

## TAMING THE GHOST WITHIN: AN APPROACH TOWARD ADDRESSING APPARENT ELECTRONIC POLTERGEIST ACTIVITY

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**ABSTRACT:** A report of electrical disturbances in a family home prompted a physician to contact the Rhine Research Center to explore a potential case of RSPK. This investigation provided much anecdotal and some strong evidence for an electronic poltergeist disturbance (EPD), a form of RSPK characterized by the disturbance of electronics and the signals from electronic devices. Strong evidence for EPD activity was observed by a computer systems expert in the behavior of a computer/printer system on a home network. A person-centered research approach was developed based on the advice of RSPK experts and experiencers. Meditation, mindful awareness, and targeted focus are introduced as activities that may help to manage or eliminate the unwanted activity by reducing the anxiety often observed in RSPK agents. In this situation, the EPD events dissipated over a 3-month period. Though family dynamics and other contributing factors complicated the evaluation of the effectiveness of mindfulness and relaxation techniques, the RSPK agent reported a calm and confident attitude after using these techniques regularly. Researchers are encouraged to explore the effects of relaxation and mindful awareness to determine if they are helpful to other RSPK agents in their quest to manage and control unwanted activity.

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Poltergeist activity has always been a disturbing and frightening experience for the people involved in the cases. From stones that rain from the sky (Holder, 2012) to broken crockery and glassware (Pratt & Roll, 1958) to bite marks and scratches (Roll, 1976), the poltergeist has terrorized children, parents, and visitors to “haunted locations.” The popular media representation of these mischievous and noisy events has been couched in a terrorizing cloak that emphasizes the vengeful and damaging nature of the poltergeist (Craven, 1976; Spielberg, 1982) and stigmatizes any locations or people that are experiencing poltergeist-type effects.

Despite the terrifying and disturbing nature of these events, with very few exceptions (Carpenter, 1993; Carrington & Fodor, 1951; Roll, 1977; Roll & Storey, 2004), very little research has been done into the effects that these activities have on the agents and their families. The majority of parapsychological research has been focused on the nature of the phenomena and the observation of poltergeist activity. With a keen scientific eye, researchers have watched for fraud and examined the psyche of individuals expressing RSPK in an attempt to uncover the origins and nature of the poltergeist activities (e.g., Palmer, 1974; Roll, 1976). When unexplained RSPK is directly observed by a researcher with an inquiring scientific mind, it is natural for him or her to search for a physical explanation of the phenomena, and when one cannot be found, it is also natural for her or him to try to understand how the phenomena occurred. Though there is no clear explanation of how the phenomena occur, poltergeist activity has been well documented by numerous researchers in the past, and further scientific evidence of its existence is necessary only for those among us who are most skeptical (Palmer, 1974). It is important for researchers to understand these events and how they occur, but the overriding theme in nearly every poltergeist story is the terror, disturbances, and discomfort experienced by the people closest to the poltergeist activity.

In the context of an investigation of a reported poltergeist situation, the nature of a possible electronic poltergeist disturbance (EPD) is presented as a subtle phenomenon that affects electronic devices. More importantly, this study is focused on the effects of the events on the agent and the family of the agent, and a general approach is proposed for assisting the poltergeist agents and their families in alleviating the poltergeist activities or managing the reactions to the unexpected and potentially unwanted phenomena. This methodology is presented as a starting point for future investigators who wish to address the needs of the agent and the people most affected by this type of unwanted experience.

### **A Very Brief History of the Poltergeist**

The modern image of the poltergeist is derived from ancient reports of mischievous and harmful spirits who chased families from their homes and caused significant disturbances in the lives of parents and children. Reports as early as 530 A.D. discuss stone-throwing demons and demonic possession (Holder, 2012), and reports from the 17th century describe the movement of household objects and banging noises (Gauld & Cornell, 1979). Little has done more to influence the popular image of this noisy spirit phenomenon (Shepard, 1978) than the *Poltergeist* films that were first produced in 1982 depicting the horrors of hauntings and possessions that originated in homes that were built on top of cemeteries (Spielberg, 1982). In many recent film depictions, an enraged or disturbed spirit plagues an individual or a number of people who are recognized as the victims of the tormenting discarnate spirit.

Despite the popular depiction of these events, poltergeist activity is elusive and typically difficult to observe (Carrington & Fodor, 1951). Researchers have had some success in observing poltergeist activities, and the famous Seaford Case, which was documented by J. G. Pratt and W. G. Roll in 1958, captured the attention of the nation and was well covered in the popular media of the day. It was because of this case that the concept of recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK) gained popularity and the activity was identified not as ghostly mischief, but as the unconscious psychokinetic response of an emotional child (Pratt & Roll, 1958).

Roll continued to investigate and observe numerous examples of macro-PK events centered on disturbed teenagers and young adults, including a 1961 case in New Jersey, a “biting poltergeist” in Indianapolis in 1962, and the Miami Poltergeist in 1967. In each case investigated by Roll, there seemed to be a person at the center of the activity. The activity would only occur when that person was around, and when that person, or agent, left, the activity would stop (Roll, 1976).

Contrary to the popular image of a spirit haunting a location, the poltergeists observed by Roll and Pratt appeared to be associated with a person. Typically this person was a teenager who was either going through puberty or was involved in an emotional family or personal situation (Roll, 1976). This representation of a disturbed teenager producing macro-PK activity was publicized in the Hollywood film *Carrie* (Craven, 1976), but the images presented in this film were more like the previous depictions of an angry spirit than they were like the mischievous behavior that was observed in the field investigations completed by trained scientists.

Each of these cases is mentioned along with the specific references in popular culture to help reveal not only the nature of the phenomena, but also how the phenomena are viewed by the public. People who are not initiated in the field of parapsychology will gather most of their knowledge of unusual phenomena such as poltergeist activity from the media sources that are most available to them, and the two motion pictures that were mentioned above are the iconic images of the poltergeists that have been used as the basis for numerous additional films, television shows, books, and even comedy sketches, for example, *Saturday Night Live* (Michaels, 1986). Each of these media channels contributes not only to the popular and terrifying image of poltergeists, but also to the anxiety and stress experienced by poltergeist agents and their families. Due to the extraordinary depictions of these events in popular culture, agents who demonstrate poltergeist effects are often singled out, avoided, and even ridiculed. This type of treatment can contribute to the stress and anxiety of the poltergeist experience and cause the activity to increase, beginning an escalating cycle of activity for the RSPK agent in a poltergeist case.

