

THE SLI EFFECT

Street Lamp Interference

A PROVISIONAL ASSESSMENT

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with ASSAP

Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena

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Note: This is a complete copy of the book, originally published by ASSAP in 1993. It has NOT been updated since, so it will inevitably be out of date. It is provided because there is so little information available on this subject. Unfortunately, little work has been done since as very few researchers have studied the field. Regrettably, the SLIDE project no longer exists though ASSAP is still interested in reports of SLI.

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Measurements

For consistency's sake, all measurements are given in metric; those originally in other forms have been converted.

Abbreviations

For the sake of convenience, the following abbreviations are used:

SL	a street lamp
SLI	the alleged phenomenon of SL interference
SLIDE	the SLI Data Exchange Project
SLIder	a person who reports a SLI experience

References

The numbers refer to individual cases, existing as documents in SLIDE's correspondence file. In most instances, the cases reported here are in verbatim form, with occasional corrections of syntax and spelling; the original letters are on file and open for inspection (subject to the customary conditions). Correspondents were asked if they had any objection to their material and their names being used; all were happy that their letters should be quoted, but some preferred to be identified only by initials. For the purposes of this report, it seemed preferable to identify cases simply by number.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to everyone who has sent in SLI reports to SLIDE and ASSAP.

Preface

What is SLI?

'Street Lamp Interference' (SLI) is an apparent phenomenon, based on claims by many people that they involuntarily, and usually spontaneously, cause street lamps to go out. Generally the effect is intermittent, infrequent and without an immediately discernible sequence of cause and effect.

SLI deserves study because it gives the appearance of being an anomalous phenomenon in its own right. That is to say, it appears to be an effect which is not consistent with our current knowledge of how people interact with the physical world, and which occurs in specific circumstances.

SLI raises many questions, but two fundamental ones are: *Does SLI occur?* And if so, *does it constitute a phenomenon in its own right?*

Does SLI occur?

The fact that so many witnesses are making claims which seem to involve a SLI effect, that they are doing so in apparent good faith, and doing so independently of one another and without awareness (until they heard of our Project), that the effect may constitute a phenomenon in its own right - these circumstances encourage us to proceed on the basis that SLI, whatever its nature, does indeed occur.

Does SLI constitute a phenomenon in its own right?

We must be prepared to find that the effect is spurious rather than real, and that the SLIers' experiences can be explained without our needing to create a special category for the purpose. History demonstrates that there can be widespread belief in a phenomenon which is nonetheless nothing more than an artifact derived from an erroneous interpretation of witness testimony.

However, SLI has a basis in physical reality which is amenable to investigation: SLs are physical objects and the SLI effect, if it exists, must be ultimately a physical process. By its nature, SLI lends itself to methodical observation and controlled testing.

At present, no such observation and testing has been carried out, and SLI remains no more than a collection of anecdotal testimony. It is not alone in this: there are many categories of experience whose status is no more strongly based, which is why the claims of ghosts, lake monsters, out-of-body experiences and many more, to be taken seriously as phenomena, continue to be doubted by the skeptical.

In such a situation, the creation of a special category - SLI - to house this particular cluster of witness reports is at best a provisional measure.

However, if it would be wrong to assume, prematurely, that SLI occurs as claimed, it would be equally wrong to dismiss the claims unless we had good reason to prefer an alternative explanation. If the SLI witnesses are honestly reporting factual events, then SLI constitutes a potentially very revealing process, for it seems to imply interaction between the human mind and external reality.

Telekinesis

The term *psychokinesis* was introduced by J B Rhine to refer to the direct influence of mind on a physical system without the mediation of any known physical energy' (Thalbourne). It replaced the earlier word *telekinesis*, which however seems more appropriate in the case of SLI:

- first, because the prefix *tele-* implies action at a distance, which is a fundamental characteristic of SLI ;
- second, because the prefix *psycho-* carries connotations of 'psychism' which we should avoid unless it becomes clear that some kind of 'psychic' force is involved in SLI, something which is far from evident.

Leaving such hair-splitting aside, it is clear that SLI could have much in common with other phenomena which seem to display an anomalous kinetic effect. That some kind of such interaction occurs in other contexts has long been suspected by open-minded researchers. The 'poltergeist' phenomenon, laboratory PK, and a number of unexplained effects occurring in spontaneous contexts, such as certain UFO observations, also point to something of the sort. (The more obviously relevant are discussed later in this report, see 5.5.)

Consequently, study of SLI is important not only in its own right, but because it could help to throw light on these long - but inconclusively - studied phenomena. For SLI has certain characteristics which would make it particularly significant if it occurs:

- it has been reported by people who have no pre-existent model on which to base their testimony. The overwhelming majority of those who have reported their experiences to SLIDE had previously supposed that they had had a one-of-a-kind experience, and have been both relieved and delighted to learn that others have shared similar experiences.
- it involves objects which are too large to be susceptible to the kind of tampering - deliberate cheating or unconscious manipulation - which must be considered a possibility in such paranormal incidents as spoon-bending, apports &c. SLs are large, public objects; and though in theory it would be possible for each of our witnesses to have familiarised themselves with the mechanics of SL operation and tampered with the mechanism prior to experiencing (often in the presence of others) the effect, in practice the probability can be dismissed.

- SLI involves little or no emotional involvement on the part of the witness; consequently, the witness rarely, if ever, has any strong motivation to believe that the SLI effect is real, apart from not wishing to seem a fool for making the claim in the first place. Since SLI provides no evidence for an afterlife or any such motivating theme, and since the ability to perform SLI does not in itself make the witness 'special', the phenomenon is not liable, in anything like the same degree, to the kind of bias which may contaminate testimony in other fields of anomaly research where some kind of 'gift' is supposed to have been conferred on the individual who derives prestige from it in consequence.

If SLI can be shown to occur, it would constitute the best evidence hitherto available that the human mind can, under certain circumstances, cause physical events to occur at a distance. It is to be hoped that publication of this preliminary study will be a first step toward implementing research directed to this end.

1 THE TESTIMONY; WHAT PEOPLE ARE REPORTING

Here are two typical SLI reports:

'Your article has been a huge relief off my mind. I couldn't believe this was a phenomenon that others shared with me. I just thought I was nuts and so did those I told. I had never experienced this problem until about 2 years ago. I first noticed street lights going off when I began taking college classes at nite. Several times when I would turn into my street to come home the street light outside our home went out. I didn't say anything thinking something was wrong with it. Then it began going off when I would step out onto the porch. For a while I thought it was coincidence, then I began noticing lights turning off in other places. I finally said something to my husband one nite when we were driving home and a light went off. He said it was probably the headlights of our car, which made sense to me, and the other times when I was on the porch was coincidental. It continued, and I continued to complain and tell people, just to be made fun of. Then one nite a friend and myself went for a walk by her home, as we walked 4 lights went off as I passed and came back on once I got by. At that point I knew it was me. It continues to happen to me and I continue to try to make others believe me. '(53: American housewife)

'From 1976 to 1979 I lived in a rented apartment not far from the physics research lab where I worked. Usually I walked home quite late in the evening, and kept on thinking on my computational problems in fluid mechanics. During these evening walks I had to walk along a number of mercury lamps which were switched on at this time. I noticed that about twenty times the lamps went out when I walked under them. The lamps stayed off for the whole night, but next day they operated perfectly again. The lamps were not always the same, and these events were repeated with different lamps on other streets as well. The conditions under which these events took place were always the same: I was concentrating with maximum efforts on my problem, ignoring the outside world completely. At this time I had a mild, sometimes sharp pain at the back of my head, and I was in a very good physical condition. This has never happened when I was even a little bit sick, or I did not concentrate, or did not feel the pain at the back of my head. '(4: Hungarian engineer)

This kind of experience has been reported to SLIDE by more than 75 individuals. Considering that the number of people who know of SLIDE's existence must be an infinitesimal percentage of the human race, not to mention other factors such as reluctance to tell others about their experience, or even acknowledge it to themselves, it is reasonable to suppose that those 75+ must be representative of a very substantial population.

The individuals who form that population appear, on the surface, to have very little in common beyond their SLI experience. They come from different walks of life in

different countries; they are male or female, young or old. If they are mostly articulate and intelligent, that is probably due simply to the fact that such people are the most likely to read the journals or attend the lectures where SLI is mentioned, and thus learn of SLIDE's existence, and more likely, too, to make the effort to contact it.

However diverse SLIders may be, it is reasonable to suppose that there are significant underlying patterns awaiting discovery; it is likely, too, that the quest will take us beyond the SLI experience per se. The SLIDE Project is primarily concerned with a single phenomenon: apparent interference with SLs. However, as we shall see, not only is it appropriate to study SLI in the context of other kinds of reported experience, but SLIders themselves often see their experiences in a wider context. Sometimes this context is an abstract one, in that the individual relates it to his/her mind-set or belief-pattern; but more generally it involves physical experiences of other kinds, most notably interference with other types of appliance. These are generally - *but not invariably* - electrical.

Consequently, the scope of research confronting SLIDE comprises:

- I. evaluation of reported instances of SLI: evaluation of their physical circumstances and other factual data related to the technical feats involved: also evaluation of those aspects of SLI experiences which suggest non-physical forces at work: for example, the frequent mention of apparent synchronicity
- II. study of the SLIders themselves - social and psychological parameters
- III. comparative study of SLI with other relevant anomalous experiences, whether reported by SLIders or by others.

2 THE PROJECT

2.1 Project SLIDE

The Project began because I was contacted by individuals who told me of their SLI experiences; this led to my following up occasional letters in the American anomaly periodical *INFO Journal*, and this in turn led to my setting up a data exchange, to provide some kind of central information point for those interested in the subject. Letters were sent to a handful of publications which would be likely to find the subject interesting. Considerable interest was aroused by a short piece by the respected Texas journalist Dennis Stacy, published in the American popular scientific magazine *Omni*, in September 1990: this brought in a substantial response, and accounts for the high proportion of American cases in the SLIDE files.

Project Slide was created simply as a first step towards defining and assessing the apparent phenomenon. As its name implies, it sets out to be little more than an exchange of information between those who are interested.

Everyone who responded to these announcements received a reply from SLIDE, but not everyone replied to that reply. So we have some 40+ letters from people who were sufficiently interested to write for information in the first instance, but not sufficiently interested to write more fully after learning more. The majority of these said they had experienced SLI, but provided no details; consequently we may regard them as probable SLIDers, without however including them in this report.

To date, we have received 77 letters containing sufficient detail for them to qualify as a 'case'. In most instances, the information was provided in the initial letter; only a very few responded to a request for additional detail, although a questionnaire was sent to every inquirer. These cases, numbered 1 to 77 in order of receipt, provide the basis for the testimony sections of this report.

