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## Toward a Model Relating Empathy, Charisma, and Telepathy

## Toward A Model Relating Empathy, Charisma, and Telepathy

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**Abstract** — Telepathy is often dismissed because it is judged to be so weird as to be counterintuitive. This article argues that telepathy may be interpreted as phenomenologically impressive events of a social psychological process which in less dramatic instances would be termed empathy and charisma. Such an equation, herein called the “possible world model,” would perhaps normalize telepathy, and lessen the opprobrium attached to its study. A first step is taken to validate the model when a comparative literature search finds that telepathy and empathy relate very similarly to other experimental variables.

**Keywords:** paranormal — telepathy — ESP — charisma — empathy

### **Telepathy = Extraordinary Empathy and/or Overwhelming Charisma: The Possible World Model**

Telepathy has often been judged to be “miraculous,” “paranormal,” and certainly “anomalous.” For no other reason than its apparent “weirdness,” zealous skeptics would dismiss the possibility that reports of telepathy are recounting true experiences, and stigmatize both the persons involved and those who study them as being anti-scientific if not downright moronic. *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, for example, refuses on principle to review any submission which has “parapsychological content” (personal communication from Chester A. Insko, JPSP-IRGP section editor).

This paper does not argue that telepathy is “real”; instead, it aims for the more modest goal of demonstrating that telepathy is *as real* as other social psychological phenomena which both scientists and the general public accept routinely, and to which telepathy can perhaps be ultimately reduced. Perceived weirdness should not be a determining factor in ascertaining truth, since on the one hand many things we take as true — such as charisma and empathy — are much more bizarre than commonly assumed, while telepathy, examined rationally, is less bizarre than some might hope. If the proposed model is correct, telepathy can be discarded only at the cost of these other constructs.

### **The Skeptical Challenge**

Skepticism about the reality of phenomena deemed “paranormal” tends to take the form David Hume directed toward the “miraculous”: “No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its

falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish" (1748/1985).

G. Price (1955, p. 360) adopts just this tactic, and arrives at his conclusion that "the findings of the parapsychologists... are dependent on clerical and statistical errors and unintentional use of sensory cues, and that all extrachance results not so explicable are dependent on deliberate fraud or mildly abnormal mental conditions." His would seem to be an extreme case of Davies' (1971, p. 577) observation about "that much mistrusted individual, the layman, to whom is attributed the property of being able to observe objectively anything that can be explained, but imagining everything that can't." Price finds it more likely that all witnesses should lie (consciously or not) than that nature be subverted, or more accurately, that his understanding of that nature should be incomplete.

Tellingly, Price assumes that by discarding laboratory work in parapsychology, he has done away with parapsychology itself. He forgets, like many parapsychologists themselves, that the genuinely important data for parapsychology, its disciplinary charter as it were, come not from the laboratory but from the case reports. Laboratory work is but a reaction to, an effort to recreate and control the experiences reported from everyday life (*cf.* Irwin, 1989, p. 47). To dismiss the former successfully leaves untouched the legitimate questions posed by the latter.

Applying Hume's criterion to these case reports, many social scientists are likely to arrive at the opposite conclusion from Price's. It is more reasonable to conclude that there is *something* going on which motivates descriptions of *psi* experiences, than that everyone who reports such events is actually gullible, mentally ill, or a cad; it seems more probable that our understanding of nature should be incomplete, than that men and women should continually, consistently, and independently deceive others or themselves about their own experiences. At the very least, the social reality of the phenomena must be conceded and studied, even if the question of their independent reality is deferred or bracketed (McClenon, 1991).

Without substantial evidence to the contrary, we should conclude that parapsychological case reports have at their core a uniquely impressive experience which the individual has tried to communicate honestly using a particular vocabulary. The experiences, in other words, are genuine enough, and their explanation constitutes a legitimate problem for students of the lived human experience (Rao & Palmer, 1987).

