

PSI AND THE COGNITIVE UNCONSCIOUS¹

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Abstract

The majority of experiences which people interpret as being 'psychic' happen without any conscious intention on the part of the person. In many spontaneous cases, it would appear that some relevant information (either psi or 'subliminal' sensory information) has actually entered the cognitive system at an unconscious level.

We conducted four experiments hoping to see if psi processes work in similar ways to other unconscious cognitive processes. Although this comparison has been made before, this was the first attempt using current methodologies.

The first two experiments involved the effect of both psi and unconscious perceptual stimuli on recognition memory. We found that a briefly presented perceptual stimulus could influence recognition memory. When we attempted to obtain the same effect using psi as a biasing stimulus we found no significant deviation from chance.

Two experiments were also conducted investigating the effect of psi and unconscious perceptual stimuli upon homophone interpretation. No effect was found for the unconscious perceptual stimuli. There was a suggestion that psi could indeed influence participant's responses to homophones. There was also evidence for a 'sender effect' (whereby one sender was more successful in producing 'hits' than another), and a response bias effect (whereby responses that were less common seemed to elicit more 'hits').

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