## **Theoretical Interpretations**

At this point, it is valuable to note the theoretical proposals for poltergeist activities. In fact, “poltergeist” is a theory-laden term that implies the activity is the result of a disturbing spirit (from the German *Poltern Geist*). The theory that a spirit is responsible for the activities has been traditionally applied to location-based cases (Irwin & Watt, 2007), and it implies an underlying intelligence that may result in activity that is an attempt to communicate or the purposeful movement of objects in a controlled manner (Gauld & Cornell, 1979). In support of this theory are the cases where apparitions are observed in the location of the activity, but these cases have been reported in only 23% of the cases studied by Roll, 12% of the cases reported by the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (IGPP) in Freiburg, Germany, and fewer than 38% of the cases gathered by Gauld and Cornell (Williams & Ventola, 2011). Because the majority of the collected cases are not tied to specific locations, and there are no indications of a specific intention or intelligence and no reports of apparitions, there are reasons to explore other explanations for this typically unwanted and mostly unexpected activity.

The RSPK theory, which is described in detail above, is a person-centered model which postulates that psychological factors and stresses induce unconscious and unintentional psychokinesis that manifests as poltergeist-type activity. This theory accounts for nearly every piece of evidence that is favorable to the spirit-centered model of poltergeist activity, and it has been strongly supported in investigated cases since it was first popularized by Pratt and Roll (1958) with the Seaford case. This model was later refined by Roll to include a neurological mechanism by which the unconscious PK is produced (Montago & Roll, 1983; Roll & Persinger, 1998). Though it was supported by Solfvín and Roll (1976) in their identification of patterns of epilepsy in the EEG of a few poltergeist agents, the neurological abnormalities that have been presented as indicative of this type of activity are not rare in growing teenagers, and so the evidence for this specific neurological mechanism is weak (Martinez-Taboas & Alvarado, 1981).

Despite the lack of physical evidence for abnormal brain activity in people who experience these phenomena, the general RSPK model remains a strong candidate for being the basis of the observed phenomena. In the present investigation, the RSPK model was assumed, and the report includes reference to this model to the exclusion of other theoretical explanations.

## **The Evolution of the Poltergeist**

A review of the professional publications in the field of parapsychology reveals a strong interest in poltergeist phenomena from ancient times through the decade of the 1980's. The earliest literature from the first millennium focused on demonology and religious spirit possession (Gauld & Cornell, 1979), while literature from the 19th and early 20th centuries revolved around the materializations and auditory phenomena typical of physical mediums, the effects produced by spirits during séances (Podmore, 1963), and spontaneous activities demonstrated by spirits in relaying a message to a living person (see Gurney, Myers, & Podmore, 1886). The literature from the mid to late 20th century revolved around RSPK and the macro-PK effects that were generated by RSPK agents, resulting in objects moving through the air, furniture turning over, glassware spilling its contents, pebbles raining from the sky, and so forth (e.g., Auerbach, 2004; Pratt & Roll, 1958; Roll, 1976; Roll & Joines, 2013; Roll & Storey, 2004). With a few exceptions (e.g., Auerbach, 1993, 1996, 2004), the poltergeist has not been seriously studied by parapsychologists since 1990.

In the 21st century, people have developed a stronger dependence on electronic equipment and wireless communication networks. Before 1990, the major electronic appliances in the home were typical kitchen appliances, the wired telephone, and the television set. Today, the majority of the population in most developed countries regularly uses computer systems, wireless network devices, and, of course, nearly everyone carries a cellular telephone. Electronics and mini-computers are embedded in television remote controls, microwave ovens, washing machines, cars, and even keys and some light bulbs. The wireless revolution has exploded and the world around us is filled with microelectronics.

Where the RSPK activity of the past was macro-PK, including the movement of large objects, today's RSPK is likely to be more subtle. It is common to have trouble with a computer only to find that the

problem is fixed after a brief coffee break and calmer nerves. We typically attribute this to *user error* or a *glitch* in a computer program. Cell phone malfunctions are attributed to thunderstorms, a bad connection, or a low battery. Of course, these explanations all have validity and are often the culprit behind the malfunction, but in some cases there may be other factors that contribute to the interference or signal failure. Studies by Morris (1984, 1986) and Radin (1990) examined the effects that humans have on electronic devices with results indicative of an unintentional influence. As the use of electronic devices becomes more prevalent and as the devices become more integrated with the physical body, there are more opportunities for RSPK to be expressed as micro-PK effects that cause the malfunction of electronic equipment that we use every day.

### **Defining Electronic Poltergeist Disturbance**

Whereas macro-PK has been defined as the movement of large objects such as bottles, stones, furniture, and other household objects without any obvious physical interaction, micro-PK is defined in the glossary of the *Journal of Parapsychology* as PK effects on quantum events or systems. Some events are clearly macro in nature (e.g., moving a statue across a room) whereas some are clearly micro in nature (e.g., effects on random number generators). Between these extremes, there is a continuum of phenomena that does not easily fit in either the macro-PK or micro-PK category. Are the small effects needed to affect a roll of dice micro- or macro-PK? Is the disruption of a beam of light or a radio signal the same as affecting a quantum system? These questions and questions about similar events lead to the conclusion that there is a continuum of PK phenomena, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to closely examine the labeling of all PK phenomena.

Helmut Schmidt (1970) demonstrated that electronic systems governed by quantum events could be affected by an observer, and subsequent studies at the PEAR Labs in Princeton, NJ, provided evidence that the intention of an observer could cause statistically significant effects on the randomness of events including the fall of balls, the movement of a pendulum, the patterns of a water fountain, and random events created by monitoring quantum processes (Jahn, Dunne, Nelson, Dobyns, & Bradish, 1997). All of these events have been characterized as micro-PK in different forums. For the purposes of this paper, the interference of electronic systems, electronic devices, and the disruption of signals produced by electronic systems will all be considered micro-PK effects.