The task of parapsychology can be stated simply: to make sense of these reported experiences, experiences which on their face should not be happening and are thereby termed either "anomalous" or "paranormal." This task may entail the discovery and articulation of heretofore unrealized processes. More likely, the answers may lie with renewed consideration of processes which we have already identified, but whose scope we have underestimated. This paper suggests that events termed "telepathic" are extreme examples of the social

psychological processes of charisma and/or empathy, and as such are both as real as and no more mysterious than these other phenomena we discuss and routinely acknowledge.

### Telepathy

Telepathy was first and best defined in 1882 by F. W. H. Myers as the “transmission of thought independently of the recognized channels of sense” (Fodor, 1966, p. 376). More recent articulations have subsumed telepathy within a larger class of “anomalous processes of information or energy transfer... that are currently unexplained in terms of known physical or biological mechanisms” (Bem & Honorton, 1994, p. 4; *cf.* Palmer, 1986; Rao & Palmer, 1987), which collectively go by the term “*psi*.” At least two reasons exist to prefer the original definition. First, Myers defines telepathy as a positive event; he tells us what telepathy is. Definitions in terms of anomalies tell us what telepathy is *not*, that is, it is not currently explainable. But that is a status which may change one day, hence is unsuitable as a defining criterion for a science’s focal phenomenon (*cf.* Hess, 1993; Irwin, 1989).

Bertrand Russell (1959, p. 155) claims that just this negative definition is what characterizes philosophy: “Those questions which are already capable of definite answers are placed in the sciences, while those only to which, at present, no definite answer can be given, remain to form the residue which is called philosophy.” Just as parapsychology’s goal is to empty itself gradually of any anomalies, “as soon as definite knowledge concerning any subject becomes possible, this subject ceases to be called philosophy, and becomes a separate science.” From this perspective, at least, parapsychologists do themselves a potential disservice by constructing their discipline as a philosophy rather than a science.

Perhaps even worse, the standard of “anomalies” may render parapsychology a subfield of theology. “Miracle, by definition,” claims anthropologist Raymond Firth (1996, p. 28), “is an event which stands outside the ordinary processes of nature, is remarkable for its discontinuity, and is not explainable by physical principles.” If parapsychology is the study of miracles, it overtly positions itself in opposition to religious discourse. Thus Firth is able to suppose that “recent work by the psychologists on precognition and extra-sensory perception attracts attention for its religious bearing rather than for its scientific interest” (p. 39). The fact that parapsychology seeks to explain miracles, that is to say, to render them unmiraculous, must be construed as a fundamentally anti-religious endeavor. While this may be true of much scientific discourse, it is usually by implication and not by design. It is unclear that this is not a confrontation which is best avoided.

The second objection is more important. The alternative definition speaks in terms of “physical or biological mechanisms.” It is unclear that these are the appropriate idioms or models through which telepathy can be most productively scrutinized. Examples of such attempts may be found in Walker (1977;

1984) and William (1986). Glaringly absent in this definition for a putative event of human communication, and in the work it inspires, is any reference to social or psychological variables. Parapsychological physics-envy is pervasive in the field, and is perhaps one of its major obstacles blocking a breakthrough reconceptualization of the problem. This possibility has been discussed at length elsewhere (Donovan, 1992).

An opposing trend is that offered by Schmeidler (1990, p. 321). She admits to having assumed "that *psi* is a psychological process and that it therefore functions the way other psychological processes do," but that heretofore neither she "nor anyone else had made a systematic effort to find if it was true." Indeed, the guiding dictum here should be her own understated suggestion that "normal and paranormal functions are so similar that learning about psychological processes will give useful information about parapsychological ones" (Schmeidler, 1988, p. 7; *cf.* White, 1994). Might they not, in fact, be *the same*? Perhaps only the powerful phenomenology emboldening these grotesque events has prevented us from seeing more clearly a genetic relationship to more mundane psychological happenings (*cf.* Irwin, 1989, p. 11). Only after this possibility has been exhausted should one resort to more exotic explanatory schemata.

