

A Brief History of EVP Research.

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Since the advent of early recording devices, strange human sounding voices have been heard on audio recordings, often discovered by accident. Intentional EVP recording developed from these. The most common method used to record EVP employs a tape or voice recorder with a microphone against a background of radio static. Music, wind and rain and software generating phenomes (chopped-up words) such as EVPMaker, have also been used as backgrounds to record the voices. More sophisticated devices, some without a microphone, have also produced the voices, such as diodes, germanium receivers and a variety of ghost boxes. Although I only have space to mention the most prominent researchers here, almost all became convinced through their experiments, that life after death is a certainty and view the anomalous voices they have recorded as objective and unassailable proof of survival after death. Thomas Edison is said to have developed an interest in using electronic technologies to contact the dead in his later years, although there is no evidence that he developed any apparatus for this purpose. (Forbes.com 2020)

It is claimed that American photographer Attila Von Szalay was one of the first EVP experimenters to gain positive results during the 1940's. Szalay did not publish his work, but much later tutored fellow American William Addams Welch, to record EVP. After three years work, Welch claimed to have recorded 25.000 EVP's, publishing his results in 'Talks from the Dead' (Welch, 1975). Szalay also recorded with Raymond Bayless in 1956 with Bayless's experiments documented in Rogo. D. Scott's book, 'Phone calls from the Dead' (Scott, 1979). A useful update on anomalous telephone phenomenon can be found in Callum Cooper's book, 'Telephone calls from the Dead' (Cooper, 2012). Other early EVP experimenters include Italian Catholic Priests, Father Ernetti and Father Gemelli, who claimed to have discovered anomalous voices whilst recording Gregorian Chants in 1952. Father Gemelli reported to Pope Pius XII, that he had heard his father's voice on the recordings calling him by his childhood nickname. (Victor Zammit.com 2020)

Swedish opera singer and artist, Frederick Jurgenson accidentally discovered anomalous voices whilst playing back recordings of birdsong he had taped in the countryside near his home. During the 1950's and 60's, Jurgenson recorded thousands of anomalous voices, often in several languages, a phenomenon termed 'polyglot'. He claimed many of the voices were from deceased family and friends, as described in his book 'Voice Transmissions from the Deceased' (Jurgenson, 1959). Up until this time, EVP phenomenon had attracted only modest scientific interest and little attention from the media, but this was about to change. Intrigued by Jurgenson's claims, Latvian psychologist Dr, Konstantin Raudive met with Jurgenson in 1965 and convinced by the genuineness of Jurgenson's recordings, began his own experiments. Raudive recorded around 70.000 EVPs over the next six years, most in several languages. Raudive claimed that the voices were recognizably those of his deceased relatives and friends. Raudive's book 'Breakthrough' (Raudive et al, 1971) published by Colin Smythe Ltd attracted wide publicity and launched EVP phenomenon into the international public arena for the first time. The extraordinary claims in Jurgenson's and Raudive's books startled

the scientific, theological and academic communities of the time. The media made good press from the controversy that raged over the voices. Peter Bander's excellent book 'Carry on Talking' (Bander, 1972) also published by Smythe, documents much of this. Smythe also published Richard Sheargold's 'Hints on Receiving the Voice Phenomenon' (Sheargold, 1975). Throughout the nineteen seventies, interest in the voice phenomenon was peaking in England with reports that many other experimenters were successfully recording the voices including Raymond Cass, Gilbert Bonner, Francis Morton, Michael Taunton and Len Ingle, although these experimenters did not publish their work in print. Jurgenson's and Raudive's work also sparked wide interest in Europe, Hans Kemmis and Leon Stam shared the results of their EVP recordings in publications in the Netherlands. In 1976 The German Association for Transcommunication (VTF) was formed by parapsychologists and EVP researchers Professor, Hans Bender, Klaus Schreiber, Hanna Buschbeck, Franz Seidl, Dr, Leo Schmidt and Fidelio Köberle (www.Vtf.de 2020). Things were looking up for EVP research, but in 1978 a Perrott-Walker Scholar from Cambridge University England, David Ellis published 'The Mediumship of the Tape Recorder' (Ellis, 1978). The book was the result of Ellis's two-year study of Jurgenson's and Raudive's recordings. Ellis concluded that the so-called 'voices' were probably due to explainable environmental and human hearing factors and should not be considered paranormal in origin.

In the United States, a great deal of publicity was occasioned by the announcement of extraordinary results reported by George Meek and William O Neil who claimed to have developed recording technologies which provided two-way communication with spirits. Unlike the more commonly reported EVP which can only be heard on playing back a recording, Meek claimed that 'The Spiricom' set up enabled conversations to be held with spirits in real time. The initial results were published in 'The Spiricom Manual' (Meek et al, 1982). An informative and interesting account of the development of the Spiricom phenomenon can be read in John. J. Fuller's, work 'The Ghost of 29 Megacycles' (Fuller, 1985). Spiricom appeared to signify a step-change in the development of the phenomenon, although there remains some controversy regarding the authenticity of some of the Spiricom evidence (Peterson, 1987). In Italy, Marcello Bacci used old valve radios to produce anomalous voices, which it is claimed, could be heard coming directly through the radio speaker, a phenomenon known as 'direct radio voice'. Bacci is well-known for his public performances of this phenomenon (Bacci, 1985) and see (Festa, 2002). His work has appeared in many documentaries including 'The Afterlife Investigations' (Coleman and Drasin, 2011). Interest in the anomalous voices continued to grow. American EVP experimenter Bill Weisensale published 'The Spirit Voice Newsletter' to share information about the voices. In 1988 EVP experimenter Sarah Estep published 'Voices from Eternity' (Estep, 1988) which reported recording EVP messages claiming to come from deceased friends and loved ones 'in heaven'. German Professor of Engineering Ernst Senkowski coined the term 'ITC' in his massive technical work, 'Instrumental Trans-Communication' - a term intended to describe all anomalous phenomenon occurring through technological devices such as radios, tape recorders, computers or cameras (Senkowski, 1989). In the same year in England, EVP experimenter Samuel Alsop published 'Whispers of Immortality' with a forward written by George Bonner (Alsop, 1989) but rather than recording the multi-lingual

