiments, percipients often process personal memories without realizing that it is the agent’s target picture that is stimulating them to recall those memories (Honorton & Harper, 1974). They cannot tell the difference between personal reminiscences and telepathic exchanges.

Not only are our own thoughts, feelings, and daydreams not immune from intrusive telepathic influences, but we cannot tell when such an effect is occurring. This means that whether you wish it or not, whether you know it or not, there is always the possibility that at any given moment, you may not be alone in your own thoughts. If psychic images cannot be distinguished from images from the imagination or memory, then you really cannot tell when you are experiencing ESP. What makes telepathy such an intimate experience is that it covertly enlists the cooperation of your own subjective responses as the carriers of the effect, rendering the external as internal, thus making it impossible for you to find any gate to shut out the influence. What portal do you close to separate yourself from telepathic influence? Telepathy renders sense of distance and separation undetectable.

There is another way that laboratory ESP can fool people. Charles Honorton told me that in one Ganzfeld experiment, for example, the receiver became quite upset, saying: “Someone is pointing a gun!” The remark was out of context with the rest of the material. A moment later, the phone in the laboratory rang. It was the building security guard calling to ask them to lock the laboratory doors because a mental patient with a gun was loose in the halls! The receiver’s ESP had gone beyond the boundaries of the experiment to tune into another event, obviously one of more interest. Not only did the woman not recognize that she was being psychic, she certainly did not appreciate the fact that her telepathic receptors had focused beyond the target material and onto something else. This tendency of ESP in research experiments to slip out of bounds has important implications for intimacy.

Laboratory ESP experiments can be somewhat pedantic. Who cares what picture another person is looking at? Would it not be more interesting to know how that person was feeling about being in the experiment in the first place, or how the experimenter felt about doing this kind of research? If I were in an ESP experiment, I certainly would have more curiosity about these more personal aspects than the formal targets that are used.

If our curiosity will not be content to think only about the ESP cards, if it can wander around the experimental situation itself, shouldn’t our ESP be able to wander also? Who is to say that ESP will remain completely

focused on the task at hand? Experimenters usually assume that ESP will remain tame, and thus they are prepared to observe only the accuracy of our guesses with regard to the formal targets. This narrow focus may miss something.

In their report of remote viewing, Jahn and Dunne (1987) say that they observed several cases where the receiver tuned into other experiences of the agent not related to the official target scene. In one example, the receiver had the impression of playing on the floor with puppies. The agent had gone to examine a moon rocket at a space museum. The rocket was the official target. Afterwards, the agent went to visit friends who had a new litter of puppies. He played with them and was so delighted by them that he purchased one. The agent's impressions were scored as wrong, yet the agent realized that the perceiver's mind had tuned into one of his private, off-duty moments. In another case, the agent was headed toward a gambling casino in Las Vegas. On a pit stop along the way, he played on a collapsible bicycle. He would try to ride it, the bike would collapse, and he would fall to the ground. It was a fun time of clumsy goofing off. The receiver got impressions of this leisure moment, not the official moment of viewing within the casino.

The receiver may even sense something about the sender's private life or may pick up on something about one of the experimenters. In most published reports of these ESP experiments, such events are rarely reported. Probably only a fraction of them are even detected, because the experimenter's focus is upon the congruence between the percipient's response and the official target. The researchers may not recognize the unofficial target that is associated with the receiver's impression. Also, because these kinds of events cloud the issue, not having been planned for, they are often discreetly ignored. I learned of the story of the armed intruder by interviewing Honorton; it was not included as part of the published report.

Perhaps the most impressive examples of ESP going out of bounds comes from studies of dream telepathy. In an article about the Maimonides research, Vaughan (1970) described an amusing case. Sol Feldstein was monitoring the equipment one night while the receiver slept and the agent was locked up with the art picture target. The male dreamer dreamed about ancient busts and statues of women with their breasts exposed. None of these dream images seemed similar to the target art print. Hearing about the poor results of the night's work, Feldstein remarked that he believed he understood what had happened. That night he had picked up *Life* magazine and studied an illustrated article about topless bathing suits. Clearly, the dreamer found the pictures Feldstein was looking at more interesting than the target picture. From then on, the laboratory had to impose a rule forbidding the staff from reading during the dream experiments. As we will see, that rule was insufficient to keep the dream telepathy from going out of bounds.

Robert Van de Castle participated as a dreaming subject in the Maimonides studies and was quite successful. Ullman and Krippner, with

Vaughan (1973) called him the "Prince of the Percipients." In their discussion of Van de Castle's attempts to dream telepathically, they present one instance where his dream tuned in on the private life of one of the experimenters. Van de Castle dreamed that he saw the expense account statements of this experimenter lying open in the lab. He felt guilty about seeing something he was not supposed to see. He saw the notation, "This was not enough money. Twenty-five dollars more needed to be raised." In the dream, Van de Castle also realized that this problem had been somehow taken care of, that there was no longer a need to raise that extra money. In going over that dream the next day, it seemed to have little to do with the target picture. Stanley Krippner recognized the dream, however, as a direct reference to an actual situation. He had made a business trip for which the reimbursement he received was 25 dollars short of his actual expenses. When he brought this to the attention of his host, that person made up the difference personally, which was somewhat unusual.

Van de Castle revealed in a personal interview that there were other cases like this one in the Maimonides' experiments. One evening he dreamed about the Northwest Mounted Police, a "regular Nelson Eddy musical," he said. The next day, he was not able to make any connection between this dream and the target pictures presented to him. As he discussed the dream with the staff, the night monitor looked embarrassed and confided that he had fallen asleep in the lab during the experiment, and while asleep he dreamed of the Northwest Mounted Police. It is of interest not just that Van de Castle picked up on this person's dream but that its revelation involved something of an embarrassment. The monitor took a small risk of his job security when he revealed the incident, yet he made a contribution to the history of ESP.

Such telepathic dreams, ranging beyond the confines of the experimental target, can yield potentially embarrassing information. In his interview, Van de Castle revealed another example from the Maimonides experiments. It was a case where discretion would not allow the authors to include the incident in their journal reports or their book, to protect the individual involved. In this case, Van de Castle dreamed about a recent unfortunate incidence in the personal life of the agent. The dream contained several relevant details concerning this incident. Because both Van de Castle's dreams and this person's name appear in *Dream Telepathy* (Ullman & Krippner, with Vaughan, 1973), in fairness to this person I cannot disclose the nature of the secret Van de Castle's dreams exposed.

