

**SELF-PERCEIVED HIGH INTUITIVENESS:  
AN INITIAL EXPLORATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents the results of an exploratory and qualitative examination of the beliefs, experiences and alleged abilities of 50 individuals claiming to be highly intuitive. Participants offered three distinct mechanisms to explain how their intuition works—psychological, psychic, and spiritual. They reported relying on intuition mainly to judge the personality of strangers and predict the outcome of future events. Most could not recall instances of their intuitive judgments failing, and believed it was always wise to act on an intuition. Almost all reported believing that the onset of intuition was uncontrollable, but could be enhanced by becoming more receptive to one's "gut feelings." These results are discussed in terms of developing a more detailed and ecologically valid understanding of intuition.

Many researchers have argued that intuition plays a key role in a wide range of human activities, including decision making, social interaction, scientific discovery, creativity and personal development (e.g., Dimitrius & Mazzarella, 1998; Monsay, 1997; Policastro, 1995; Way, 1995). For this reason, psychologists have carried out a considerable amount of work into intuition, examining

the topic from a diverse range of theoretical perspectives.<sup>1</sup> This work has, for example, included investigating the situations under which people report making intuitive judgments (e.g., Agor, 1986, 1989; Charles, 2004; Chinen, Spielvogel, & Farrell, 1985; Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1997; Miller, 1995, Rew, 1988), the mechanisms that may underlay such experiences (e.g., Bastick, 1982; Baylor, 1997; Cosier & Aplin, 1982; Ferguson, 1999; Giannini, Daood, Giannini, Boniface, & Rhodes, 1978; Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, 2002; Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982; Rehm & Gadenne, 1990; Sutherland, 1992; Wisniewski, 1998) and the types of individual differences that may correlate with alleged intuitive abilities (Epstein, 1990; Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj, & Meier et al., 1996; Fallik, & Eliot, 1985; June, 1923<sup>2</sup>; Lester, Thinschmidt, & Trautman, 1987; McCrae, 1994; Taggart, Valenzi, Zalka, & Lowe, 1997; Woolhouse, 1996; Woolhouse & Bayne, 2000).

However, despite this relatively large body of work, little attempt has been made to examine individuals who claim to be *highly* intuitive. This is unfortunate, in part, because the notion that some people are significantly more intuitive than others has widespread lay appeal and is frequently discussed within popular psychology texts (see, e.g., Goldberg, 1983). The study reported here addresses this issue by exploring the beliefs, experiences and alleged abilities of individuals who claim to be intuitively gifted.

The study employed an exploratory, and qualitative, methodology to investigate several issues. First, few previous studies have attempted to gain insight into participants' lay understanding of the term "intuition." Participants in this study were asked to define the word "intuition," explain why they classed themselves as highly intuitive, describe two of their most memorable intuitive experiences and state in which areas of life they tended to use their intuitions (cf. Spinney, 1998). Second, most previous studies have tended to focus on intuitive judgments that have resulted in positive consequences. This study explored the potential negative aspects of intuition by asking participants to describe circumstances when their intuition had proved unproductive, when ignoring their intuitions had positive consequences and whether they believed it was ever unwise to follow an intuition. Third, although many popular self-help books offer techniques to increase one's intuitive potential (e.g., Stokes, 1998; Way, 1995), no previous studies have examined whether such techniques are employed by those claiming to be intuitively gifted. This study explored participants' beliefs about

<sup>1</sup>Research which is related to, but which does not specifically mention 'intuition' includes the study of nonconscious information processing, implicit learning, tacit knowledge and insight (see, e.g. Myers, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Jung (1923) went further and claimed more widespread individual differences exist in the extent to which people generally use thinking (perception by means of cognitive thought), feeling (perception by means of subjective evaluation), sensing (perception by means of the physical sense organs) or intuiting (perception by way of the unconscious) as their primary means of experiencing the world. For a detailed discussion of Jung's typology see Sharp (1987).

the controllability of intuitions and the enhancement of intuitiveness. Finally, participants were asked to describe the sensations they felt when having an intuitive experience.