polyglot voices reported by Jurgenson and Raudive, these experimenters reported recording voices in only their own language. German ITC investigator Hans Otto Koenig also began recording EVP in the 1970's and claims to have developed recording technologies which enable two-way real-time communication with spirits (Wauters and Koenig, 2018).

During the 1990's further developments in ITC phenomenon were reported. In Luxembourg Dr, Theo Locher and Maggie and Jules Harsch-Fischbach claimed not only to record EVP voices, but also still-images of 'spirits' received on a detuned television set and mysterious text files which appeared on their computers. The results were published in 'Technical Breakthroughs in Spirit Communication' (Locher and Fischbach, 1997). This was followed by further reports of multi-mode instrumental trans-communication phenomenon which occurred during the Scole Experiments in Suffolk, England (Keen et al, 1999) and (Solomon and Solomon, 1999). Scole experimenters reported recording anomalous sounds and discovered mysterious text and drawings which had manifested on new unopened rolls of film. In 2000, English EVP experimenter Judith Chisholm published 'Voices from Paradise' which describes EVP messages she received from her deceased son and her EVP work with bereaved families (Chisholm, 2000).

The Millennium occasioned a coming of age for Instrumental Trans-Communication. In 2001 in the United States, EVP experimenter Mark Macey founded the American Association for EVP. Things were going well for ITC research, but in the same year Canadian parapsychologist Emants Baruss published a critical report on the phenomenon (Baruss, 2001). Baruss concluded that his experiments with EVP had failed to replicate the voices. After further attempts, Baruss concluded that EVP are probably an effect of environmental or mind-machine effects (Baruss, 2007). This was disappointing, but EVP research continued undeterred. In the United States Mark Macey published his results in 'Miracles in the Storm' (Macey, 2003). Tom and Lisa Butler founded the Association for Transcommunication – AtransC and published their results in 'There is no Death and there are no Dead' (Butler and Butler, 2004). In 2005 Scottish engineer Alexander MacRae conducted EVP experiments inside a Faraday screened room and reported recording anomalous voices in the Journal of the Society for Psychological Research (MacRae, 2005).

In 2011 Mark Bocuzzi and Julie Beischel in the US, published 'Objective Analyses of Reported Real-Time Audio Instrumental Transcommunication and Matched Control Sessions: A Pilot Study', in the Journal of Scientific Exploration. This is an excellent study of EVP - I can't go into detail here, but there are very good control measures employed, including security software which can detect tampering with the recordings. The study is reliant upon EVPMaker and would have benefited from comparing results from samples of recordings using radio static or white noise. All 98 participants were sent a test file to ensure they could hear the recordings, but were not subjected to a hearing test. I employ a double letter system for scoring the volume and clarity of EVP, this can help differentiate types of EVP. There needed some description of the voices heard, does the voice sound like a young child or an old person? What gender might it be? Is there a discernible accent? And, did any of the voices heard, have any significance to any of the experimenters or listeners? The

researchers concluded that they could not rule out pareidolia and highlighted the subjectivity of hearing and interpreting EVP.

Portuguese linguist and diplomat Dr, Anabela Cardoso records EVP in Spain and Portugal and founded the ITC Journal. A series of scientifically controlled experiments were conducted by Cardoso and her colleagues in 2012 at the University of Vigo, which successfully recorded EVP (Cardoso, 2012) and see (Cardoso, 2010: 2017). Past President of the Society for Psychical Research, the late Professor David Fontana, took a keen interest in Cardoso's work and saw potential in ITC as a means of furthering research into the possibility of an afterlife (Fontana, 2009). Over the last decade in the United States, Professor, Craig Hogan, Sheri Perl and Sonia Ronaldi at the Afterlife Research and Education Institute, have reported recording anomalous voices and images. Professor, Gary Schwartz at the University of Arizona has also conducted ITC experiments. Keith Clarke and Ron Ruiz recently established the website varanormal.com to showcase new ITC work. The internet age and the popularity of TV ghost hunting series wherein paranormal investigators sometimes use EVP recordings in investigations of hauntings, has helped to widen public awareness of the voice phenomenon. In 2017 and 2021 I published 'The Greetings Project' e-books. These two volumes present findings from my eight years of EVP experiments (Richards, 2017:2022). More recently During March and April 2021, American evp experimenter Jayne Thompson and I conducted a series of 'Trans-Atlantic evp recordings to test the concept of 'digital mediumship, with some successful results, we both received some personally relevant 'spirit messages' among dozens of anomalous voices recorded. (See Thompson and Richards 2022). I have just finished reading American author Martha Copeland's fascinating book 'I'm Still Here' (Copeland, 2019) which describes Martha's frequent contacts with her deceased daughter through EVP recordings.

There is little doubt that the voices exist, there are dozens of experimenters' accounts and over six decades of recorded evidence, but the question remains, are they really voices from spirits of the deceased in the afterlife? It is important that increased support is given to EVP research. New controlled, group experiments and peer reviewed studies could build upon the findings of past work and make further contributions to our understandings of this fascinating phenomenon.

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