I would note, however, that here is an instance where were it not for my acquaintance with the subject, a telepathic event in an experiment would go unrecorded in order to protect someone's privacy. It is a relevant concern. ESP does violate privacy and presents the participants in an experiment with the quandary of whether or not to reveal the intimacies that ESP exposes. Ironically, it seems that it is the desire for intimacy that propels the ESP, whereas it is our fear of intimacy that keeps the ESP effect hidden. In both life and lab, ESP can make us too close for comfort, and

the only way we can erect a barrier to this invasion is to deny or suppress data indicative of ESP.

ESP may excite our imaginations, but it also raises concerns about loss of privacy, vanishing boundaries, and uncontrollable intimacy. Spontaneous cases and laboratory research show that these concerns are not simply the product of imagination. Issues of intimacy can truly impede both the public acceptance of ESP and the advance of parapsychology.

Perhaps we would do well to take the intimacy factor into consideration. If we can grapple with people's mixed feelings about intimacy, both their wanting to be close to others and their fear of closeness, perhaps we can make more progress in the exploration of ESP. A good place to start is by looking at the experience of two people coming into close rapport with one another.

RESONATING: WHEN YOU AND I ARE ONE

When one thinks about the terms that describe the process of the linking up of minds—empathy, sympathy, telepathy, rapport, resonating, communion, union—there is one quality they have in common: two entities become unified by their yoked response: Two act as one.

If I feel like you feel when I empathize with you, or if I feel your pain, enter your world, then it is as if I take on your characteristics. I become you. Therapists have at times used the term *resonance* to explain this deep level of empathy that has psychic overtones. Virginia A. Larson (1986, 1987), for example, presents a survey of therapists' accounts of such experiences and tells of her own. She notes that one thing that is appealing about the resonance idea is the phenomenon of "sympathetic vibration." She observes that as she enters into empathy with another person, there is an enhancement of affect. Through sympathetic vibration, she begins to feel even more strongly how the other person feels. This vibration, she suggests, might explain the quantum leap from sympathy to empathy to telepathy.

She describes an instance when a new client came for her appointment. Larson had been practicing some relaxation exercises to prepare for this session and was quite serene when the client arrived. Upon meeting her, Larson immediately began to experience some strange sensations. While the interview proceeded, she watched these sensations and observed them begin to localize in the abdomen. Finally, she described her sensations to the client. The woman immediately recognized what Larson was talking about, and she told her she had cervical cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy. From that moment on, at the recognition of the sympathetic sensation in the therapist, Larson and this woman enjoyed a deep bond and had a fruitful therapeutic experience. She said that the experience of resonance, as it began, made her think that she knew this person from the past. The sense of rapport was greater than she could explain.

From meeting to merging, the development of this telepathic rapport

seems to progress in stages. In her research, Larson interviewed several therapists who reported telepathic resonance. She concluded that the process begins with humility and a willingness to be receptive towards another individual. The next stage is sympathy, or focusing our emotional response upon the emotions of the other person. As we begin to identify with the other person and experience his or her feelings and attitudes as if they were our own, the empathy stage occurs. Empathy leads to rapport, or the development of synchronization with the other person. The rapport sets up the possibility for resonance, in which the other person's experiences are so enhanced within you that you are able to jump past the sensory channel and move into the direct, mind-to-mind level of telepathy, or what some have called "transpersonal" communication (Rowan, 1986). Therapists have often described this type of telepathic effect, when it occurs in the face-to-face encounter, as unconscious communication (Field, 1989; Lothane, 1981; Margulies, 1989).

This progression of closeness, good as it might feel at times, may also sometimes be felt as threatening. Listening itself can be risky. When we listen to music, for example, it has the capacity to entrance us. We begin to tap our feet, to feel along with the rhythm; it is almost involuntary. Listening can be a form of surrender as it invites us to fuse with the object of our attention. Listening with rapt attention or experiencing empathy for another person's point of view can threaten the listener's own standpoint. Inherent in the activity of listening, therefore, lurks the possibility of merger, and thus concerns about being influenced, submission, surrender, obedience, or compliance—the same concerns about loss of control and confused identity that exists with telepathy.

The use of hypnosis in facilitating telepathic experiences is relevant to this concern. In the 1800s, hypnotists used the word "rapport" to describe the empathic relationship that formed between the hypnotic subject and the hypnotist. This rapport developed to such an extent that even silent suggestions were effective. The hypnotist only had to think the suggestion and the subject would follow it. In experiments described as "the community of sensations," the hypnotist would explore a sensory experience in a separate location and the subject would experience it. If the hypnotist put a substance in his mouth, for example, the subject would taste it. Empathy became telepathy. There appeared to be a telepathic transference of thoughts, feelings, and sensations from hypnotist to subject. A sympathetic bond was created by the subject's empathy with the hypnotist's voice (Dingwall, 1967). In fact, it was these studies that led to the coining of the term "telepathy" and its experimental investigation outside of hypnosis.

Hypnotic suggestion raises the same concern for surrender and loss of control as do listening and telepathy. Total listening can be hypnotic. Hypnotic inductions often include, in fact, instructions to simply listen to, not think about, the hypnotist's suggestions. To respond to a hypnotist's remarks as propositions to be evaluated strips them of their suggestive

power. If one ceases those rational activities and just listens, what the hypnotist is saying becomes very suggestive.

Psychologists who have observed habits of listening note that many people are generally poor listeners (e.g., Rogers, 1961). Rather than automatically trying to empathize with what a person is saying, they are more likely to think about the content or information they present, evaluate it, and prepare to respond. One possible reason for this defensive posture is found in recent research on how people understand sentences. It seems that in order to understand a statement, the listener temporarily believes that statement: "People believe in the ideas they comprehend, as quickly and automatically as they believe in objects they see" (Gilbert, 1991). Our responses to people talking to us, therefore, are often geared toward preventing their words from becoming too suggestive, or too "real."

There is something about listening that potentially threatens our identity. As children, the sound of a parent's voice is a very compelling reality. As we listen to our parents, suggestible to their almost hypnotic remarks, we know no other reality. As we develop some individual identity, however, we begin to evaluate what they say and to make our own decision about the validity of their remarks. When they say "Listen!" it seems that what they really mean is "Obey!" or "Agree!" Such an experience of forced compliance gives us a bad taste for the experience of listening, as if listening to our parents means we will have to surrender our developing sense of personal reality. As adults we continue to suspect that if we don't hold onto our own viewpoint or a critical posture while we are listening, we are liable to accept unquestioningly what the person is saying. We fear that we can be taken over as we listen. Empathizing, for example, with someone who is telling us something that we do not want to hear is very difficult. We erect defenses as we listen, mentally repeating our objections to protect ourselves from having our own position destroyed.