Electronic poltergeist disturbances (EPDs) are unconscious micro-PK events that affect electronic devices or signals and occur near an RSPK agent who is likely unaware of the origin of the event. Some examples of possible EPDs are the disruption of the electronics of a computer, a household appliance, an alarm system, or a vehicle that uses electronics or computers as a control system. EPDs could be seen in cell phones or in the disruption of the signals sent from cell phones or on wireless networks. Many things could disrupt these devices or signals, but the defining characteristics of EPDs are that they are unintentional, often unnoticed, and as is the case in other RSPK cases (e.g., Carpenter, 1993; Roll & Pratt, 1971; Roll & Storey, 2004), these disruptions could originate from an individual who is experiencing stresses, pressures, or anxiety that could lead to repressed aggression or anger.

### **A Possible Case of Electronic Poltergeist Disturbances**

In October of 2013, JGK was contacted by a medical doctor who indicated that he had an 11-year-old male patient who was experiencing unusual electrical activity. This activity was disturbing to his family, and they approached this physician to help to eliminate the problem. As it was described to the doctor, the boy could not use a cell phone due to interference that was produced when he was speaking on the phone. Electrical devices malfunctioned or behaved erratically when he was near them. The doctor reported that most disturbing to the family were the problems that developed with computers at the boy's school. Malfunctions were being interpreted by his teachers as pranks or electronic sabotage, and he was being punished by his teachers for these disturbances. The doctor examined the boy and found him to be in perfect health, and he was looking for assistance in addressing this phenomenon.

The initial research concern in this case was that the doctor, the young boy, or his family were looking for attention and publicity. There was skepticism about the reported activity, and this situation called for extreme circumspection to avoid any obvious fraud or malicious intent on the part of the parties that reported the activity. Before beginning our investigation or exploration of the phenomena, a preliminary interview was arranged with the doctor, the young boy, and his family.

The interview included the young boy, his mother, his grandmother, and the doctor. The boy lived with his mother and grandmother and he had never known his father. Prior to the interview, JGK met with the doctor privately and reviewed his reports to insure they were consistent with the original discussions of the activity. Subsequently, the family joined JGK and the doctor and they discussed why they were meeting.

The family expressed anxiety and concern about the activity, the expense related to the events, and possible health hazards that they thought might be related to the events. They described electrical appliances that were turning on and off without any physical contact. They mentioned that the grandmother's computer would crash when the boy came near. They described the TV and the computer-controlled washing machine breaking when he was near. Telephones would act in strange ways, car doors would lock and unlock, car windows would go up and down, and the electrical gauges in the car would not operate correctly when he was in the front seat.

At school, computers would crash when the boy tried to use them, printers would act very strangely, cell phones would sometimes make sounds when he was upset, and the scores on standardized tests (scored automatically by computer) would not register when he took the tests. The teacher did not believe that the boy was affecting these machines without touching them, and she often embarrassed him when things like this happened in class.

Besides the inconvenience of these events, the family expressed concerns about the expenses to replace many electronic items. The grandmother provided a list of 31 separate unusual happenings that had occurred near the boy since November of 2012, and the boy expressed a concern that he was going to be the cause of health issues with his family if these activities continued.

The concern and sincerity of the family seemed genuine in the personal judgement of JGK, so he agreed to further discuss these issues with the family at a later date.

### **Developing an Approach to the Investigation**

Poltergeist activity is rare in our culture, and rarer still is the opportunity to explore poltergeist agents in the carefully controlled environment of a parapsychology laboratory under the watchful eyes of trained observers and experts in the phenomena. In rare situations, researchers trained in observation and critical thinking have observed apparent poltergeist events in uncontrolled environments such as private homes and public locations (e.g., Pratt & Roll, 1958; Roll, 1976; Roll & Pratt, 1971), and at times these same researchers have been able to examine the physiology and psychology of a possible poltergeist agent by bringing the potential agent into a controlled laboratory environment (Roll & Storey, 2004).

The case of the Miami Poltergeist (Roll & Pratt, 1971) provided an opportunity for the researchers to explore the psychology of Julio Vasquez, who was present during all reported cases of object movement. In this case, psychologists determined that the employee displayed signs of dismay and anger towards the owner of a public warehouse due to his phony demeanor. He also showed a number of specific psychological characteristics including high moral standards, feelings of guilt and rejection, passivity and inaction, detachment, and dissociative tendencies in his expression of aggression.

In the case of Tina Resch (Roll & Storey, 2004) feelings of shame and guilt were interpreted to have contributed to Tina's rich fantasy life, and she exhibited tendencies to use aggression to release the anxiety produced by situations that brought on the guilt (Carpenter, 1993). Despite her predisposition towards producing grand displays to distract people in social situations, the observed RSPK activities were interpreted as an expression of her dissatisfaction and stress related to her family life (Carpenter, 1993). In an additional review of 10 specific cases, Gauld and Cornell (1979) indicate that the most common theme in analyses of RSPK agents is repressed aggression and tension within the family (p. 341). Further investigations of

potential RSPK agents by Roll in the chapter Poltergeists in the *Handbook of Parapsychology* (Roll, 1977) indicated that 49 of 92 person-centered cases involved people with medical or psychological problems.

If RSPK were to be discovered in this investigation, there might be psychological issues related to repression of emotions and the tendency to avoid the expression of aggressive feelings. In addition, family pressures and tensions may be present that would complicate the observation of the events. In order to ameliorate the potential risks and ethical issues related to this visit, the researcher took precautions to insure that the young boy and his family would be protected while he was conducting the investigation and assisting the family in fulfilling their desire to eliminate the electrical disturbances or adapt to them.

### **Preparing for the Investigation**

In preparation for this investigation, JGK recruited the assistance of a number of professionals who had previous experience working with children or in cases of possible RSPK.

1. A poltergeist agent who had been studied by scientists in three laboratories was contacted to provide counsel on her approach to the anxiety and inconvenience of managing unintentional movement and electrical disruptions in her life. In addition, she discussed her experiences with her family while she was trying to eliminate these activities from her life.
2. Loyd Auerbach, a professional field investigator and mentalist, provided advice on how best to observe the situation and what types of activities had helped other people who experienced other types of RSPK.
3. Dr. Athena Drewes, a psychologist who works with children with exceptional experiences, was contacted to discuss how best to approach a child in this type of situation while maintaining a critical eye towards the reality of the phenomena.
4. Dr. Sally Rhine Feather, a professional psychologist, was contacted to be available during the investigation to assist in any potential counselling needs if they would arise. In addition, the family's doctor was available via phone in the case that he may be needed.
5. Finally, Dr. William T. Joines, an experienced researcher and the second author, expert on electrical fields, and a veteran of numerous poltergeist investigations, accompanied JGK to provide a second objective perspective on the events and to help evaluate how best to manage ostensible RSPK events should any be observed.

