

Human Levitation

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ABSTRACT: Human levitation occurs when the physical body rises into the air seemingly in defiance of the force of gravity. Traditionally most levitation reports have originated from seven groups: (i) mysticism, (ii) shamanism, (iii) people supposedly possessed by demonic spiritual entities, (iv) those subjected to poltergeist activity, (v) Spiritualism, (vi) people who believe they have been abducted by aliens, and (vii) martial arts such as *qigong*. So far almost no scientific research appears to have been conducted into this phenomenon. In order to persuade empirical scientists that human levitation warrants further investigation, this qualitative study contains two components. First, there is a thematic comparison of historical and modern levitation reports from the seven groups to see what physical, cultural and phenomenological circumstances they may have in common. Three kinds of evidence have been examined: general features of the seven groups; interviews with a sample of Christian priests and pastors, Spiritualists and *qigong* instructors; and interviews with six people who claim to have levitated. Second, to assist future researchers in their investigations, the present article includes a hypothesis-generating exercise that seeks clues from the thematic comparison and interviews as to how human levitation might work.

INTRODUCTION

In 2005 I completed an interdisciplinary (religious studies/anthropology) Ph.D. with a thesis on human levitation at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia. For many years I have had an interest in research into what is colloquially called the paranormal, but which academics refer to as parapsychology. There are no parapsychologists at any of the five universities (four public and one private) in Perth and I do not have any formal parapsychology qualifications, so I was effectively obliged to do my research from a social

sciences perspective. I picked the topic of human levitation (which I define as the whole physical body inexplicably lifting into the air) because virtually no serious research has been done into this phenomenon and in my opinion it would be one of the least ambiguous paranormal events that one can witness. I do not doubt the existence of phenomena such as telepathy, remote viewing or clairvoyance, but skeptics frequently claim that, because they are largely internal experiences, they are hard to define or measure. Human levitation, on the other hand, would be clearly visible and hard to fake.

Doctorates have to be original research. I have only come across two serious books (in English) on levitation. The first is by the French Catholic researcher Olivier Leroy (English edition, 1928). This is by far the most comprehensive book on this subject, but suffers from significant religious bias. Leroy documents a large number of historical levitation reports including Christian saints and Spiritualists but, in my opinion, rather irrationally concludes that divine forces levitate those of high moral standing while demonic forces levitate everyone else.

The second book on levitation (Richards, 1980) is not a scholarly analysis, but does discuss the subject in a fairly comprehensive fashion. Most books on the paranormal or parapsychology mention human levitation, but have little to say about it other than referring to well-known levitators such as the Spiritualist D. D. Home or the seventeenth century Catholic monk Saint Joseph of Cupertino. Some books even assert that all levitation claims are probably fictitious.

Although my research was done from a social sciences perspective, I wanted it to be as close to a parapsychological perspective as I could get it. Because human levitation appears to have been almost completely ignored by the academic community, the purpose of my qualitative study was to persuade empirical researchers (e.g., parapsychologists) that the phenomenon of human levitation is sufficiently credible to warrant further investigation, and to provide them with enough relevant information to commence their research.

Because my research methodology does not fall into any precise category, I was often rather embarrassed when people would ask me what my methodology was, so I would attempt jokingly to claim that I was studying human levitation using grounded theory. In his book *An Introduction to Parapsychology*, Dr. Harvey Irwin (2004) claims that parapsychology's three basic concerns are "authenticity, underlying process and phenomenology" (p. 7). By 'authenticity' he means whether the phenomenon being investigated is "ontologically real" (p. 7). In his opinion, because parapsychology is a scientific discipline, the authenticity issue "properly can only be resolved in the scientific laboratory" (p. 7), although

he believes that it is appropriate to investigate how a so-called paranormal phenomenon might work even if its authenticity has not yet been proven (p. 8). However, it is unlikely that anyone would receive funding or be motivated to research human levitation within a laboratory unless preliminary research elsewhere had demonstrated that it is reasonable to believe that the phenomenon exists, with suggestions as to how the laboratory research might proceed.

My research project does not attempt to prove that any individual levitation report is genuine. It only addresses the authenticity question to the degree required to persuade empirical researchers that the phenomenon is sufficiently convincing to warrant further investigation. Instead of ignoring the slowly increasing body of human levitation reports, as the empirical sciences are doing, my project is a study of these reports primarily to seek information that relates to Irwin's underlying process and phenomenology components.