The psychology of intimacy recognizes that the ability to listen requires the existence of a stable sense of self (Solomon, 1989). A person with an established identity can enter imaginatively into an alternative perspective, using an "as if" or role-playing ability, without becoming lost. A person with an unstable self-identity, however, feels that to listen carefully, completely, and empathically is the same as agreeing—permanently—with that person; it poses the threatening possibility of the loss of self-identity by becoming engulfed in the other person's perspective.

If empathy can be so threatening, then so much more so does telepathy threaten the loss of self-boundaries, a breach in the self's assertion of its own independent, autonomous reality. Whatever philosophical or scientific implications psi may have for the intellectual community, it is the loss of autonomy that makes telepathy such an emotional issue.

It is my opinion that although many people may aspire to develop psychic ability, most do not really want it unless it will be a power they can consciously control. To be able to use psychic ability to extend the power

of self-definition or to use it for personal advantage feels more attractive and safe than to find it blurring our boundaries and making us involuntarily connected with others. The irony, however, is that perhaps telepathy appears not in the context of affirming the autonomy of the independent self but more in the context of the self-in-relationship. Parapsychologists (e.g., LeShan, 1987) and practicing psychics, such as Edgar Cayce (Reed, 1988), for example, have maintained that people who are in a cooperative rather than a competitive relationship are more likely to have psychic experiences between them.

What if we were to study telepathy as an extension of listening and as an invitation to intimacy? By creating a context to encourage cooperation and asking people to listen to one another very closely for mutual gain, we might provide a situation where they could become telepathic. Such a situation might provide us with an experimental context for dealing simultaneously with the issues of both intimacy and psi. I will describe just such a situation.

AN INTIMATE EXPERIMENT IN TRANSPERSONAL EMPATHY

Thus far I have discussed the fear of too much, or unwanted, intimacy. What about the flip side, the desire to be close? What is the basis of our motivation for intimacy? This topic is vast, and it has been explored by poets, philosophers, and, most recently, psychologists. In Plato's *Symposium*, for example, Socrates recalls Aristophanes, who said that one time long ago, we had four hands and four feet. We were round. But we were arrogant, and the gods got upset with us. Zeus punished us, decreeing:

They shall continue to exist but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers . . . Each of us when separated is but the indenture of a man having one side only like a flat fish, and he is always looking for his other half . . . and when one of them finds his other half . . . the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy. . . . The intense yearning which each of them has toward the other does not appear to be in the desire of intercourse but of something else which the soul desires and cannot tell, and of which she only has a dark and doubtful presentiment.

Socrates remarked, "There's not a man among them when he heard this who would deny or who would not acknowledge that this meeting and melding in one another's arms, thus becoming one instead of the two, was the very expression of his ancient needs. And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were whole, and the desire and pursuit of that whole is called Love." (quoted in Gaylin & Person, 1988, pp. 56-57)

Today, psychologists recognize that the impetus for intimacy has its origins in the mother-child bond (Solomon, 1989; Wright, 1991), as does telepathy (Ehrenwald, 1971, 1978). The mother's gaze is like a mirror reflecting to the baby the information that will form his or her self-identity. As we develop, interpersonal relationships have a great impact upon our

self-concept. Intimacy is the sharing of spontaneous internal processes with another person such that the other person becomes involved, at least for that moment, in the process of our self-exploration and ongoing identity creation. It is more than simply the communication of personal information or the empathic sharing of emotional responses, but a mutual mirroring process in which either party has the ability to shape, reinforce, or hurt the other party's experience of his or her essence. The reward is a sense of connection and fulfillment, much as alluded to in Socrates' account above.

The process of establishing intimacy need not be restricted to romantic or therapeutic encounters. Intimacy can also occur in fleeting moments of mundane interaction, as when someone catches your eye as you are preening in front of a mirror. Because telepathy has roots similar to those of our capacity for intimacy, it may play a role in our everyday experience of close encounters. Parapsychological research might well take advantage of the intimacy motif in telepathic interaction.

When we first meet someone, for example, we quickly form many impressions. It is as if we immediately put out feelers to sense whether the other person vibrates to frequencies of our liking or familiarity. Part of the process of getting to know someone may have a psychic component. We have fantasies about a person, such as imaging their homes, their lives, or seeing them in various activities. Generally we do not share these fantasies with the person, so we never have reason to suspect that much of what we experience about a person may be coming from unconscious impressions.

I have translated this spontaneous happening into an exercise for a small group activity that I present at workshops as an exercise in intuitive communication. I call it the "Getting to Know You" game. It is a structured group process that provides repeated opportunities to encounter the experience of unconscious communication, whether we wish to call it resonance, telepathy, or transpersonal empathy. It allows people to experience it intentionally and explore its meaning. This exercise may be the basis of a fruitful field approach to studying the way people handle telepathic communication. The method I use is this: When people meet in small groups, it is very common for them to introduce themselves, say where they are from, what job they do, and so on. In the "Getting to Know You" game, people introduce themselves very differently. We dispense with the usual sharing of information and instead simply listen intently to the sound of one another's voices. People are intently curious about the strangers gathered around them and wonder how they might relate to these people. The "Getting to Know You" game encourages them to use their natural intuitive ability to get acquainted while demonstrating many points about telepathic functioning.

Picture a small group of, say, 6–8 people, sitting in a circle. Each person takes a turn introducing him or herself. While the target person, agent, or sender makes a vowel sound aloud in a prolonged, chanting fashion, everyone else imitates the sound: The agent intones a 10-second "Aaaaaah-hhhhh . . ." and the rest of the group intones "Aaaaaahhhhhh . . ." at the

same time. This “tuning-up phase” is like the lead violin in an orchestra to which all the other instruments are attuned. It is a way of having the group focus their attention on the sound of the target person’s voice in a room where there may be several competing voices and other noises. By imitating that voice sound, the group members are putting themselves into sympathetic vibration, both literally and figuratively, with the target person.

Once the group is tuned to the target person, he or she provides a “voice sample” for the group to absorb. The sample consists of reciting aloud a standardized script (e.g., reciting the alphabet or counting backwards from 49). Each target person uses the same script, and as the voice sample always contains the same verbal content, group members do not have to pay attention to what the target person is saying; they can focus on the tone of his or her voice.

In explaining how to listen, I encourage people to assume that their bodies are very sensitive receivers, such that the vibration of the target person’s voice will create effects within the listener. I suggest that people allow themselves to be passive instruments of the vibration, allowing the target person’s voice to massage them, to rub against them like a violin bow rubs the violin string, creating various resonant effects. To suggest further the frame of mind that is most receptive to receiving impressions from a voice sample, I quote an item from the Absorption Scale of the Differential Personality Inventory (Nelson, 1990; Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974), an assessment device that correlates with psychic performance. The item reads: “Sometimes a voice is so fascinating I can go on listening to it forever.” I ask participants to imagine what it might be like to listen to a voice in that way, not thinking about or analyzing the voice quality, but simply allowing oneself to drift along to the sound of the voice.