### **The Research Approach**

An investigation of this type requires careful planning and caution. The first step in developing an approach is to determine the goals of the investigation. In this case, the goals were two-fold. First, determine whether the reported events truly occurred, and second, since the family expressed a specific desire to eliminate electrical disturbances, provide the family with some tools that may help them to reduce the frequency of the occurrences or refer them to a professional if necessary.

Based on the advice of researchers, counsellors, and a person who had previously experienced RSPK, the following three-part approach was developed to assist the family in reducing the frequency of the electrical disturbances and to assist the family in managing the activity. None of this was designed to address family dynamics, provide guidance or counselling to the family, or advise the family on psychological or medical issues.

**Calming the mind through anxiety reduction.** One of the major psychological factors described in previous RSPK cases involved anxiety and the avoidance of expressing aggressive feelings (e.g., Gauld & Cornell, 1979; Roll & Pratt, 1971). Following the assumption that anxiety may play a part in the RSPK activity, it is reasonable to postulate that a reduction in anxiety may in turn reduce the unintentional PK activity. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of simple relaxation and meditation techniques in reducing anxiety (e.g., Chen et al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn et al., 1992; Koszycki, Bengler, Shlik, & Bradwejn,

2007), so this information was communicated to the potential RSPK agent and family.

**Mindful awareness.** Mindfulness meditation techniques have been demonstrated to be effective in alleviating generalized anxiety disorder (Evans et al., 2008), but it also is a way to bring one's attention to the activities and the experience of the current moment (Baer, 2003). Since RSPK type events are spontaneous and unpredictable in nature, there may be consistent events that trigger the activities. By becoming aware of these triggers, an RSPK agent may be able to reduce the impact of the events or even prevent them completely.

If information was requested to reduce the frequency of the events, mindful awareness was to be presented as a technique that may help to increase awareness of activities and feelings just before and during an unintentional PK event. The agent may use this technique to develop an awareness of a possible trigger for the event. With this additional knowledge, agents can seek assistance in managing those feelings or find a method for handling those feelings themselves.

**Rechanneling focus.** Conversations with Auerbach and a person who had experienced RSPK activity personally indicated that unconscious or unintentional PK activity might be calmed if agents focus their attention on performing purposeful PK. It is not clear whether this would be a method to release some of the potential PK activities that have not been expressed or whether the act of focusing on intentional PK provides a type of psychological benefit to the agent. In any case, the recommended focus item was a "psi wheel"—a handmade device with a light pinwheel balanced on top of a needle. Since this type of device is easily affected by normal physical activity, it was recommended that the wheel be properly shielded to ameliorate the influence of heat or air flow. This was accomplished by placing the device inside a large jar with a sealing lid.

**Additional information.** One of the main recommendations from the person who had experienced RSPK activity and had successfully reduced the frequency of the events was related to the reactions of her family. She recommended that the family attempt to react casually to unexpected electronic occurrences rather than respond with surprise or anger to the events.

**Summary.** If the participant and/or the family requested information on how to reduce the frequency of the events, they were to be provided with information about relaxation and meditation, mindful awareness, and provided with an example of how one person rechanneled their unintentional activity to an intentional event. In addition, the family was to be advised to attempt to respond to an unexpected electronic event nonchalantly in order to reduce the focus on the unusual nature of the event.

## **The Complete Plan**

The following plan was developed based upon the advice of researchers, counsellors, and a person who had previously experienced RSPK. The major theme of this approach is to maintain the comfort and confidence of the people reporting the activity while verifying the validity of the reported events. In addition, once the claimants are verified as serious (i.e., not seeking publicity), attempt to address their needs before completing tasks for scientific research. In other words, for ethical reasons, always put the needs of the participants ahead of the scientific research.

For example, in this case, scientific rigor would require a detailed inspection of the premises, interviews with workmen, teachers, and friends, and a review of documentation confirming the events reported by the family. A dispassionate scientist who is attempting to validate the phenomena and examine the mechanisms of the events may take these steps and include psychological testing and additional physical examinations of brain activity. These steps would be required in a pure scientific approach to the reports, but they do not consider the needs of the people experiencing these events.

The anxiety and concern expressed by the family indicated a focus on eliminating the activity, illustrated by their initial contact with a medical professional to help treat the child for the problems they were observing. When considering the needs of the family and the apparent PK agent, this approach recommends that validation of the activity is necessary, but not the primary goal of the first session. Once apparent activity is observed by the researchers, the researchers should respect the family's requests for help in eliminating

the phenomena if possible. If the problem persists, further investigation, including collecting detailed documentation and conducting psychological testing, would be necessary to further validate the phenomena and to provide information that may help to address the needs of the family.

The steps of the approach are as follows:

1. When a claim of unusual activity is initially reported, acknowledge it sincerely and seriously to assure the persons reporting the claim that they will not be ridiculed or made to feel uncomfortable about their experiences.
2. Interview the claimant and those close to the claimant to determine their intentions and goals. If their intentions do not include eliminating the activity or learning more about the mechanisms behind the activities, consider rejecting the opportunity to investigate the phenomena.
3. Evaluate the desirability of continuing the investigation based on the desires of the claimant. A desire for publicity or a lack of concern about the phenomena may be a sign of fraud. Proceed with caution.
4. Design and communicate a plan to address the activity, insuring that the goals of the claimant are addressed in the plan. This provides a level of comfort and confidence in the researcher and the approach to the research. It is essential that the claimant be comfortable throughout the process and that his or her needs be acknowledged and addressed.
5. Validate the claim of activity using controlled methodologies in an environment that is comfortable for the claimant. Respect the claim but protect against deception or misinterpretations of the events. When performing investigations outside of the laboratory, be sure to account for natural and environmental factors that might contribute to the activity.
6. Express the results of the validation clearly to formalize the recognition of the activities, and if there is an observed event, reassure the claimant that there is a real problem that has also been observed with other people. If there is no observed event, communicate that also. Sincerity and honesty are essential in communicating scientific observations.
7. Determine whether the activity is intentional or unintentional through interviews and observations.
8. Provide guidance for controlling unintentional activities. This includes a three-step process of anxiety reduction, mindfulness, and a redirection of energies using a focus object such as the psi wheel.
9. Follow up to address additional issues that may arise, such as a change in the expression of the phenomena (e.g., knocks occurring or larger objects being affected), an increase in activity, or signs that further psychological counselling may be warranted.
10. Follow up on the progress in alleviating the unintentional activities.