One of the most notable features of SLIDers' letters is typified by this extract:

'I can't tell you how much relief I've felt since hearing others have experienced this sort of "happening" in their lives also.' (5)

Another wrote:

'I have this problem but had no idea it was widespread enough to be a phenomenon.' (13)

It is no exaggeration to say that similar remarks are made in 9 out of 10 of the letters we have received. If SLIDers are deluding themselves that they are something special, we would not expect heartfelt expressions of relief that others have had similar experiences;

and if they are seeking to deceive others, we would not expect them to welcome the menace of scientific investigation of their claims.

It is noteworthy that these expressions of relief are not offered in a highly charged, emotional way. The witness is relieved because we can tell him he is not being ridiculous when he finds his experience puzzling, rather than because his belief-system is threatened or something of that sort. What is at stake is not something as profound as a religious faith or ideology, but simply the individual's own image of himself as a competent observer.

One SLIDER speaks for many when he says he regards SLI as 'something beneficial, but not very important' (40) This gives an additional dimension to the SLIDE project. While we are not in the therapy business, it is nevertheless good to know that SLIDE serves a useful purpose simply by making SLIDERS aware that they are not alone.

2.2 Other Initiatives

Ideally, SLIDE is only an initial step, leading to a more scientific undertaking. As yet, no academic establishment or institution has shown any interest in such an undertaking, and the work of SLIDE has been supplemented only by two other bodies:

ASSAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena)

This British association has shown a lively interest in the SLI effect from the start, and has kept its members informed of developments by means of various items in its publications. An article in *ASSAP NEWS* in 1991 produced an interesting response (case 48).

New Being Project

In December 1991 SLIDE was approached by David Pursglove of the New Being Project, a California-based project which investigates people's extraordinary experiences. SLIDE responded with some caution, but encouraged by the fact that NBP's published literature was professional and well-informed despite the Californian language and New Age coloration.

As yet we have had no reports from them as to whether they did anything and, if they did, whether it brought any results.

So, apart from ASSAP's valuable support, SLIDE remains a voice crying in the wilderness.

3 THE OPTIONS

Theoretically, it is possible that every one of our witnesses is deliberately lying; but since each one of them approached us independently, involved him/herself in some effort and expense in making the contact, and has no ostensible motivation apart from a natural and commendable desire to resolve a mystery, deliberate deceit can probably be set aside as an overall explanation, even if it should be true of one or two mentally aberrant individuals.

Possible explanations for witness claims of SLI can therefore be limited to three broad categories:

- delusion
- natural phenomenon or mechanical effect
- paranormal process

3.1 Delusion

A primary question must be: does SLI occur at all, or are the alleged witnesses deluding themselves?

Until the phenomenon is scientifically tested, it is not possible to give a decisive answer to this question. We know that widespread delusion has taken place in the past - as with the witchcraft mania of the 16/17th centuries - and continues to occur in our supposedly more enlightened era - as with the currently on-going alien abduction mania: so we must consider the possibility that SLI could be another such shared delusion.

Against this is the fact that SLI has not the 'appeal' of witchcraft or abductions: there is nothing like the same psychological pay-off. Individuals seeking to enhance their reputation for possessing special gifts will not find much to flatter themselves with in SLI, nor do our witnesses reveal any signs of this in their letters or personal contacts: if anything, the contrary. All their testimony points to a very matter-of-fact response to a not particularly exciting incident or series of incidents, and to a sincere relief at finding they are not as crazy as their friends have suggested.

Moreover, the fact that SLI is not an established phenomenon does away with the 'glamour' which attaches to such things as witchcraft or abductions. Here, there is a parallel with the 'old hag' effect reported by Hufford (see bibliography): briefly, Hufford found that when he gave a label to a category of one-of-a-kind experiences (night terrors) reported to him in the course of his folklore research, this attracted further testimony from persons who had not hitherto reported their experiences because they had no category in which to classify them. There is no evidence to suggest that Hufford's creation and announcement of the category caused people to respond by fabricating imaginary experiences on the lines of his model, as does seem to have been the case in witchcraft and abductions. Simply, his account made them realise that their

own puzzling experience could well have been the sort of thing that he was talking about.

This seems to be how the majority of SLI reports are generated. A large proportion of SLI respondents told of their experiences in response to a very short item in a magazine article, where only brief and sketchy information was provided. While we cannot rule out the possibility that each of them was inspired by the item to fantasise a delusion that they themselves had had such an experience, this is not very plausible.

In short, while we must keep the possibility before us, it seems highly unlikely that all SLI experiences are delusory.

3.2 Natural Phenomenon or Mechanical Effect

Overwhelmingly, the initial response from non-experiencers is that SLI is a natural event of some kind. The fact that a mechanical device is involved logically suggests that a mechanical explanation should be looked for, and skeptics (most people new to the phenomenon are immediately and rightly skeptical) generally start by supposing that this process can be accounted for in one or another simple ways.

For example, American investigator Loyd Auerbach, in *ESP, hauntings & poltergeists*:

'Almost certainly what was happening was that headlights of passing cars were being reflected into the photoelectric cells of the lamps (the electric eye that automatically turns streetlights on and off as the sun sets and rises).'

Here is a case where an explanation was offered by the witness himself:

'I want to describe an occurrence that has gone on for about 9-12 months and would like to see if anyone else has such an experience. For some reason, when I have driven under a specific street light at night, it will go out ! Now, this does not happen when I am 50 metres ahead or behind it but when I am exactly underneath it. I have a sunroof in my car, so, when it goes out I can usually look up through the sunroof and see it going out. This has occurred about a dozen times in the last year. I never try to make it go out. About 50% of the time I am not thinking of anything specifically, and am somewhat upset the other 50% of the time.'(3+)

to which a fellow correspondent on the bulletin board where it appeared replied:

'My friend suggests that since street lights contain light sensors, when you go under them with a sunroof, or a certain angle on the windshield of your car, the reflection of the street light on that surface causes it to shut off because the light sensor thinks it is daylight.' (3+)

It is then supposed that the misinterpretation on the part of the witness is due to coincidence which strikes the experiencer as significant whereas no such correlation actually occurs.

Unquestionably, such explanations should be looked for. However, the effect must be broad enough to cover a very wide range of experiences. For example, the suggestion that headlights on the SLIder's car might have triggered the SL switch is inadequate, because many SLI events occur when the SLIder is not in a car, but walking or cycling.

Section 4.2 of this report outlines the physical 'task' which the SLIder would have to perform in order to achieve SLI: clearly, the possibility that this is a process which can be expressed in purely physical terms is an option which must be fully explored. But it is already clear that there is no simple solution.

3.3 Paranormal

By paranormal in this context, we mean something which occurs outside the conventionally recognised 'normal' scientific parameters. There is no implication that any supernatural force or occult process is involved.

If SLI occurs as SLIders claim, it does seem to transcend recognised parameters. There is no recognition, in conventional science, that the human mind can cause physical effects at a distance, which is what seems to be occurring in SLI.

However, SLI would not be the only alleged occurrence of this kind. Certain types of phenomena which have attracted the interest of parapsychologists are equally difficult to house within a conventional scientific framework: notably poltergeist phenomena, and those grouped under the heading 'psychokinetic' - such as objects moved at a distance seemingly due to mental effort on the part of the individual.

The evidence that such effects occur, though substantial in quantity and frequently striking in quality, has not hitherto proved sufficient to convince mainstream science that it occurs, and PK effects are still dismissed by most skeptics. Replicability under test conditions is, of course, the criterion which is crucial; and because the operating factor in these occurrences seems to be the human mind, operating under unusual conditions, the difficulty hitherto has been to find a human mind which can perform to order.

SLI suffers from the same drawback, and even if we can persuade scientists to take it sufficiently seriously to test for the phenomenon in a controlled manner, it is likely to come up against the same problem as other PK phenomena.

However, SLI does have one great advantage over most PK experiments: the subjects of the effect - SLs - are not easily manipulated. Whereas a small object, moving across a table, could conceivably be influenced by magnets, breathing, heat etc., the same is not true of SLs. Even though it is in theory possible for someone to tamper with the

mechanism even of so large and public an object as an SL, it is going beyond realistic conjecture to suppose that every one of our witnesses, acting independently, did so. Consequently trickery - always a bugbear in this type of research - can to all intents and purposes be eliminated.

We must also take into account a further possibility, that some of the cases can be attributed to one of these options, some to another. For example, those cases in which the SLider is in a vehicle can be attributed to a mechanical effect, those where he is walking to delusion. Ball lightning and UFOs are two classes of phenomena where it does seem that investigation has been hampered because researchers insist on looking for a single explanation for all the reports - that ball lightning is a potential explanation for a whole range of luminous phenomena, or that there is such a thing as 'a UFO', which accounts for all the enigmatic observations.

Could SLI be another such instance? The consistency of SLI reports, however varied the circumstantial details, argues against any attempt to explain away SLI by separating it into a variety of different misinterpretations, one which applies to motorists, another to pedestrians, and so on.

So while the multiple-cause approach must be given due consideration, along with our other options, we must recognise that there are strong arguments against it.

4 DEFINING THE PHENOMENON

4.1 The Apparent Process

What seems to be happening in a typical SLI case is this: An individual (we have no cases that suggest multiple activation, though sometimes another individual in the witness's company also produces SLI) is engaged in some unrelated activity when he observes that one or more of the SLs in his vicinity have extinguished.

The effect is **spontaneous** (with the exception of a few 'control' incidents in which the witness has tested the phenomenon, and which this report will consider separately).

The effect is apparently **meaningless**; it serves no practical purpose, nor does it seem to provide satisfaction for the individual or in any other way serve some kind of psychological purpose.

In section 5.1 we will consider the range of **circumstances** under which SLI is reported, to see whether any constant or recurrent features are reported. At this point, we will simply observe that a very wide range of circumstances exists - the witness may be walking, cycling or driving a vehicle; he may be alone or accompanied; he may or may not be in a heightened emotional state; there may or may not be independent observers. A wide variety of SLs are targeted, in various physical situations.

We shall be analysing witnesses' experiences in the following section; but some of the specific factors are relevant to this section, in that they serve to define the technical task which is being performed, and the limits within which we can expect to find a solution. For example, one witness observes:

'It happens with both of my Honda automobiles but not to my wife, who drives the same.' (16)

This suggests that SLI cannot easily be attributed to a particular vehicle, or type of vehicle, as some skeptics are apt to suggest.

4.2 The Technical Task

What SLIders themselves think they are doing

Most SLIders approach their experience with intelligence as well as curiosity, not to speak of wonder and humour. Several of them have made interesting efforts to find a technical basis for what they do: for example:

'It occurred to me that the ones I zap are all on light-sensing switches, and perhaps my energy at certain times for who knows what or why, is the right kind and strength to trick the switch into thinking it is daytime.' (2)

(From a Hungarian physicist) 'In my opinion during such incidents some special, presently not known type of magnetic field is created around the body, which has an effect upon the structure of the materials. Consequently their fundamental properties are changed temporarily: like their tensile stress, electric conductivity, magnetic momentum, optical properties, etc. The same effects are detected in the case of "metal bending", or similar features are observed sometimes around ball lightnings.' [The author is an authority on ball lightning](4)

What seems most likely to be happening

Most commentators, confronted with the SLI phenomenon, look - and rightly - for a straightforward physical explanation. For example, when Robert McMorris of the *Omaha World-Herald* devoted two or three issues of his regular column to SLI reports in January 1990, he quoted Allen Klostermeyer, manufacturer's representative for Lighting Specialists Inc., who pointed out that when a sodium (amber) bulb nears the end of its useful life, it may go into an off-and-on sequence:

'When one of them starts to "die", it requires more voltage. This will cause the lamp to go off temporarily; when it cools down, it will come on again for a while. Eventually it will die completely.'

