

Poltergeist Phenomena: What Have We Learned?

Bryan Williams

Psychical Research Foundation

Prepared for:

WizIQ ParaMOOC 2015 Discussion Forum: RSPK & Poltergeists

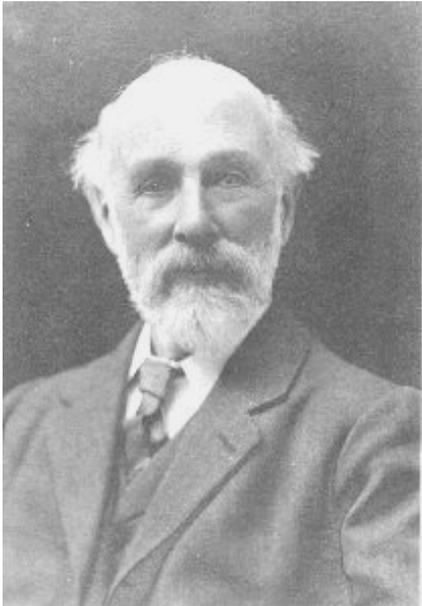
July 26, 2015

Traditional View

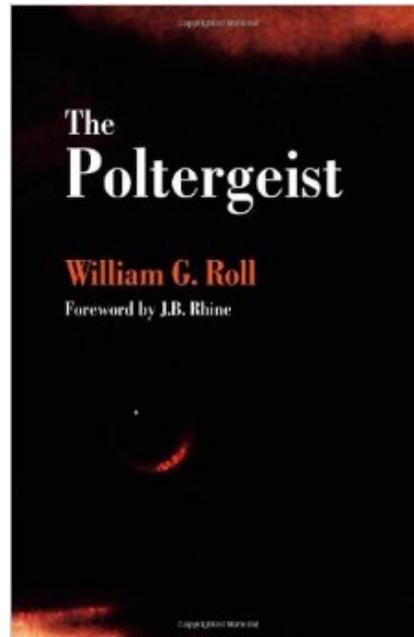
Poltergeist phenomena are thought to be due to the mischievous acts of spirits, demons, or some other kind of discarnate entity (as implied by the term *poltergeist*, which literally means “noisy spirit” when translated from its German roots).



Modern View



1911: Sir William Barrett advances the view that there is a *human side* to the poltergeist, with much of the phenomena seeming to focus around a certain person.



Investigations by the late William Roll and others seem to support this view.

Poltergeists as Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (RSPK)

What evidence do we have for this?

- PK studies with RSPK agents
- Physiological aspects
- Physical aspects

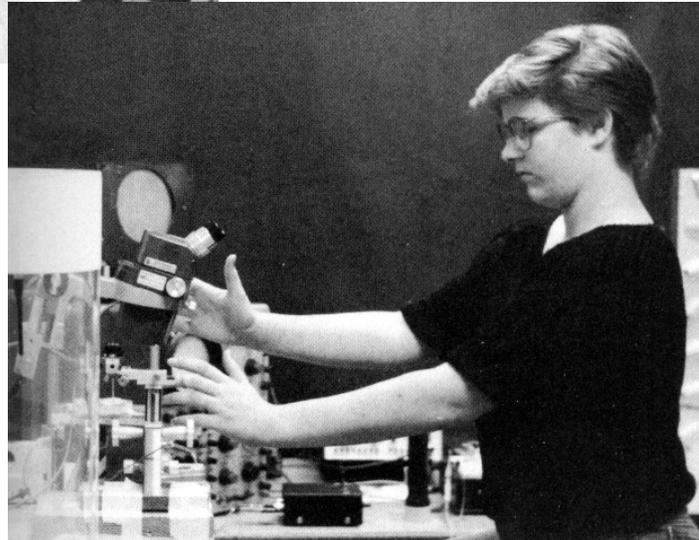


PK Studies with RSPK Agents



Tina Resch at Spring
Creek Institute –
October 1984

(See the accompanying
article for details)