Irwin's three issues can be adopted for the study of human levitation, asking about its authenticity, how it works and what the experience of levitation is like. The main thrust of my research focuses on Irwin's second parapsychological issue, which he describes as "*process-oriented* research . . . designed to ascertain the processes by which parapsychological experiences are enacted" (Irwin, 2004, p. 8). Irwin further claims that, "like other behavioural scientists parapsychologists seek to understand the bases of human experience" (p. 8). This leads to his third issue, phenomenology, which "focuses on the description of parapsychological phenomena from the *experient's* point of view; that is, investigators seek to establish the characteristics of the phenomena as actually experienced and the impact such experiences have upon the individual" (p. 8). Irwin asserts that "phenomenological research should set the research agenda in parapsychology, because it has the function of specifying the essential characteristics of the phenomenon to be explained" (2004, p. 9). His justification for this claim is that:

although it certainly is possible to study phenomenological characteristics of the experiences without the slightest concern for underlying processes, such study often does suggest ideas about the nature of underlying processes. In other words, phenomenological research is useful in generating hypotheses for investigation in process-oriented research. (Irwin, 2004, p. 8)

Human levitation has often been regarded as a religious or miraculous phenomenon, but a wider examination reveals that the main groups that have traditionally produced levitation reports are:

1. Shamans.
2. People supposedly possessed by demonic spiritual entities.
3. Those subjected to poltergeist activity.
4. Spirit mediums (Spiritualism).
5. People who believe that they have been abducted by aliens (abductees).
6. Practitioners of Eastern martial arts traditions such as *qigong* (sometimes spelt *qi gong*, *qi kung* or *ch'i kung*).
7. Mystics from all major religions.

I have referred to these people as belonging to particular 'groups', but this word is being used merely for convenience. By providing seemingly relevant details about the groups that traditionally produce levitation reports my research hopes to assist parapsychologists to find someone who can levitate, and provide them with some helpful research hypotheses. In summary, the two main components of my levitation research project are:

1. A thematic comparison of historical and modern human levitation reports, and of the groups that have traditionally produced them, to see what physical, cultural and phenomenological circumstances the levitators and their groups may have in common.
2. A hypothesis-generating exercise that seeks clues that might begin to explain what causes human levitation. This information may assist future researchers to investigate the dynamics of levitation from a more empirical perspective.

I also conducted interviews with a selection of people from three of the seven groups: Some Christian priests and pastors, Spiritualists and *qigong* instructors have been asked whether they have experienced or witnessed levitation and what their opinions are about miraculous or psi events such as human levitation. Members of these so-called groups may vary significantly in their beliefs and behaviour. For example, while the Spiritualists whom I have interviewed mostly live in Western Australia, they come from a variety of Spiritualist churches, and some of the interviewed *qigong* instructors also teach yoga and other traditions. Information from some of these interviews has been used to enhance both

the thematic comparison and the hypothesis-generation exercise. I have interviewed six people who claim to have levitated, and received email and phone reports from two others who claim to have levitated and from two who said they almost levitated while participating in the lifting game or Transcendental Meditation. All of these people fit into one or more of the seven groups that traditionally produce levitation reports. Although few interviewees claim to have levitated or to have seen someone else do it, their beliefs are important because they represent the particular spiritual and cultural environment surrounding levitators or potential levitators within these groups.

It has not been possible to conduct interviews with representatives of all the groups that have traditionally produced levitation reports. Instead of interviewing samples of indigenous shamans and mystics from around the world, I have used levitation reports from anthropological, religious and paranormal literature. For ethical and availability reasons, I have been unable to interview people who are or have been spiritually possessed or have suffered from poltergeist activity. These people are rare indeed and may not be able to provide informed consent to be interviewed.

THEMATIC COMPARISON

The thematic comparison of the seven groups that have traditionally produced human levitation reports constitutes the main body of my thesis and is split into five thematic sections. Within those sections, I also quote numerous levitation reports and, as part of the hypothesis-generating exercise, discuss ideas that might reveal how human levitation works.

