

# A Phenomenological Examination of Premonition Experiences in Dreams and Waking States: A Survey Study

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**Abstract:** The main aim of the present study was to determine the proportion of people in Argentina who claim to have had various kinds of premonition experiences, and to discover correlations between these experiences and other variables, such as content, topics, symbols, clearness, vividness, emotional variables, and sensory modalities, and whether people could discern normal from paranormal explanations for their premonitions. The sample comprised 218 (50.8%) females and 211 (49.2%) males (Mean Age = 34 years; *SD* = 13 years), most of whom were students. The *Premonition Experiences Questionnaire* was used to collect information on spontaneous premonition experiences. The first part of the questionnaire covered “Premonition in dreams”, and the second part covered “Premonition not related to dreams” (i.e., premonitions in waking states). The majority of premonitory dreamers reported that their premonitions were vivid, clear, and emotionally intense. Premonitory dreams were reported to be clearer than usual dreams. More than half the participants who reported premonitions during waking states, reported feeling anxious, but many expressed feelings of happiness and relief. The information obtained in the survey is of value to parapsychology both as a source of sociological information, and possible hypotheses about the nature of the experiences considered.

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**Keywords:** dream-ESP, phenomenological approach, pre-feeling, precognition, premonition.

## INTRODUCTION

The inspirational writings of prophets and soothsayers throughout recorded history often have a precognitive tone. The Biblical account of pharaoh’s dream of the seven fat kine and the seven lean kine is of this type.

Thalbourne (2003) defines *precognition* as a “form of extrasensory perception [ESP] in which the target is some future event that cannot be deduced from normally known data in the present” (p. 90). He defines *premonition*, a related paranormal phenomenon, as a “feeling or impression that something is about to happen, especially something ominous or dire, yet about which no normal information is available” (p. 91).

Dossey (2009) suggests premonition literally means a ‘forewarning’, which hints at the importance of these experiences. Premonitions often warn the experiencer of something unpleasant—e.g., challenges to health, personal dangers, or natural disasters. Therefore, like other types of ESP, premonitions tend to be emotionally significant to the percipient, especially if the content is tragic (e.g., Richet, 1932; Saltmarsh, 1934; Sannwald, 1963; Schouten, 1982; Sidgwick, 1888-1889; Steinkamp, 2000)—e.g., the death of a close friend or relative is a common theme. There may be cultural variations in this trend, and the tragic element might not be so much the case for the precognitive experiences of children (Drewes, 2002), and it is noted that premonitions may not be exclusively ominous, but may be neutral, or even pleasant. Therefore, the preponderance of negatively toned precognitive material may simply be explained as a reporting bias (see De Pablos, 2006; Drewes, 2002; Steinkamp, 2000).

Spontaneous precognitive cases exhibit much of the same evidential problems as other types of ESP. Nevertheless, because precognized events relate to the future, investigation of their predictive accuracy is possible. To this end several ‘premonition bureaus’ have been established, including some on the World Wide Web. People who have premonitions are invited to register them with one of the bureaus before the precognized events take place.

For Dossey (2009), premonitions serve as a survival function, and “probably arose early in our evolutionary development in the predator-prey relationship, because any organism that knew when danger would happen in the future could take measures to avoid it.”<sup>1</sup> Precognitive experiences, including premonitions, can occur in dreams, and such dreams are also considered paranormal inasmuch as some of the dream details give information about future events normally unknowable to the experient. Lange, Schredl, and Houran (2000-2001) define a precognitive dream “as a dream that seemingly includes knowledge about the future which cannot be inferred from actually available information” (see also, Stowell, 1995).

Lange et al. (2000-2001) report precognitive dreams occur quite frequently: “17.8% to 38% of persons of large samples of individuals

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from <http://paranormal.about.com/od/espandtelepathy/a/power-premonitions.htm>

reported that they experienced at least one precognitive dream". In student samples, the prevalence rates are even higher: 51% (Schredl, 2009) and 65% (Sunmola & Adejumo, 2000; Gómez Montanelli & Parra, 2008).

Bender (1966, p. 399) formulated five criteria for precognitive dreams: (1) the dream must be recounted or recorded before its fulfilment; (2) the dream must include enough details to render chance coincidence unlikely; (3) the possibility of interference from actual knowledge must be excluded; (4) self-fulfilling prophecies must be excluded; and (5) telepathic influences should not be able to explain the occurrence of the precognitive dream.

### *Phenomenology of Precognitive Experience*

One of the major interests in parapsychological research is the focus on descriptions of parapsychological phenomena from the experient's point of view whether or not those experiences have a paranormal basis. As with other extrasensory experiences, spontaneous case collections have been used to ascertain the phenomenological features of precognitive experience (Irwin, 1994; Irwin & Watt, 2007). Schriever (1987), for example, analyzed 115 dreams of a single subject and found no differences in emotional intensity, vividness and personal significance between well-confirmed precognitive dreams and insufficiently-confirmed dreams.