### **Investigating Possible EPD Phenomena**

After the initial conversation and meeting with the family, in the judgement of the primary researcher, the family was seeking relief from the disturbances in their home and assurance that the activity would not result in health problems for the family. The family doctor provided the requested medical and health assurances. Before the investigation could proceed, the researchers attempted to verify that the reported events were not based on fraud, imagination, or a misunderstanding. Consultations with a number of professionals (see above) resulted in the development of a plan to approach the situation, and the approach was reviewed for ethical concerns by the Rhine Institutional Review Board and approved.

JGK and WTJ visited the family's home. The purpose of the visit was to observe the reported phenomena in an environment where it had been previously observed. The researchers purposely presented a friendly and approachable demeanor in order to make the family members comfortable with the situation and encourage their honesty and cooperation with the investigation. Before the researchers entered the



house, they inspected the outside of the house and did not notice any possible sources of electrical interference such as high tension lines or a power station or antenna nearby. The house appeared to have a normal electrical and phone wire running from a pole on the street to the house.

Numerous events were reported to the researchers by the mother and grandmother of the young boy in the family. A complete listing is provided in the appendix, but since most of these events occurred before the researchers' visit, there was no way to verify them. Some of these events occurred at the boy's school or at a friend's house, but the majority of the events were reported to have occurred inside the home. Since the activity was reported to be occurring nearly every day in the home or in the car, the researchers saw this as an opportunity to attempt to reproduce the most frequently reported events.

Though this investigation was carefully performed, there were some situations where the boy was out of sight of the researchers or when he may have used trickery to produce the effects. One reported event involved activity with the automatic garage door opener, but this proved to be a mechanical flaw that was mistakenly attributed to interference by the young boy. A second set of events was reported to involve the electrical system of the grandmother's car. Electronic gauges would fluctuate in unusual and unexpected ways, and the windows and door locks would open and close as someone drove down the road. With the researchers in the car with the grandmother and the boy, no electrical interference was observed, but the door locks and the car windows did behave in an unusual manner when the boy was in the front seat. Unfortunately, his hands and the hands of the grandmother were not visible to the researchers, so there was no way to rule out trickery in this situation.

### **Phone Interference**

The first reports of activity in the home were related to telephones. The wired telephones in the home began making noises when the boy walked by them. A short time later, the phones began to make repeated calls to the neighbors when nobody was dialing them. Also, the phone base would consistently make a sound like it was paging the handset even though the handset was securely in the phone base. These events prompted the family to contact a repairman from the phone company, and, according to their report of the situation, the repair man made many visits to the home but could not locate any problems that would cause the phone to call the neighbors repeatedly or make noises when none of the buttons were being touched. Despite efforts to replace the phone battery, move the phone to different outlets or locations, or replace the phone itself, the events continued to occur. The researchers did not verify the service calls made by the repairman, but instead asked if the boy could try to make a phone call with the phone in question.

The mother and grandmother both reported that the boy could not call a cell phone or use a cell phone because it would result in interference. They agreed to have the boy try to make phone calls while the researchers were present, using the phones that had produced problems in the past.

The boy first made a call from the wired phone in the house to the mother's cell phone, since this was a situation that had regularly produced interference. Within 15 s of the first call, the mother's cell phone began producing a loud sound from the speaker, which sounded like feedback. Both the grandmother and mother appeared undisturbed and familiar with this event, and the mother happily handed the phone to JGK, who heard the same sound. WTJ then took the cell phone and JGK went into another room to observe the boy and his behavior with the wired phone. While the boy was holding the wired phone, the interference sound was heard by WTJ on the cell phone, but when JGK took the phone from the boy, the sound stopped and the phone worked normally. The boy appeared to be very frustrated that he could not communicate through the phone, and he expressed his frustration by shaking the phone and yelling at it. Each time JGK gave the phone back to the boy, the interference pattern returned, and each time JGK took the phone, the phone once again acted normally. Even when JGK had the boy hold the phone away from his head, the interference continued.

This test was repeated with other phones including the cell phones of each researcher. In each case, when the boy held the phone while making a call, the phone would go dead and the phone that was being called emitted a loud sound similar to feedback. It did not matter if the phone was a cell phone or a wired

phone, which type of phone (iPhone or Android), or which carrier served the phone. In each case, the phone behaved the same way in the boy's hand.

The events were observed in different location around the house. The electromagnetic field near the boy was measured using an EMF meter from Walker Scientific, Inc. (model ELF-500), but no unusual readings were observed around the boy while he was at rest or while he was making an interrupted phone call.

Though these events were convincing and impressive, the researchers never asked the boy to empty his pockets or searched him for potential electrical interference devices. There are stories of gamblers using interference devices in their shoes to disrupt radio communication at a casino, so this is a feasible means of producing this type of effect. There was no obvious evidence of fraud, and since the goal of the investigation at this point was to address the needs of the family, the researchers did not explore every possible means of trickery related to the phone interference.

### **Printer and Computer**

With respect to most of the events inside the house, neither of the researchers were specifically expert related to the devices or observed activity. One exception to this was interference related to the computer system and the printer. JGK has more than 20 years of experiences in the technical field including training in software development, hardware, and more than 17 years working as a professional for a large software company. This experience provides him with special insight into computer systems, specifically PCs and laptops using the Windows operating system, and how they interact with peripheral devices.

The grandmother reported that when the boy was near her desktop computer it would begin malfunctioning in different ways even when he was not touching the computer. The display monitor would go blank. The system would often display an error screen that would require a reboot to correct the problem. Sometimes the system would go into complete failure and it could not be restarted for a number of minutes. Eventually, the computer went into complete failure even though it was a fairly new system, and it had to be completely replaced. She reported that these events had occurred so often that she would not let him in the same room with her computer for fear that he would damage the new system.