In sum, the present study attempted to establish how those claiming to have an “intuitive gift” define intuition and how they justify these claims, when and where they use their intuitions, whether they believe their intuitions ever fail, if they can control and/or enhance their intuitions, and finally, what their intuitive experiences feel like.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were recruited via the national press (*The Independent on Sunday* newspaper) and radio (a BBC *Radio Five-Live* phone-in program). Any readers/listeners who considered themselves to be highly intuitive were invited to contact the researchers in writing. The 496 people who responded made up a database/pool of self-perceived high intuitives from which subsequent samples were drawn.<sup>3</sup>

For the present study, 90 intuitives were randomly sampled from the intuitive pool and sent a copy of the *Qualitative Intuitive Experiences Questionnaire* described below. Of these, 50 respondent (3 male, 46 female; 1 missing gender data) returned useable questionnaires; a response rate of 55.6%. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 84 years with a mean age of 39.0 years ( $sd = 15.7$  years). Two-thirds (67.3%) were educated to at least undergraduate degree or professional level, with roughly equal numbers having backgrounds in the natural sciences, social science or arts and humanities. Of those who stated their current occupation, 13.0% worked in education, 13.0% in finance, 8.7% in retail, sales or advertising and 8.7% in the welfare or probation services. A further 17.4% were students. Finally, over half (59.6%) of the sample earned less than £15,000 per annum although a sizable proportion (12.8%) had annual incomes in excess of £25,000. No other demographic details were taken.

### Materials

The *Qualitative Intuitive Experiences Questionnaire* comprised 10 open-ended questions regarding respondents' beliefs about, and experiences of, intuition. Specifically, items asked respondents (1) how they defined intuition, (2) why they claimed to be *highly* intuitive, (3) to describe their two most memorable

<sup>3</sup>Demographic data for the entire intuitive pool was not collected at the initial recruitment stage. Subsequent research did however confirm that members of the intuitive pool scored higher on a self-report measure of (perceived) intuitive ability—a generalized version of the *Miller Intuitiveness Inventory* (Miller, 1993)—than did controls. See Rogers (2001) for further details.

intuitive experiences, (4) in which areas of life they used their intuitions, (5) if/when following their intuitions ever had negative consequences and conversely, (6) if/when ignoring their intuitions ever had positive consequences, (7) if/when they believed it was ever unwise to follow their intuitions and their beliefs about whether (8) intuitions could be controlled and (9) whether general intuitiveness could be enhanced. Finally, respondents were asked to describe (10) the feelings and sensations they felt when having an intuitive experience.

## RESULTS

Exploratory content analysis (see Clark-Carter, 1997) was performed on all items with data summarized in Tables 1 to 3. In all cases, percentage figures do not sum to 100% because answers may have been relevant to more than one response category. Because of response overlap, some questions are combined under a single sub-heading.

The fact that the vast majority (93.9%) of participants were female could be seen as confirmation of the popular stereotype that women are more intuitive than men (see Goldberg, 1983; Myers, 2002). However, it is possible that women were drawn to the study precisely because of this myth and that men avoided it because of the social stigma sometimes attached to intuitive thinking (Chinen et al., 1985).

### Explanation of Intuition

Table 1 summarizes the ways in which respondents defined and justified their intuitive self-concept.

Participants offered four mechanisms as explanations for their intuition. The most widely endorsed explanation involved reference to some form of “gut instinct.” The second, suggested by just under a third of respondents, was that intuition reflects a nonconscious or super-fast method of processing of information.

Our subconscious takes in and processes much more information than our conscious mind can . . . and our intuitive thoughts are our subconscious mind telling us what it has found [R09].<sup>4</sup>

The ability to attend to a whole situation in minute detail quickly, link it to past knowledge and come up with a rapid interpretation . . . [and] set up new links between unconnected information held in long term memory [R76].