Extrasensory dreams can contain both realistic and unrealistic elements—a view that has generally been endorsed by other case analysts who utilized schemes similar to those of L. E. Rhine (e.g., Dossey, 2009; Green, 1960; Prasad & Stevenson, 1968; Sannwald, 1963; Schouten, 1981, 1982). The relative incidence of the different forms of ESP experience in L. E. Rhine's (1961) collection was approximately as follows: intuitive (26%), hallucinatory (9%), realistic dreams (44%), and unrealistic dreams (21%) (see Rhine, 1961, p. 93, for details). In an Argentinean survey carried out by Gomez Montanelli and Parra (2008), it was found that (i) 15% of people have extrasensory dreams (considerably lower compared to Rhine's finding), and (ii) of those who had experienced telepathy in their dreams, 6% reported that their experiences had been negative to some degree. Similar findings are reported for other case collections of extrasensory experience (Prasad & Stevenson, 1968; Schouten, 1981; Stevenson, 1970; Stowell, 1997a, 1997b).

Two British analyses (Green, 1960; Orme, 1974), and one from Brazil (Peters Lessa, 1972) examined the length of time between the precognitive experience and the actual occurrence of the event to which the experience related. For about half of all cases, the precognized event had occurred within two days of the experience, and only about 20% of

experiences were fulfilled after an interval exceeding one month (Sondow, 1988).

Given these findings there clearly is scope for further research into premonitions and their emotional impact, especially in dreams. For these reasons, it is argued that premonition reports are an important part of human phenomenological experience and, as such, deserve and require study in and of themselves, with and without efforts to relate them to possible paranormal components. While I endorse Palmer's (1979) claim of the importance of distinguishing conventional models of explanation from paranormal ones in parapsychology, I acknowledge the pleas to consider the experiential aspects of psi claims as part of parapsychological research without necessarily focusing on paranormal explanatory models (e.g., Schouten, 1986; White, 1990).

The main aim of the present survey was to determine (amongst other demographic factors) the proportion of people in Argentina who claim to have had various kinds of premonition experiences, and compare the sources of these (i.e., whether they are from dreams or not). A second aim was to determine correlations (if any) between these premonition experiences and characteristics such as content (including symbols), topics (i.e., types of premonitions), clarity and vividness of premonitions, emotional factors and sensory modalities involved, and whether people have the capacity to discern whether normal or paranormal explanations are warranted for their premonitions.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

From a total of 513 undergraduate students recruited from the Psychology Department of the Universidad Abierta Interamericana (South Campus), Buenos Aires, Argentina, I received 429 usable questionnaires (83%). Participation was voluntary and no payments were made to teachers or participants for their participation. The sample comprised 218 (51%) females and 211 (48%) males, ranging in age from 17 to 54 years ( $M = 34$  years;  $SD = 13$  years).

### *Materials*

*Premonition Experiences Questionnaire (PEQ)*. Inspired by the collection of our own Counseling Service's cases (more than 2000 paranormal/anomalous experiences) at the Institute of Paranormal Psychology (Gómez Montanelli & Parra, 2004; Parra & Corbetta, 2012),

and workshops on dreamwork at Buenos Aires (Parra, 2009), I developed a self-report questionnaire, the Premonition Experiences Questionnaire (PEQ), for the purposes of collecting information on spontaneous premonition experiences.

The first part of the questionnaire (items 1 to 1.8) explores 'Premonitions in dreams', and the second part (items 2.1 to 12) covers 'Premonition not related to dreams' which are premonition-like waking experiences. If participants answered 'Never' to item 1, they moved to the second part (item 2.1).

The first part, 'Premonition in dreams', involves: Frequency ('Never', to 'Very frequently'); Content ('Deaths', 'Serious events', and 'Trivial events'); Symbols ('difficult to interpret', 'easy to interpret', 'very real events', 'no images', which were in part inspired by L. E. Rhine's [1961] classification); Vividness ('Clearer than my usual dreams' to 'Less clear than my usual dreams'); Clearness ('Perfectly clear and intense', to 'So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern'); Emotional intensity ('Not intense' to 'Very intense'); Discern a premonitory dream ('Never' to 'Every time'); Time range ('Minutes' to 'Years'); People involved (e.g., 'Mother/Father', 'Brothers/Sisters', etc.). (See APPENDIX for details.)

The second part, 'Premonition not related to dreams' (i.e., presentiments), also involved Frequency, Vividness, Clearness, Discern a premonitory dream, Time range, People involved and Relatives who had premonition experiences ("if yes, who"). Participants could also describe the types of premonitory experiences (Topics) they had, such as, unusual success in gambling, avoid accidents, anticipated the state of health, assaults/robberies, major accidents, death of someone near, and others; they could also give responses to items covering four sensory modalities of the premonition experiences: visual experiences, sudden feelings (i.e., pre-feelings), hearing voices, and physical signs. Part 2 also covered characteristics of the experiences, such as, Negative Emotions (anxiety, pessimism, despair, shame, etc.), and Positive Emotions (awesome, pride, relief, optimism, etc.—See APPENDIX for details). The emotional sub-categories were summed to yield a total score for Positive Emotions, and a total score for Negative Emotions.