This, it was suggested, is sufficient to explain the SLI effect; what happens is that the witness just happens to be passing such a lamp during its death-throes, and is led by the synchronicity to imagine that he is somehow responsible.

But as the testimony shows, even if we allow the coincidence in place and time, this effect could account for only a small fraction of the reported cases. For one thing, other types of lamp are involved besides sodium lamps. Then again, only a small number of reports describe anything like an SL going off, then on, then off again. And what about when a witness extinguishes a whole batch of SLs: are we to conclude that the whole batch was purchased together, and so shared the same life-span, and such was the perfection of their manufacture, that they all reached their death-point simultaneously? Yet even if we allow that, there is still the fact that some SLiders extinguish a row of SLs in sequence, each one going out as the witnesses nears it: it is asking too much to suppose that a series of lamps would have been arranged in order of their life-span...

Naturally, SLIDE has given considerable thought to the technical aspects of the SLI phenomenon. We have consulted specialists in the field, and received some relevant material; but while we are grateful to these specialists for sharing their knowledge with us, we have to say that no one so far has been able to provide any convincing field explanation.

By far the most useful contribution on this aspect has been made by SLider Ronald Brown, and what follows is largely a condensed version of his extremely helpful analysis. (His full contribution may be consulted on request.)

Does SLI involve some kind of built-in response: i.e. are SLs designed to respond accidentally to certain environmental factors, and does SLI accidentally duplicate those factors and consequently trigger the response?

This is unlikely; it would be ridiculous to design SLs which could be so easily affected. This would lead to inefficient function - i.e. the lamps would frequently be failing to perform their social task - and also be costly both in electricity and in wear-and-tear on the lamp.

Does SLI involve interaction with the photo-electric cell which causes the activation of modern street lamps?

This is improbable for a number of reasons:

- The cells are generally mounted on top of the SLs, where they are most receptive to prevailing lighting conditions, but where they would often be out of sightline for SLIders.
- SLs are often controlled as a group; but we rarely if ever have reports of SLs being affected otherwise than individually - that is to say, when multiple effects occur, they occur as a series of individual extinctions, not a single multiple extinction.
- The cell is activated by **visible light** - its presence or absence. There are no reports of SLIders emitting visible light in any form.

Does SLI involve an interruption of the electrical current supply to the lamps?

This is improbable because:

- If this were the case, not only would more than one SL be extinguished at a time, but it would be liable to affect area supply, including electrical supply to nearby homes and/or such equipment as traffic lights.
- The supply circuit provides an alternating current of very high electrical potential, unlikely to be overcome by another force of vastly smaller potential.
- Supply circuits are insulated; also, being demand-orientated (i.e. responding to the power requirement at any given time) they possess built-in protection against undue surge or reduction, such as may be involved in SLI.

Does SLI act on the internal gas vapour pressure or quality, or on the internal fluorescent materials?

This seems improbable because such a process takes time, whereas the SLI effect appears to be spontaneous, or at any rate acts very rapidly (see section 5.2).

Is there any aspect of the SL's operation which seems vulnerable to SLI force?

SLs operate by passing a current through a liquid metal (e.g. mercury etc) which has first to be pre-heated by a starter circuit to form a gas vapour. Once the vapour is warmed to start-up temperature, the general lamp circuit takes over, and so long as it maintains adequate voltage the lamp will function.

However, if the voltage should drop below a certain level, the lamp's internal resistance will overcome the circuit and the lamp will cease to function. It will stay off until (usually the following evening) it is re-set or re-activated, along with the regular complete street lamp circuit.

Equally, there is an upper limit to the voltage; here again, if the critical level is reached, the circuit will kick-out so as to protect the lamp from the consequences of operating at too high a voltage. This, too, will last until the following evening's re-set or start-up. Normally, the circuit is designed to ensure a supply of current safely within the margin, despite such factors as outside temperature, humidity etc.

In view of the foregoing, the most likely hypothesis would be that **SLI operates by affecting the voltage of the current**; and it is more likely that **it does so by causing a surge rather than a reduction, with the effect of automatically triggering the cut-out.**

To perform this feat, SLI would have to be an electro-dynamic force, somehow generated within or through the human biological system, and somehow externalised into the neighbouring environment, where it will act on any appliance which happens to be vulnerable.

These appliances need not be SLs, of course: and the reports we have of persons affecting computers, supermarket check-outs etc can be seen as providing confirmatory testimony to this. However, there is good reason to think that SLs are particularly sensitive compared with other types of equipment: this could be because they operate at close to the critical level, or because it is not normally considered necessary to provide them with substantial shielding.

Nor can we conclusively discard the alternative hypothesis, i.e. that SLI operates by causing a reduction in the current. This would be a more complex operation, but is technically feasible.

An additional element to be taken into account is the targeting of the individual SL; is this just the one that happens to be closest, or is there some other factor to be taken into account? (see 5.2)

It should be emphasised that the hypothetical explanation offered here is no more than a 'best bet' arrived at on the basis of what we know so far. It may well be that additional technical information would open up alternative technical explanations.

Some additional complications

Since at this stage of our inquiry we have no idea what information may be relevant, we have no right to exclude any possible data. Here are some thought-provoking contributions taken from SLIders' accounts.

What at first seems to be a simple case of a defective SL may nevertheless be an instance of SLI, if the SLIder was responsible for the defect:

'I drove to a nearby town to attend a meeting. As I was early I parked on the street to wait. There were streetlights lining both sides of the street. I had been sitting in the car for about 10 minutes when the streetlamp on the opposite side of the street (and more than 50 metres away) suddenly went off. I watched in total fascination as it came on again, then popped off again. After about a dozen times I decided to time it. It was not random, but it wasn't cyclical either. The time between going off and coming on seemed to vary from 45 to 55 seconds. There seemed to be no relationship to passing cars, as it very often popped off when there was no car near it. Anyway I left to attend my meeting and when I got out, that streetlamp was still bonkers. Perhaps it was defective, but I suspect it just became defective because I was in the neighbourhood...' (13)

I would agree that the synchronicity between her arrival and the onset of the defective operation supports her suggestion that something more than chance was operating.

Other data of possible relevance are presented in sections 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6.

To summarise the technical task which is performed by SLI, we can accept that it is fundamentally a physical one - that the modus operandi of SLs lends itself to interference whose effect would be to extinguish the lamp until other factors reversed the process (usually, of course, the following day's switch-on: but in the case of SLs which come on again almost immediately, we have to look for a different process, such as some kind of built-in provision for automatic re-lighting.)

An SL, then, may be extinguished by a set of circumstances which should in principle be identifiable: consequently, it would seem that what SLIders do is somehow to duplicate these circumstances, either by pure chance, or by some deliberate - albeit subconscious - motivation. The next step is to examine the testimony to see if it offers any clues as to what it is that witnesses are doing that somehow duplicates the switch-off process.

5 ANALYSING THE TESTIMONY

At this stage SLIDE both enjoys the benefits and suffers from the drawbacks of being a new and unexplored field of research. On the one hand the testimony is relatively uncontaminated, so that we may more readily accept it as an honest account of what happened; but on the other, because SLiders are reporting spontaneous phenomena which often take them by surprise, they are not often able to provide much circumstantial detail. If, seeking to understand their experience, they do some investigation, they may observe some additional findings, but this does not necessarily include the information we would like to have.

In order to obtain fuller information, it will be necessary to confront SLiders with a formal questionnaire such as is reproduced at the end of this report. At that stage, however, we shall have to allow for the danger that they may be steered by it into giving an account which conforms to the suggestions implicit in the questions, rather than to what actually happened. At a later stage, when we have a good model of the experience, this can be allowed for; but at this preliminary stage, it is quite an advantage to work from reports which are uncontaminated by any involvement on the part of an investigator, even though this means working from accounts which are sparse in detail.

In fact, the body of testimony we have received is sufficient to provide us with a good deal of useful information regarding the circumstances in which SLI occurs; the technical aspects of the experience; and the kind of person who has the experience.

We can also recognise the occurrence of some puzzling effects in connection with SLI experiences, which we must suppose are part of the experience and must be included in any evaluation.

5.1 The Circumstances

Almost the only constants in a SLI incident are (1) the SL and (2) the SLider. In every other way, factors vary widely. SLiders may be driving a car, cycling or walking; they may be in a heavily built-up inner city environment or a lightly populated suburban district; the streets may be busy or nearly deserted; and so on.

When?

By definition, virtually every SLI event occurs after nightfall. However, given that many SLiders also affect other appliances in daytime contexts - eg lights in offices - it would appear that it is not the SLI force but the SL itself which is nocturnal in its habits. There is probably no significance in the fact that SLI events occur in darkness beyond the fact that that is when SL are switched on.

Where?

Urban streets are the most frequent locale, by definition; but within this heading there are variations eg: 'On busy streets and on side streets' (2)

Who was present?

Almost every SLIder reports that they produce the effects whether alone or with others. Sometimes they draw attention to it, sometimes not; sometimes their companions notice it, with a variety of responses, usually of disbelief at first, sometimes mockery.

Some individual comments:

'It often happened when my boyfriend was with me, so at least he didn't think I was crazy. But it happens more often when I'm alone, driving; occasionally when I'm walking at night.' (23)

(A cab-driver) 'The majority of the time I was alone, but occasionally SLI was observed when I was transporting passengers.' (25)

'It took a while to convince my wife, but since then she has been with me to witness the lights going out.' (30)

Many SLIders are driving at the time, but SLI can occur when driving even if the SLIder is a passenger (13). Another reports: 'It happened when I was walking, driving, or riding my bicycle' (28)

Frequency & recurrence

This is a very variable factor. Few people do it in any way on anything like a regular basis, the SLI being confined to special types of occasion, or to brief periods, or other kinds of intermittence. The following are necessarily only rough categories, derived from those who give any meaningful estimate of frequency:

How often?

'a few dozen in my life' (54,55,56)

60+ (24,27,30)

100+ (10,18,23,28,50)

Over how long a period?

one brief period only (4,12,25)

over a period of years (34 cases)

How frequently?