Julio Vasquez (the
suspected agent in
the Miami case) at
the Institute for
Parapsychology,
FRNM – Feb 1967

Physiological Aspects

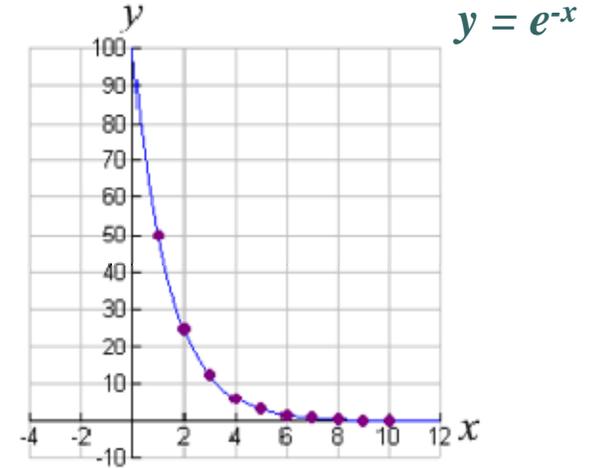
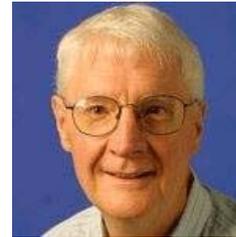


- A survey by Roll (1977) found that of 93 suspected RSPK agents, 49 of them (53%) had medical or neurological issues
- In some cases, these issues seemed to be inversely correlated with the poltergeist disturbances (whenever one manifested, the other often did not) (Roll, 2007)
- Little is currently known about exactly how (or even if) these physiological issues may tie into RSPK, as there have been very few opportunities to study agents along these lines

Physical Aspects

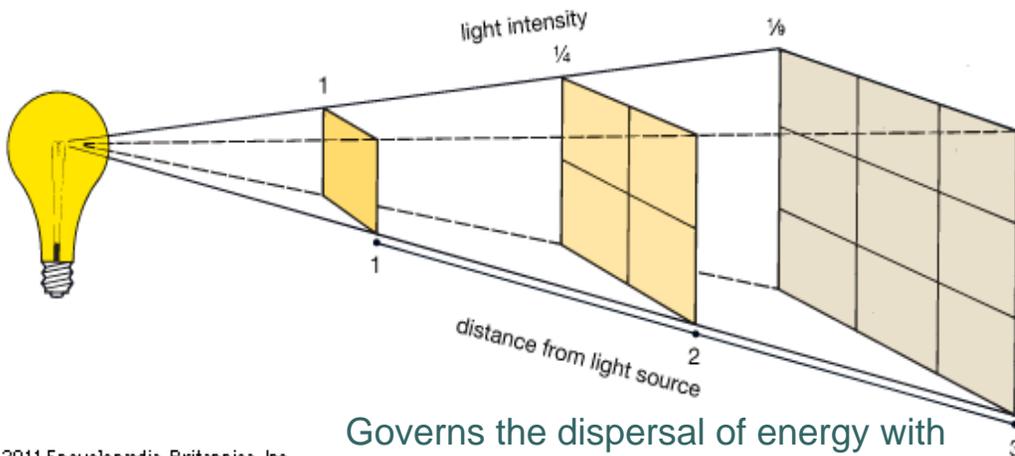
Exponential Decay Function:

William Joines found that RSPK disturbances seem to exhibit patterns very similar to those seen in two mathematical functions which govern electricity & magnetism (Roll & Joines, 2013):

