# *Introduction to Psychical Research and Paranormal Investigation*

**Psychical** is a word that means, "relating to things perceived through the senses as opposed to the mind", and **paranormal** is a word that means, "denoting events or phenomena such as telekinesis or clairvoyance that are beyond the scope of normal scientific understanding". It is a **pseudoscience**, which means, "a collection of beliefs or practices mistakenly regarded as being based on scientific method", because it is the study of consciousness.

**Consciousness** is "the awareness or perception of something by a person", and is not a contested topic. However, consciousness has yet to be explained, or even which areas of the human brain are capable of producing it.

Source:
Goff, Philip. “Science as We Know It Can't Explain Consciousness – but a Revolution Is Coming.” The Conversation, 7 May 2020, theconversation.com/science-as-we-know-it-cant-explain-consciousness-but-a-revolution-is-coming-126143.

Some even hypothesize **remote consciousness**, or non-locality of cognition, wherein consciousness is separate from the brain, and the brain only acts as a filter for it.

Source:
Lazarus, Clifford N. “Does Consciousness Exist Outside of the Brain?” Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, 26 June 2019, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/think-well/201906/does-consciousness-exist-outside-the-brain.

Most in the field of psychical research and paranormal investigation believe that some part of a person, be it consciousness or the soul, may be able to interact with the environment, and that that part survives physical death and can, on occasion, communicate with the still-living.

# Scientific Methodology

Though considered a pseudoscience, steps can be taken to adhere to scientific methodology, and avoid common biases.

1

First, create a **hypothesis**, or an "educated guess".

2

Gather the equipment that you will need for the experiment.

3

Design your experiment, with a control.

A scientific **control** is an experiment
or observation designed to minimize the effects of
variables other than
the independent variable. This increases the
reliability of the
results, often through a comparison between
control measurements and the other measurements.

4

Complete your experiment.

5

Have your data verified by a third party, to avoid confirmation bias.

6

# Draw your conclusions.

# Types of Biases

Cognitive biases are expected in science. They are expectations that cloud judgement, and cause deviation from conclusions. There are a number to keep in mind.

**Confirmation bias** is the tendency to search for, interpret, focus on and remember information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions.

**Experimenter/Expectation bias** is the tendency for experimenters to believe, certify, and publish data that agree with their expectations for the outcome of an experiment, and to disbelieve, discard, or downgrade the corresponding weightings for data that appear to conflict with those expectations.

**Observer-expectancy effect** is when a researcher expects a given result and therefore unconsciously manipulates an experiment or misinterprets data in order to find it.

**Pareidolia** is when vague and random stimulus (often an image or sound) is perceived as  significant, e.g., seeing images of animals or faces in clouds, the man in the moon, and hearing non-existent hidden messages on records played in reverse.

**Selective perception** is tendency for expectations to affect perception.

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**Subjective validation** is the perception that something is true if a subject's belief demands it to be true. Also assigns perceived connections between coincidences.

**Bandwagon effect** is the tendency to do (or believe) things because many other people do (or believe) the same.

**Courtesy bias** is the tendency to give an opinion that is more socially correct than one's true opinion, so as to avoid offending anyone.

**Shared information bias** is the tendency for group members to spend more time and energy discussing information that all members are already familiar with (i.e., shared information), and less time and energy discussing information that only some members are aware of (i.e., unshared information).