Spirits and Spirit Realms

The first thematic section demonstrates that, to varying degrees, most members of the seven groups believe that various types of spiritual entities exist, such as spirits of the dead, gods, demi-gods, angels, demons, or inter-dimensional beings. Sometimes—especially in *qigong*—spiritual powers are perceived not as personal entities, but as impersonal energies such as *chi* or *prana*. Some mystics claim that it is possible for the mind to create independent or semi-independent spiritual entities, such as Tibetan *tulpas* (David-Neel, 1965). Spirit realms are invisible to the normal person; they have no precise geographical location, but are generally claimed to interpenetrate physical reality in a multi-dimensional manner. All the groups attribute divine, magical, or psi abilities to spiritual entities or

powers and treat them with great reverence or, in the case of demons, attempt to banish or avoid them.

Similarly, some abductees are fearful of aliens—whom they may regard as spiritual entities—although others welcome their attention. In all seven groups, the power of spiritual entities or energy is the most common explanation for spontaneous or involuntary human levitation, although some members claim that with sufficient meditative training one can learn to levitate voluntarily by accessing this power oneself without the assistance of spirits. Whether couched in personal (e.g., spirits) or impersonal (e.g., *chi*) terms, this first theme is the most popular way to explain how levitation works, and the subsequent four themes are dependent on the apparent existence of the psi powers that originate from these hypothesised spiritual realms. The primary question that this theme raises is whether there really exists an invisible, multi-dimensional realm that is somehow linked to consciousness and which contains discarnate entities and/or powers that at times facilitate psi events. It seems unlikely that all seven groups would invent a similar explanation for levitation if it was completely untrue. A second question is whether this explanation largely just replaces one mystery with another.

Spirit Possession

The second thematic comparison section discusses spirit possession. Many members of the seven groups engage in activities such as prayer, contemplation, meditation, or trances that they hope will bring them closer to spiritual beings or powers. This may be done to seek protection, spiritual guidance, clairvoyant information, contact with the dead, improved martial arts abilities, or psi results such as healing. To varying degrees these activities lead practitioners to claim that spiritual entities can intrude into or completely take over their consciousness, although many modern researchers believe that these are merely psychological disturbances.

In some, such as spirit mediums and shamans, this intrusion may be voluntary and temporary, but in spirit possession, poltergeist activity and some alien abductions it is involuntary and difficult to stop. Levitation and other psi events may occasionally occur during voluntary or involuntary spirit possession. As an extension of the first theme, the possession theme is believed to explain some levitations and suggests that consciousness interfaces with the hypothesised spirit realm, although claiming that spiritual entities cause levitation explains little about how levitation works.

Within most of the seven groups there is evidence that practitioners who are highly trained in their group's conceptual map of these realms are the least likely to become involuntarily possessed and the most likely to be

able to levitate at will, which again suggests a link between consciousness and psi abilities.

Altered States of Consciousness and Breath Control

In the third thematic section it is claimed that everyone who levitates does so while in some form of altered state of consciousness (ASC), such as trance or religious ecstasy. ASCs may vary significantly among the groups; a mystic may sit impassively in deep meditation, whereas entranced shamans can display intense physical activity and psi abilities that are completely different from their normal behaviour.

Among those that employ the technique, breath control is frequently used to enter ASCs and is believed to assist in accessing universal or life energies, such as *prana* or *chi* which, like spirits, are claimed to facilitate psi abilities. Like the theme of spirit possession, this third theme of ASCs and breath control is linked to a belief in spirit realms because many group members believe that certain ASCs enable one to access these realms and the powers or entities they contain.

The ASC theme is only partially explanatory because, although almost all levitators enter ASCs, these states are not seen as the cause of levitation, but as a means of accessing its cause(s), which are believed to be spirits or spiritual energies. Because consciousness and ASCs are already the subject of several academic disciplines, from a scientific perspective this theme may perhaps be the most fruitful one from which to research levitation. Although they are uncertain about the reason, parapsychologists are aware of a correlation between ASCs and psi events (Radin, 1997, p. 105). Science has only a limited understanding of the nature of human consciousness. Nevertheless this theme, like the previous two, suggests a link between psi abilities such as levitation and what appear to be transpersonal dimensions of the mind.

Levitators' Other Paranormal Abilities

Within the seven groups there are a small number of people who seem to have a remarkable range of psi abilities in addition to the ability to levitate. These include healing, fire invulnerability, clairvoyance, teleportation, radiance, weather control and extrasensory interaction with animals. There are no psi abilities that are exclusive to any one of the groups. This seems to confirm that some aspect of the groups' members' behaviour triggers or enhances psi abilities and that these powers are not culturally dependent: they cross geographical and religious boundaries with ease, although useful abilities such as healing are more prevalent than less productive ones like levitation.