### *Procedure*

Participants were invited to complete the questionnaire in a single session, selected from days and times previously agreed upon with the teachers. They were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire to preserve anonymity. They also received information about the aims of the

study and instructions were given about the premonitions and paranormal dreams in general.

### *Data analysis*

The sample was split into two groups: (i) premonitions in dreams; and (ii) premonitions not related to dreams. Statistical analysis involved a number of exploratory comparisons focusing on content, symbols, people involved, clearness, vividness, emotional intensity, and discernment of paranormal/normal explanations. Also a number of correlations were tested using nonparametric measures (Spearman's *rho* and Kruskal-Wallis' *H* test). A co-operator (JV) tallied the scores from the *PEQ*. JV remained blind to participants' group identity. The data was exported to a statistical package (SPSS 20) for analysis. All data entry and analyses were double-checked.

## RESULTS

### *Descriptive Findings*

*Frequency.* As Table 1 indicates, of the 429 participants who reported premonitions in dreams, 93 (21.7%) reported having experienced them at least once, and approximately half of the sample ( $n = 222$ ; 51.7%) experienced premonitions but these were not related to dreams (e.g., they were presentiments, hunches or other physical signs). As Table 1 also indicates, 222 (51.7%) experienced one or both (premonition not related to dreams).

*Content and Symbols.* Of 93 participants who answered they had premonitions in dreams, trivial events in their dreams were the most common premonition ( $n = 48$ ; 51.6%) over death and other serious events. Forty (43.0%) of the 93 experienced symbols of some kind; 23 (24.7%) reported very real (i.e., non-symbolic) events taking place as they dreamed them, while 30 (32.3%) "just knew what was going to happen".

*Vividness and Clearness.* Of the 93 participants who reported premonitions in dreams, 55 participants (59.1%) reported that vividness was *moderately* to *perfectly* clear and intense; 34 participants (36.6%) expressed some degree of vagueness, lack of clarity, or diffuseness in their symbols/images, and a mere four participants (4.3%) reported effectively no discernable level of vividness. Of the same 93 participants, 23 (24.7%) reported that their

**Table 1**  
**Descriptives: Premonitions in Dreams and the Waking State**

Variable	Premonition in dreams		Premonition not related to dreams	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
<i>Q1: Frequency</i>				
Never	336	78.3	207	48.3
One single	29	6.8	34	7.9
Sometimes	58	13.5	141	32.8
Multiple times	6	1.4	47	11.0
<b>[Yes, sub-total]</b>	<b>[93]</b>	<b>[21.7]</b>	<b>[222]</b>	<b>[51.7]</b>
Total	429	100.0	429	100.0
<i>Q1.1: Content</i>				
Deaths	25	26.8	—	—
Serious events	20	21.6	—	—
Trivial events	48	51.6	—	—
<i>Q1.2: Symbols</i>				
Symbols difficult to interpret	16	17.2	—	—
Symbols easy to interpret	24	25.8	—	—
Very real events that take place as I dreamed them	23	24.7	—	—
No symbols, I just knew what was going to happen	30	32.3	—	—
<i>Q1.3 &amp; Q4: Vividness</i>				
Perfectly clear and intense	16	17.2	44	19.8
Moderately clear and intense	39	41.9	81	36.5
Unclear but vivid	17	18.3	65	29.3
Vague and diffuse	17	18.3	28	12.6
So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern	4	4.3	4	1.8
<i>Q1.4: Clearness (dreams)</i>				
Clearer than my usual dreams	23	24.7	—	—
As clear as my usual dreams	42	45.2	—	—
Less clear than my usual dreams	28	30.1	—	—

Table 1 (Cont'd)

Descriptives: Premonitions in Dreams and the Waking State

Variable	Premonition in dreams		Premonition not related to dreams	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Q5: Clearness (non-dreams)</i>				
Not intense	—	—	32	14.4
A little intense	—	—	69	31.1
Moderately intense	—	—	97	43.7
Very intense	—	—	24	10.8
<i>Q1.5: Emotional intensity (dreams)</i>				
Not intense	8	8.6	—	—
A little intense	30	32.3	—	—
Moderately intense	9	9.7	—	—
Very intense	46	49.4	—	—
<i>Q1.6 &amp; Q6: discern normal/paranormal explanations</i>				
Never	13	14.0	24	10.8
Rarely	29	31.2	50	22.5
Occasionally	28	30.1	83	37.4
Every time	23	24.7	65	29.3
<i>Q1.7 &amp; Q7: Time range</i>				
Minutes	6	6.5	77	34.7
Hours	5	5.4	28	12.6
Days	57	61.3	30	13.5
Months	17	18.3	4	1.8
Years	8	8.6	13	5.9
<i>Q1.8 &amp; Q8: People involved*</i>				
Mother/Father	24	25.8	41	18.5
Brothers/Sisters	12	12.9	36	16.2
Wife/Husband	11	11.8	29	13.1
Sons/Daughters	10	10.7	30	13.5
Relatives	45	48.3	81	36.5
Friends	23	24.7	71	32.0
Acquaintances	35	37.6	95	42.8
People I do not know	20	21.5	48	21.6