The young boy had gotten a new laptop as a gift, and he was very excited but very cautious and focused when he used this system. He wanted to print a document from his laptop to the wireless printer to show it to the researchers. When he left the room to print the document from the laptop, the printer would become active and every piece of paper in the printer was fed through the printer without printing. The grandmother would casually turn the printer off, replace all of the paper, and turn it back on. The document was then printed normally. She explained that this happened every time the boy printed a document from any computer.

JGK, being knowledgeable about this computer system, recognized that there are specific commands that can be activated from a computer to cause a printer to feed paper through without printing, so he went to the laptop and carefully observed the boy as he rebooted the laptop, opened only the document to be printed, and pressed the print button. Again, all the paper was fed through the printer, and it had to be reset for the document to print. With the permission of the family, JGK took the computer and went through exactly the same process to print the same document. The document printed normally and the blank pages were not fed through the printer. This process was repeated by the boy and by JGK in different combinations of rebooting, opening the document, and printing. In each situation, when JGK printed the document the printer worked normally, but when the boy printed the document, the printer would feed all of the paper through before the document was printed.

Unlike the phone interference issues mentioned earlier, these events did not involve an uncontrolled signal interruption but rather a specific behavior activated in the printer when the print command was sent from the computer. This was a simple home network that consisted of one desktop computer, one laptop, and one networked printer. The fact that this behavior was only observed when the young boy issued the command, but never when JGK issued the command provides strong evidence that the events were not the result of fraud. Though a complex mirroring system in the home network could produce this effect and

enable fraud, an inspection of the devices on the network provided no evidence that such a system was in place and the family had no knowledge of additional computers or mirroring devices in the home.

As a side note, at one point in the process, JGK asked the boy to reboot his computer, and the system would not start. This was a computer that was less than one month old and it hadn't shown any signs of a problem besides the printer issue. When JGK saw the boy begin to get upset when the computer wouldn't start, he reassured the boy and asked him to relax and focus on their conversation for a moment. After just a minute, the computer restarted normally.

There are some hardware systems that are flawed when they are first purchased, and they may exhibit unusual behavior or failures. Some may even produce inconsistent behavior and operate normally one moment and fail the next moment. The same activities can produce failures one moment and work fine after they have been rebooted. In this situation, the request from the laptop was repeated multiple times by both the young boy and by JGK. In each situation using multiple procedures, the printer consistently worked flawlessly for JGK and consistently failed in the same manner for the young boy. These events are considered by the researchers to be the strongest evidence of an electrical disturbance that was centered on the young boy.

### **Other Activity**

Other events occurred while the researchers were in the house, including the sounding of a smoke alarm and CO<sub>2</sub> detector when the boy walked past the device, unusual beeping sounds and partial rings from the wired telephone when the boy was near it, and unusual activity with kitchen appliances. Most of these were one time, isolated events that could not be verified because the researchers could not always see the boy or his hands while the events were taking place.

An exception was the activation of a toaster oven in the kitchen just before the boy had lunch. Lunch was slightly delayed, and the boy was excited that it was going to be prepared. He went into the kitchen and stood near the toaster oven waiting for his mother to make him a sandwich. He was obviously excited because he was jumping up and down slightly and saying "Oh boy! Oh boy! Oh boy!" over and over. The toaster oven was not turned on, but it got very hot to the touch. When the boy was asked to move into the other room, the toaster oven immediately began to cool down to normal temperature. The researchers were able to observe the boy and the toaster oven closely during this event, and the boy never touched the toaster oven to either turn it on or turn it off. After his lunch was made, he calmed down considerably, and fewer events were observed in the afternoon.

### **Post-Investigation Discussions and Education**

After the observation of numerous events throughout the day, the researchers sat with the family members to discuss the results. They informed the family that some of the phenomena, such as those involving the garage door and the car windows, were likely due to mechanical issues that should be examined by a professional. The issues related to the phone and the computer system were unexplainable at that time and acknowledged as problematic activity that the family would like to stop. The other events were acknowledged, but it was communicated that they could not be scientifically recognized as unintentional electrical disturbances. The goal of this session was a truthful recap by the researchers to reassure the family that their experiences were being taken seriously and that some of the events were similar to events experienced by other RSPK agents.

At this point the young boy was asked whether he was purposely trying to make any of these events happen. He clearly indicated that he wasn't doing any of this on purpose, and when the family was asked as a group what they wanted from this investigation, they all agreed that their main goal was to put a stop to the undesired electrical disturbances. The mother wanted to avoid the expense of replacing electronic devices in the house. The grandmother was concerned about the perception of the boy at his school and the need to restrict him from certain activities or locations when electronic devices were in use. The boy himself want-

ed to be able to use a cell phone like other children his age, and he wanted to be able to use the computers at his school without breaking them.

### **Education**

The researchers provided the family with information about the research results from other cases of RSPK. They assured them that similar activities had been observed with other people, and that some people had managed to control the unwanted activity by calming the mind with relaxation techniques, simple meditation, mindful awareness, and by redirecting their focus to attempt to produce purposeful PK events. The family had never done meditation or relaxation before, so JGK described the process to them and led them through a simple breathing exercise to help them to relax. They were also referred to websites and online search terms that might help them to learn more about relaxation methods.

JGK also taught the young boy how to create a simple psi wheel that could be used as a focus item for practicing purposeful PK. The family showed little interest in this item, and the young boy never ended up focusing his attention on this item.

Finally, when the young boy was out of the room, the mother and grandmother were advised that the activity may increase when the young boy is aggravated or anxious. In order to avoid increasing these feelings, the family was informed that other people had reported that they were able to decrease the activities when their family remained calm during the events and approached the situation in a light-hearted way.

### **Follow-up**

In the following month, JGK kept in touch with the grandmother, and she reported a significant decrease in electrical disturbances in the house. The young boy was using his “breathing exercises,” and he was proud that he was able to avoid getting upset when he thought the events were going to occur. The RSPK events decreased significantly during this time, but they did not vanish completely.

Approximately two months after the visit, an unexpected family crisis caused fear and discomfort for all of the family members. As was reported to JGK by the family members, they were forced to leave their home for a period of time, and they cut all communication with their friends. During this time, knocking, tapping, and banging noises began to occur around the house and in the hotel room that was their temporary home. The effects were so loud that they thought somebody was trying to break into their room.