I reassure the group members that each person’s experience will be different. I point out that some people will see pictures, but not everyone will process the voice sample in terms of visual imagery. Some people will simply have physical sensations. Others will have feelings and impressions or even urges. Some people will see words flash before their mind’s eye, whereas others will find themselves thinking of things or being reminded of past experiences. I encourage people to simply accept the possibility that whatever they experience may be related to something about the target person. The game helps people to learn to recognize the modalities by which they get intuitive impressions.

After the target person has completed the recitation, the people in the group describe what they experienced. I had instructed them to make a special effort to report their raw experience without interpreting, judging, or analyzing it first, but simply describe what they experienced. For example, “Well, while I listened to your voice I thought about the time I had to give a speech to the local Rotary Club and how worried I was about choking up, and I had a mental image of my wife telling me not to be

nervous, and I wondered if my mind was wandering too far from the task and was afraid I wasn't going to get any correct impressions."

After everyone has shared their experiences, the group reviews them to look for patterns. Were there any repeated themes? Did their impressions seem to focus on a particular subject matter? If so, perhaps the group can make an inference about the person or what the person had in mind while providing the voice sample.

Earlier in the instructions I had suggested that the target person might consider whether or not to focus on something specific while providing the voice sample. Target persons might want to think of something positive about their personal life that they'd like the others to know, or perhaps a scene from home that reflects something interesting about themselves or that makes them feel good. It is a way of saying, "This is something about who I am and what my life is like that's very important to me." Focusing on such a scene should put the person in an open frame of mind, and it can be a way to direct or limit what the listeners might tune into about the target person. I suggested that whether or not the target person intentionally focuses on a specific mental scene, it might prove worthwhile to notice what thoughts transpire during the recitation as a frame of reference when considering the listeners' impressions.

The target person takes notes on the listeners' impressions. When everyone has presented their impressions or experiences, he or she responds to them one by one. I encourage them to explore the meaning of their impressions and not to leave it simply at whether or not the impression is a "hit" (to use a term from experimental parapsychology) with the target person; that is, I encourage the participants not to let the game deteriorate into a mere test of "mind reading" but to use it as a getting acquainted tool. Listeners might associate to their own impressions to find out what they have in common with the target person. The metaphor of resonance, an image of two entities vibrating together on a common frequency, implies that a listener's impressions might pertain to areas where he or she has something in common with the target person.

INDICATIONS OF PSI INDUCED BY THE INTIMACY EXERCISE

I have presented this exercise at several workshops, primarily for the Association for Research and Enlightenment at its Virginia Beach headquarters and at several regional gatherings; and also at a conference on Psi and Intimacy at the Department of Psychology, West Georgia College; to counselors of the Hampton Roads Licensed Professional Counselors Association; to therapists at the Boston Jung Institute; and to members of the Unity Church in Anchorage, Alaska. A typical workshop is attended by 100 to 200 participants, forming anywhere from 10 to 30 small groups of 6 to 8 members. As of this writing, I have presented the game at over 40 different workshops, to a total of more than 4,000 participants. Although

in small classes and seminars I have been able to participate personally in the group interaction to gain a closer look at what happens, in the majority of cases my observations are based primarily upon the groups' self-reports, with written follow-ups from a few self-selected individuals.

During a discussion phase at the end of the exercise, I ask for a show of hands in response to the question: "Based on what you observed happening among members in your group, would you say that the listeners experiences are accurately tuning in to significant aspects of the target person's life?" Typically, there is a resounding positive response to this question, with almost all hands flying up. People are enthusiastic and amazed at what they were able to pick up and what their colleagues picked up about them. When I ask the next question, "Looking at the most accurate impressions, would you say that you witnessed any telepathy going on?," few hands go up, perhaps only about 10% of the audience. When asked why, the usual reaction is that telepathy is something that happens at a distance, not in a face-to-face encounter. If I use the word "psychic," meaning a direct mind-to-mind connection, then the majority (anywhere from 60 to 75%) of the people affirm that they have witnessed something "psychic." (Whether psi is actually a factor in this game will be addressed later.)

As another context for presenting this exercise, I have developed written instructions of the process and sent them to informal study groups who have tried it for themselves and sent me brief reports of the results. Their response was essentially the same as the audiences I directed in a first-hand fashion.

Based on this extensive experience, I present below some basic observations about the results provided by the game that may be expected if a reader should attempt to replicate it.

1. If a target person focused on a particular scene, sometimes a group of listeners will have a collection of impressions that bear directly on that scene. In one group in which I participated, during the voice impression I got the sense of motion, of something going back and forth between two people, and a sense of expanse, as at the beach, and a wavy feeling, or an undulating curve, like the waves at the beach, going back and forth, a ball going back and forth. And I saw people throwing a ball back and forth at the beach, overlooking a fence, like a picket fence. Other people saw the ocean and children. One person mentioned seeing the target person and her husband next to each other in the car on a long drive. The target person said the scene she imagined was at her family's beach house where her husband played ball with the kids on the beach. It is a 5-hour drive there, and the beach is strewn with sand-retention fences that look like picket fences.

In another case, group members noted that their impressions had a lot in common, but they may have misinterpreted their impressions. One person described an image of the target person, a young woman, lying on her back spinning around. Two group members had images of her dancing and spinning, and both also saw flashes of bright yellow. Another person

imagined himself spinning around in a circle and waving some yellow ribbons above his head, making them spin around in a circle like some kind of child's toy. From these impressions, the group was convinced that the target person must have been contemplating some kind of dance performance with a yellow theme. In actuality, she was contemplating an experience she had upon leaving her home town to come to the east coast. As a good-bye ceremony, she went for a swim in her favorite river. What she remembered was lying on her back and floating around in circles, sinking down under the water and seeing the sun shining through the water, creating a sensation of yellow light spinning and twirling above her. Incidentally, someone else saw a Raggedy Ann doll. The woman said when she was a child she had a Raggedy Ann doll, and when she left home, she realized she no longer had any of her dolls and bought a Teddy bear to take on the trip.

In another case, a group member said she had the impression of a "very crisp white." Another person thought about scenes of planes flying overhead. Someone else imagined a stage, as if witnessing some kind of performance. Another reported seeing a scene involving education or a dedication. The group guessed that perhaps the agent imagined something having to do with a graduation ceremony. In fact, the agent reported that she was reliving her recent experience at her son's induction day ceremony at the U.S. Naval Academy. There were thousands of young people in white, with jets flying over as part of the graduation ceremony.