Do SLI events occur either during a short period, or sporadically over a longer period?
'once or twice a year' (15,48)
'twice a year' (6)
'every month or so' (33,55)
'a few times a month' (3)
'one or two per week' (19,36,46)
'virtually every night' (23,41,50,52,62)
'at least 140+ in the past year and a half' (18)

Many SLIders report a distinct lack of pattern:
'Sometimes it happens once a week, sometimes once a month, and sometimes even once a day' (31)

Some specific statements:

'Typically, 3 lights will go off in an hour drive' (16)
'almost a nightly occurrence' (18)
'Sometimes many will go out in one evening' (28)
'I once blew out 7 lights in one weekend at a friend's house. His wife made me replace them!' (44)
'I would put out street lights along an Interstate Hiway exchange, there may have been as many as twenty lights involved at a time' (60)

Meteorological conditions

Is the weather a factor? Not many SLIders refer to the prevailing weather conditions, but this is a factor which should be taken into account, in the light of current research into the interaction between psychological processes and the physical environment.

'I can't remember ever popping a light in the rain, but then it hardly ever rains in Southern California...' (13)

Other SLIders report a possible correlation with cold, damp weather:

(12) reports 'cold and damp'; (7) reports 'cold and snow'
Case (25) narrated below, dates his experience from a thundery evening when meteorological effects were observed.

5.2 Technical Aspects

What kinds of lamp are affected?

Most SLIders do not specify what kind of SL they extinguish, either because they do not know, or they would not know one kind of lamp from another anyway. Of those who were able to specify their targets, we have the following indications:

mercury vapour (9 cases)

sodium vapour (yellow) (10 cases)
'never with tungsten' (4)
'never with incandescent bulbs or neon' (25)

Number affected in each episode

one only on each occasion (4 cases - 3,7,55,56)
several in succession (6 cases - 3,4,16,55,56,77)
several simultaneously (7)

'Some nights I hit the jackpot - 5 lights & more' (41)

Two particularly dramatic cases:

(cab-driver) 'I had been feeling uneasy all day... At around 9pm I drove west along East 4th St: along this street were sodium vapour lamps spaced about 24 metres apart. As I passed, all of the lights on the south side of the street were going out, as I came up to a light, the next three would go out at the same time, then when I came to the fourth, the next three would go out.' (25)

'I was once stopped in a major city by police officers, who wanted to know what I was doing to the city street lights. They had observed that as I turned onto a lighted street, each and every lamp went out as my car reached within 3 metres of it. I looked back and nearly 6 lights or 1½ city blocks of street lamps were darkened ! The police searched my entire car and me before allowing me to leave. As I drove away and on down the street, the oncoming street lamps extinguished just before my car reached each pole. I turned off the street and around the block and looked; the streetlamps were still dark, and the police stopped me again and asked me *not* to drive down that street again until they had the lights checked out. I drove again on that street the opposite direction and once again the far side street lamps went dark as I approached all the way through the city approx. 8 kilometres. These were electro-vapour type modern street lamps.' (11)

The same lamp, or different ones?

Some SLiders seem to have individual lamps which they zap more often than others. This is generally due to their location - for example, it may be one they have to pass frequently - so this may not be significant. On the other hand, it could be that some individual lamps are more vulnerable than the average on purely technical grounds.

That this last is sometimes the case is suggested by the following account:

'At the time I was single, in an unhappy relationship with a woman who lived about an hour away, and without transportation, my car parked dead at the curb and requiring expensive repairs. I worked long hours out of compulsiveness and frustration. It was not a high point in my life. My walk to work took about 35

minutes, and in the darkness on the way home I was almost always thinking intensely. One night I was walking past an apartment building and the yard light turned off. After I had walked past it a few metres, it sputtered back on. I didn't think much of it until the next night, when the same thing happened. Now I began to wonder if perhaps I was doing this somehow. I made a game of it - actually concentrating on turning off the light - and found much to my surprise that I could do it consistently. I found that I couldn't turn off just any light, but that one was a snap. I discounted oncoming car headlights and even observed the light from a distance for a few minutes one night to make sure it wasn't just going on and off at random.'

However, before we are tempted to hypothesise that the effect was entirely due to some characteristic of that particular light, consider the sequel:

'Then one February night I was walking through the bitter cold and snow through downtown Colorado Springs, feeling quite sorry for myself and actually getting angry. As my frustration with my situation roiled to the surface, the street lights began to go out. Not just one at a time, but five or six at a time. As I walked down the street, more lights went out. I felt filled with excitement, as I looked back at the two city blocks of dim street lights.'(7)

Eight SLIders specifically report individual targets (3,21,33,35,40,56,57,77)

Sometimes we could be tempted to think a mechanical fault, pure and simple, is responsible, as in this instance:

'Whilst on holiday in Tenerife last year, I liked to stroll on the marina last thing every night. As I passed each street lamp it went out. As I approached the next one, the previous one came on again. After three nights it really spooked me... It happened every night for two weeks. It has not happened since. I mentioned it to my family, they only laughed and made a comment about faulty electrics in Spain.' (77)

We might be willing to accept his family's verdict, except that clearly not every inhabitant of Tenerife was having this effect, or someone would have noticed and even the authorities might have done something about it. So, even if we accept that a mechanical fault of some kind was implicated, there does none the less seem to have been something special about this witness which set that fault off.

This next case perhaps belongs here:

'I always put out the lights in the rest of the house when occupied with my photographic work. One night I noticed a small point of light in the living room. When I went to investigate, I found a narcissus blossom glowing, as it were. I checked for a source of light and found a thin beam coming through the shutters. I opened the shutters and saw the street lamp across the street. It immediately went

out. An hour or so later the same thing happened. The light had gone back on: it went out again when I looked at it.' (44)

Location of SLider in relation to lamp

approaching (3+,11)

beneath (3+,13,32,35)

'These lamps are 4-6 metres above our heads and when a lamp goes out, it is always the nearest one, not the one 3 or 4 poles away' (4)

'2-3 metres distant' (12)

'within 20 metres or so' (18)

'about 25 metres' (35)

50 metres (13)

'while directly under the light or upwards of 50-100 metres away' (32)

up to 200 metres (57)

What is done to the lights

On or off? The great majority of SLiders cause lights to go out, but there are some exceptions:

'Sometimes lights that were out, in a row that was mostly lit, would go on.' (14)

There are at least five other 'on' cases. (21,31,35,37,45)

Just one SLider has reported that SL will either extinguish completely or dim to the point of practically no light. (34)

How rapid are the effects?

Few SLiders have commented on this aspect, and the impression given is that the effect is instantaneous, insofar, that is, that we acknowledge there is anything for it to be instantaneous with. So when we have a statement like this: 'It is a matter of seconds (3-4) before the street light goes on or off' (31) we must suppose there is some definite moment from which the witness is measuring the time lapse.

Effects: temporary

The vast majority of cases involve only temporary extinction: sometimes the lights are fairly soon back to normal:

Almost immediately (27,34,52,53,55)

'Sometimes they will re-ignite shortly after I have passed under them and at other times I will look back and they still haven't relit.' (34)

Within a few hours

'I observed the lamps operating normally around two hours later.' (25)

The following day (1,4,27)

'The lights were always on when I passed them the next day' (1)

'Next day they operated perfectly again' (4)

Effects: permanent, or at any rate lasting

A small number are longer-lasting:

'Another SLI event occurred after I told a fellow student about the strange occurrences, including the street lamps, while walking across a large university campus. When we finally reached my truck, I opened the door, and the lamps on both sides of the truck burned out. They made some crackling noise. The student was quite startled. We looked around and all of the hundreds of lights in the several connected parking lots were on. Only the two nearest the truck went out. I noticed that the lights were off for several weeks after the event.' (14)

'One lamp in particular is near my house and I am turning that one off more than any other. It is then off for about a week until the highway department fixes it, then I put it out again.' (33)

Controlled SLI

The initial SLI incident is always spontaneous, but thereafter a curious SLIer may try to do it deliberately, either to test whether the apparent effect was real, or to try his own powers.

'Usually, the lights go off by themselves, but occasionally I'll look at one, try to make it go out, and it does' (1)

'..a neighbour's yard light, which I could induce to turn off by walking past it and concentrating. (I did so once for the benefit of my mother-in-law, who was visiting from Colorado. As a devout Catholic, she wasn't exactly thrilled that I could do this.) I did verify that the light was not equipped with a motion detector on/off switch. My wife could not induce the light to switch off by herself as she walked past it.' (7)

'I did it once very consciously for my husband.' (27)

'I decided to see if I could turn it on after I would walk under it and it would go out. I would be about 40 metres past it and turn around and stare intently at it wanting it to come on and it would - sometimes.' (35)

'While waiting for a bus with nothing to do, seeing a street light and trying to get it to go out, amazingly it did, after a few seconds it came on again and so I concentrated and off it went again. That's when I noticed this apparent trick.' (45)

'We were dropping friends off at their apartment building on one of Athens' hills: as I stepped out of our car the light opposite popped and went out. As a joke, my husband, who was used to this by now, said to me "Do your spookies - make it come on again". I lightheartedly took up the challenge - I clicked my fingers in the direction of the light and it came back on again. At this, the very narrowly brought up Catholic lady who was with us fled for the cover of her home. She told me the light subsequently went out again and never came back on !'(61)

The greatest degree of control was achieved by a SLIder who is a doctor of chiropractic, accustomed to working with healing energies:

'Being analytical on both a scientific and esoteric basis as well, I found that I could turn these lights off at will or not turn them off. I realised that I could do it at a distance, as much as 200 metres away. After some experience of attempting to perceive what exactly I did to make this occur, I found that I could reverse this energy and turn the lights back on. I can do this, turning lights off and then back on, over and over, even in rapid succession at times.' (57)

The following experience may be significant:

'This week, driving with my girlfriend, I said I wanted to see if I could put out a light by trying. I kept concentrating but none would go out. However, as soon as I "gave up" (released the thought) one went out.' (36)

and another SLIder tries to explain her answer to the question, Have you ever made a conscious effort at SLI?:

'Yes - but it is a subtle, oblique sort of effort. I will be aware of myself having the thought on another level of thinking and then a few seconds later the light goes off.' (46)

5.3 Witness Response

SLIders rarely have an opportunity to test that they are doing something that other people do not, but here is one case:

'SLI has been happening to me for years. Recently my mother and I stopped at a highway rest stop just north of Springfield, IL, to stretch our legs after many hours of driving. The previous day I had showed my mother that I made street lights turn off and she thought this was really odd.

While stopped at the rest stop, we both walked towards the restrooms and the light above us went out. This was the perfect opportunity to prove it to her. When we had come out of the restrooms, the light was back on again. So I walked toward the light and it went out again.

We spent about 25 minutes individually walking toward the light pole and it went out every time on both of us. We stayed around and watched other people walk under it, but nobody else had an effect on it.' (26)

Who causes SLI

Occupations:

accountant (8)
Air Force (38)
alarm engineer (24)
artist (43)
automobile technician (52)
chemistry engineer (11)
computer engineer (19)
draughtsman (12)
editor (23)
electrician (21)
geologist (25)
hospital worker (45)
housewife (1)
mathematician (13)
medium (61)
microbiologist/analyst (48)
musician (33)
nursing student (9)
physics student (47)
priest, former, turned counsellor (47)
psychologist (37)
radio announcer (54)
singer (6)
software engineer (55)
teacher (40)
TV art director (7)

Age

This does not seem to be a relevant factor, especially since for perhaps a majority of SLIders, the experiences spread over many years.