Table 1 (Cont'd)

Descriptives: Premonitions in Dreams and the Waking State

Variable	Premonition in dreams		Premonition not related to dreams	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Q9: Relatives who had Premonition Experiences*</i>				
Yes (Total)	38	40.9	69	31.1
Grandmother (only)	1	1.1	2	0.9
Brothers/sisters	8	8.6	11	5.0
Sons/Daughters	0	0	5	2.3
Mothers (only)	22	23.7	29	13.1
Grandmother and mother	2	2.2	2	0.9
Both parents	2	2.2	5	2.3
Father (only)	0	0.0	4	1.8
Others relatives	3	3.2	11	5.0
<i>Q10: Premonition at will</i>				
Never	—	—	172	77.5
Once	—	—	24	10.8
Occasionally	—	—	8	3.6
Very frequently	—	—	18	8.1

premonitory dreams were clearer compared to their “usual dreams”, but a majority ( $n = 42$ ; 45.2%) reported that their premonitory dreams were *no clearer* than their usual dreams. Of the 222 participants who reported waking (non-dream) premonitory experiences, vividness was *moderately to perfectly* clear and intense for 125 participants (56.3%), and clearness was *moderately to very intense* for 121 participants (54.5%).

*Emotional intensity, premonitory/normal dream discernment, and time range.* Of the 93 participants reporting premonitory dreams, 46 participants (49.4%) reported their premonitory dreams to be “very intense”, and 23 (24.7%) participants discerned premonitory dreams from normal dreams “every time”. For 57 (61.3%) of the 93 participants, the time range (i.e., lag) from premonition to event was in days. Of the 222 participants who reported waking premonitory experiences, the majority of participants ( $n = 83$ ; 37.4%) discerned premonitory from normal experiences “occasionally”. For 77 (34.7%) of the 222 participants, the time range from premonition to

event was in minutes, and 50 participants (29%) had premonitions at will *at least once*.

*People involved, and relatives who had premonitory experiences.* Of the 93 participants reporting premonitory dreams, the majority of participants ( $n = 45$ ; 48.3%) reported that the people involved in the dreams were relatives (see Table 1 for specific relationships). Out of 38 participants whose relatives also had premonitions, mothers were reported more than any other ( $n = 22$ ; 23.7%). Of the 222 participants who reported waking premonitions, the majority of participants ( $n = 95$ ; 42.8%) reported that the people involved were “acquaintances” (see Table 1 for specific relationships). Of the 69 participants whose relatives experienced waking premonitory experiences, mothers were again reported more than any other ( $n = 29$ ; 13%).

*Sensory modalities of premonitions not related to dreams.* Table 2 shows that 88 (40%) out of 222 who said they had waking (non-dream) premonitory experiences, had *at least* one vision of the situation; 97 (43.7%) had *at least* one pre-feeling of a future event; 64 (28.8%) heard voices *at least once* warning them about a future event; and 42 (18.9%) felt a physical sign *at least once* that anticipated the future event.

Table 2  
Descriptives: Sensory Modalities of Premonitions in Waking State ( $N = 222$ )

Sensory Modalities	Never	One single	Sometimes	Multiple times	Total*
Vision	134 (60.4%)	36 (16.2%)	14 (6.3%)	38 (17.1%)	88 (40.0%)
Pre-feeling	125 (56.3%)	36 (16.2%)	18 (8.1%)	43 (19.4%)	97 (43.7%)
Hearing voices	158 (71.2%)	27 (12.1%)	9 (4.1%)	28 (12.6%)	64 (28.8%)
Physical signs	180 (81.1%)	16 (7.2%)	7 (3.1%)	19 (8.6%)	42 (18.9%)

\* excludes “Never”

*Types of premonitions (i.e., topics), negative and positive emotions.* Table 3 shows that out of 222 participants polled who said they had waking premonitions, 181 (81.5%) had the experience of saying what another person in the conversation was about to say, 94 (42.3%) had unusual success in gambling, and 57 (25.7%) had anticipated the state of health of a person before he/she became ill (see Table 3 for other types of waking premonition).

Table 3  
 Descriptives: Topics of Waking Premonitions and Emotions (*N* = 222)

Topics (Participants ticked more than one choice)	<i>N</i>	%
1. Saying what another person in the conversation was about to say	181	81.5
2. Unusual success in gambling	94	42.3
3. To anticipate the state of health of a person	57	25.7
4. School exams	45	20.3
5. Major accidents	43	19.4
6. To anticipate visiting or living in unknown places	42	18.9
7. Death of someone next	36	16.2
8. Events related to unknown ones	37	16.7
9. Finding objects in unusual places	38	17.1
10. Assaults/robberies	35	15.8
11. Events related on the media	21	9.5
Negative emotions (Participants ticked more than one choice)		
Anxiety	115	51.8
Fear of loved ones' death	44	19.8
Deep sadness, depression	37	16.7
Feelings of guilt for not being able to avoid the event	31	14.0
Fear of not being understood by others	25	11.3
Fear of my own death	25	11.3
Despair	28	12.6
Fear for unknown ones' death	26	11.7
Pessimism	26	11.7
Shame	19	8.6
Fear of losing my mind	17	7.7
Positive emotions (Participants ticked more than one choice)		
Awesome	72	32.4
Happiness	53	23.9
Relief	52	23.4
Optimism	42	18.9
Pride	33	14.9
Improved the quality of my work in other areas	27	12.2
Contributed towards my spiritual growth	25	11.3
Improved my interpersonal relationships	17	7.7
Changed the meaning of my life	15	6.8