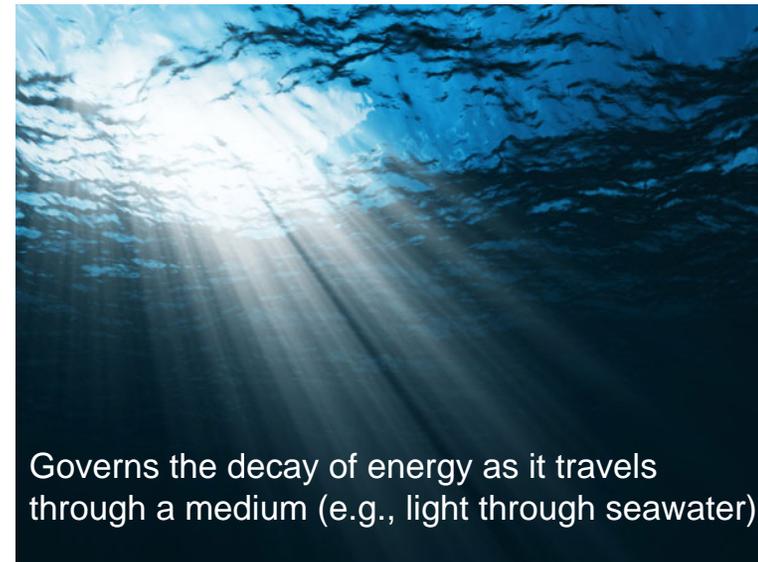


Inverse Square Function:

$$I \sim 1 / r^2$$



Governs the dispersal of energy with distance (e.g., the light from a light bulb)



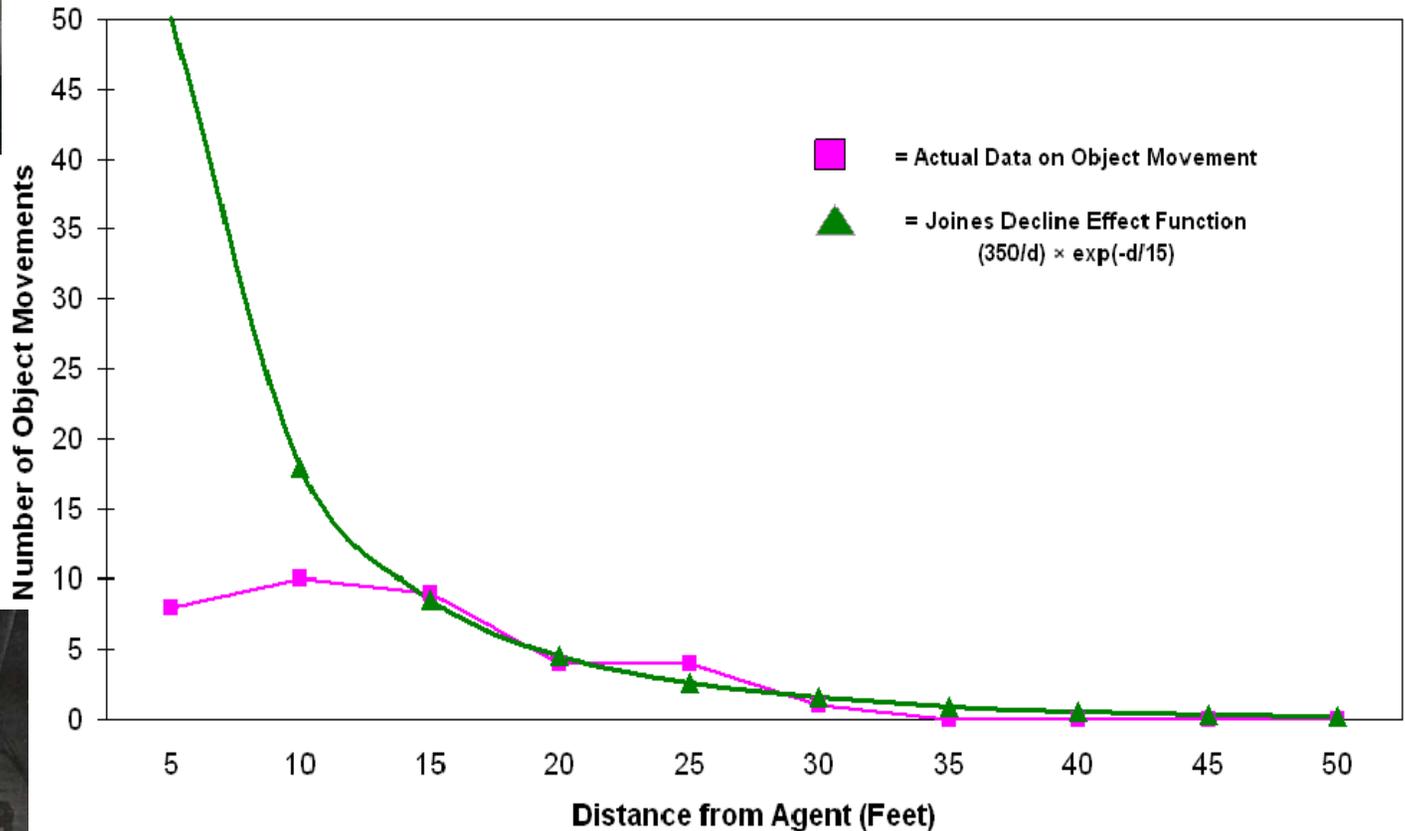
Governs the decay of energy as it travels through a medium (e.g., light through seawater)