(20) says 'I first noticed that street lamps went off in my presence when I was about 14; I'm 32 now and it still happens.' So even if there was initially a link with adolescence, as seems to be the case with 'poltergeist' phenomena, this is not the entire picture.

Sex

62% of our SLIders are male, 38% female. However, a large proportion of reports came as a result of an article in *Omni*, which probably has more male readers than female. Allowing for this imbalance, it would seem that sex is not a significant factor.

A special kind of person?

A good many SLiders report other kinds of anomalous experience, and in some cases this had led them to believe they were in some way 'special', although this is seldom if ever seen as a reason for self-congratulation. Among those reporting this, in one form or another, are cases 1, 13 and those listed below:

Specific 'gifts' reported include:

apparitions (11)

automatic writing (47)

déjà vu experiences (54)

healing (6,37,61)

intuitions (37)

precognition (3,11,13,47,48,54)

seeing auras (47)

telepathy (52)

also

'I've shocked boyfriends while kissing them' (3+)

One SLider, who says she is 'very interested in New Age ideas' adds that she is very tuned to ley lines:

'I had an awareness of ley lines since child. Probably have a transmitter inside nose placed there by aliens.' (46) (I do not know if she is joking or not !)

Another SLider reports:

'I have also worked with biofeedback equipment and am able to make the dials and temperature gauges fluctuate with ease. I was asked to demonstrate the equipment at the University of Hawaii. Is there any connection?' (58)

A SLider describes an incident in which he was having a tense argument with his girlfriend and a room-mate, when a loud bang occurred which made all three think one of the others had fired a gun, but with no evident cause. (59)

...or a normal person in a special state?

No factor is more frequent, or more intriguing, than the observation by the witness that he or she was in an unusual emotional state. Here is a particularly striking example:

'My experiences started around 17.9.87. On this day I had what I can only explain as "a spiritual awakening to my oneness with all in the universe". For 7 straight days I experienced a "heightened consciousness". Not sporadic, but for 7 straight days. During this time, while driving my much familiar road home from work, street lights would go out as my car would come to stop at intersections.

At first I didn't think too much of it, but it began to be very frequent. So I began to pay closer attention to what I was feeling or thinking when these occurrences took place. My initial reaction was, hey, who do you think you are, to be able to cause street lamps to go out? But again, it became more than mere coincidence.

When these incidents take place, I am usually feeling as though spiritually or emotionally I am reaching out in all directions and at peace. Also, my mind is usually just left to "go where it would", as you might say.'(5)

What makes this factor particularly intriguing is that the emotional state is not always the same. One SLider says 'it seemed to be tied to strong emotions (positive or negative)' (36). Among specific emotions identified by SLiders are:

feeling agitated, aggravated, upset (19,56,60)

'When I get aggravated, fluorescent lights go out over my head, or over the heads of those with whom I am upset' (1)

feeling angry (3+,20,37,55)

- repressing anger (17)

feeling anxious, uneasy (25,37)

concentrating (4,13,22,50)

feeling depressed (12,47,48,55)

feeling elated (47,55)

'SLI mostly happens when I am elated, but being upset causes it as well' (1)

feeling emotionally shut-down (16)

feeling excited (48,50,56)

feeling fed-up (48)

feeling happy (20)

'high energy level' (27)

intensity of feeling (6,7)

'This seems related to intensity of feeling that is for some reason not being expressed, or expressed fully' (6)

feeling irritated (52) but note:

'I do notice that I usually have to be feeling some irritation for household lights and appliances to malfunction, but streetlights go off around me without me being really annoyed' (9).

'nothing on my mind' (60)

feeling relaxed (40)

feeling serene (5)

sexual activity (38,54)

feeling stressed (6,52)

One SLider goes into detail: '...the kind of stress that is prolonged and not acute at any particular point, and which for that reason must be submerged and lived with in order to continue daily functioning on the job, etc. (The kind of anticipatory stress involved with waiting with a loved one who is in the death process over a period of a year or so, for example, or the kind of psychic turmoil which a person

undergoes over a long period of time when undergoing a transformation in values, understanding and development.' (6)

feeling tense (37,46)

feeling terror (20)

feeling unhappy (3,7)

feeling worried (14,37)

Since these are all subjective descriptions, it could well be that SLIders are using different words to describe essentially the same state; but it seemed best to leave the labels actually used by witnesses.

The most marked specific correlation reported is this:

'Many years ago when I was dating a particular girlfriend this phenomenon took on a more evident effect. This girl lived across town from me and as I began to accelerate across the freeway entrance, each lamp I passed would go out just as I was passing it. This was invariably on evenings that we had had sex. On other evenings some lamps would go out but not like on the ones when our passions had been aroused.' (38)

Some SLIders find no correlation with any particular emotional state:

'I have zapped them mad, in love, lost in "job" thoughts, daydreams.' (2)

and some SLIders find no correlation with any emotional state:

'There is absolutely NO tie-in with anything, not with moods, circumstances, job, weather, nothing. Completely random. Each time it happens, I try desperately to figure out what common thread runs between happenings - as far as I can tell, there is no thread.' (33)

Also possibly relevant is the feelings that SLIders have after a SLI experience. Most are merely puzzled, many are curious; one was 'amused and bemused' (37). But some have more positive feelings, such as:

'I must admit, when a light turns on when I come close to it, I do feel excited. I can't explain why, it just feels that I have more power or something when it happens.' (31)

Relevant physiological circumstances

SLIders rarely comment on any possible correlation with their state of health; if they do, it is to say that they are in good health. One stated that he was in good health, but associated SLI with a pain in his head (4).

Some SLIders have observed a correlation with migraine:

'If I am pre-migraine, for about 2 days before, I randomly set off circuit-breakers, cause the phone machine to malfunction.' (17)

'I suffer from chronic headaches. I sometimes wonder if the lights are the culprit.'(41)

Few SLIders make reference to alcohol or other drugs; one is quoted later on, another states that she experienced SLI after taking LSD as a young woman of 19.

One SLIder dates the commencement of his SLI experiences from a very serious accident with an electric welding machine, which paralysed him for 2 weeks and left long-term damage: since then he has experienced SLI more than 100 times, witnessed by friends and family though they dismissed it as coincidence.(10)

Another SLIder who feels able to pinpoint a specific starting-point:

(cab-driver) 'The first SLI was preceded at around 8pm by an unexplained phenomenon I call the "Energy Ball", a source of strong static electrical energy that appeared to follow the taxi I was driving. The weather was unstable... thunderstorms had been present... At a stop sign, I observed a blue aura in the branches of some trees and the presence of an intense sparking sound similar to that made by electrical discharges from a Van de Graaff generator... The phenomenon suddenly appeared to become attracted to my taxicab as if it was trying to overtake me. I accelerated and still it stayed with me for a moment. I could feel static electricity in the air. Then it slowly faded away as if I was leaving it behind.

I have observed ball lightning before and there was no resemblance to what was experienced here. In addition, I had the impression that this phenomenon was well organised.

I believe that my SLI activity was somehow related to the "energy ball" phenomenon. I hadn't noticed SLI occurring before this experience. '(25)

Two SLIders refer specifically to static:

'I am also very static-y. I build up static electricity like crazy. My cats loathe me in the winter when the air is especially dry. Petting them is akin to static torture.' (43)

'I seem to get more static shocks than other people.'(55)

Relevant psychological observations

After-effects?

'SLI doesn't seem to cause me any after-effects one way or the other' (1)

Attitudes to the effect generally involve curiosity, but otherwise most SLIders seem fairly detached about the thing. One regards it as 'a rather comforting "signal"....I feel this is my own higher self at work, calling my attention.' (6) Another said 'I see it as a lucky sign; it makes me smile.' (40)

'I used to feel scared sometimes from SLI, now I am very used to it.' (31)

In case 9 (narrated below) the SLIder seems to have been in a continually stressed state while she lived in New York City, but reports:

'I have noticed a marked decline since my move to California 5 years ago. I rarely affect household appliances now, but streetlights still continue to blink off, much to the amazement of my husband!'

A good example of emotions at work:

'My dad didn't believe me at all. When I was 16, Dad and I were walking home from the movies, arguing about something, and a light went out. I said, "I told you", he ignored me which made me mad (madder) and 4 other lights went out in a row. He now believes.' (20)

Does SLI bring relief?

'Most of the time it has happened I have been concentrating on something, like finding a house number, or figuring the shortest route there...and the somehow comic serendipity of the light blinking out in my peripheral vision as I go by has usually served to relieve some of the tension produced by that concentration, if only temporarily.' (22)

...and another possible correlation:

'I am a member of Mensa - make of that what you will!' (62)

Genetic factors

There is very little indication that SLI is shared by other members of the family, yet there is some. Case (72) involves two sisters, one cited below a mother and son, (47) a father and son. Sometimes the ability is shared by husband and wife (74).

5.4 Synchronicity?

Apart from the correlation with specific states of mind, there are numerous SLI incidents which suggest by their timing that some further process is at work. Skeptics are continually warning us that coincidences occur more commonly than we suspect, and so we must consider the possibility that each of these incidents should be individually attributed to simple chance, and that chance, again, will suffice to explain

why such events occur collectively with such frequency in association with SLI. Be that as it may, here are some of the incidents that SLIders have reported:

After recounting two matter-of-fact SLI incidents, this witness adds a third:

'On 1.9.1990, after we had discussed the matter, I was walking towards Baker Street [London] following a meeting. I was talking to Steve Gamble [a hard-headed mutual acquaintance]. I was discussing some strange events and Steve was rationalising them to counter my suggestions. As we passed a street light on the corner of "the outer circle" [Regent's Park] and the main road, it suddenly went out. I said to Steve "witness that - I have to tell Hilary Evans about this" (and I briefly explained my previous experiences). Steve countered by explaining that it was perfectly normal for street lights to "rest" for periods and that I should make nothing of it. I did not counter the point (which I am sure is probably correct). However, as we together passed the next light in the street, that went out just as we walked past it. I asked Steve to witness that also. On neither of these occasions did I feel interactive with the lights, or even the cause of the incidents.' (8)

Perhaps related to this is the following:

'A friend and myself were talking about my ability to put out lights, he did not believe me, so I concentrated and nothing was happening; as soon as I gave up, 7 or 8 in a row went out.' (10)

Another curious anecdote:

'Recently I had just checked out a book from the local university library. While I walked the short distance from the circulation desk to the magnetic exit arms I suddenly knew I was going to be stopped at the gate, and I was. The device that demagnetises books when they have been properly checked out had not worked, and the process had to be repeated again before I could get out.'(13)

Simple coincidence? Maybe; but we should also consider the possibility that the failure of the demagnetisation process was itself an instance of the SLI faculty.

