

## **INVESTIGATING CHILDREN'S EXTRA SENSORY EXPERIENCES ACROSS VARIOUS CULTURAL CONTEXTS**

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### **Grant 70/22**

**Background:** The study aims to address the exclusion of children from research that studies anomalous or extra sensory experiences. There is a scarcity of research with children in the field of parapsychology compared to studies with adult populations. Recent pilot studies show children to have a range of extra sensory experiences, such as OBEs, premonitions and hearing sounds and voices that others cannot hear. Excluding children may leave a gap in knowledge around the nature and emergence of these kinds of experiences. We aim to involve children, parents and professionals in a large scale qualitative study into their extra sensory experiences, paying close attention to how any socio-cultural influences may affect children's experiences. Although the study sees children as the primary target group, adults who care for children will also be invited to participate. Identifying how adults respond to children's experiences will support how we understand children's extra sensory experiences in terms of wellbeing.

**Aims:** The main aim is to investigate children's extra sensory experiences across various cultural contexts in the UK to: identify whether extra sensory experiences are common in childhood; and examine any cultural and social influences, activities, environments or medical factors which may influence children's extra sensory experiences, in terms of emergence, form, frequency and meanings. We also aim to explore how adults who care for children (parents/carers/professionals) make sense of extra sensory experiences, gathering information about any childhood experiences, their views about children's extra sensory experiences and their opinions on current service provision for children.

**Method:** The study population will be 200 children aged 4-18 years and 200 adults who care for children (laypersons and professionals), from various cultural backgrounds across the UK. Working with child-centred organisations (schools, youth centres, etc.) we will identify and distribute online questionnaires to older children ages 11-18 years. Younger children, ages 4-10 years, will be invited to participate in creative research sessions. Individual interviews will be conducted with a sample of older children selected from questionnaire responses. Online questionnaires will also be distributed to parents and professionals who care for children.

**Preliminary results:** Pilot questionnaires and some preliminary fieldwork results show that children report a range of extra sensory experiences such as memories from previous lives, premonitions, seeing deceased relatives, shape-shifting beings, OBE's, peak experiences and hearing sounds, music and voices that others cannot hear. Parents report childhood experiences including imaginary companions and hearing sounds or voices that others cannot hear. Professionals report less extra sensory experiences in childhood than parents. Both parents and professionals felt that children's services have very little understanding about their extra sensory experiences.

**Keywords:** Children, Extra sensory experiences, Culture, Emergence, Creative research

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