2. *Percipients cannot distinguish subjective experiences from objective, intuitive impressions.* Sometimes I will ask if anyone finds that they never seem to get any impression. A number of people report that they just get a "blank" when they try to tune into the voice. I find it is instructive to interview these people. For example, one woman said, "I didn't get anything again, just the word 'commitment.'" I teased her a little bit, saying "Just the word commitment? You're assuming that your impression should be visual, aren't you? How do you know but maybe the word commitment has some meaning?" Later, when we heard from the target person, we learned she was recalling an important incident in her life when she had nursed her sister back to health, and as she had agonized during the process, she found that her sense of commitment to her sister was something that was very important to her. She was very surprised when this woman had an impression of the word "commitment." She said her body responded to that word as if it touched the essence of her experience. The woman who thought she had received nothing had in fact expressed the core of the target person's experience.

It is not possible to determine how many other times people reject their impressions as "nothing" and so are never in a position to learn just how relevant their "nothing" in fact was because they did not share what they experienced. As Louisa Rhine (1967) pointed out, psi experiences do not have any specific characteristics to distinguish their presence from the ongoing flow of subjective experiences.

Sometimes there are surprising examples of ostensibly purely subjective responses or normal trains of the listener's thought that contain information very relevant to the target person. I was once present in a group where a listener apologized for not paying attention during the voice recitation. He said that on his way to the seminar that morning he walked through the park and saw a wedding taking place. During the voice sample, he found himself thinking about that wedding and reminiscing about when he gave his own daughter away in marriage. Again he apologized for his lapse of attention. At that point, the target person broke the protocol of silence and announced: "My daughter got married yesterday, and giving her away at the wedding was exactly what I was thinking about when I recited the verse!" Needless to say, we were impressed by that coincidence! This kind of shaping of thought is quite similar to that observed in Ganzfeld experiments where a personal memory may carry the psi impression (Honorton & Harper, 1974).

3. *The percipient's raw experience is usually more accurate than their interpretation of their experience.* I once witnessed the listener say to the target person: "You are a person who is striving to stay in control!" The target person replied, "I don't know if I like that characterization." I asked the listener, "What did you actually experience?" The listener answered, "While listening to his voice, I felt my shoulders and neck tightening up." I asked her if she had ever experienced that before. She indicated she had, during periods when she was anxious and was trying to stay in control of her feelings or a situation. She supposed that was why she had guessed the target person was a "controlling person." The target person was now excited and broke into the conversation, exclaiming, "I'm always having trouble with stiff shoulders and have a sore neck right now. Are you saying these problems come from an attempt to always be in control?" The target person had changed his tone when his attention had been directed away from being judged to the subject of sore shoulders. The listener had experienced the resonant listening reported by Larson (1986, 1987) and cited earlier, but she did not have the skill to use it effectively. Nevertheless, there was a definite tuning in to the target person that the target person found meaningful.

Confusing the report of the raw experience with some attribute of the target person is an example of what early introspectionists called "the stimulus error" (Stevens, 1951). I have experienced the same difficulty reported by those early researchers, namely, that it is hard for people to report their direct, raw experience without giving it some interpretation.

The intervention of rational processes may interfere with the psi mechanism, depending upon whether or not it occurs during the reception stage or only during the reporting of one's experience. I have witnessed in my own experience what many listeners have noted about themselves, which is that people can only report a portion of their experience because they do not know how to verbalize it. As they hear other listeners report their experiences, they find themselves nodding in agreement because another

person's report will match some aspect of their own subjective experience that they were unable to put into words. The nonverbal aspects of a considerable proportion of the subjective impressions received may result in not being able to detect psi hits.

4. *Both percipients and agents sometimes suppress information relevant to detecting ESP when unwanted intimacy would result from such a disclosure.* Many percipients who claim they get "nothing" may be getting impressions that they would rather not share. Percipients have come up to me and said that they simply had to tune out a person because, for example, they could not tolerate the hostility in the person's voice. Others have confided that they sensed tragedy or trauma in the person's life and did not think it wise to mention it. Sometimes these percipients just cannot get these ideas out of their minds. They become "infected" with the other person's emotional state or obsessed with aspects of what they assume to be the other person's life.

People feel a need to defend themselves from what they experience as psychic contagion when empathy with another person triggers uncomfortable feelings within themselves. This phenomenon is quite similar to what therapists describe as "projective identification." This term refers to the effect a patient has upon the therapist whereby feelings that are unconscious in the patient are transferred to the therapist. The therapist easily mistakes these feelings as countertransference, that is, as being of a personal subjective origin, when in fact they originate with the patient (Schwartz-Salant, 1988; Tansey & Burke, 1985). Patients diagnosed as "borderline" psychotic most often create this effect (de Beà, 1989; Field, 1991).

Another source of suppressed reporting of experience on the part of percipients is embarrassment. When I poll participants to see if any had impressions they did not share because of embarrassment, many people confess to having held back material. One man joked that he felt an attraction for one of the female group members, and it was clear from other people's reactions that he expressed feelings that many could recognize. Sexual attraction is an area of intimacy that excites a great deal of mixed feelings.

At one conference, a woman reported that she had an impression during the voice sample that was so grotesque that she was ashamed to report it for fear of being judged "sick" by the group. She said that because the group had specifically discussed the ideal of sharing everything, she reluctantly decided to go ahead and tell her impression. It was of being in a corn field and reaching down and picking up an ear of corn that had a strange appearance. It had warts and strangely colored growths all over it. She felt that perhaps the image reflected some kind of distorted phallic feelings on her part so she did not want to share it. When she did reveal the image, however, the target person, a young male, turned quite pale as he explained that he lived across the road from a corn field, and the week before he had walked among the rows. There he came upon an ear of corn that had

colored growths all over it. He was bothered by what he saw, not understanding that it was not that uncommon an example of a particular type of blight. The woman and he were both flabbergasted that she would pick up on this particular experience. The woman said that she was still quite shaken by the event, and to quote her exactly, she was aghast “to think that I almost didn’t say anything because of feeling embarrassed.”

The target person, too, may suppress information that would otherwise validate a listener’s impressions because to do so would be anxiety provoking or information was involved that could not be revealed. At one conference, I received an anonymous note from a woman who confided that someone in her group hit a nerve that made her clam up. She wrote that although no one picked up on the exact scene that she was imagining, one woman said the word “infidelity” came to her. Hearing this word shocked the target person, she wrote me, as she had just returned from a trip with a man other than her husband. She believed that that group member had tuned into her secret affair. If so, then here was an example of the need to suppress the exposure of a secret, which resulted in evidence of a possible psi effect itself being suppressed. It is exciting to imagine just how often this effect may occur, but frustrating to suspect that the evidence will never come to light. Even in the innocuous “Getting to Know You” game, there can be potentially dramatic moments of unexpected and unwanted intimacy.