'The first possible SLI occurred when I was in an extremely emotional state, while I was driving to a police station. I was very worried about a loved-one, and spontaneously asked, "Just give me a sign that she will be OK". At that instant a street light over the car burned out. Everything turned out OK. I am not sure who it was that I was asking for a "sign" !' (14)

'I was walking my dog one evening, after the streets were deserted and quiet, when an uneasy feeling of not being safe came over me. I was at that moment wondering if I should continue in the direction I was going as I stepped to the middle of a cross street, and as I glanced down the street every single light for one neighbourhood block went out followed by a small explosion and sparks from what I thought was

a transformer at the other end of the street. It was the most odd thing to be so immediately certain that this was NOT the way I wanted to go. We turned around and went straight home.' (18)

'Two examples may relate to one another... The first is one of the few times I was able to look at a street light and it went out. I was walking to my car one evening from work and I looked at the street light ahead and I asked the light if I was going to move to Los Angeles. The light was already OUT and 1 second after the "question" the light went ON. I was bedazzled. When I got in my car, though, still looking at the light, it went OUT. I still do not understand this occurrence, maybe it was a sign - I do not know.

The second experience was also connected to Los Angeles. I went to LA on vacation, after being laid off from a movie company in NY, and the street lights were going out left and right. My friend was in the car and noticed it as well. Jokingly he said I brought a lot of negative energy with me after being fired.' (31)

'In 1980 or 1981, in Sofia, Bulgaria, I was walking on foot to the cité universitaire, and stopped to drink at a little fountain; at the moment I stooped to drink, the street lamp overlooking the fountain went out. I laughed to myself, and the next day I told the story to a friend. We were in a bus, and as we passed by the same spot, I showed her the lamp which had gone out: at the very moment, it went out. It was one of the rare occasions when I have had a witness, and the only occasion when I've been in a vehicle when SLI occurred.

On another occasion, I was walking one evening along a street undergoing repairs when a SLI occurred. A few days later, in the same spot, I remembered the incident, and watched the lamp to see if the same thing would happen. Nothing happened. I turned my thoughts to something else - probably how not to fall into a hole in the road - and the neighbouring lamp went out. My feeling at the time was that it is useless to think of SLI and hope to provoke it: it happens when it chooses to happen.' (40)

'The other day my brother was making fun of my supposed powers. He was laughing, saying my experiences with this phenomenon was a bunch of hula-bulo [sic]. I ignored him thinking to myself I know what I know and his doubt could be attributed to being a younger inexperienced sibling rival who possibly could be jealous. Minutes later, all the power - lights and everything - went out for 15-20 seconds, then came back on. I laughed heartily and exclaimed to him how wrong he was. He was flabbergasted and says to me, "Do it again, Do it again!" (42)

'Another amusing incident occurred at Exeter Cathedral when our choir was in residence for a week. As we were standing in the close, one of the great flood lights went out. I had been telling one of our choir boys about my funny street lamp phenomena, and assured him the light would come back on - which it did. He avoided me for a while!' (44)

Each of these stories is unsupported and rests wholly on the say-so of the narrator: scientifically they are of little value. Yet it is surprising how frequently such coincidences occur in the SLI context.

This is perhaps the moment to report something that happened to me while transcribing this report. I was writing out on my computer the incident in the following section, where a SLIDER says how he always knows when his computer is about to die on him when, at precisely that passage in the text, my computer - which has given me no trouble for more than a year - died on me. Asked to choose between cosmic joke or simple chance, I have to admit I go for the joke... though whether the joke is some mischievous demon or my no less mischievous subconscious mind, I am not prepared to say.

5.5 Related Anomalous Phenomena

Study of SLI must include not only study of the SLI experience per se, and of the SLIDERS who experience it, but also other kinds of experience reported by SLIDERS, and other phenomena, occurring independently from SLI, but which appear to offer sufficiently similar characteristics for the question to be raised, whether the same or similar forces may be involved.

Other electrical appliances affected by SLIDERS

A very high percentage of SLIDERS report similar effects with other types of lamp:

'I notice when I get aggravated, fluorescent lights go out over my head, or over the heads of those with whom I am upset' (1)

'very frequently, lights in my home or friends' homes' (6)

Here are two SLIDERS' experiences with domestic lights:

'I first noticed this phenomenon when I moved to New York City. I lived there for five years, in 3 different apartments, and my roommates always referred to me as "the fuse blower". When I would come home from work, usually irritated by a crowded subway ride, the first light I would put on would "pop" and be burned out. Also other appliances wouldn't turn "on" when I touched them, and someone else would have to turn them on.

I worked in an office then, and one day the woman in the office next to mine called me over and really made me angry. Suddenly all the lights in her office went off, and the switchplate was too hot to touch. The maintenance man was baffled because she was on the same circuit as the rest of the offices, and only hers went out. I told her that I did it and she never bothered me again!'(9)

'Once or twice a year, year after year, light bulbs - some virtually brand-new - have come on briefly and then burned out as soon as I flipped on the controlling wall-switch. In virtually all of these instances such anomalies as power surges or mechanical malfunctions could easily be eliminated. Moreover, in the majority of instances I knew, unmistakably, an instant before I touched the switch, that the bulb would burn out. Before my fingers touched the switch I knew, clearly, what was about to happen. At no time was my anticipation wrong.'(15)

Other SLiders do domestic lights (31,56), while others specifically observe that they do not affect anything but streetlamps: (13,22)

'I do not affect normal household bulbs or anything other than streetlamps.' (13)

Other types of appliance:

Computers are another favourite target:

'There have been several times when I knew my computer was going to die and need repairs - just before it died and showed no outward symptoms: did I sense it or cause it?' (2)

Several others affect computers and word-processors: (3+,6,50,56,61,72)

Intriguingly, the effects are not always destructive: one SLider, an engineer with a pacemaker manufacturer, reports:

'I have the experience of turning off street lamps frequently. I also have a kind of "healing" effect on computers in our research department. I am frequently involved in helping colleagues with high-performance computer installations. When they have trouble and ask me to come by and help, the problem almost always disappears when I handle the machine - I've acquired a somewhat humorous reputation over it !' (63)

Other specified items include:

aircraft electrics (17)

alarms (29)

business pager (27)

camera (46)

car electrics (6,17)

car alternator (73 - 'I am now on the eighth')

cash registers (47)

clocks (21,48,56)

compass (61)

copy machines (3+)

dice (48)

dowsing rods (48)

floodlights (62)
gambling machines (48)
iron (17)
lift (elevator) (47)
lottery machines (42)
machinery (32)
microphone system (61)
radio (19,52)
railway crossing (60,76)
store safe (3+)
telephone (17)
TV & video (11,17,52,61)
typewriter (61)
video games (43)
watches (20)('I also kill wacths [sic]')(27,34,46,48,54,56)

Some specific statements:

'My first knowledge of myself as an "electric person" was at age 21. I was ironing a silk dress and had the iron on low. My mother was arguing and baiting me and I was holding my tongue. The face on the iron literally melted and silver liquid metal spilled down on my dress. I know for certain repressed anger contributes to my ability to disrupt electrical equipment.

When I am in electronically sophisticated cars (electronic ignition, door locks, window openers etc) I often cause that to malfunction. Car won't start or doors lock and won't open. I keep a simple house, needless to say. I have an old Apple computer that is "used" to me. My cars are simple, though at first I have to coax them along. After they are used to me they are in some way extensions of me. I had one truck 13 years and it would start under any conditions for me. This truck started without a key for me and no one else could do this.

When I fly on airlines, I become aware that the pilot often said there would be a delay to check out an unknown electrical disturbance. If I meditated and shielded myself, in a few minutes the pilot would announce there was no apparent trouble. So I now routinely shield myself with color imagery so I can pass through the safety check points, and then when I am first on the plane I quiet myself and shield again.'
(17)

'I cannot sit near or tune a radio when I am agitated. If a radio is in tune when I am next to it, it will be badly out of tune when I step away. And vice versa. This effect is so pronounced and occurs so frequently that one friend dubbed me "radio-active". A similar effect occurs around televisions.' (19)

'At dinner in a taverna, one of my clients said "You do healing, don't you, could you get rid of my husband's headache?" Normally I would do hands-on healing, but

since we were in a public restaurant, I SENT the Reiki healing energy across the table, aimed at her husband. About 20 minutes later I asked him how was his headache - he said "It's gone". Unfortunately so had the microphone system. It had been working fine beforehand, but when the cabaret tried to start up again they just couldn't get the microphone system to work - it was out for the rest of the evening.' (61)

'I have affected railroad crossings, where the barricades would come down and the lights and bells would come on, with no train, workmen, or other people around.' (60). (76) also affects train crossings.

'[When I was] a teenager my father would exclaim "Don't touch the TV - tell me what channel you want, I will change it". This was in the days before remote controls, and every time I got up to touch the tv, the picture became distorted with electrical "interference". It didn't happen with anyone else in the house.' (61)

'I caused cameras to stop working temporarily when I strenuously objected to my picture being taken' (46)

'About 50% of the times I approach a supermarket cash register it malfunctions, and the usual comment by the operator is "It never did that before". My children took this as a matter of course and would get angry because they could not get out of the store until the problem was over. What we do now is that my wife takes over and I move about 15 metres from the machine - this seems to be about my "range". Then the machine resumes functioning.' (47)

'Radios and TVs sometimes change volume or fine tuning when I am close to them.' (52)

'I can't wear a watch - the batteries only last for ¼ time span they're supposed to.' (54)

'My son who is 20 does the same: when we are together the interference rises to about 75% of the time. Once I had to take him to a hotel in Miami for a high school conference. We entered a posh hotel and found he had to register on another floor so we went to the elevator, one of 8. We entered, the doors closed then opened again. We waited but nothing happened. When we stepped out we noticed all the elevators were back on the first floor and were opening their doors. A voice came over the PA saying that a sensor was recording a fire somewhere in the building so the elevators would not function. A few minutes later the PA announced there was no fire but a sensor in the first floor elevator wing was malfunctioning. Seeing the possibility that we might be doing this we left the wing and in a moment the elevators were operating again. We took the stairs. Maybe coincidence, but it happens far too many times to me. I walk into the bank and the computer goes down at that moment. I walk into MacDonalds and their computer system goes down. I have learned to stay back from the counter a metre or so.' (47)

At the same time we must recognise that by no means all SLIders affect other appliances, some of them specifically indicate otherwise:

'The weird thing is, I have never had any problem with any other electrical devices (watches, tvs, radios etc) or any other types of lights.' (5)

(7) also reports affecting no other devices.

Non-electrical objects affected by SLIders

The great majority of appliances affected by SLIders are electrical, and we must presume that the watches, clocks and typewriters were all electrical, and that it was the electrical parts of cash registers etc. which were affected. But dice and compasses are not electrical: should we regard this as an irrelevance, or simply set it on one side as of possible relevance, while concentrating on the electrical phenomena?