This explanation is clearly in line with traditional interpretations of intuition including those from the implicit learning literature (e.g., Bastick, 1982; Bowers,

<sup>4</sup> Respondents are identified with an “R” number given at the foot of each quote with gender specific text used to reflect the sex of each respondent. Grammatical corrections, indicated by square brackets, have also been made where appropriate.

Table 1. Intuitives' Definitions and Justifications of Self-Perceived High Intuitiveness (*N* = 50)

Question & Response Categories	Percent
<b>Q1. Explanations of Intuition</b>	
Gut feelings/instinct	62
Nonconscious processing/super-fast decision making	30
Sixth Sense/extrasensory perception	24
Inner/spiritual guide	8
Other	14
<b>Q2. Justifications for Self-Perceived High Intuitiveness</b>	
Predict future/precognitions	62
Judge stranger's personality	30
Judge stranger's thoughts/feelings	16
Superiority of intuition	16
Other	12
<b>Q3. Most Memorable Intuitive Experiences</b>	
Financial/career successes	42
Forewarning	38
First impressions of strangers	34
Relationship outcomes	18
Future interpersonal contact	14
Domestic issues	10
Other relationship predictions	8
Other	8
Nothing specific/all decisions intuitive	12
<b>Q4. Areas of Life in Which Intuitions were Followed</b>	62
Dealing with personal relationships	52
Work/business decisions	26
Meeting strangers	18
Career moves	12
House moves	12
All/most areas of life	30
Other	

Regehr, Balthazard, & Parker, 1990). A third explanation, offered by a quarter of participants, was that intuition reflects some form of extrasensory perception:

[Intuition is] a 'sixth sense' which does not arise purely from thought processes. . . . Whether this sense comes from workings of the brain we don't yet know about or from something even less understandable I don't know [R76].

While this view of intuition has been discussed by a number of writers (e.g., Broughton, 1991; Nadel, 1996) it has been ignored by the majority of academics studying intuitive thinking (Shirley & Langon-Fox, 1996; although see Myers, 2002). The final suggestion, forwarded by a small number of participants, is that intuition reflects a form of spiritual guidance.

Being guided from within. Trusting that within us we have all we need. A feeling, a sense of being led to where we need to go. When you trust intuition going with the flow of life and everything feels like it's meant to be [R37].

Again, this view of intuition has largely been ignored by most academic psychologists investigating the topic, although notable exceptions include Fontana (2003), Goldberg (1983), Mishlove (1997) and Vaughan (1979). According to Vaughan (1979) for example, spiritual intuition provides a holistic perception of reality which transcends rational, dualistic ways of knowing and gives the experient a direct transpersonal awareness of the underlying oneness of life. Thus, some participants appear to be basing their intuitive self-concept on their apparent development of a more transcendental approach to life again implying that self-high intuitiveness may be characterized, at least in part, by possession of a wider transcendental world view (cf. Zusne & Jones, 1989).

### **Justifications of Self-Perceived High Intuitiveness**

When asked to justify their use of intuition and relate memorable intuitive experiences, approximately 50% of participants cited their ability to form quick and accurate judgments of strangers' thoughts, feelings or personality:

I get instant impressions of people, whether they are 'my sort of person' . . .  
I use my intuition when deciding to trust someone [R31].

When I was 22 (and very 'green' about life), I met a seemingly very pleasant man with whom I struck up a friendship. One day he asked if he could borrow my car and at that moment I 'knew' he was a thief and a con-man, so I refused. About two weeks later, the police came to see me as they had arrested this man in Tanzania in a stolen car [R73].

These data suggest that self-perceived high intuitiveness is characterized by a claimed ability to make accurate personality judgments (e.g., Albright, Kenny, & Malloy, 1988). Such claims are in stark contrast to most experimental studies of intuitive thinking (e.g., Westcott, 1968; Bowers, et al. 1990).

