

Is there any evidence mind-reading works?

By Matthew Davis

- 1 Mind-reading is taken seriously by scientists. Not the mystical, extra-sensory perception (ESP) variety, but the study of the non-verbal signals that can say more about us than we consciously reveal. Signs like pupil dilation, emotional arousal and altered heart rate form the basis of lie-detector tests. Even unaided by machines, the best police interrogators can reportedly 11 someone who is lying in 70% of cases. But how many people would put a gun to their head for a 7-in-10 shot at survival, like Derren Brown did?
- 2 Brown, an illusionist who survived a televised game of Russian Roulette, does not claim extra-sensory powers, but says he used a series of psychological tests to determine where the bullet was. He asked his volunteer to count to six, using the sound of his voice to help locate the live chamber. In earlier shows, the illusionist correctly "guessed" a credit card number and the profession of someone just by looking at their hands.
- 3 Experts say there is no way anyone could be so specific, or accurate. Professor Chris French, of London's Goldsmith's college – a specialist in investigating paranormal beliefs and "experiences" – says mind-reading is the stuff of fantasy. "If Derren Brown really has successfully developed techniques to discern the contents of people's minds in the way that he claims, he has single-handedly achieved more than the collective attempts of psychologists over many decades."
- 4 He says the stunt may have more in common with the "cold reading" techniques typically associated with psychics and mediums. Here, subjects are convinced that someone has told them so much detail about their life, that they could only be reading their mind – or receiving messages from loved ones in the "afterlife". But much of this rests on leading statements that sound specific, but are really general such as, "You have a better than average sense of humour" or "I sense lots of unused potential". "Sitters tend to 14, but come away feeling they have been given real revelations," adds Prof French.
- 5 Still, there is significant research into mind-reading – especially the psychology of lying – because of its great practical implications. Last year, Nasa bosses issued an astonishing denial to reports suggesting they were introducing mind-reading machines to catch terrorists at airports. "Nasa does not have the

capability to read minds, nor are we suggesting that would be done," said Robert Pearce, head of Nasa's Strategy and Analysis Division. But he added: "Our scientists were asked to think outside the box with regards to ideas that could aid the nation in the war on terrorism and that's what they are doing."

- 6 Most experts say it is beyond current scientific knowledge to consistently and reliably recognise a lie, let alone read someone's innermost thoughts from behavioural clues. One man who should know is Richard Wiseman, of the University of Hertfordshire, Britain's first professor of the public understanding of psychology.
- 7 Professor Wiseman started his working life as an award-winning professional magician and was one of the youngest members of The Magic Circle. He said: "Make no mistake, Derren Brown is a conjuror. He is using the idea of mind-reading to mask his trick. You don't want to run the risk of blowing your brains out in your act – you need certainty. There is no certainty in mind-reading."

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Tekst 4 Is there any evidence mind-reading works?

- 1p 11 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 1?
A discourage
B influence
C overlook
D spot
- 1p 12 How does paragraph 2 relate to the last sentence of paragraph 1?
Paragraph 2
A criticises it.
B expands on it.
C repeats it.
- 1p 13 “he used ... the bullet was” (paragraph 2)
How does professor Chris French react to the claim made by Derren Brown?
A He reformulates it.
B He rejects it.
C He specifies it.
D He supports it.
- 1p 14 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 4?
A doubt themselves
B fear the outcome
C fill in the blanks
D underestimate the psychic
- 1p 15 Which of the following is in line with the content of paragraph 5?
A Nasa has hired expert mind-readers to help find and stop terrorists in time.
B Nasa has publicly announced it does not know how to read people’s minds.
C Nasa is reluctant to admit it is conducting research into mind-reading.
D Nasa is working on methods that will enable it to read people’s minds.
E Nasa tried to build a mind-reading machine but has given up on the project.
- 1p 16 Welk voordeel heeft psycholoog professor Richard Wiseman bij het doorzien van het verschijnsel gedachtelezen in vergelijking met andere psychologen?
- 1p 17 How can the tone of the article be characterised?
A As indignant.
B As neutral.
C As sarcastic.

Bronvermelding

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