Regarding emotional reactions, many participants reported having experienced negative emotions: for example, anxiety ( $n = 115, 51.8\%$ ), fear of loved ones' death ( $n = 44, 19.8\%$ ), and deep sadness/depression ( $n = 37, 16.7\%$ ). Regarding positive emotions: 72 (32.4%) reported that the premonitory experience was 'awesome'; 53 (23.9%) expressed happiness ( $n = 52, 23.4\%$ ), and 52 (23.4%) expressed relief.

### Correlations

These correlations concern sensory modalities. Participants who reported premonition in dreams tended to have more premonition experiences not related to dreams,  $r_s(427) = .36, p < .001$ . Table 4 shows that participants who reported the highest number of presentiments as visions and pre-feelings, tended to score highest on vividness. Participants who reported the highest number of other physical signs, tended to score lowest on clearness, but highest on vividness, and discernment of paranormal from normal explanations of their experiences. (Note that only the strongest effects are reported here).

Table 4  
Spearman's Correlations: Sensory Modalities and Clearness, Vividness, and Discernment of Normal/Paranormal Explanation in Premonitions Not Related to Dreams ( $N = 222$ )

Sensory Modalities <sup>a</sup>	Clearness <sup>b</sup>	Vividness <sup>c</sup>	To discern <sup>d</sup>
Visions	-.07	.34***	.02
Pre-feeling	-.05	.22***	.09
Hearing voices	.09	.03	.08
Physical signs	-.19**	.17**	.30**

Note: Spearman's  $\rho$   $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  ( $p$  adjusted to multiple analysis).

<sup>a</sup> *Sensory Modalities*: 0 = "Never" to 3 = "Very frequently"; <sup>b</sup> *Clearness*: 1 = "Less clear than my usual dreams" to 3 = "Clearer than my usual dreams"; <sup>c</sup> *Vividness*: 1 = "So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern" to 5 = "Perfectly clear and intense"; <sup>d</sup> *To discern*: 0 = "Never" to 3 = "Every time"

Table 5 lists a number of significant correlations between types of premonition and sensory modalities involved. Of 44 correlations, 28 (64%) were significant. Generally, if there is a high level of activation of the sensory modalities, the more likely will premonitions of all types be reported.

Table 5  
Spearman's Correlations: Sensory Modalities and Types of Premonitions (Topics) in Premonitions Not Related to Dreams ( $N = 222$ )

Topics <sup>(a)</sup>	Sensorial Modalities <sup>(b)</sup>			
	Visions	Pre- feeling	Hearing voices	Physical signs
1. Saying what another person in the conversation was about to say	.19**	.16*	-.04	.25**
2. Unusual success in gambling	-.02	.23**	.16*	.05
3. To anticipate the state of health of a person	.28**	.31**	.17*	.19**
4. School exams	-.09	.05	-.04	.09
5. Major accidents	.32**	.24**	.32**	.13
6. To anticipate visiting or living in unknown places	.32***	.32***	.33***	.24***
7. Death of someone next	.11	.09	.15*	.27**
8. Events related to unknown ones	.21**	.18**	-.12	.15*
9. Finding objects in unusual places	.13	.05	.18**	.10
10. Events related on the media	.12	.14 *	.14*	.18**
11. Assaults/robberies	.13*	.18**	.08	.17*

Note: Spearman's  $\rho$   $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  ( $p$  adjusted to multiple analysis).

<sup>a</sup> Score range: 0 = "No" to 1 = "Yes"; <sup>b</sup> Score range: 0 = "Never" to 3 = "Very frequently".

Table 6 lists four out of four significant correlations between sensory modalities and negative emotions (Mean  $\rho = .29$ ; range = .15 to .39), and three out of four significant correlations between sensory modalities and positive emotions (Mean  $\rho = .25$ ; range = .12 to .38). Participants who report high frequencies of activated sensory modalities tend to report a greater number of emotional reactions, positive and negative.

Table 7 lists correlations on vividness, clearness, emotional intensity, and normal/paranormal discernment for participants who reported having dream precognitions ( $N = 93$ ). The clearest premonitions were the most vivid. The more emotionally intense premonitions were easier to discern as being normal or paranormal. Table 8 shows that of participants who reported premonitions in dreams, the clearest dreams tended to take the longest time to "come true" (the lag ranged up to days, months, and even years). No significant correlations were found in the non-dream group (see Table 8).