The family crises ended in about ten days after external pressures were removed, and with the end of the crises, the knocking stopped. Other RSPK activity also stopped, and for two years since the investigation, the young boy has continued to do relaxation exercises. No further RSPK events or electrical disturbances have been reported in the house, in the car, at the boy’s school, or at his friends’ houses.

### **Why Did These Events Stop?**

Though there is a temptation to attribute the stop in RSPK activity to the relaxation methods and mindfulness exercises that started as soon as the researchers left, the psychology of the family dynamic is complex. There are many factors that may have contributed to the activity stopping, including the additional attention that this young boy got from the researchers who came to learn about him. The methods introduced in this investigation are a single isolated example, and they cannot be considered to be responsible for the cessation of RSPK events without further examination.

### **Summary**

A report of electrical disturbances in a family household led a physician to contact the Rhine Research Center for an examination of the phenomena and for assistance in helping to stop the activity. Thanks to the advice and contributions of a number of professionals who were experienced with RSPK phenomena

and how to work with children, a research approach was developed to keep the focus on the people experiencing RSPK and the people close to them. In the course of this study, the investigation provided much anecdotal and some convincing evidence of electronic poltergeist disturbances (EPDs) which may become more prevalent with the closer integration of electronic devices in our lives.

The research method used in this investigation emphasizes the needs of people before the needs of the research project, so there were some gaps in the scientific controls in parts of the field investigation. The strongest evidence of a confirmed event is related to the unusual interaction between a laptop computer and a printer when being used by the 11-year-old boy. In addition, the heating of a toaster oven when the boy was anticipating lunch demonstrated a clear phenomenon that dissipated when the boy left the room. Though the lack of some scientific rigor may have caused the researchers to overlook potential trickery by the boy in some cases with the telephones, the car windows, and the smoke alarm, there is little doubt that the researchers observed some instances of electrical disturbances that are not the result of observable physical causes and that seem to be centered around the young boy in the home.

Since the main focus of this investigation was helping the person experiencing RSPK and his family to manage the events and potentially eliminate the unwanted activity, the major thrust of this study is the presentation of a methodology and the development of a simple process of relaxation and mindfulness that was developed to help to address the possible anxiety that has been present in so many other RSPK cases. The RSPK agent was also introduced to a method that had been used by another RSPK agent to focus attention on intentional PK in order to reduce the occurrence of unintentional PK activity. This focus method was never adopted in this situation, but it is still considered to be a valuable tool in helping RSPK agents to manage their activity.

Although the RSPK agent reported feeling more confident, calm, and in control after regularly using relaxation techniques, it is premature to attribute the reduced RSPK activity to relaxation and mindfulness. A volatile family situation increased the activity for a short time after the investigation, and after the family matters were resolved, the RSPK nearly disappeared completely. In addition, just the act of having researchers visit to investigate the phenomena may have produced a response in the young boy that reduced the RSPK events.

Nonetheless, the young boy felt better after using relaxation and mindfulness techniques, and shortly afterwards, the RSPK events stopped. Because of this, the person-centered methodology described in this case is presented as a basis for approaches to investigate other cases of RSPK activity, and the use of relaxation, meditation, and mindfulness should be further explored in future cases to determine if it is helpful to other potential RSPK agents.

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### Appendix

The following is a list of 31 separate events observed by the family over a 12-month period. Some of these events occurred multiple times. These events are included to give a sense of the experience of the family, though almost none of these activities were observed and validated by the researchers. This information was reported by the family to their doctor and to the researchers but was not validated. All of these events refer to the young boy who was the apparent agent in this study, and they were submitted to the researchers on March 17, 2014.

1. Telephone rang and beeped when nobody was touching the phone and when nobody was calling. (*observed by researchers, but not thoroughly validated*)
2. Smoke alarm sounded when there was no sign of smoke. (*observed by researchers, but not thoroughly validated*)
3. Weather alert radio sounded an alarm when there was no sign of a weather emergency. (*observed by researchers, but not thoroughly validated*)
4. Sheets used for standardized testing at school didn't scan when boy completed them.
5. Panic alarm on car key fobs went off when boy held them even when he wasn't pressing any buttons.
6. Laptop stopped working, appearing to be due to electrical overload.
7. Cell phone displayed strange behavior, had issues with the screen turning upside down, and could not be repaired by the Apple Store.
8. Television changed channels and volume increased when nobody was touching the remote control. Eventually, the television, which was only a year old, stopped working completely and had to be replaced.
9. Washing machine which was operated with a computer touch screen lit up all the lights on the touch screen and changed cycles rapidly when boy was near it. Eventually, it stopped working completely. Now, the new washing machine is always unplugged, and boy is not permitted in the basement when it is plugged in or running.
10. Toaster heated up when boy was near it, even when it was not turned on. (*observed by researchers*)
11. Timer on microwave would not operate when boy was in the kitchen. The display went blank or all the lights lit up.
12. Accelerated Reader (AR) system at school that is used for computerized teaching and testing froze and stopped operating when boy was near.
13. Printers at school, at home, and at mother's work fed all the paper when boy was near. (*observed by researchers in the home*)
14. Hotel key card demagnetized when boy held it.
15. Check Engine light in car came on regularly when boy was in the front seat of the car. Mechanics couldn't find any sign of problems, and the light went off when boy was not riding in the car.
16. Bar code scanner at grocery store wouldn't scan items when boy was near.
17. Light bulb over the table at a restaurant went off when family was sitting at the table.
18. Cat responded to boy as if it was in pain when he was near. The cat howled loudly and ran from the room even though boy was not touching the cat. (*observed by researchers, but not validated*)
19. Metronome stopped working when boy was near it.
20. Two cassette tape recorders stopped working.
21. The thermostat for the house heating and air conditioning did not operate and the display panel became unreadable.
22. Multiple computers at school shut down when boy went near them. The teacher often made him use the oldest and worst computers, and he had to take his tests last so that he didn't interrupt the other students' ability to use their computers.

