

The Flexibility of Physical Body Boundaries and its Relationship to Out-of-body Experiences

Results:

In this project we theorised that the daily bodily experiences of people with a prior OBE and those without this experience would differ along a number of dimensions. In order to test this theory a questionnaire study was conducted. In study 1, 62 of 243 respondents reported at least one prior OBE. Six scales on different aspects of bodily experience were administered. Respondents reporting a previous OBE were found to score significantly higher on measures of somatoform dissociation ($p < .001$), self-consciousness ($p = .035$), body dissatisfaction ($p = .001$), and lower on a measure of confidence in their physical self-presentation ($p = .02$) than respondents without a previous OBE. The significant findings were confirmed in a second study in which 64 people (34 of whom had had an OBE), where participants also scored significantly higher on measures of Social Physique Anxiety. OBE experiencers also reported lower levels of body awareness during use of an immersive virtual reality system than non-experiencers. The project has also explored variables such as dissociation and absorption in relation to OBEs and the experience of presence within virtual reality. Other data regarding the navigational styles of OBE and non-OBE respondents in an immersive virtual reality task are currently undergoing analysis.

Published work:

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. "*Body image in respondents with and without out-of-body experiences*". In S. Schmidt (ed.) Proceedings of the Parapsychological Association, 47th Annual Convention, Vienna. (2004) Pp.145-156.

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. "*The out-of-body experience and body image: Differences between experiencers and non-experiencers*". Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, (2005a) 193(1), 70-72.

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. "*Body image in persons with and without prior out-of-body-experiences*". British Journal of Psychology, (2005c) 96(4), 441-456.

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. "*From dreams to (virtual) reality: exploring behavioural embodiment in out-of-body experiencers*". Australian Journal of Parapsychology, (2006b) 6(2) 125-134.

Murray, C.D., Fox, J. and Pettifer, S. "*Absorption, dissociation, locus of control and presence in virtual reality*". Computers in Human Behavior, (2007) 23(3), 1347-1354.

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. (2007) Casting shadow and light on the peer review process: a reply to Neppe's 'Interpreting key variables in parapsychological phenomenology by single vs. screening questions'. *Australian Journal of Parapsychology*, 7(2), 172-181

Murray, C. (2010). Developing a dissociational account of the out-of-body experience. In M. D. Smith (Ed.), *Anomalous experiences: Essays from parapsychological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 161-176). Jefferson, NC : McFarland & Co Inc.

Murray, C. (Ed.) (2009). *Psychological scientific perspectives on out-of-body and near-death experiences*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Other Presentations

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. "*The out-of-body experience and the flexibility of body boundaries*". Poster presented at Behind and Beyond the Brain: The 6th Bial Foundation Research Symposium. Porto, Portugal. (2006)

Murray, C.D. and Fox, J. "*Embodiment and the out-of-body experience. Developing Perspectives on Anomalous Experience*". Liverpool Hope University College. Liverpool. (2005)

Murray, C., & Fox, J. (2005). Dissociational body experiences: Differences between respondents with and without prior out-of-body-experiences. *British Journal of Psychology*, 96(4), 441-456. doi: 10.1348/000712605X49169

Researchers' Contacts

Dr Craig D. Murray, Lecturer in Psychology,
Clinical Psychology
Division of Health Research
School of Health and Medicine
The University of Lancaster
Lancaster, LA1 4YF
United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0) 1524 593576
Fax: +44 (0) 1524 592401
Email: c.murray@lancaster.ac.uk
Web address: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/ihr/profiles/Craig-Murray/>

Mr Jezz Fox
unaffiliated
Email: jezzfox@mac.com