One reason for retaining the non-electrical claims as of possible relevance is because of their possible connection with earlier manifestations of apparent paranormal power which occurred in pre-electric times. Most notable is the 'electric girl' phenomenon noted in the following section.

Relevant non-SLI phenomena

● *The 'electric girls'*

Although reports of people who seem to be able to interact with inanimate objects have been published for hundreds of years, there was a particularly interesting flurry of cases around the 1840s, with two subjects in particular - Angélique Cottin and Honorine Séguin, both of them French teenagers of modest social background - attracting not only popular but also scientific interest. While Honorine's activities were fairly close to conventional 'poltergeist' phenomena, Angélique's were more original: especially noteworthy is the fact that she affected not simply non-electrical, but non-metallic objects, so that explanations in terms of magnetism seem to be ruled out. Wooden chairs and tables would be repelled when she came close to them, often violently, and despite the efforts of strong men to obstruct the force.

Elsewhere, I have suggested a psychological origin for the phenomena, as is generally supposed to be the case in poltergeist occurrences. At the same time, the force was clearly also a physiological one, and offered material parameters capable of scientific analysis. For example, the fact that Angelique's powers were observed to be strongest between 7 and 9 in the evening must have some meaning. (For detailed account, see Evans, 1989, etc)

● *Anomalous luminous phenomena*

A wide variety of luminous phenomena has puzzled observers over centuries of observation: a great many are listed in the Corliss sourcebooks (see bibliography). BOLs (Ball Of Light phenomena) manifest in an extraordinary variety of shapes and sizes and under a remarkable diversity of circumstances, so that it is by no means evident that all the appearances relate to the same basic cause. Nevertheless, many of them display a considerable degree of apparent interaction with human observers: for example, the Piedmont Lights, studied by Prof. Rutledge of Missouri, appeared on at least 32 recorded occasions to synchronise their movements with the activities of the observers (Rutledge, 1981)

● *'Poltergeists'*

The essential characteristic of 'poltergeists' is the interaction between human subjects and their physical environment. It seems to have been established beyond any reasonable doubt that some people - notably adolescents - exert some kind of influence on physical objects in their vicinity, causing them to move, fly through the air etc. Though the effects are arbitrary and so far as can be told meaningless, there does seem to be some kind of correlation between the subject's emotional state and the physical events.

Currently studied under the more objective label RSPK ('Recurrent spontaneous psycho-kinesis'), the precise nature of the phenomenon remains enigmatic, although the

evidence that some kind of force, originating in a human subject, is being exerted on material objects at a distance is impressively substantial and strong. The parallels with SLI are evident.

- *Machine-busters*

We have seen that many SLIders report affecting computers and other types of machine, and this has been observed sufficiently often to be remarked on both in the popular and in some specialist media. Sporadic bursts of more scientific inquiry into people who seem to exert an effect - usually malign - on machines is periodically reported, but hitherto the findings have been inconclusive. It is surprising that so promising a research field should be generally neglected when it has such a practical bearing on everyday life. It is quite possible, for example, that a very great many instances of machine failure could be traced to this kind of personal origin.

- *Laboratory PK*

Finally, SLI would appear to be related to other forms of PK - for example, the ability to move objects across the surface of a table, simply by exerting 'will-power' or some such mental effort.

The evidence that PK occurs is strong, and there is an abundant literature which testifies to it: but replicability remains a stumbling-block, cheating is very often a practical possibility, and the skeptics justifiably can, and do, withhold their acceptance until better evidence is available.

5.6 Miscellaneous Anomalous Experiences Reported by SLIders

Many SLIders, whether or not they think of themselves as 'special', report other kinds of anomalous experiences. It is important we take these into account, whether they relate to SLI, or to the SLIder, or are purely fortuitous. Among the experiences mentioned are these:

'I once saw a rock glowing, and out of it came pinpoints of light - five or six of them. They rose into the air a few centimetres, then went back down into the rock, after sort of inverting themselves. They did this three times within, say, thirty seconds or so.' (1)

'I thought it strange (or interesting) that a man from whom I was purchasing vitamins asked me, "out of the blue", what I thought of an experience he had been having. He said as he would drive along, street lamps went out one after the other, and what did I think it meant? I thought it strange he asked me such a question, I was a stranger to him.' (46)

'There is a mischievous note to it many times, like someone or something or some part of me wants to add to my fun if I am high. Once in a bubbly mood I went to a liquor store for a bottle of scotch since we were camping and a drink would be appropriate. I paid for it with a \$20 and the cash register told the clerk to give me \$83 change, which he started to do but then laughed and said the usual "It never did that before".' (47)

Some attempts at explanation or query

'Few Southern states among the USA were represented in the bulletin. Will it turn out that the phenomenon's frequency varies from latitude to latitude? If indeed more SLIders live in northern latitudes, will this correlation serve to help establish a connection to static electricity? (I might also add that I have always had no trouble in winter in acquiring big static electricity charges.)' (15)

'I began to look for a pattern. What was I doing when it happened? I found that I was using both sides of my brain. You see, I'm an artist. Very visually oriented. I "think" mostly in pictures. Sometimes verbally, but not often. Visual is right-brained, verbal is left-brained. I found that when I visualised a situation that had both visual and verbal (heavy on the verbal) SLI was more likely to occur. When I do that kind of visualising it is more of an altered state, like concentrated day-dreaming. The content is generally very emotional.' (43)

An outside comment of possible relevance:

'The leader in Czech research, Dr Zdenek Rejdak, believes that the basis of all psi effects, including PK, is "psychotronic energy", a human force analogous to electromagnetic energy. A Czech engineer, Robert Pavlita, alleges success in harnessing and storing this energy in tiny machines which he calls "psychotronic generators". Pavlita has claimed that his generators are capable of moving distant objects and producing other psychokinetic effects, including the killing of small animals and insects.'

(quoted in Lyons & Truzzi, The Blue Sense, p 200-1)

'Some people may just be more prone to be around when lamps go on and off, period.' (14)

'That some street lamp systems are "open" to being turned off by random reflections of light, and by sporadic raising of ambient light levels, does not necessarily mean that a physical causal hypothesis is the only possibility. Highly labile systems may be more readily influenced by PK, and more readily fit into a synchronicity.' (14)

'A Chinese acupuncturist suggested I sleep with head toward west to reduce effect of my magnetising watch. It helped.' (46)

'My wife and I purchased a dog in April, which ought to be about as relevant as any of the rest of these data.' (16)

'I look at [SLI] as a sign from God that my spirit is on its correct course.' (54)

How other people respond to SLIders' experiences

'I have learned over the years not to tell people about it for they look at you sort of "funny" like they feel you should be in a rubber room somewhere.' (47)

A great many SLIders have difficulty in convincing relatives, friends and colleagues that the effect is real; but a good many do eventually succeed, thanks to repeated demonstrations. In a very few cases, a specific and deliberate attempt has provided the necessary conviction, as in the case (20) quoted earlier, where a girl convinced her father while walking home from the movies.

Another comment:

'The only really negative aspect about it is that my girlfriend seems to think I'm possessed or something, and she won't even discuss the matter!' (22)

Correlations with paranormal experience

Reluctant as we may be to contemplate any correlation between SLI and the kind of experience often termed 'psychic', the fact is that a certain number of SLIders themselves make the connection, and we are obliged to take it into account. Here is one account from a college-educated woman with an IQ of 147 and 'the mother of two very bright children':

'I have "practised" witchcraft in my youth, mostly harmless influencing people. I feel in close harmony with the earth and many creatures, particularly dolphins and cats. Once I had a black cat and when I had a fatty cyst show up on my neck one also appeared on his at the same time. They both went away at the same time. Both my father and brother had/have the same effect on watches but I don't know about street lights.' (27)

'As a child, I was quite psychic. I gradually "shut down" over the years and am re-opening, seemingly as a result of my metaphysical/spiritual disciplines.' (34)

'I chant and meditate daily and I think this has expanded my consciousness a little bit to be more "electric" or sensitive to the magnetic and perhaps other fields of energy that comprise ourselves and our environment. I haven't always been "electric".' (35)

'I often have precognitive dreams about things that will occur the very next day... My ash tray jumped up and split in two... My lover saw my spirit sit up while I lay sleeping...' (54)

The fact that some SLIders see themselves as 'psychically gifted', whether or not they are in fact, could itself be a contributing factor to the SLI effect.

6 PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

Insofar as a meaningful model can be constructed on the basis of anecdotal testimony, the body of case histories so far accumulated does seem to constitute a case for regarding SLI as a phenomenon in its own right. Like so many other anomalous phenomena, its existence must remain in question until some conclusive evidence is forthcoming; but the apparent evidence is persuasive. Moreover, since this report is based on reports supplied only by the tiny section of the population who are aware of SLIDE's existence, we must presume that for every case cited here there are hundreds if not thousands more unknown to us.

It therefore seems in order to construct a provisional model for the phenomenon, to be used as a working hypothesis which we can test, as a way of establishing, first, the existence of the phenomenon, and then its nature.

A skeptic could reasonably argue that it is somewhat premature to put forward conjectures as to what the SLI effect may be when we are not yet sure of its existence: it may appear as academic as to debate the mode of propulsion of extraterrestrial flying saucers when it is by no means certain that flying saucers exist. But such speculation, by requiring us to confront the minutiae of the matter, even when we do not know the nature of the matter, can help us to think scientifically about the problems it raises.

More importantly, as with flying saucers, there is one very good reason why we should proceed as though the phenomenon exists: and that is the fact that a good many people are reporting the experience as though an actual phenomenon is involved. Certainly, people can be mistaken or deluded, and we must keep this possibility in mind. But that, too, is something which would have to be proved before we would accept it: and until such time as it is proved, it is right to respect the testimony of people who claim these experiences at first hand.

Consequently, it is justifiable to proceed to construct a hypothesis on the basis of their testimony, with the implicit caveat that our speculations are contingent on the good faith and accurate reporting of those who supplied the testimony.

Some questions

First, we should try to provide answers to some of the questions which have arisen in the course of setting out the testimony:

Are SLIders a special kind of person, or ordinary people who are in a special state?

In a sense, both. To perform SLI, it seems that a person must be in a particular state: but some people go more easily into that state than others, so it can be said that there are SLI-prone people. But it must be emphasised that this is a question of degree, rather

than a clear-cut distinction between two divisions of mankind (ref Evans, *Alternate States*).

Are street lamps chosen as targets, or is this chance?

A case could be made on psychological grounds for seeing SL as somehow symbolic, and therefore a fit choice of target. For example, a person passing through a 'black' emotional phase might want to cause SLI as a public declaration that to him the lights of his life have gone out. Or extinguishing SL could be an expression of exuberance just as young men who have had too much to drink are liable to smash windows etc.