23. Phone connections on landline and cell phones were interrupted with a loud screeching sound. (*observed by researchers, partially validated*)
24. Telephones called back the numbers that had previously been called, sometimes over and over again, when nobody was touching the phone. The phone repairman could find no problems with the line or the phones that were in the house. The phones had been replaced a number of times.
25. Text messages showed up on a cell phone when no one had sent a text. Sometimes many text messages were sent repeatedly and at a very fast rate.
26. The electronic checkout system at the library did not operate for boy.
27. The bread machine stopped in mid-cycle.
28. Miles per gallon gauge in the car changed values very quickly and went to unbelievable values such as 99 miles per gallon or two miles per gallon. This happened on normal drives, and the mechanic could find no flaws in the electrical system. It only happened when boy was in the car.
29. Car door lock and electric windows went up and down when boy was in the front seat and not touching the controls. (*observed by researchers, but not validated*)
30. While holding the TV remote but not pressing buttons, the TV ordered pay-per-view events.
31. When boy was using a computer, it sent emails automatically without his selecting the email program or pressing buttons.

The phenomena were reported to have been observed by family members, neighbors, teachers, working companions, and a telephone technician.

### **Abstracts in Other Languages**

#### *Spanish*

#### DOMANDO AL FANTASMA INTERIOR: UN ACERCAMIENTO A LA RESOLUCIÓN DE ACTIVIDAD POLTERGEIST APARENTE

RESUMEN: Un informe sobre perturbaciones eléctricas en una casa llevó a un médico a ponerse en contacto con el Centro de Investigación Rhine para explorar un posible caso de RSPK. La investigación proporcionó mucha evidencia anecdótica, alguna sólida, sobre perturbación electrónica poltergeist (EPD), una forma de RSPK caracterizada por la alteración de aparatos electrónicos y de las señales de los dispositivos electrónicos. Un experto en sistemas informáticos observó una evidencia fuerte de actividad EPD en el comportamiento de un sistema de computadora/impresora en una red doméstica. Un enfoque de investigación centrada en la persona fue desarrollado con base en el asesoramiento de personas con experiencia en y experimentadores RSPK. Meditación, atención consciente (mindfulness), y un enfoque orientado pueden utilizarse como actividades para ayudar a controlar o eliminar la actividad no deseada mediante la reducción de la ansiedad a menudo observada en los agentes RSPK. En esta situación, los eventos de EPD se disipan durante un período de 3 meses. A pesar de que la dinámica familiar y otros factores contribuyeron a complicar la evaluación de la eficacia de las técnicas de mindfulness y relajación, el agente RSPK mencionó tener una actitud tranquila y segura después de usar estas técnicas con regularidad. Se alienta a los investigadores a explorar los efectos de relajación y mindfulness para determinar si son de utilidad para otros agentes RSPK en su intento por controlar la actividad no deseada.

#### *French*

#### APPRIVOISER LE FANTÔME INTÉRIEUR : UNE APPROCHE DE L'APPARENTE ACTIVITÉ ÉLECTRIQUE DES POLTERGEISTS

RÉSUMÉ : Un témoignage de perturbations électriques dans une demeure familiale a poussé un médecin à contacter le Rhine Research Center pour explorer un cas potentiel de PKSR. L'investigation a fourni beaucoup de preuves anecdotiques et quelques preuves fortes d'une perturbation électronique associée à



un poltergeist (PEP), une forme de PKSR caractérisée par la perturbation des appareils électroniques et des signaux émis par les dispositifs électroniques. De fortes preuves d'activité PEP furent observées par un expert en systèmes informatiques dans le comportement d'un système d'ordinateur et d'imprimante dans un réseau local. Une approche de recherche centrée sur la personne fut développée sur la base des conseils d'experts et d'expérienceurs en PKSR. La méditation, la pleine conscience et la focalisation ciblée furent introduites comme des activités pour tenter de contrôler ou d'éliminer l'activité non-désirée en réduisant l'anxiété souvent observée chez les agents de PKSR. Dans cette situation, les événements PEP se sont dissipés dans une période de 3 mois. Bien que la dynamique familiale et d'autres facteurs contributeurs ont compliqué l'évaluation de l'efficacité des techniques de pleine conscience et de relaxation, l'agent de PKSR a relaté une attitude de calme et de confiance après avoir utilisé ces techniques régulièrement. Les chercheurs sont encouragés à explorer les effets de la relaxation et de la pleine conscience pour déterminer si elles sont utiles pour d'autres agents PKSR dans leur quête pour gérer et contrôler l'activité non-désirée.

*German*

#### DIE ZÄHMUNG DES GEISTES IM INNERN: EINE ANNÄHERUNG ZUM UMGANG MIT ANSCHEINENDEN ELEKTRONISCHEN SPUKPHÄNOMENEN

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG:** Ein Bericht über elektrische Störungen in einem Einfamilienhaus veranlasste einen Arzt, sich an das Rhine Research Center zu wenden, um einen möglichen Spukfall untersuchen zu lassen. Die Untersuchung ergab viel anekdotische und einige starke Hinweise auf elektronische Poltergeist-Störungen (EPS) als eine RSPK-Form, die durch elektronische Störungen und Signale elektronischer Geräte charakterisiert wird. Ein Experte für Computersysteme konnte im Verhalten eines Computer-Drucker-Systems eines häuslichen Netzwerkes deutliche Hinweise auf EPS-Aktivitäten feststellen. Ein personen-zentrierter Forschungsansatz wurde entwickelt, der auf Ratschlägen von Spukexperten und spukerfahrenen Personen beruhte. Darin werden Meditation, achtsamkeitszentrierte Wahrnehmung und gezieltes Fokussieren angeführt, mit deren Hilfe sich die störenden Vorkommnisse besser handhaben oder eliminieren lassen, indem sie zur Reduktion von Ängsten beitragen, wie sie oft bei Spukauslösern beobachtet werden. In diesem Falle konnten die EPS-Vorfälle innerhalb dreier Monate zum Verschwinden gebracht werden. Obwohl die Beurteilung der Wirksamkeit von Achtsamkeit und Entspannungstechniken aufgrund der Familiendynamik und anderer beteiligter Faktoren schwierig ist, berichtete der Spukauslöser von einer entspannten und züversichtlichen Einstellung als Folge der regelmäßigen Anwendung dieser Techniken. Spukforscher sollten die Wirkungen von Entspannung und achtsamkeitszentrierter Wahrnehmung erproben, um herauszufinden, ob sie auch anderen Spukauslösern bei deren Suche nach Handhabung und Kontrolle dieser störenden Vorkommnisse hilfreich sein können.