Approximately two-thirds of participants claimed that their intuition provided accurate information about some future event that could not be known through normal sensory channels, with many citing specific instances of when they intuitively knew about future career gains, financial successes, re-acquaintances or new relationships:

I had a strong intuitive feeling that someone I had not seen for 20 years and never expected to see again as we had lost touch and he lived abroad, was thinking about me. The next day he telephoned he was in England and had been trying to track me down all the previous day [R47].

The first occasion he kissed me on the lips an inner voice clearly told me 'this is the one.' I was taken aback and certainly not looking for a serious commitment. After a few more teenage friendships, my boyfriend and I got together again, became engaged and eventually married. Thirty-six years later we are still very much together [R43].

For a third of participants, their intuition served a far more ominous function:

I was driving on the freeway in LA (as a passenger) and out of the blue I felt that death was kind of close(ish). And I mentioned to my colleague that I would hate to die in LA. The intuition has seemed like a semi-warning but not of something fatal. The next day I was involved in a serious accident on the exact same part of the freeway [R51].

I had not seen David who I used to work with years ago for approximately 2 years. I decided to send him a Xmas card with my new number on and contact him in the new year. On Boxing Day, I felt very depressed and my mood was heavy as though something bad was about to happen. On the 2nd January 1997 I had a phone call advising me David had died on Boxing Day in a car crash [R13].

Thus for many, their intuitive gift serves some protective function akin to an inner warning signal or alarm bell. These data are in line with previous research relating faith in intuitions to both paranormal and superstitious thinking (Lester et al., 1987; Epstein et al., 1996) and suggest that self-perceived high intuitiveness may be characterized by endorsement of a wider metaphysical world-view (Zusne & Jones, 1989).

A minority of participants claimed they followed their intuitions in all or most areas of life and hence that they were used as a general strategy for decision-making. The remainder reported using their intuitions in three main areas of life. First, approximately a quarter specifically mentioned following their intuitions when meeting strangers for the first time. Around two-thirds also cited their use when dealing with personal relationships:

I follow my intuitions with regard to people, for example, in deciding whether to trust someone or not. Initially, my intuition tells me whether someone is dangerous or harmless, honest or dishonest [R09].

[When] considering men as potential partners. I very quickly see who is just a real bastard. I can sometimes tell from across a room by posture and expression [R75].

These data reinforce earlier suggestions that self-perceived high intuitiveness is characterized by ostensibly high interpersonal sensitivity (see Hall & Bernieri, 2001). Finally, just over half the sample claimed they followed their intuitions at work:

As a bar manager it is often necessary to deal with situations. Under some circumstances you get a feeling about someone who walks up to the bar and you then watch them. 90% of the time the feeling I have, be it good or bad, is correct [R17].

While this last category supports earlier findings that top executives and medical staff frequently use their intuitions in the workplace (e.g., Agor, 1989; Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1997; Miller, 1995; Rew, 1988), it should be noted that a sizable proportion of respondents referred to their use for dealing with customers, patients, potential employees and work colleagues again implying the importance of intuitions within an interpersonal, as opposed to problem-solving, context (cf. Shirley & Langon-Fox, 1996).

### **Trust in Intuition**

Table 2 summarizes the extent to which participants followed and/or trusted the accuracy of their intuitive experiences.

Interestingly, around half the sample failed to recall instances when following their intuitions had negative consequences, with many interpreting their intuitions as being positive regardless of the outcome. Similarly, over four-fifths of intuitives failed to recall a single example of when ignoring their intuitions led to a positive outcome, with a third subsequently stating it was never unwise to follow your intuitions:

I can't think of any [examples] because whenever I follow my intuitive feelings—which I have often, . . . I always find . . . that doing so was right for me. So of course I tend as a result to follow them [R73].

I never ignore my intuition if it is indicating something positive. Plus, my intuition never indicates something negative if the outcome is positive [R51].