Plausible as such explanations might be in some cases, I personally have always the uneasy feeling with regard to symbols that with a little manipulation almost anything can be used to symbolise anything else. So I personally do not feel very enthusiastic about this kind of explanation.

Additionally, there is the fact that our SLIders seem to be in a wide variety of emotional states; it would be strange if they all concurred in thinking that SL somehow symbolised their varying states.

Nevertheless, this approach should not be dismissed out of hand until we are more sure of our way.

The fact that so many SLIders affect other types of appliance seems to suggest that the force which extinguishes SLs can also be deployed in other directions. Should we conclude that those who affect only SL have the power only feebly, those who affect other appliances have it more strongly? Possibly; but it is also possible that they have the force in a different way.

The explanation may be simpler than any of this; it may be that SL are, by their physical nature, more sensitive to the force than any other kind of appliance.

Provisionally, then, it seems justifiable to offer the following working hypothesis as a primary statement about SLI:

People in an appropriate mental state are able to affect the operation of street lamps, at a distance, generally spontaneously rather than deliberately, as a consequence of their unconscious mental activity.

In addition, we can offer the following findings as supported by the testimony:

- While there is no known limit to the range of the SLI effect, it seems generally to occur in fairly close proximity to the individual - say under 10 metres (though we must recognise isolated examples of SLIders who claim to deploy the force over greater distances). The SLIder seems always to be in sight of the SL - we have no instances of SL being affected out of sight, but of course this would be difficult to establish.

- There is no evidence to show whether the force which affects the SL is a force field or a directed 'beam'. But whatever its nature, it seems sensible to conclude that it emanates from the SLider to the SL in a straightforward physical manner; there is no evidence, for example, to suggest that the force detaches itself from the SLider and 'travels' autonomously to the target.

7 QUESTIONNAIRE

If you have experienced SLI yourself, or know someone who has, we invite you to photocopy this questionnaire and send it, when completed, to either SLIDE or ASSAP (addresses in Section 8). Please also include the results of any experiments, such as those suggested in Part 5 below, with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was prepared by ASSAP and is intended to cover those aspects of the phenomenon which seem relevant in the light of what we currently know. But please feel free to add any other experiences, thoughts, comments or suggestions of your own.

PART ONE: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Some basic personal information:

- 1.1) Name:
- 1.2) Address:
- 1.3) Date of birth:
- 1.4) Occupation:
- 1.5) If you do **not** want to be named in publications, please tick box

PART TWO: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section looks into the background to the SLI phenomenon. This is a general section to be filled-in just once - record information on specific incidents in part three. Please put your answers on a separate sheet.

- 2.1) How often do street lamps apparently go on or off when you approach them?
- 2.2) Is it any particular type of street lamp?
- 2.3) Have you ever done it while other people were present? If so, how did they react?
- 2.4) Are you aware of being in any specific mood at the time?
- 2.5) Do you sense any tie-in with anything - time of day, time of month, time of year: menstrual cycle, biorhythms, lunar phases; synchronicities: anniversaries, meaningful dates; weather conditions, humidity, temperature; problems at work, quarrel with lover or friend, etc.
- 2.6) Have you ever made a conscious effort at SLI, or does it always happen spontaneously?
- 2.7) Does SLI leave you with after-effects such as headache, feeling tired or drained? Or alternatively, satisfaction, relief, jubilation?
- 2.8) If you once used to do SLI but do not any longer, do you associate the loss of SLIability with any event or change in your life?
- 2.9) Do you have any other abilities which you think might be related to SLI? For example, do you interact with watches / electrical appliances / computers?
- 2.10) Do you relate SLI to other anomalous things which have happened to you - coincidences, freak accidents, premonitions?

- 2.11) Does SLIability make you happy / anxious / uneasy / scared?
2.12) Do you think it is a gift to be happy about, or a symptom that something may be wrong, or just something curious that does not touch you one way or the other?
2.13) Have you ever had any "paranormal" experiences such as seeing a ghost or a UFO, had accurate premonitions, known other people's thoughts etc?

PART THREE: INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL INCIDENTS

This section should be filled in for EACH incident. Please try to fill it in as best you can for all previous incidents. For each new incident, please fill in the form as soon as possible after the incident. To use the form, you should photocopy this page and fill in the photocopy for each separate incident. Alternatively you can reply on a separate sheet of paper using the question numbers to refer back to the form.

3.1) Please give a complete account of the whole incident, including names and comments of any witnesses and any points you consider may have a bearing on the incident.

Specific Additional Details

- 3.2) Exact time and date of incident.
3.3) Approximate duration of incident.
3.4) Did the light, or lights, concerned go on, go off or do something else (eg. flicker)?
3.5) Did the observed effect happen to just one particular lamp, a string of lamps in a row or several separate ones?
3.6) Please give the exact location of the incident (street, town etc) - a sketch map of the area would be useful, if possible.
3.7) What type of light was involved? For example:
- sodium light (bright yellow)
 - filament light ("ordinary", eg. domestic light bulb)
 - mercury vapour (bright blue/green white light)
 - fluorescent (diffused white light)
 - other known type: please specify.

Alternatively, please state if you do not know or are not sure what kind it was.

- 3.8) How was the light mounted? For example:
- on a steel lamppost
 - on a wooden post
 - on a wall
 - suspended by a wire
 - some other way: please specify.
- 3.9) How did you approach the light? For example:
- on foot
 - in a motorised vehicle

- on a bicycle
- some other way: please specify.

3.10) Having gone past the lamp, did you notice if it came on or went out as you left?

3.11) What was the weather like at the time of the incident?

3.12) If the event took place in the daytime, did you notice any birds on the lamp? Also, did you notice any especially dark clouds passing overhead?

PART FOUR: TESTS TO CARRY OUT AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT

The following suggests a possible procedure that you might follow to investigate the SLI incident further, at the time it occurs. First a note of caution: on **NO ACCOUNT** should you attempt to physically examine the lamp (even the outside cover) - a faulty lamp can be live! Such an examination could be dangerous and illegal.

First of all you should retreat to a discreet distance and observe the lamp. Does it revert to the state it was in (either on or off) **BEFORE** you noticed the SLI incident? If so, does it change again when there is no one near it? Does it change state when a passer-by goes near it?

After this you can try an experiment. Walk close to the lamp, to the point where you previously noted it change state. Stand still and watch the light to see if it goes on or off. Then try going closer and further away to see if it makes any difference. Take note if any change of state coincides with anyone else going by on foot or in a car. See if you can change the state of the light by trying to "will" it when there is no one else about. Try also approaching the light from different directions to see if any change of state occurs.

If you have someone with you, you can try some additional tests. Assuming the light reverts to its previous state, you should retreat some distance away and ask the other person to retrace your exact steps (or drive as appropriate) alone past the lamp. Note if there is any reaction from the lamp. Then do the same thing yourself ie. retrace your own steps **ALONE**.

Having warned earlier against examination of the lamp, there is something you can do to find out more. You can inform the local authority about a "faulty" lamp. It may be possible to enquire afterwards what fault, if any, the engineer who inspected the lamp found.

PART FIVE: TEST TO CARRY OUT AFTER THE INCIDENT

Here is an experiment you can do at home when you have a few hours free. It should provide an interesting test of SLIability.

The equipment you will need is an ordinary torch fitted with new, long-life batteries, a notebook, pen and accurate watch (preferably with a stop-watch facility). You will

also need an assistant. You should arrange to do this experiment when only the people taking part in it are present in the building.

The first step is for your assistant to check out the torch. Try taking out the bulb and the batteries and reassembling it. Make sure it still works afterwards. Try switching it on, shaking it and see if it remains lit. Assuming the torch passes these tests, you should now place it on a steady table switched ON.

Now you and your assistant should retreat to a position out of reach of the torch and table. Try to make the light go OFF without any physical contact! You could try simply willing it to happen or simply ignore it and see what happens. A useful method might be to close your eyes, think of the torch switching off and then opening your eyes to look at it. If the light is still on, then just ignore and try something else. Your assistant should act as witness, recording if and when the torch goes off and back on again. If you manage to affect the torch, you should then withdraw from the room and let your assistant try to affect the torch by him or herself. You should not close the door to the room but watch your assistant from outside. Again, any times when the torch goes on or off should be noted. When the test is complete, check the torch again to ensure it is working correctly. Should you find this experiment works on several different occasions, try repeating it in front of a video camera.

8 BOOKS AND ORGANISATIONS

(Note: Books and journals are published in London unless otherwise indicated)

SLI

There has been no formal documentation or study of SLI hitherto, and there are precious few references to it in the literature of anomalous phenomena.

Loyd Auerbach, *ESP, Hauntings & Poltergeists*, Warner Books, 1986 (p32)

Robert McMorris, 'Couple bring darkness wherever they roam' in *Omaha World-Herald*, 12.1.1990, and follow-ups on January 16-17-18.

John Spencer, *The Paranormal: a Modern Perspective*, Hamlyn, 1992. The author is himself one of SLIDE's witnesses, and the section he devotes to SLI in this book is based on his own experiences and other SLIDE material.

INFO Journal (1965 to present) published by the International Fortean Organization, PO Box 367, Arlington, VA 22210-0367, USA

Recommended books on related topics:

(Note: on some subjects, for example poltergeists and PK, the literature is extensive. I have indicated those which are in my personal opinion the most helpful, but there may be others that I do not know about, or which others would rate more highly.)

Electric Girls

'A new force' in Hilary Evans (editor), *Frontiers of Reality*, Thorsons, 1989
Louis Figuier, *Les Mystères de la Science*, Paris, 1893
E.C. Rogers, *Philosophy of Mysterious Agents*, Jewett, Boston, 1853

Anomalous Luminous Phenomena

William R Corliss (compiler) 'Lightning, auroras, nocturnal lights' and other volumes in *The Sourcebook Project*, Glen Arm, 1982 and continuing
Harley Rutledge, *Project Identification*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1981
'Balls of light' in Hilary Evans (editor), *Frontiers of Reality*, Thorsons, 1989

Poltergeists

Alan Gauld & A D Cornell, *Poltergeists*, Routledge, 1979
A R G Owen, *Can We Explain the Poltergeist?*, Helix, New York, 1964

Psychokinesis

Stephen E Braude, *The Limits of Influence*, Routledge, 1986

Related interest

Hilary Evans, *Alternate States of Consciousness*, Thorsons, 1989

David Hufford, *The Terror that Comes in the Night*, University of Pennsylvania, 1982

Michael Shallis, *The Electric Shock Book*, Souvenir, 1988

Michael Thalbourne, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology*, Heinemann, 1982

Groups and organisations

ASSAP (the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena) is a relatively small but active British group which has carried out several interesting projects in various fields of anomaly research. The Association covers a wide subject area. This divides broadly into psychic phenomena, earth mysteries, UFOs and Fortean. The Association does research and carries out investigations into cases reported to it by the public. Members are strongly encouraged to join in these investigations and are kept up to date through regular publications.