The present discussion shares Schmeidler's assumption that *psi* phenomena, such as telepathy, are psychological and not mechanical. Thus, the appropriate discourse to model telepathy successfully will not come from the material sciences, but rather from the social and psychological disciplines.

### **The Charismatic Agent and the Empathic Percipient**

The present section paints in broad strokes the thesis that telepathy can be accounted for by the social psychological processes known as empathy and charisma, a possibility which first presents itself through comparison of the language used to document the case reports.

"What human communication achieves in general," says anthropologist Dan Sperber, "is merely some degree of resemblance between the communicator's and the audience's thoughts" (Boyer, 1994, p. 284). Charisma, empathy, and telepathy share a surface similarity of language characterizing each as a process of communication involving the convergence of the participants' mindsets and through which emotional tones are shared between persons.

Friedman, Riggio, and Casella (1988, p. 204) tellingly define charisma as a "dramatic flair involving the desire and ability to communicate emotions and thereby inspire others." Lindholm (1990, p. 26) suggests that "the intense emotional state of the charismatic is transmitted spontaneously to onlookers."

Empathy, on the other hand, has been defined as "the imaginative transposing of oneself into the thinking, feeling and acting of another and so structuring the world as he does" (Dymond, 1949, p. 127), so that "the perceiver actually comes to experience the thoughts and feelings of the other person" (Grover & Brockner, 1989, p. 470; Hickson, 1985). The "core of the empathic experience

[is]... a 'free-association' or loosening of self-other boundaries in allowing stimuli impinging on the other to be experienced by the self" (Strayer, 1987, p. 227).

The precise relationship of charisma to empathy requires further and future clarification. "Mental contagion" could be instances of *either* empathy or charisma: "We are all 'moved' by other people's emotions.... The teacher complains of the one pupil who is having a bad influence on his class.... The psychiatrist... describes infectious mass psychoses or *psychoses à deux*" (Meerloo, 1964, p. 82-83). Lindholm (1990), when describing prototypical examples of charismatic personalities (Adolph Hitler, Charles Manson, and Jim Jones), attributes to them also extraordinary levels of empathy. Does this mean that these persons were in joint possession of two independent abilities (e.g., Cunningham, 1977, p. 577, found that "a good sender in any condition... was a poor receiver of others' nonverbal communication"), or perhaps the two are distinct but nonseverable? What are the theoretical implications of describing the charismatic leader and his followers as "entangled in an empathetic communion" (Lindholm, 1990, p. 67)?

For purposes herein, charisma is provisionally conceived as an attribute intrinsic to the individual actor (Lindholm, 1990; Weber, 1922/1963). Others, however, define charisma as a quality of the perceivers than of the perceived, by virtue of their own qualities, such as anomie or lack of values (Greenfield, 1985), alienation (Miyahara, 1983), distress (Tucker, 1968), or dissociative ability (Ludwig, 1983). Kluckhohn (1949/1985, p. 217) finds that individuals with diffuse childhood attachments, as is common among the Zuñi Indians, are "peculiarly resistant to leaders of the Hitler type." If indeed charisma is not an action, but a mere attribution of an action (Lipman & Pizzurro, 1956; Tucker, 1968), then it seems likely that charisma is reducible to empathy, since the end result would be indistinguishable. On the other hand, if charisma is a quality of the charismatic, it seems more plausible that the same variables are employed as those which generate empathy, but that they interact differently. In any event, charisma and empathy seemingly are either identical, or at worst composed of identical but differently interacting elements.

Both empathy and charisma reveal strong descriptive overlaps with common accounts of telepathic experiences. Indeed, Weber's original conceptualization of charisma explicitly included telepathy as one of its constituent "extraordinary powers (1922/1963, p. 2). Lindholm (1990, p. 132) recounts Susan Atkins' claims "that when she was delegated to command some of the followers, she found herself able to read their thoughts and to manipulate them, just as she believed [Charles] Manson did." Such descriptions afford a *prima facie* reasonableness to the idea that charisma might be related to telepathy.