The young age at which some people develop psi abilities suggests that they may have a genetic component. Not all group members welcome all psi events; demonic spirit possession and poltergeist activity are certainly not sought after, although shamans and mediums often seek a variety of psi powers. There often seems to be a complex, human-like intelligence behind psi abilities, especially in cases of poltergeist activity, which appears to strengthen the suggestion of a link between these abilities and consciousness. This fourth theme is closely linked to the previous themes. Group members generally propose the same explanations for other psi abilities as they do for levitation and these abilities can overlap or occur simultaneously, which suggests that at some level they may be powered by the same energy. Learning how one psi ability works may therefore help explain some of the others.

Taboos and Obstacles

In the fifth thematic section, it is noted that most of the seven groups have either longstanding or more recent cultural taboos against developing and demonstrating psi abilities. There are also numerous practical difficulties that researchers need to overcome if they wish to investigate these abilities. These result largely from the fact that psi abilities are so often unpredictable, involuntary and supposedly caused by invisible entities. Most religions accept that some advanced mystics have healing or other psi abilities that they claim are divinely inspired but, with little justification, they tend to demonise reports of similar abilities from members of other groups.

This fifth theme is the most varied among the seven groups—for example Spiritualists may seek psi powers while mystics do not—and does not reveal very much about how levitation works. But most of the taboos against developing or displaying psi powers have a religious origin, which implies that in those circles it has long been known that activities such as meditation and ASCs will produce psi abilities in some practitioners that may subvert their spiritual progress or produce unfavourable publicity. This appears to strengthen both the probability that psi abilities such as levitation exist and that they are linked to consciousness. It also links the taboo theme to the previous four themes and suggests that there may be more people who can levitate voluntarily than the groups have traditionally acknowledged.

Almost Levitating

Additionally, seemingly related topics or groups might provide information for the hypothesis-generation exercise because they could be seen as either precursors to human levitation or they have produced a few

levitation reports. These are *lung-gom*; hypnosis, mesmerism and animal magnetism; witchcraft; mass control and excessive gravitation; the lifting game; and Transcendental Meditation.

Alexandra David-Neel (1965) describes encountering a monk indulging in *lung-gom* in Tibet. As Blofeld (1974) writes, *lung-gom* “enables people in a state of trance to cover great distances at amazing speed leaping like a ball and negotiating obstacles with supernormal dexterity” (p. 223). It is interesting to note that *lung-gom* trainees have to spend many years meditating. There exist reports of shamans in other parts of the world, including Australia, doing ‘fast walking’ which resembles *lung-gom*.

A few references in the literature on mesmerism and animal magnetism (e.g., Leroy, 1928) claim that a small number of deeply entranced patients would spontaneously levitate.

There are also claims that some traditional witches confessed to being able to fly or levitate through the air. However, witches’ confessions produced under torture cannot be relied upon and the witchcraft literature is rather inconsistent. Nevertheless, witchcraft is at times supposedly linked to spirit possession and some of its activities derive from shamanism.

‘Mass control’ is a term that some researchers use to describe the anecdotal observations that, for example, some ballet dancers seem able to stay in the air slightly longer than gravity should allow. Nandor Fodor (1933/1966) writes that Vaslav Nijinsky possessed this ability. ‘Excessive gravitation’ refers to reports of a few spiritually possessed people who suddenly become very heavy or appear to be stuck to the ground. This ability is sought after by some martial arts practitioners, as well as the capacity to make themselves lighter. Is the cause of excessive gravitation just levitation in reverse or are the two unrelated?

The lifting game normally involves four standing people lifting a seated subject by putting both forefingers, or the first two fingers of one hand, under the subject’s knees and armpits. There are claims that the lifted person often feels unusually light. Some researchers assert that breathing exercises produce the weight loss during the lifting game. The psychical researcher Dr Hereward Carrington conducted experiments where he put four lifters and a seated subject on a large weighing scale. The technique required the lifters to “bend forward several times in unison, inhaling and exhaling deeply together. The person seated in the chair also inhales and exhales at the same time. On the fifth count all five persons hold their breath” and the seated person is lifted (in Fodor, 1933/1966, p. 37). Although the combined weight of the lifters, chair and subject was 712 pounds (323 kg), on each of five successive lifts, a weight loss of between 50 and 60 pounds (23-27 kg) was recorded (p. 37). The weight loss “slowly

returned to normal as the subject was held for some considerable time in the air” (in Fodor, 1933/1966, p. 37). Apart from the suggestion of mass control, no conventional scientific explanation has been proposed for the lifting game.