Table 6  
Spearman's Correlations: Sensory Modalities and Negative/Positive Emotions in Premonitions not related to dreams ( $N = 222$ )

Sensory Modalities <sup>a</sup>	Emotional Reactions <sup>b</sup>	
	Negative	Positive
Visions	.39**	.31**
Pre-feeling	.39**	.38**
Hearing voices	.15*	.12
Physical signs	.22**	.17*

\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .001$  ( $p$  adjusted to multiple analysis).

<sup>a</sup> *Sensory Modalities*: 0 = "Never" to 3 = "Very frequently".

<sup>b</sup> Participants ticked one or more than one reaction. The emotional sub-categories were summed to yield a total score for Positive Emotions, and a total score for Negative Emotions. Negative/Positive Emotional reactions: 0 = No reaction reported; 1 = "One reaction" to 11 = "Eleven reactions (*Mean* Positive = 1.73 [*SD* = 1.83] *Mean* Negative = 1.74 [*SD* = 1.94]) Range = 0-9. Seventy one participants (32%) had no reactions. Fifty five (24.8%) participants had one reaction, 93 (42%) had 2-6 reactions, and 3 (1.4%) had < 7 negative reactions; and fifty eight (26%) participants had one reaction, 52 (35.6%) had 2-6 reactions, and 6 (2.9%) had < 7 negative reactions.

Table 7  
Spearman's Correlations: Vividness, Clearness, Emotional Intensity and Discernment of Normal/Paranormal Explanations in Premonitions in Dreams (Q1.3 to Q1.6:  $N = 93$ )

Variable	Vividness <sup>a</sup>	Clearness <sup>b</sup>	Emotional Intensity <sup>c</sup>
Clearness	.50***	—	—
Emotional intensity	-0.20	-0.25*	—
To discern <sup>d</sup>	-0.24*	-0.19	.39***

\* Spearman's  $\rho$   $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  ( $p$  adjusted to multiple analysis).

<sup>a</sup> *Vividness*: 1 = "So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern" to 5 = "Perfectly clear and intense"; <sup>b</sup> *Clearness*: 1 = "Less clear than my usual dreams" to 3 = "Clearer than my usual dreams"; <sup>c</sup> *Emotional intensity*: 0 = "Not intense" to 3 = "Very intense"; <sup>d</sup> *To discern*: 0 = "Never" to 3 = "Every time".

As shown in Table 9, 16 dreamers experienced premonitory dreams that were "difficult to interpret", 24 reported their dreams were "Easy to interpret", 23 reported their dreams were "Realistic dreams", and 30 reported their dreams had "No symbols". Table 9 gives results of statistical comparisons between the four dream-premonition groups based on reports

about dream symbols. The group who reported no symbols (i.e., no images) in their dreams scored significantly higher on vividness and clearness. Ironically, our other finding, that vividness and clearness were significantly and positively correlated (see Table 7), suggests that the complete lack of symbols positively influences vividness and clearness ratings.

Table 8  
Spearman’s Correlations: Time Range with Emotional Intensity, Vividness, Clearness, and Discernment of Normal/Paranormal Explanations in Premonitions in Dreams and Not Related to Dreams

Variable	Time Range <sup>a</sup>	
	Dreams (n = 93)	No dreams (n = 222)
Emotional Intensity <sup>b</sup>	-0.04	—
Vividness <sup>c</sup>	0.15	-0.08
Clearness <sup>d</sup>	0.36***	0.07
To discern <sup>e</sup>	-0.20	-0.10

\* Spearman’s rho  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$  ( $p$  adjusted to multiple analysis).

<sup>a</sup> Time Range: 1 = “Minutes” to 5 = “Years”; <sup>b</sup> Emotional intensity: 0 = “Not intense” to 3 = “Very intense”; <sup>c</sup> Vividness: 1 = “So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern” to 5 = “Perfectly clear and intense”; <sup>d</sup> Clearness: 1 = “Less clear than my usual dreams” to 3 = “Clearer than my usual dreams”; <sup>e</sup> To discern: 0 = “Never” to 3 = “Every time”.

Table 9  
Comparisons: Symbols with Emotional Intensity, Vividness, Clearness, and Discernment of Normal/Paranormal Explanations in Premonitions in Dreams (N = 93)

Variable	Symbols								$\chi^2$	$p^*$
	Difficult to interpret (n = 16)		Easy to interpret (n = 24)		Realistic dreams (n = 23)		No symbols (n = 30)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Emotional intensity <sup>(a)</sup>	1.75	1.12	1.79	1.06	1.96	1.14	2.33	0.99	4.90	.179
Vividness <sup>(b)</sup>	2.44	0.96	2.21	0.77	1.96	0.92	3.20	1.21	17.70	.001
Clearness <sup>(c)</sup>	2.19	0.83	1.92	0.58	1.74	0.54	2.33	0.84	10.30	.016
To discern <sup>(d)</sup>	1.38	0.88	1.25	0.84	1.96	0.97	1.90	1.09	8.84	.031

\* Kruskal-Wallis’s  $H$  ( $p$  adjusted to multiple analysis).