Likewise, Strayer's description of empathy, given above, sounds much like the following analysis of psychic interactions:

Psychics often commented that “reading” a client was simple, a matter of “becoming one with” that client and then “reading themselves.” What psychics do, then, is predicated on the ability to literally or metaphorically “let go” of their ego boundaries. (Galanti, 1989, p. 6)

Wagenfeld (1976, p. 44) also noticed the convergence: “Since it appears that many of these views of empathy and telepathy come so close to being synonymous, perhaps telepathy is the most intense type of empathy” (*cf.* Sanchez, 1989). Describing the experience of two subjects who underwent mutual hypnosis, Stet (1969, p. 305) reports that they “showed a great sensitivity and empathy to the other’s experiences (but not necessarily an agreement). Subsequent conversations revealed that the [subjects] felt so much *rapport* with each other that it seemed telepathic....” Similar examples abound within psychoanalytic literature especially (*cf.* Beahrs, 1982; Devereux, 1953; Margulies, 1989; Meerloo, 1964). Central to our model is the repeated observation that successful empathic connection is often a function of similarity between the involved parties (Wispé, 1987; Hoffman, 1987).

There is a level, then, at which the descriptive language characterizing both charisma and empathy overlap with that used to recount details of alleged telepathic phenomena. This hypothesis has been termed the “possible world model” (Donovan, 1992), evoking a method of analysis within linguistic theory (McCawley, 1981). Within the possible world model, successful communication is achieved when parties agree on communicationally relevant reality postulates which may be taken for granted. The more postulates which are shared, the more successful is that exchange. Karniol (1990) extends the notion of shared postulates to include not only factual (or declarative) knowledge, but also procedural knowledge used to manipulate and prioritize facts and beliefs.

Each combination of differences on these postulates defines a unique possible world for that conversation. To share that single possible world where all postulates are identical is literally to “be of one mind.” Clearly, such synchronization is extremely rare and never sustained. The more typical instance is one of relative degree of similarity. Crapanzano (1980) accurately depicts how ethnographic field-workers must negotiate a joint reality of shared reality postulates with their other-cultured informants.

Charisma and empathy, when viewed from the possible world model, are mechanisms for achieving postulate convergence which, when it occurs in phenomenologically strong events, is termed telepathy. Charisma would be the process by which one imposes one’s own postulates upon the other; empathy, on the other hand, would be that process by which one willingly suspends one’s own postulates and incorporates those of the other. Telepathy is an experience of postulate convergence, achieved through the dual processes of charisma and empathy, which is of such an extraordinary degree that that moment stands out in the minds of the participants, but which involves little or



nothing which is not included in more ordinary instances of empathic or charismatic connection. As such, the possible world model would seem to have something in common with Ehrenwald's (1972) hypothesis which features "the concept of a symbiotic gradient, reaching out from the ego to the nonego," and with the state-sharing model examined by Bohm (1984). In keeping with this model, we are not surprised to learn that telepathy reports are more successful between those who share a common language (Greist, 1977), those who are "culturally proximate" (Stoller & Olkes, 1987, p. 211), or those who share "a close personal relationship" (Rice & Townsend, 1962).

The remainder of this essay sifts through existing experimental literature to ascertain whether known correlates of empathy have parallel findings in the researches on charisma and telepathy. The hope is that results will reveal whether the justification for the possible world model goes any deeper than superficial terminological similarities.

### Comparing the Experimental Correlates

If charisma, empathy, and telepathy are intimately related, then significant overlap should appear when we directly compare the experimental correlates of each. The basis of comparison is empathy, which is by far the best studied of the three processes. After listing the discerned experimental correlates of empathy, a review was conducted with the purpose of identifying parallel researches on either charisma or telepathy. Results of this comparison are synopsized in Table 1.