5. *Percipients have accurate impressions that go beyond the boundaries of the agent’s specific focus and sometimes touch on personal facts of intense emotional significance.* Many people noted that when they were the target person, they considered and then rejected certain scenes as potential images upon which to focus. The listeners, they reported, did not provide impressions relevant to their chosen image but to one that they had decided not to use.

In one interesting case the group members’ impressions seemed to coincide with the theme of travel. I was in that group, and I first received an impression of a small boat rocking in the sea and the sense of a sail. But then the scene shifted, and I was waiting at a train station where I saw a locomotive arrive. These impressions made me think of travel. Another person saw the vertical tail fin of an airplane. A third imagined walking on a moving sidewalk in an airport. One person saw the color pink, and another had the impression of the target person carrying a pink parasol while walking about in a foreign country in a strangely shaped building. The last person saw the target person working in the kitchen, tidying up a little girl, and got the feeling that “if I could just stop time now—this is a perfect moment.” The target person, a woman, said she was thinking about her trip to Egypt, which was a very special experience for her. She carried a pink sun umbrella around while there because it was so hot. She noted that prior to deciding to focus on that experience, however, she thought about her first boat ride, where she caught a sailfish, and thought it was interesting that one person seemed to pick up on that scene, even

though she had rejected it. The person who saw the upright tail fin wondered if she was seeing the sailfish. The target person then confided that the impression that made the greatest impact on her had nothing to do with her trip to Egypt. Mention of the young girl in the kitchen had hit her in the heart and made her want to cry because a painful aspect of her life right now involved her grown daughter who had moved back to live with her following a divorce. The man who had that impression mentioned that he was himself back home living with his parents after years away and was going through an intense period of getting reacquainted.

On another occasion when I was a listener, I experienced an impression of a white woven blanket, like a cotton blanket, or perhaps something like a quilt; a sense of white creamy milk being poured out; then a rocker, as in a nursery for a young child; then a vision of knives, which shook me; then a woman observing or supervising men at work on a house, putting shingles on the roof and painting the exterior walls. Then I saw a scalpel approach a pregnant belly and draw slowly across it, cutting it softly and smoothly like butter. Someone else saw mother and child, and another saw a child. Another saw a youngster's lips with red all around them. Someone saw a glass of bourbon, a soft carpet covering an expanse of floor, and experienced a sense of fluidity and of giving in to the flow. The target person had been focusing on that morning's intimate moment with her young daughter, who climbed into bed with her and lay there cuddling. On the bed is a white woven blanket and a quilt. Then their happiness was interrupted when the mother found herself upset over her daughter's continued use of a pacifier, which had caused a red rash around her lips and mouth. One woman had a headache during the exercise, and said she was having a similar separation issue with both her daughter and her mother. I suggested that the image of a Caesarean delivery is one of premature separation of mother and child. The person who had the image of a glass of bourbon said it reminded him of a pacifier, using drink to pacify oneself. Here an underlying emotional conflict experienced by the target person seemed to come across to some of the group members in symbolic terms that related to the members' own separation experiences.

6. *Groups vary in how intimate they become, and the degree of intimacy achieved may be correlated with reports of apparent psi.* Some groups are quite shy, or the composition of the group is such that there doesn't seem to be much interest among the people in getting close. Or there may be too much attraction to tolerate. Whatever the source of this fear of intimacy, I have noticed one dynamic a group uses to deal with the problem. They progress through the game quite rapidly, and they share impressions in a brief and perfunctory manner. They lack curiosity about their interconnections, so there is little discussion beyond a routine assessment of "hits" and "misses." They invariably report that there was very little that might suggest ESP, and they do not report anything suggesting that they got well acquainted. It may be that the game itself made them feel too close for comfort.

By way of contrast, other groups embrace the opportunity to become acquainted and experience profoundly moving connections that cement a bond between and among members. When asked about the occurrence of any apparent telepathic effects, they describe many. It is notable, however, that in contrast to the low intimacy groups, whose reports focus on the external details of how their impressions did not match the target person's images, the high intimacy groups do not stress the great number of apparently telepathic connections they observed so much as the content of their connections and what they are learning from one another about the issues of mutual concern. It is as if the psi mechanism has become "transparent" and was itself no longer the focus, which became the meaningful emotional exchange psi provided them.

CAN WE DISCUSS TELEPATHY FACE TO FACE?

The informal observations made in conjunction with the "Getting to Know You" game are in keeping with the theme of our exploration of intimacy and psi. All of the relationships, in fact, between the psychology of intimacy and the functioning of telepathy proposed during the first part of this paper were apparent in the participants' responses to the game. Before discussing these further, we will discuss whether psi was present in the game.

The participants themselves were reluctant to accept that the connections they experienced were due to telepathy or some other form of psi. This was because they were sitting face to face, and they assumed that telepathy connoted the passing of information over a distance and with no sensory contact. The traditional parapsychological approach to telepathy is to physically isolate the participants, for the telepathic hypothesis is usually defined as communication with no sensory involvement. By this standard, the "Getting to Know You" game is not capable of demonstrating telepathy.

The majority of participants did believe, however, that they had witnessed a psychic interchange, meaning a mind-to-mind connection. The impressions people had about the agent went beyond mere speculation about the personality characteristics of the speaker. They included many examples of the person's home environment, conditions at work, and other images that went beyond mere subjective impressions. In response to these surprising coincidences, they reported having tell-tale bodily sensations, such as hair standing up on the back of the neck, "gut" wrenching recognitions, blushing, and other physiological indicators of the experience of being seen or recognized in a surprising and meaningful way. They often described these experiences as "uncanny."

Psychoanalytic studies of the uncanny (Hutch, 1988) have proposed that it is the confluence of the conscious, sensory world with that of the unconscious and fantasy realms that gives rise to such reactions of being in the presence of the uncanny. Psychotherapists often use the term "unconscious communication" as a pseudonym for presumably telepathic or psy-

chic interaction (Devereux, 1953; Eisenbud, 1970), implying that the channel of psi interaction is through the unconscious mind and that it can occur in face-to-face encounters, where it is intermixed with normal sensory channels of communication.

Examples of uncanny coincidences between the listeners' impressions and the target person's private life that many participants experienced resemble instances published in the psychotherapeutic literature as examples of unconscious communication (Larson, 1987; Mintz & Schmeidler, 1983; Silverman, 1988, 1991). A number of laboratory studies have demonstrated the possibility of telepathy (Broughton, 1991), so it is not inappropriate to suggest that a telepathic component could have been present in the "Getting to Know You" game.