<sup>a</sup> Emotional intensity: 0 = “Not intense” to 3 = “Very intense”; <sup>b</sup> Vividness: 1 = “So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern” to 5 = “Perfectly clear and intense”; <sup>c</sup> Clearness: 1 = “Less clear than my usual dreams” to 3 = “Clearer than my usual dreams”; <sup>d</sup> To discern: 0 = “Never” to 3 = “Every time”.

## DISCUSSION

Analysis of case material serves the function of determining the different ways in which claims of ESP may be expressed. For example, ESP experiences in everyday life seem to relate to past, present, and future events, and may take the form of intuitions, apparent hallucinations, or mental images (e.g., as in dream content). The researcher should be alert to these ecological vehicles of expression and consider the extent to which specific laboratory findings may be generalized to the various forms. Thus, quite apart from the matter of the bases of parapsychological phenomena, it is legitimate to inquire into the 'character' of the experiences from the percipient's point of view (White, 1990, 1992).

### *Comparisons of Dream and Non-Dream Premonitions*

In the present study, the majority of participants reported that their dream and non-dream premonitions were vivid, clear, and emotionally intense. While a majority of premonitory dreamers (59%) reported the vividness of their premonitions were *moderately to perfectly clear and intense*, premonitory dreams were no clearer than usual dreams for 42 participants (45%; see Table 1). This latter, somewhat puzzling, finding could be explained by the fact that many premonitory dreams have no symbols (32%), and/or the symbols are difficult to interpret (17%), and/or many of them involve trivial events (52%)—the dreams may also be of insufficient intensity to be recognized as precognitive dreams. In contrast, premonitions in waking states (i.e., presentiments, hunches, and other physical signs) were reported as being only a little less vivid than dream premonitions (56%).

The time lag from the dream premonition event up to the actual event occurring in real life (i.e., actualisation) was more often measured in days, and the participants involved in the dreams tended to be *relatives* (48%). This former finding compares with that of Sondow (1988), who found an exponential relationship between the dream precognition and time interval, whereby about 41% of the dreams were linked to an event the following day. A majority of participants who answered that they had non-dream (waking) premonitions tended to report involvement with *acquaintances* (about 43%) rather than relatives, and the time lag for 'actualization' was considerably reduced to only minutes rather than days. It is clear that waking premonitions appear to be more immediate ('actualised' in minutes), whereas dream precognitions seem to give the dreamer more time to act. It is not clear whether the time lag has anything to do with

relationship of the person in the premonition to the one having the premonition.

Some 37% of all experiencers (dreamers and non-dreamers) reported that their mothers also had premonition experiences, but the possibility and nature of the heritability factor underlying the so-called 'paranormal gift' is still yet to be determined in parapsychological research. Given the other findings, some kind of prioritization of the psi capacity is suggested. It seems reasonable to expect that, in all cases, premonitions should involve strong emotional reactions with good clarity (Houran & Lange, 1998; Schredl, 2009; Thalbourne, 1984, 1994) since persons who barely (if at all) recall the content of their dreams, and have little or no reaction to them, are not likely to recall or benefit from precognitive dreams. Furthermore, we may expect strong relationships between precognitive dreams and (i) positive attitudes towards parapsychological phenomena (e.g., Gómez Montanelli & Parra, 2003, 2004; Houran & Lange, 1998; Schredl, 2009), and (ii) empathy in regard to close (e.g., maternal) relationships (Parra, 2013), which may extend to acquaintances.

#### *Sensory Modalities and Topics (i.e., Types of Premonition)*

Only the findings for the sub-sample of participants who answered that they had premonitions *not* related to dreams ( $N = 222$ ) can be reported here as the sensory-modality variables did not apply to the group of 93 participants who had premonitions in their dreams.

Similarly characteristic of dream premonitions, the sensory modalities most commonly activated during waking premonitions were 'vision' (*per se*) and pre-feelings, although hearing voices was quite common (see Table 2). We note, however, that dream premonitions, which are characteristically of a visual nature, were more vivid.

Table 3 showed that participants seem most pre-occupied with gambling and health issues. It is also noted that just over half the sub-sample experienced anxiety during or after premonitions, and about one quarter of the sample expressed happiness and relief. While it was stated earlier that the preponderance of negatively toned precognitive material may be explained as a reporting bias (see De Pablos, 2006; Drewes, 2002; Steinkamp, 2000), the reporting bias (if that is what it is) in this Argentinian sample seems to be undermined by much positively toned material. Generally speaking, these outcomes reflect Dossey's (2009) belief that premonitions serve a survival function since health and money (actively expressed in gambling behaviour) are directly related to day-to-day survival in western societies, and it is of little surprise if anxiety on the one hand, and happiness on the other, should figure strongly in premonitions which

invariably evoke deep personal concerns. Further studies will clarify and/or confirm the above findings.

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APPENDIX

Premonitions Questionnaire

A premonition is an experience through which an individual becomes aware of a future event. The different modalities in which a premonition can occur vary across people. This questionnaire explores the characteristics of this phenomenon and the frequency with which it occurs in the population. Please answer each question carefully. The first part of the questionnaire (items 1.1 to 1.8) explores dream precognition, the second part (items 2.1 to 12) explores waking precognition.