#### *Empathy*

*Developmental/Historical Correlates.* Only three variables were identified which belong in the first category of developmental or historical correlates of empathy. Kalliopuska (1984a) found that, from among four social classes, middle-class fathers, but not mothers, were most empathic. This same author also noted a tendency for middle-born children to be more empathic than either first-borns or later-borns, although she acknowledges many contrary trends in the literature (Kalliopuska, 1984b; cf. Wise & Cramer, 1988). Finally, reviewing the pertinent studies, Chlopan *et al.* (1985) concluded that high marijuana use correlated with high empathy scores. This finding can be interpreted to suggest that altered states of consciousness encourage empathic responses.

*Personality Correlates.* A common finding is that empathy correlates positively with measures of emotional arousability generally, and with neuroticism specifically (Hogan, 1969; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; Chlopan *et al.*, 1985). This relationship with neuroticism does not necessarily mean that empathy is a precursor of mental illness. On the contrary, high empaths are perhaps better adjusted emotionally than are low empaths (Chlopan *et al.*, 1985). Intuitively, we would also expect empaths to have low competitive drives, since the

TABLE 1  
Experimental Correlates of Empathy, Charisma, and Telepathy

	Empathy	Charisma	Telepathy
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL/HISTORICAL</b>			
High marijuana usage	Yes Chlopan <i>et al.</i> , 1985	N/A	Yes Schmeidler, 1988
Middle class socio-economic standing	Yes Kalliopuska, 1984a	N/A	N/A
Middle-born birth order	Yes Kalliopuska, 1984b	N/A	N/A
<b>PERSONALITY</b>			
High neuroticism/ arousability	Yes Hogan, 1969	No Friedman <i>et al.</i> , 1980	No Irwin, 1989
Less anxious/ better adjusted	Yes Chlopan <i>et al.</i> , 1985	N/A	Yes Schmeidler, 1988
Field-dependent	No Wise & Cramer, 1988	N/A	Yes Schmeidler, 1988
Meditation	No Pearl & Carozzi, 1994	N/A	Yes Schmeidler, 1988
Androgynous	Yes Yarnold <i>et al.</i> , 1993	N/A	N/A
Low emphasis on inter-personal competition	Yes Barnett, 1987	N/A	N/A
Femininity	N/A	No Sahoo, 1987	N/A
Extraversion	N/A	Yes Friedman <i>et al.</i> , 1980	Yes Bem & Honorton, 1994
High attitudinal similarity	Yes Grover & Brockner, 1989	N/A	Yes Bem & Honorton, 1994
<b>SOMATIC</b>			
Women more prone	Yes Grover & Brockner, 1989	Yes Riggio, 1987	Yes Virtanen, 1990
Heritable	Yes Zahn-Waxler <i>et al.</i> , 1992	N/A	Yes Bohm, 1984
Physiological linkage facilitates	Yes Levenson & Ruef, 1992	N/A	Yes Bohm, 1984
Right brain hemisphere function	N/A	N/A	Yes Wagenfeld, 1976

essence of the phenomena is a yielding to the other's perspective. Some research bears out this assumption (Barnett, 1987).

Empathy occurs most often in those with strong attitudinal similarity and attraction (Grover & Brockner, 1989). One study also found androgyny to be "predictive of an empathetic orientation" (Yarnold *et al.*, 1993).

Other experimental results are more ambivalent. One could imagine that empathys are more field-dependent, since this cognitive style correlates well with heightened interpersonal sociality (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981). However, Wise and Cramer (1988) failed to discern this relationship using the Group Embedded Figures Test, while Krieger and Reznikoff (1992), deploying the individually administered Embedded Figures Test, found only a slight tendency for field dependent men (but not women) to score well on some measures of empathy.

Equally contested is the effect of meditation upon empathy. Although Pearl and Carlozzi (1994) review several reports which found a positive interaction, their own study failed to replicate these findings.

