

# Paradigm Explorer

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The Scientific &  
Medical Network



# After-Death Communications (ADCs)

*Evelyn Elsaesser*

*Here Evelyn presents a two-year SMN research project – an investigation of the phenomenology and impact of perceived spontaneous and direct After-Death Communications (ADCs).*

## Introduction

A spontaneous After-Death Communication (ADC) occurs when a mourner unexpectedly perceives a deceased person through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, or touch. Very commonly, persons who experience an ADC (experients) solely “feel the presence” of the deceased person or perceive a contact or a communication during sleep or hypnagogic states. Perceived ADCs occur frequently, with an estimated 25-50% of mourners having experienced one or more spontaneous ADCs. Testimonies collected in different countries and since the last century suggest this phenomenon to be *universal* and *timeless*. Despite their widespread occurrence, perceived ADCs, paradoxically, have been little researched and are absent from the media and public discourse. As a consequence, experients usually have no frame of reference in terms of which to understand, integrate and fully benefit from this experience which doesn't match mainstream conceptions of reality. Whatever the ontological status of perceived ADCs might be, they are perceived as real by a great number of persons and therefore certainly deserve their place on the consciousness research agenda.

## Research objectives

The first objective is to describe the **phenomenology** of perceived ADCs. The data collected are expected to provide insights into the profile of the experients; the profile of the deceased person supposedly initiating the contact (including cause of death); the circumstances of occurrence; the type, unfolding and message of

perceived ADCs; emotions and sense of reality associated with the experience; and potential differences between countries.

The second objective is to analyse the **impact** of perceived ADCs on experients. The following questions will be examined: What is the impact of perceived ADCs on experients? Are there implications for the grieving process? Do these experiences change experients' conception of death and their belief system? Does the national and social context influence individuals' experiences and their impact?

The third objective will consist in **disseminating the research results** as widely as possible to the scientific community and the general public. By collecting information about how perceived ADCs occur and unfold, and by analysing their impact on individuals' lives, we aim at making these results accessible to people who face the death of a close relative, partner or friend, and to the general public. Following an applied research orientation, we will emphasise in our conclusions the relevance of our results for the public, and highlight possible policy implications. The research project will contribute to raising awareness about perceived ADCs and have a practical impact on a large number of persons.

## Data and methodology

This international 2-year research project which started on 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2018 is led in several European countries and the United States. The collection, analysis and comparison of data of 200

participants will provide insight into the supposedly universal nature of this phenomenon, making this the first comparative ADC research.

Participants will be invited to complete an online survey about the perceived ADC they experienced and about some key socioeconomic characteristics. On the basis of this specially designed online questionnaire – available in English, French and Spanish – data will be collected in Switzerland, France, Great Britain and Spain. This data will allow us, using descriptive statistics, to depict the main characteristics about our sample and the different profiles of ADC experiencers.

The online questionnaire will be available as of 1st August 2018, at <https://www.evelyn-elsaesser.com/research/>

Finally, for participants who will have previously agreed to the anonymised publication of their testimonies, the collected data will be archived in a multi-lingual, international, open access database, hosted and up-dated by the University of Northampton. This database will eventually be available on a dedicated website to the scientific community for further analysis and to the general public, in order to make the perceived ADC phenomenon more visible in society.

### Project team

The project team, led by the Swiss expert on experiences around death Evelyn Elsaesser, is composed of Prof. Chris Roe (PI) and Dr. Cal Cooper (University of Northampton, UK), and Prof. Lluís Pastor (Universitat Oberta de

Catalunya, Spain). The Scientific Committee comprises Prof. Kim Penberthy (University of Virginia, USA), Prof. Peter Fenwick (UK), Prof. Kenneth Ring (USA), and David Lorimer (SMN).

### Impact of the research study

Following an applied research orientation, we will emphasise in our conclusions the relevance of our results for the general public. We aim at bridging science and spirituality by shedding light on this major social phenomenon which is currently hidden since it challenges mainstream concept of reality. For the purpose of information dissemination and knowledge transfer to the public, we will publish a short and accessible version of the results of the study, explaining the ADC phenomenon, its impact on experiencers, and the broader implications of these experiences (possible survival of consciousness after bodily death). A more in-depth analysis of the research findings, illustrated with testimonies, will be published as a monograph.

Professor Kenneth Ring has conducted a research identifying the effects of information about near-death experiences (NDEs) on individuals who have never had such an experience themselves. What he labeled the “benign virus hypothesis” shows that exposure to NDE material – and in particular if the persons could listen to and exchange with NDE experiencers – has a strong and lasting effect on those individuals. *“Through these testimonies, we can see how it is not only possible for persons open to NDEs to learn*

*from them, but to internalise their essential insights and make them their own”*<sup>1</sup>. We believe the same psychological mechanism will hold true for information dissemination on ADCs.

Furthermore, we will address groups of the population more immediately concerned with ADCs like individuals dealing with the grief of bereavement (in the context of bereavement associations) and those facing death (in palliative care centers). ADCs could also be discussed in advanced school classes in order to allow undergraduates to think and talk about death, rather than making the subject taboo and generating anxiety which is as unfounded as it is harmful. Professor Allan Kellehear has had very encouraging results which what he calls “death education”<sup>2</sup> by addressing the phenomena around death, spreading the word in community settings and encouraging discussions.

Our research findings and hypotheses will also be presented to the scientific community by means of presentations at conferences in the field of consciousness research and by publication of papers in scientific journals. Considering the lack of research and knowledge on ADCs, we expect the results of this exploratory research to open up further questions. Hence the project could also enable us to specify new research hypotheses which may be pursued in the future in the frame of a large scale research, involving research teams in different countries.

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*Evelyn Elsaesser is an expert on death-related experiences, notably Near-death experiences (NDEs) and perceived spontaneous and direct After-death communications (ADCs). She is the author of numerous books, articles and book chapters on these topics, including Lessons from the Light, co-authored with Kenneth Ring, On the Other Side of Life, and Talking with Angel about Illness, Death and Survival. Her latest book Quand les défunts viennent à nous is dedicated to perceived spontaneous and direct ADCs. Evelyn Elsaesser is co-founder and member of the Executive Committee of Swiss IANDS (International Association for Near-Death Studies) and coordinator for Europe of IANDS. She has served for many years as coordinator of the Swiss branch of the Scientific and Medical Network (SMN). <https://www.evelyn-elsaesser.com/>*

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1. Ring, Kenneth, Elsaesser, Evelyn (Repr. 2006) Lessons from the Light: What we can learn from the near-death experience. – Moment Point Press, p. 213
2. Kellehear, Allan (2015) Death Education as a Public Health Issue. IN: Death, Dying and Bereavement: Contemporary Perspectives, Institutions, and Practices, ed. Judith M. Stillion and Thomas Attig. – New York: Springer