Gender: M        F

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I have had dreams that foresaw the future, without possibility of having deduced it or known it beforehand. If your answer is NEVER, please move to item 2.

- Never
- Once
- Occasionally
- Very frequently

1.1. My premonitory dreams have to do mainly with:

- Deaths
- Serious events
- Trivial events

1.2. My premonitory dreams consist mainly of:

- Symbols difficult to interpret
- Symbols easy to interpret
- Very real events that take place as I dreamed them
- No images, I just knew what was going to happen

1.3. My premonitory dreams are:

- Perfectly clear and intense
- Moderately clear and intense
- Unclear but vivid
- Vague and diffuse
- So vague and diffuse they are impossible to discern

1.4. My premonitory dreams are:

- Clearer than my usual dreams

As clear as my usual dreams  
Less clear than my usual dreams

1.5. The emotional intensity of my premonitory dreams is:

Not intense  
A little intense  
Moderately intense  
Very intense

1.6. I can discern a premonitory dreams from a normal dream derived from my unfulfilled needs, expectancies, my own fantasy or imagination.

Never  
Rarely  
Occasionally  
Every time

1.7. My premonitory dreams came true after (please indicate how long this took):

Minutes  
Hours  
Days  
Months  
Years

1.8. My premonitory dreams had to do with (you can tick more than one choice)

Mother/Father  
Brothers/Sisters  
Wife/Husband  
Sons/Daughters  
Relatives  
Friends  
Acquaintances  
People I do not know

2.1. I have had presentiments in general, hunches and other physical signs.

Never  
Once  
Occasionally  
Very frequently

2.2. I have had the experience of anticipating assaults/robberies.

Yes/No

2.3. I have had the experience of anticipating death of someone next (to me in any situation).

Yes/No

2.4. I have had the experience of anticipating events related to unknown ones.

Yes/No

2.5. I have had the experience of anticipating events related to people or situations that I saw on the media.

Yes/No

2.6. I have had the experience of anticipating school exams.

Yes/No

2.7. I have had the experience of visiting or living in unknown places.

Yes/No

2.8. I have had the experience of finding objects in unusual places (e.g. cloths, books, money).

Yes/No

2.9. I have had the experience of anticipating saying what another person in the conversation was about to say.

Yes/No

2.10. I have had an unusual success in gambling thanks to a premonition, hunch or sign.

Yes/No

2.11. I have managed to avoid an accident on me or on someone else thanks to a premonition.

Yes/No

2.12. I have anticipated the state of health of a person before he/she became ill, without further previous knowledge of it.

Yes/No

3.1. I have had a premonitory vision of a situation or person), which I cannot explain by conventional means.

Never

Once

Occasionally  
Very frequently

3.2. I have had the experience of a sudden feeling of a future event, which I cannot explain by conventional means.

Never  
Once  
Occasionally  
Very frequently

3.3. I have had the experience of hearing clearly a voice warning me about a future event, which I cannot explain by conventional means.

Never  
Once  
Occasionally  
Very frequently

3.4. I have felt a physical sign (e. g. pain, warmth, rush, etc.) that clearly anticipated a future event, which I cannot explain through conventional means.

Never  
Once  
Occasionally  
Very frequently

4. My presentiment, hunches, and signs are:

Perfectly clear and intense  
Moderately clear and intense  
Unclear but vivid  
Vague and diffuse  
So vague and diffuse that are impossible to discern

5. My presentiments, hunches, and signs are:

Not intense  
A little intense  
Moderately intense  
Very intense

6. I can discern my presentiments, hunches, and signs from other common experiences derived from my unfulfilled needs, expectancies, my own fantasy or imagination.

Never  
Rarely

Occasionally  
Every time

7. My presentiment, hunch, or sign came true after (please indicate how long this took):

Minutes  
Hours  
Days  
Months  
Years

8. My presentiment dream had to do with (you can tick more than one choice)

Mother/Father  
Brothers/Sisters  
Wife/Husband  
Sons/Daughters  
Relatives  
Friends  
Acquaintances  
People I do not know

9. I have close relatives that have also experienced premonitions.

Yes/No  
Who:

10. I have tried to have a premonition.

Never  
Once  
Occasionally  
Very frequently

11. During or after my premonitions I have felt ... (you can tick more than one):

Negative Emotions

Anxiety  
Pessimism  
Despair  
Shame  
Deep sadness, depression  
Fear of my own death  
Fear of losing my mind

Fear for unknown ones' death  
Fear of loved ones' death  
Fear of not being understood by others  
Feelings of guilt for not being able to avoid the event

Positive Emotions

Awesome  
Pride  
Relief  
Optimism  
Happiness  
Changed the meaning of my life  
Improved my interpersonal relationships  
Improved the quality of my work in other areas  
Contributed towards my spiritual growth

12. Can you describe your most impacting premonitory experience? Please, provide details of the experience itself and how the event it referred to happened.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.