*Somatic Correlates.* Three variables fell into the category of physical or genetic correlates of empathy. First, empathy is probably heritable, as was discerned by twin studies (Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, & Emde, 1992). This study also found "indications that girls and women are more empathic than boys and men." The finding of a sex difference favoring women as high empathys is commonly reported (*cf.* Grover & Brockner, 1989; Krieger & Reznikoff, 1992), although there is a good likelihood that this finding may be an artifact of the methods used to quantify empathy. According to the meta-analysis conducted by Eisenberg and Lennon (1983), strong sex differences appear only when self-report scales were used. Other research designs, such as physiological or unobtrusive observation, fail to reveal similar sex differences (*cf.* Ickes *et al.*, 1990).

Finally, Levenson and Ruef (1992, p. 239) found that "the greater the physiological linkage between subject and target, the greater the accuracy of the subject's rating of the target's negative affect." While accurate empathy of negative emotions were thus dependent upon intersubjective physiology (*i.e.*, the subject's body responded as did the target's), empathy for positive emotions depended only upon the level of cardiovascular arousal of the subject. Only in the positive emotion arm of the design did a sex difference appear, again favoring women.

### *Charisma*

*Developmental/Historical Correlates.* Despite the familiarity of the charisma concept, it has been little studied. Political scientists and sociologists will discuss it theoretically in the context of great historical leaders, but rarely has it been operationalized in the context of ordinary mortals. At best, all one could hope for is a thorough case study of a specific charismatic individual, but of unknown generalizability. No empirical studies examining the

developmental and historical correlates of the charismatic personality could be identified for this review.

*Personality Correlates.* Likewise, few studies examine the personality correlates of charisma. In fact, Dow (1969) opines that there is no type or temperament which characterizes charisma. The one relevant finding that could be identified was the result from Friedman *et al.* (1980) that charisma was positively correlated with extraversion, but slightly negatively with neuroticism. The inverse relationship with neuroticism runs counter to the theoretical expectations of many psychoanalysts, who regard charisma as inherently a neurotic phenomenon (Lipman & Pizzurro, 1956; *cf.* Lindholm, 1990, p. 62).

Finally, one study by Sahoo (1987, p. 13) offers the conclusion that charismatics "tend to be more sociable, responsible, and accepting of self; they tend to achieve things through conformance." That author also found a strong negative relationship by gender, between charisma and femininity as measured by California Personality Inventory.

*Somatic Correlates.* The issue of sex, which was so contentious within empathy, reappears concerning charisma. Lindholm (1990, p. 198) observes that "the number of female charismatics has been relatively few," and notes that according to orthodox Freudian theory, only men can fill this role. However, others would give the edge to women: "Women tend to have more charisma potential than men, based on their total possession of basic social skills" (Riggio, 1987, p. 46). If sides must be chosen, the prudent reviewer would select the latter, since Riggio attempts a more rigorous methodology than psychoanalysis is usually known for.

### *Telepathy*

*Developmental/Historical Correlates.* Only one reference is made to the developmental and historical correlates found for empathy. Schmeidler (1988, p. 149) notes the existence of "unpublished research on marijuana, reported only by the grapevine.... [Often] but not always the reports tell of high ESP scores."

*Personality Correlates.* A wide variety of personality variables have been considered in relation to good performance of *psi* tasks. High I.Q. "may lead to more [accuracy] in cases where high I.Q. does not lead to disbelief in *psi*" (Walker, 1977, p. 95), although Spinelli (1983) reports the opposite result. Extraversion has displayed a consistent relationship with *psi* performance (Bem & Honorton, 1994; Broughton, 1991; Schmeidler, 1988; Irwin, 1989). Neuroticism has for the most part been negatively correlated with successful *psi* testing (Irwin, 1989; Schmeidler, 1988), although the description of one psychoanalytic patient by Saul (1938, p. 333) could lead one to expect the contrary. Schmeidler (1988, p. 142) identifies three studies which used standard methods to investigate cognitive style. These results "tend to find more evidence for *psi* from field dependent subjects."