Because of the publicity it has received in previous years, a link between Transcendental Meditation (TM) and levitation, or at least hopping while sitting cross-legged, exists in the minds of many Westerners. Although they have been largely secularised, most of the beliefs and practices of TM derive from Hindu and yogic traditions and are closely linked to the breathing exercises and mantra repetition of *pranayama*. The *pranayama* tradition claims that advanced practitioners may start hopping or jumping about like a frog and some may eventually levitate. The TM organization has produced videotapes of its students hopping around with tremendous vitality, but they have not proved that any of them can genuinely levitate. Although there is no guarantee that all the activities described in the ‘Almost Levitating’ section are related to or are precursors to levitation, they may be worth investigating in case they are. For example, researching the lifting game, which uses normal people as sitters, would probably be much easier than finding a genuine levitator to study.

DISCUSSION

Although the thematic comparison cannot verify any particular levitation report, it appears to demonstrate that there are two main variable factors in levitation cases: (i) they are either voluntary or involuntary in nature, and (ii) the levitator either hovers in one place, or flies through the air. Joseph of Cupertino did both on different occasions. Some people from groups such as shamanism, *qigong* and mysticism, appear able to levitate at will, while people who are supposedly possessed by demonic entities, those affected by poltergeist activity and most alien abductees, appear to have no control over their levitations and are often thrown through the air. Some Spiritualists who levitate appear to have a slight amount of control while others have no control, whether they hover or fly a trajectory. People who are levitated by others generally hover. Another interesting feature involves demoniacs being involuntarily levitated upside down without their clothes (e.g., skirts) falling down.

Thematic comparison suggests that, from a future research perspective, the link between human levitation and ASCs is the most important similarity between the groups. Everyone who levitates appears to do so while in an ASC. Some may be in a deep trance while others may be in such a shallow trance that witnesses do not realise it. People who are

levitated by others always seem to be in a trance. Further research into human consciousness and the ASCs that levitators experience seems to be an important pathway to investigate how levitation works. To varying degrees, all the groups believe that ASCs enable people to access spiritual realms containing entities and/or powers that can transcend the known laws of physics. This suggests that the empirical sciences need to continue the investigation into whether there is an unknown, transpersonal force that links some aspect of human consciousness and physical reality.

Several hypotheses have been generated from this research. These ideas are not formal scientific findings—they are merely suggestions or qualitative findings that may be of relevance to any subsequent parapsychological investigation of human levitation. The first point is that the consistency of worldwide human levitation reports over the centuries suggests that the phenomenon may be genuine. Minor differences in beliefs about the causes of levitation can be explained by varying cultural influences, but descriptions of the phenomenon and the circumstances under which it occurs appear to remain reasonably consistent.

It is unlikely that similar levitation reports are the product of mistaken observations because human levitation is so different from other physical activities. It is difficult to mistakenly observe a person hovering half a metre off the ground, which Leroy (1928, p. 180) claims is the height of the average levitation. Leroy (p. 184) also notes that most levitations last for several minutes and that Joseph of Cupertino and some others were reported to have remained in the air for over an hour. These heights and durations provide ample opportunity for witnesses to observe the phenomena. For example, Sister Anne testified that she observed Teresa of Avila levitate in religious ecstasy about 50 centimetres off the ground for half an hour and that she passed her hands under Teresa's feet (in Leroy, 1928, p. 72).

If all levitation reports are delusional, surely they would vary considerably more than they do and would not be as confined to members of the seven groups. Mental illness is not limited to these groups, so there would be people from all walks of life making delusional levitation claims, but I have not found any such reports. If the reports are produced by spiritual groups attempting to prove that their gods are more powerful, the levitation descriptions would, over the centuries, probably have become increasingly exaggerated, which is not the case. Despite the extraordinary nature of the phenomenon, the most likely explanation for the thematic consistency of the worldwide body of levitation reports is that genuine psi events are being described.