If we hypothesize that a psi component *may* be present in this game, even though it is unproven at this moment, we can briefly review how the presence of apparent psi relates to the intimacy factors we discussed earlier. First, the game is an exercise in intimate listening. In listening to someone speak about a topic, the listener can process the verbal meanings in the communication, but in the case of our game, there is very little objective content to which to attend. It requires the listener to suspend *thinking about* the voice sample and to become absorbed in *resonating with* the feeling of the voice. To suspend the rational processes of reflection in favor of allowing one to be susceptible to the influence of the suggestive power of the agent's voice is to become vulnerable to the fear of engulfment that is one basis for the fear of intimacy (Solomon, 1989). Yet that same mind-set seems important for the reception of subjective impressions that have the quality of apparent psi. Some participants have difficulty engaging in this level of intimacy, either generally or with particular agents.

Second, in order for a participant to be successful in this game, he or she must avoid the "stimulus error." The apparent psi connections occur in the subjective experiences of the listener and not in the listener's interpretation of these experiences. The reporting of raw experience is more intimate because it is closer to one's core, and thus, more threatening, than consciously attributing something to the target person. To report one's raw experience is more revealing of the self, and one is more open and vulnerable. Yet, in most instances of free-response ESP testing, such as the Ganzfeld, for example, the flow of raw, subjective experience is generally where psi-based information is found, because the subject would rarely be able to identify the properties of the stimulus from the introspective material. Thus, if revealing raw experience is more intimate than making attributions about the target stimulus person, then we see here that intimacy would become a mediator of the psi response.

Third, we saw instances of apparent psi playing havoc with boundary issues during the game. Agents who focused on specific personal scenes could not prevent listeners from gaining access to other areas of the agent's life. Therefore, agents could not maintain boundaries around the informa-

tion that would be shared. A related boundary lies between conscious thoughts and unconscious ones. Many examples of apparent psi seemed to involve the retrieval of thoughts that had been momentarily conscious in the agent but were then suppressed. Reports that people seemed to pick up on scenes that agents had decided *not* to focus on resemble reports from psychoanalytic studies of thought transference that suggest that ideation that is in the process of being repressed is often the best candidate for a psi impression (Silverman, 1988). Another type of boundary violation concerns secrets. One case of a secret being potentially exposed was confidentially reported, suggesting the presence of other examples that were not reported. As a final boundary issue, it was hard to maintain a distinction between what was strictly internal and subjective and what was external and objective. That one's seemingly personal, subjective experience might be invisibly shaped by someone else's thoughts or feelings, as if there were a direct but subliminal mind-to-mind influence, was disturbing to some people. Participants spoke of an identity confusion similar to the students in the Tart and Labore (1986) survey who were worried that if they were to become telepathic, they would not be able to distinguish their own thoughts from those of people around them. Participants sometimes express this concern by asking how they can "protect" themselves from picking up unwanted thoughts or feelings.

Fourth, when listener's impressions touched on surprising areas of the agent's personal life, a sense of connection was often made between listener and agent. This connection could reflect the fact that psi operates in the listener's subjective impressions—responses that necessarily have a projective component. If the subjective component does have a recognized objective aspect, that is, if the target person can recognize him- or herself in that impression, then there will be a connection between the personal meaning for the listener and the meaning for the target person. The ostensible psi functioned to establish and enhance intimacy, allowing the participants to discuss matters of intense mutual interest.

This same interpersonal effect was also observed in the group dream telepathy experiment I devised with Van de Castle. In this experiment, called the "Dream Helper Ceremony," a group of people attempt to have telepathic dreams to guide a stranger who suffered from an unspecified personal problem (Reed, 1985; Reed & Van de Castle, 1991). In that situation, the participants' dreams revealed both psi components applicable to the target person as well as information relevant to the dreamer. Both experimental situations function as "psychic readings," and they have that interesting attribute of showing how readers' "projections" reveal their own personal situations as well as are significant for the target person.

Finally, let us consider the intimacy factor operating within the methodological considerations of the experiment. We are not accustomed to think of the face-to-face exchanges such as are involved in this game as relevant to telepathy because the people are not physically separated. Because a lot of ESP research is geared toward supporting the supposedly

impossible contention that thoughts can be communicated at a distance, the research situation is usually sterilized by removing any sensory contact or relationship between the parties involved. It is not considered parsimonious to consider telepathy when the two people involved can see or hear one another, because one would assume that the communication could be mediated by sounds and sights.

Is this specification strictly a matter of the logical requirements for deducing the psi factor? Could it be, perhaps, that the reality of telepathy is too frightening to acknowledge when two people are face-to-face? Perhaps it is more comfortable to think about mind-to-mind communication when there is a great distance separating the people. Perhaps when we define telepathy as communication in the absence of sensory contact, we do so not just on logical grounds, but partly to keep telepathy at a comfortable distance. Perhaps it becomes an arena too threatening to explore, suggesting interpersonal merger, one person flowing into another, and ultimate one-to-one intimacy. Perhaps we would do well to exchange our distancing metaphor, "tele-pathy" (feeling at a distance) for something like "transpersonal empathy," where we might expect to witness direct communication through the unconscious mind. As Rao, Kanthamani, and Palmer (1990) suggest:

It is possible that psi abilities generally function along with our normal abilities such as perception and memory and that only on rare occasions do they manifest in a manner that reveals their separate identity and distinctiveness. Our own fear of the paranormal and the need to insulate ourselves to protect our individualities and privacy and provide for stability and order in our interactions may indeed serve as constant inhibitors and censors of conscious psi experience. Thus, psi may play a more pervasive and decisive role in our lives that we are aware of and yet go completely unrecognized. Therefore, a more fruitful approach to studying psi may be found in understanding its interactions with normal abilities than in attempting to investigate it in isolation. (pp. 245–246)

Intimacy and telepathy may be natural partners. The closeness people experience is more than a physical closeness; it is a psychological closeness. The parties actually feel the presence of one another within themselves. To observe this phenomenon of psychic closeness, the participants must introspect rather than observe outward events. The psi factor similarly operates from *within* the parties involved. The internal experience of the psi factor, reflected in the startling coincidence of subjective and objective circumstances, creates the feeling of a bond between the parties involved. This psychic bond may extend to situations in which the parties are physically separated, such that the intimacy previously established serves as a channel for more clear-cut telepathic phenomena. Although the physical separation makes the telepathy aspect more distinctive, the process of the intimacy connection between them remains the same internal reality of "feeling close."