Physical Pattern: Miami Case

The number of object movements decreases as the distance from Julio increases:



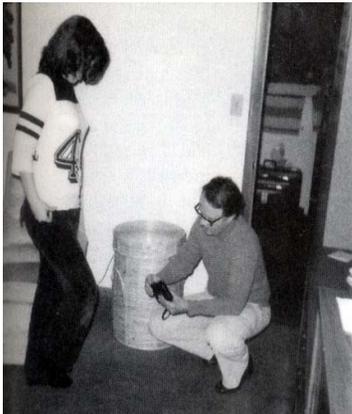
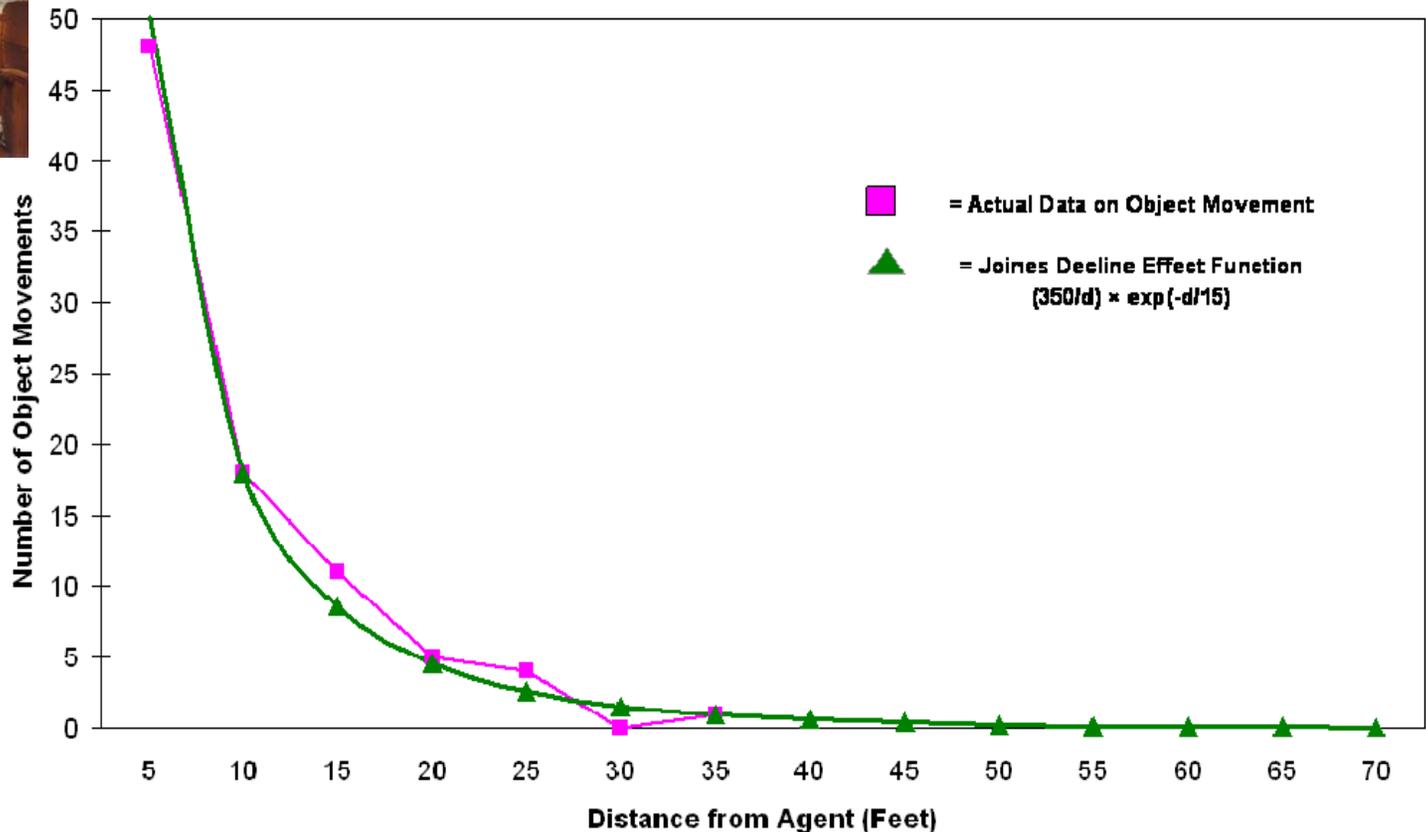
RSPK Decline Effect: Miami Case