Attitudinal similarity also proved to be a recurring correlate of telepathic episodes. Bem and Honorton (1994) noted that studies that allowed partici-

pants to bring in their own friends to act as senders “had significantly higher hit rates than did the studies that used only laboratory-assigned senders.” Their own research, however, failed to demonstrate that sender-receiver pairing of friends was a significant correlate of *psi* performance. Still, upon the cumulative evidence, both Schmeidler (1961) and Virtanen (1990) conclude that agent-percipient similarity facilitates telepathic connections.

The last cell of the table concerns the effect of meditation upon *psi*. In her review, Schmeidler (1988, p. 104) writes that “meditation may be *psi*-conductive; but the multiple analyses, the possibility that other variables enter in, and the large number or null or unanticipated results prevent a firm conclusion” (cf. Broughton, 1991, p. 111; Winkelman, 1990).

These personality traits do not exhaust those which have been found to facilitate telepathic events. Both Virtanen (1990) and Schmeidler (1988) review many other personality variables for which no empathy results were identified.

*Physical/Genetic Correlates.* Virtanen (1990, p. 107) records the opinion that “men are better senders of telepathic messages (agents), whereas women are better receivers (percipients).” If agency is synonymous with charisma, and percipience with empathy, then this statement is in perfect keeping with earlier results. Since *psi* scores are usually attributed to the percipient, this gender difference would normally appear as women being deemed better test performers than men.

This same author relates the opinion of a Swedish psychiatrist that “genuine talent as a medium for telepathic or extrasensory communication is clearly an inherited trait” (Virtanen, 1990, p. 18). Spirit possession mediumship almost certainly requires a genetic predisposition (Donovan, 1994, p. 553-561); to the extent that this role involves telepathic performance, then the latter may also be a heritable quality. Bohm (1984) reviews the relevant twin studies, which are “consistent with the hypothesis that variations in ESP have a genetic basis.”

Parapsychologists have long recognized the theoretical importance of possible physiological linkages between parties to a telepathic event (Virtanen, 1990). While one experiment testing this hypothesis failed to yield the expected relationships (Barron & Mordkoff, 1968), Bohm (1984) describes many instances where galvanic skin response fluctuations in reaction to emotional stimuli were echoed in the GSR recordings of an intimate attached to a second machine. While Johnson and Millay failed to find a one-to-one correspondence between brain wave synchronization and success on a free-response telepathy test, overall team totals did reveal a significant correlation between synchronization and telepathy success (Johnson, 1993).

Finally, Wagenfeld (1976) reviews suggestions that ESP ability is a right-brain function (cf. Roig & Neaman, 1992).

### Discussion

This review does not permit any conclusions about charisma and its relationship to either empathy or telepathy. Very little empirical research on this social psychological trait has been performed, and even less which explored the same variables as those in the study of the other concepts.

Although the experimental correlates of empathy and telepathy are not exactly matched, they do seem to be more similar than dissimilar. They share results on the one developmental/historical dimension explored for them both, the effects of marijuana use. Two additional possibilities for future study under this heading would first be the appearance of age effects (are the young more likely to be empathetic than the old, as Spinelli (1983, 1987) notes is true of telepathy). A second question pertains to the influence of events in the personal history of the person, analogous to the impact of child abuse on the etiology of multiple personality (Kluft, 1985).

All three common physical/genetic variables match. On the personality dimension, it is probably the assertion that empathy is correlated with high neuroticism which will change under improved study. As Hamer and Copeland (1994, p. 198) note, neuroticism is a "superfactor" into which are lumped many different qualities. It is "a general measure of emotional instability or maladjustment, rather than a particular neurosis. People who score high on the neuroticism factor tend to be anxious, moody, hostile, and depressed. They are unable to cope with stress and may panic or feel hopeless when faced with an emergency." To the extent that the measure of neuroticism emphasizes emotional flexibility, one could expect a positive correlation; if the operationalized focus is on the negative dimensions, however, a negative correlation should emerge between neuroticism, telepathy, and empathy. Additional studies should resolve this ambiguity.