The dominant themes that distinguish the seven groups from the public at large are a belief in and an attempt to get to know, to interact with,

to tap into, to merge, or resonate with unknown spiritual powers which some members personify and others do not. The most common way of doing this is by entering voluntary or involuntary ASCs, and almost all levitators do so while in these states. Given that parapsychologists accept that there is a correlation between ASCs and psi events, it seems probable that what distinguishes levitators from other members of their groups is a rare combination of three factors: (i) a belief in spiritual entities or powers; (ii) physical activities such as prayer, meditation, or séances; and (iii) certain ASCs.

There is a difference, however, between whatever might cause levitation and its actual mechanism. For example, if an entranced physical medium successfully requests to be levitated by a spirit, we can conclude that that behaviour caused the levitation, but, from an empirical perspective, it does not prove that spirits exist; it does not explain the force or energy that lifts the person into the air; and it does not eliminate the possibility that other levitations may occur under different circumstances. But, whatever the mechanism or force, the evidence suggests that it is reasonable to conclude that ASCs and communicating with or tapping into spiritual powers are activities that significantly increase the probability of levitation. Heath (2003, p. 21), too, concludes that “an altered state of consciousness (ASC) seems to be a helpful, and perhaps necessary, condition” for levitation. The capacity to enter certain ASCs, therefore, seems to be the most likely explanation for such a small percentage of the groups’ members levitating, despite many of them having the same spiritual beliefs and regularly carrying out the same physical activities.

Each part of the hypothesis-generation sections seems to point towards an open model of the human mind that asserts that consciousness is somehow capable of transcending the biological brain. Mainstream science largely adopts the theory of materialistic monism, which claims that “matter causes mind, that the mind is essentially a function of the activity of matter in the brain. The basic stuff of the universe is matter and energy” (Radin, 1997, p. 255). But this limited model can only be accepted if numerous psi anomalies are ignored or rejected. The beliefs of the seven groups examined would make more sense, and psi phenomena would be more easily explained, if an open model of the mind were correct, but at this stage the theory has not been verified conclusively despite having been in existence for several thousand years.

In general terms the groups’ beliefs and their anecdotal psi reports postulate the existence of a multi-dimensional realm or field that interfaces or interpenetrates our physical universe. The hypothesised qualities of this realm are that it stores information in a non-local manner, and appears capable of controlling or overriding what physicists claim are the four basic

forces of nature. The human brain is believed to be an interface device between this realm of transpersonal consciousness and physical reality. The realm seems accessible only by using certain ASCs. Because of their lack of appropriate training, and possibly their genetic inheritance, most people, therefore, do not seem to have voluntary or conscious access to this realm.

As the thematic comparison reveals, the activities and beliefs of all seven groups contain elements of mysticism, which can be seen as the art of attempting to transcend these barriers. The belief that certain people can transcend the physical body to access this realm assumes that humans have what religions call a soul or spirit but, as Braude (2003, p. 292) asks, what is the nature of the 'stuff' that survives death? This research cannot answer that question, but if this realm is able to sustain clairvoyant information, spirits, Taoist immortals, *tulpas* and other seemingly intelligent entities, then it would surely need to be composed of a substance that has highly sophisticated information storage and processing capacities, to use computing terminology. In addition, if this realm can facilitate human levitation and other PK phenomena, it would need to contain large amounts of energy as well as being connected to human consciousness.

In my research, I interviewed eleven people who were Spiritualists, ten Christian priests and pastors, and nine *qigong* instructors. Six actually claimed to have levitated, but all six said it was spontaneous and involuntary, so they were unable to provide a demonstration. The Spiritualists produced three levitators and three levitation witnesses; one of the Catholic pastors claims to have levitated; and two of the *qigong* instructors have witnessed someone levitate. In addition, I interviewed an abductee who claims to have levitated, and a woman who says she levitated twice during yoga classes while doing breathing exercises. This suggests that human levitation is more common than parapsychologists appear to believe.

Levitation probably occurs most often among Spiritualists because they deliberately attempt to interact with spiritual forces and entities, and normally welcome psi phenomena as confirmation of their belief in an afterlife. All my interviewees come from Perth, Western Australia, which has a population of nearly one and a half million, only a small percentage of whom are priests, pastors, Spiritualists, or *qigong* teachers. This suggests that worldwide there may be many people who have either levitated or seen someone do it, but whose experiences have not been publicised or researched. Spiritualism may thus be the best field for future levitation researchers to investigate.

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