These data reinforce the view that intuitions are seen as being an important and valid source of information (Monsay, 1997; Vaughan, 1979) and again imply that absolute faith in the accuracy and need to act on one's intuitions may be a defining feature of self-perceived high intuitiveness. However, contrary to this view, several respondents did acknowledge at least the partial fallibility of their intuitions with a third of the sample citing inaccurate first impressions or poor relationship choices as examples of when trust in their intuitions was misplaced. Similarly, just under a fifth suggested it might be unwise to follow intuitions that will have a direct impact on other peoples' lives:

Table 2. Intuitives' Trust in Their Intuitions (*N* = 50)

Question & Response Categories	Percent
<b>Q5. When Following Intuitions Had Negative Consequences</b>	
None	44
Misperceiving personal relationships	18
Financial losses	16
Inaccurate first impressions of people	14
Other	10
<b>Q6. When Ignoring Intuitions Had Positive Consequences</b>	
None/never ignored	82
Inaccurate first impressions	6
Financial gain	4
Children from unhappy relationship	2
Other	8
<b>Q7. When It is Unwise to Follow Intuitions</b>	
None/never unwise	34
Important decisions/need for justifications	26
Financial decisions	18
Impacts on Other People's Lives	16
Conflict with logic	12
Work	12
Tired, ill, or emotional	10
Other	16

One woman I felt I could 'intuitively' trust has turned out to be two-faced and I was obviously very wrong in my assessment of her [R38].

[When] making decisions on other people's behalf, for example, about providing resources for them at work . . . because it would be unethical [and] because I am not in full control of the situation [P76].

Thus, while many of those claiming to be intuitively gifted base this self-perception on their alleged interpersonal sensitivity (see above) a sizable minority also recognize the pragmatic issues associated with acting on one's intuitive hunches (e.g., Chinen et al., 1985). Further support for this argument came from the seemingly paradoxical claim, forwarded by a third of intuitives, that it was unwise to follow intuitions which conflicted with common sense or the need for rational justification:

Really big decisions, especially financial ones, should be part intuition but should also include a large helping of fact . . . Anything on behalf of a

company or other people must be very certain and intuition is often only a feeling [R62].

These data are in line with Rew's (1988) claim that many nurses trust their initial intuitions but still seek objective, medical fact before treating with patient needs. By comparison, under a fifth of the sample could recall instances when ignoring their intuition had positive consequences. Of these, most talked of acquiring friends whom they initially disliked; a direct contradiction of earlier examples linking self-perceived high intuitiveness to heightened interpersonal sensitivity (see above):

One woman I felt I could 'intuitively' trust has turned out to be two-faced and I was obviously very wrong in my assessment of her [R38].

I was introduced to a certain person and didn't 'feel' quite right about them and this made me feel uncomfortable, but I ignored the feelings and I'm glad I did as 13 years on, this person is still my best friend [R27].

Taken together, these data suggest there may be two sub-classes of self-perceived high intuitives. The first appears to be characterized by an absolute trust in their intuitions and an unrelenting readiness to act on these regardless of context. This group, it would seem, is less worried about the stigma typically associated with irrational decision making processes (Shirley & Langon-Fox, 1996). The second sub-group appears to be characterized by the belief that while mostly accurate, intuitions may on occasion be less than perfect. With skeptical views of intuition in mind (Hill, 1987; Sutherland, 1992), it seems reasonable to suggest that the former group may be more prone to memory, confirmation, hindsight or other self-validating biases (see Kunda, 1999; Myers, 2002; Plous, 1993) when it comes to justifying their own intuitive self-concept than the latter.

### **The Intuitive Experience**

Table 3 provides a summary of intuitives' beliefs about how controllable intuitions are, how enhanceable intuitiveness is and what their intuitive experiences feel like.

Interestingly, there was some ambiguity over the perceived controllability of intuitions. Just over half the sample believed that the onset of intuitions was spontaneous hence uncontrollable and that being intuitively gifted merely meant being passive recipients, having no influence over when and where their intuitions occurred:

Usually they are spontaneous and just strike me at any time and are not always relevant to what I am doing/thinking at the time . . . I feel my influence is minimal [R51].