Over all, the more unequivocal the findings, the more empathy resembles telepathy. Divergence appears most commonly on those questions for which the literature displays conflicting conclusions. For instance, one potentially serious difference seems to be that related to cognitive style. Yet the failure to find empathy related to field dependence was ambiguous; resolution of this ambiguity will perhaps reveal the relationship expected with this well-developed facet of personality theory.

No final conclusions should be asserted based upon this literature review. As additional correlates are identified, and further cells in the table filled with new or better quality research, a more compelling pattern may emerge. As it stands, though, if one were to draw a conclusion from what we have before us now, the more prudent conclusion would be that empathy and telepathy are very similar at the level of experimental correlates.

### Conclusion

The argument has been made that empathy, charisma, and telepathy resemble each other sufficiently to warrant the suggestion that they are intimately related processes, and may even be identical. The existing literature on these three processes is suggestive in the direction of the proposed possible world model, but it is clear that the model's verification will depend on other studies especially designed to test its implications. Such work is presently underway.

The value of the possible world model to parapsychology (and social psychology) is great and varied. Consider the implications of empathy and charisma being distinctive variables, whose *interaction* generates the experience called "telepathy." First, the model promises a significant advance for laboratory modeling of real-life experiences by suggesting that telepathic "sensitives" and "psychics" do not in fact exist, at least to the extent that they should be the sole focus of parapsychological research. If the event is the outcome of a symbiotic relationship, then no single party can be credited with initiating anomalous information transfer. Such synergistic interaction runs contrary to the early expectations of the founder of modern parapsychology, J. B. Rhine (Wagenfeld, 1976, p. 27; cf. Carr, 1983), who thought that the percipient was the active mind (L. Rhine, 1956), and much more in keeping with the writings of Gardner Murphy (1945; 1962) and his student, Gertrude Schmeidler (1961; 1988). Moreover, given the dynamism of interpersonal relationships, a pair which performs well at one session cannot be assumed to perform well at the next unless it is known that the relationship, and the valuation of that relationship, has not altered in the interim. In this view, the unreliability of telepathic connection is an inherent, and theoretically predictable quality of the phenomenon, and not the undesirable effect of static, interference, or even poor research methodology.

The immediate impact of this assimilation of telepathy into empathy and charisma is to remove much of the "weirdness" which permeates the idea of telepathy. What it does *not* do is give us an easy answer to telepathy, since so very little is known about either charisma or empathy. In fact, empathy has sometimes been suggested to be a "riddle in social psychology" (Allport, 1968, p. 30), one which cannot be studied scientifically (Strayer, 1987, p. 235) and which cannot be explained "any more than one can explain memory or imagination" (Wispé, 1987, p. 34). Perhaps what Sullivan (1953, p. 41-42) said about empathy will in time apply to telepathy: "So although empathy may sound mysterious, remember that there is much that sounds mysterious in the universe, only you have got used to it; and perhaps you will get used to empathy."

There is not an immediate benefit of increased understanding about telepathy, then, to claim that it is intimately related to empathy, but there is increased legitimacy. Telepathy is both as real as, and no more (and no less) "paranormal" than is charisma or empathy, and its acceptance should rise and fall with our commitment to and understanding of these two social psychological

constructs. If empathy and charisma are real and non-paranormal, telepathy must be as well. Or, if telepathy is real and paranormal, so too must be empathy and charisma. If any one of them is illusory, the other two probably are, also.

What you *cannot* do, if the possible world model is accurate, without sacrificing intellectual consistency, is accept charisma and empathy as uncontroversially real social phenomena, while simultaneously denying the reality of telepathy.

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