Physical Pattern: Tina Resch Case

Again, movements decrease as the distance from Tina increases:

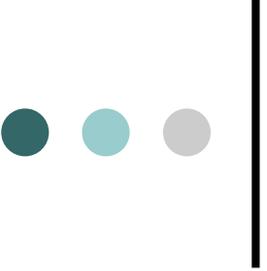
RSPK Decline Effect: Tina Resch Case



Tentative Implications



- PK tests conducted with suspected RSPK agents do seem to offer some preliminary evidence indicating that a “mind over matter” effect is involved in poltergeist phenomena, although it may act largely on the unconscious level.
- There are indications that some RSPK agents may suffer from medical or neurological issues, although how exactly these issues tie into the poltergeist disturbances (if they do at all) currently remains unclear.
- Poltergeist disturbances do exhibit patterns very similar to known physical patterns, suggesting that these phenomena may not be outside the realm of known physics. However, we still have a ways to go in terms of understanding the precise mechanisms that may be involved.



References

Barrett, W. F. (1911). Poltergeists, old and new. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 15, 377 – 412.

Gerding, J. L. F., Wezelman, R., & Bierman, D. J. (2002). The Druten disturbances: Exploratory RSPK research. *European Journal of Parapsychology*, 17, 3 – 15.

Roll, W. G. (1972/2004). *The Poltergeist*. New York: Nelson Doubleday, Inc. (Reprinted by Paraview Special Editions)

Roll, W. G. (1977). Poltergeists. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.) *Handbook of Parapsychology* (pp. 382 – 413). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Roll, W. G. (2007). Psychological and neuropsychological aspects of RSPK. *Proceedings of Presented Papers: The Parapsychological Association 50th Annual Convention* (pp. 114 – 130). Durham, NC: Parapsychological Association, Inc.

Roll, W. G., & Joines, W. T. (2013). RSPK and consciousness. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 77, 192 – 211.