Table 3. Intuitives' Perceptions of the Intuitive Experience ( $N = 50$ )

Question & Response Categories	Percent
<b>Q8. Spontaneity Versus Controllability of Intuition</b>	
Onset is uncontrollable/spontaneous	56
Can tune into intuitions	42
Onset is manageable	12
Some aspects manageable	10
Other	10
<b>Q9. How to Enhance One's Intuitiveness</b>	
Quiet the mind	30
Remove stress/negative emotions	14
Meditation/spiritual development	12
Enhances naturally with age	10
Not enhanceable	8
Other	6
<b>Q10. Feelings and Sensations Associated with Intuition</b>	
Confusion/anxiety	36
Sense of certainty	32
Stomach cramps/chills/light-headed	18
Serenity/spiritual calmness	16
Emotional (general)	14
Nothing	14

[Intuition] cannot be controlled on the outset by the depth to which they affect one's life can be limited or harnessed [R44].

The remainder believed that intuitions were controllable inasmuch that a person could become more receptive and selectively "tune in" to their intuitive potential. Around half of all respondents either stated this explicitly or, by arguing that intuition operates in much the same way as other emotions, implied it:

I cannot control it [intuition] to a specific requirement, that is I cannot remove it but I can 'turn it on' or enhance the thinking mode I'm in to pick up information [R41].

Intuition is a feeling much like happiness or grief . . . everyone has the basic instincts/feelings but some choose to ignore them or switch off from them [R15].

When asked directly how intuitiveness could be enhanced, half the sample suggested it could via a general “quietening of the mind” or through guided relaxation, meditation and/or spiritual development techniques:

I believe I can improve my intuition by becoming more spiritual through meditation . . . My intuition seems to be more acute since I have started improving my spiritual side [R81].

Again, these views are echoed in many self-help guides (e.g., Stokes, 1998; Way, 1995). Moreover, the implicit suggestion here is many self-perceived high intuitives endorse a “noise reduction theory” of intuition similar to that proposed for psychic ability (see Eysenck & Sargent, 1993; Irwin, 2004)<sup>5</sup>.

Taken together, these data imply that self-perceived high intuitiveness is characterized by the belief that one can improve the likelihood of accessing—but not generating—their own intuitive experiences; a view reflected in many self-help books on the subject. Vaughan (1979) for instance, suggests that “although one cannot *make* intuition happen, there is much that one can do to *allow* it to happen” (pp. 9-10; italics added). Moreover, findings also suggest that many of those claiming to be highly intuitive see their “gift” as reflecting a heightened receptivity to an otherwise dormant intuitive sense (cf. Way, 1995).

Surprisingly, several intuitives either stated explicitly or implied they felt nothing (unusual) during their intuitive experiences. In contrast, most intuitives were quite precise in describing their intuitive experiences. A third perceived their intuitions either as sudden realization or sense of knowingness.

Sometimes it just hits me unannounced . . . its just a very deep conviction which comes into my mind that this is the way to go [R47].

These claims are clearly in line with the first key characteristic of classically defined intuition (Bastick, 1982; Rogers, 2001; see above) and support the view that intuition is “the most certain route to perfect knowledge” (see Monsay, 1997). In contrast, half the sample described a sense of confusion, anxiety or heightened emotional sensitivity with a fifth referred to as having unpleasant physical sensations such as stomach aches, chills and/or light headedness:

My intuitive voice is a persistent nagging feeling quite unlike the voice of thinking or conscious thoughts. [It is] a voice that will not be quietened or easily ignored. I feel compelled to obey the urgency and commands of the voice/feeling of intuition [P27].

<sup>5</sup>Noise reduction theory claims that psychic ability (psi) is such a weak signal that it can only be detected when all other sensory input is at a minimum. According to some parapsychologists (e.g., Bem & Honorton, 1994; Radin, 1997), Ganzfeld studies—in which psi receivers lay in a soft, reclining chair, listen to white noise and view a dim red light through halved ping-pong balls over their eyes—provide the most robust evidence for extrasensory perception (although see Milton & Wiseman, 1999).