The "Getting to Know You" game, because it does not involve any

such physical separation, lacks the experimental controls necessary to draw conclusions about the existence of psi independent of all sensory channels. One way to achieve greater control would be to limit listener contact with the target person strictly to the auditory channel. The experimenter might present the listener with an audiotape of the agent's voice to prevent the presence of visual cues. To make the target material less vague, the agent would write down in advance exactly the personal scene to be focused upon during the recording of the voice sample. Independent judges could attempt to match agents' and percipients' transcribed descriptions. Training in the game could be used as a precursor to a remote-viewing experiment, to test whether the experimental intimacy and apparent psi would carry over into a situation of physical separation. The reader may think of many other refinements that would increase the rigor of the experiment. On the other hand, as the focus changes from encouraging people to become acquainted as intimately as possible (although through experimentally constricted means) to challenging people to demonstrate a technical feat, the intention of the experiment drastically changes.

Because intention is so important to the outcome of the experiment, I often give the players an important reminder: The name of the game is "Getting to Know You," not "Mind Reading." In a psychic reading given for Gardner Murphy, Edgar Cayce advised him to devise telepathy experiments in which the focus was not on scoring hits but upon helping the people involved form helpful connections between themselves (Reed, 1988). Cayce's advice was in the forefront of my mind as I tried to shape the participants' intentions. By being focused on getting acquainted and discovering what they have in common, they actually encounter more profound transpersonal empathy, or psi, than if they were to trivialize the game into a test of mind reading. In fact, reducing the exercise to merely a test of telepathy is one way the participants can reduce the potential for intimacy in the game. The same goes for parapsychology. In its automatic assumption that it would be an improvement to nail down the psi factor with greater experimental control, the traditional parapsychological orientation minimizes the intimacy in the psi test situation.

Because it is not easy for a researcher to legislate intimacy, we may be touching on a human factor that makes it difficult to gain rigorous scientific control over the significant events in parapsychological experiments. Whether it concerns intimacy or telepathy, if the experiment demands "Be intimate!" or if the evaluation focuses itself narrowly on "Was this really telepathy?" the closeness experienced between the participants begins to evaporate or goes unnoticed. Telepathy and intimacy share the paradoxical quality that when you focus on them, they disappear.

Perhaps another approach may be necessary. Moving the locus of our research away from trying to prove that extrasensory communication can occur to trying to find ways of helping people who are motivated to exchange information to communicate effectively in a context of restricted channels of communication might provide results of some utility.

To keep the experiment focused upon an intention to facilitate interpersonal understanding while at the same time having a more quantitative measure of that understanding, it might be helpful to borrow from research on empathy. One approach to studying empathy that was popular in the 1960s was to measure the accuracy with which one person could predict how another person would fill out a personality inventory, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Smith, 1973). If I can understand you well enough to be able to fill out a questionnaire the way that you would, then I am demonstrating a degree of empathy with you. This type of task somewhat resembles that of the psychic reader who is asked to specify another person's traits and predispositions. Participants in an activity such as the "Getting to Know You" game might attempt to follow up an experience in intuitive listening by predicting how the agent donor would answer a personality inventory. Explorations in the detection of deception might be another avenue of investigation in which specific, quantitative findings would be of most value. In either case, it would be important to follow the motivational configurations that characterize the quest for intimacy. The advantage of the "Getting to Know You" game is that it plays upon the participants' natural curiosity about one another and takes advantage of the ability of the unconscious to sniff out exciting and meaningful areas of personal overlap between participants.

The original purpose of the "Getting to Know You" game was educational training, to help participants develop their intuitive listening skills and enhance their awareness of the issues involved in transpersonal empathy. Although designed as a training exercise with no built-in quantitative aspects, its methodology and the observations that result from it nevertheless do have significance for parapsychology. In her essay on an "experience-centered" approach to psi research, Rhea White (1990) contrasted experimental and nonexperimental studies and suggested that parapsychologists refrain from future experiments because of their seeming futility. Perhaps the "Getting to Know You" game can offer some new life to the experimental approach.

Although not an experiment in the traditional sense of the word, as there are no controlled manipulations nor any attempt to make quantified observations, the game does have a structure similar to that of an experiment. Both present standardized situations that focus the participants' attention and shape how the participants behave. In this manner they both enable us to make repeatable observations of the participants' responses. Unlike most experiments, however, the game offers many of the advantages of nonexperimental approaches.

The game offers the possibility for nontrivial psi. Stevenson (1990) noted, for example, that the significance of the psi reported in the experimental literature has been declining. Only trivial psi, observable with the aid of statistics, manages to find its way into our experiments. The same is not true for the experimental game reported here. The difficulties in

isolating the psi factor notwithstanding, the game results in repeated instances of apparent psi that the participants find very meaningful and personally significant. They have the human interest quality of the spontaneous cases that originally sparked interest in parapsychology. They also have some of the quality of the therapeutic situation, where the psi event is immediate, meaningful, and freshly available for further exploration and evaluation. We can interview both target person and listener for greater in-depth understanding of the communication transaction. The desire of the participants for greater self-understanding and better relations with others becomes a potential asset in this work, and the subjects can become collaborators in our research efforts (Carpenter, 1988).

As a training activity, the game has sufficient value to participants that they are willing to fund its presentation. In an era of declining resources for parapsychological research, it seems significant that there are nevertheless great numbers of individuals who are interested in learning how to use and apply a phenomenon that most of them believe they have experienced and that experimental parapsychology has shown exists. Can parapsychology take these people onto the next stage of exploring psi, or will we abdicate?

I am reminded of the admonition of psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (1959), who pointed out that empathy, a tool of interpersonal understanding, was a better medium than detached, analytic interpretation for psychoanalysis to use to gain information about the human being. This shift in approach to knowledge led to a total revision of psychoanalytic theory (Balter & Spencer, 1991). In the workshop context of the "Getting to Know You" game, I have noted the epistemological gap between the participants and an outside observer. The participants are satisfied to rely upon their empathic sense to tell them if they are making connections with each other. The outsider requires more external, objective indicators and thinks immediately in terms of putting distance between the communicants to test whether or not they are really making a connection. If we parapsychologists can allow ourselves to study psi in a face-to-face manner with appreciation for the desire of many people in the population who wish to experience a more intimate approach to psi, we may be able simultaneously to rejuvenate our discipline and make a significant contribution. I predict that parapsychologists, like the humans they study, must one day confront their feelings about intimacy if they are to be granted access to the secrets of psi. For coming face-to-face with the intimacy of telepathy, the ultimate reward will be that through the special channels of experience that psi provides we will have the transpersonal realization needed to free us from Zeus's punishment.

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