Sometimes deep tearful feelings of emotion [P69].

A tightness of the stomach, very distinct . . . a lightness, almost disembodied feeling in the head. Like a head-cold [P89].

Thus for some, the intuitive experience was not always a pleasant one. Moreover, intuitives appear to disagree as to the subjective quality of the intuitive experience<sup>6</sup>, something previous studies of intuition (e.g., Westcott, 1968; Bowers et al., 1990) have failed to acknowledge. Finally, a sixth of those claiming to be highly intuitive described experiencing a unique sense of serenity or spiritual connectedness:

A sense of oneness. Of being part of something much greater than myself.  
Of connectedness. It feels right—there's no need for discussion. Calm and inner peace [R37].

While the experiences described above again highlight the problems of defining intuition simply (Shirley & Langon-Fox, 1996), they do support Vaughan's (1979; 1998) claim that intuition operates on four distinct levels; namely the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. Self-perceived high intuitiveness, it seems, is not characterized by the experience of intuitions in any one modality.

## DISCUSSION

Several themes emerge from this initial, qualitative study of self-perceived high intuitiveness.

First, while virtually all participants endorsed the traditional definition of intuition as “knowing without knowing why” (Claxton, 1998; Hill, 1987) three specific, yet very different mechanisms—psychological, psychic, and spiritual—were forwarded to explain how intuition works. These findings further highlight the complexity in defining intuition (Shirley & Langon-Fox, 1996) and moreover, suggest that a sizable proportion of those believing themselves to be intuitively gifted also endorse a metaphysical world-view (Zusne & Jones, 1989).

Second, those claiming to have an intuitive gift appear to base these claims on an alleged ability to accurately determine the personality of strangers, and predict the outcome of personal relationships. Much of the previous work on intuition has tended to employ problem-solving tasks (e.g., Westcott, 1968; Bowers et al., 1990), whereas the findings discussed here suggest that researchers may profit from examining tasks that involved some form of social perception. Such work could build upon the methods developed by researchers examining person perception at zero acquaintance (e.g., Albright et al., 1988; Borkeau & Liebler, 1992; Levesque & Kenny, 1993; Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997). Interestingly, this

<sup>6</sup>While the lack of data cannot rule out wider mental health problems, previous research does suggest that individuals with more faith in their intuitions are less—not more—prone to generalized anxiety disorders (Epstein et al., 1996).

work suggests that individual differences in the ability to judge strangers may reflect differences in knowledge about which cues are valid indicators of which traits, with some researchers suggesting that as behavior-trait relationships are usually too complex to describe explicitly, much of this knowledge will involve “intuitive” rather than “analytic” processes (Funder, 1999).

Those describing themselves as intuitively gifted also claimed they are able to accurately predict the outcome of their own relationships, with many reporting “love-at-first-sight” experiences (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). Again, this claim could be tested using methods developed by researchers examining the accuracy of predictions concerning interpersonal relationships (Chapdelaine, Kenny, & LaFontana, 1994; Kenny, Bond, Mohr, & Horn, 1996; Meiran, Netzer, Netzer, Itzhak, Rechnitz, et al., 1994; Tofalo, 1977).

Finally, approximately a third of participants believed intuition reflected some form of extrasensory or metaphysical awareness. Such individuals may thus yield interesting results in experiments investigating the validity of extrasensory perception (for a review, see Radin, 1997; Irwin, 2004) and those interested in why some people attribute paranormal causation to normal events (Epstein et al., 1996; Vyse, 1997; Zusne & Jones, 1989).

In short, this article represents an initial step toward understanding the psychology of people who claim to be highly intuitive. It is hoped that the other researchers will now extend this work by using established quantitative methodologies to examine the claims made by this unique and interesting group of individuals.

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