

# Empirically addressing a proposed mechanism behind orbic photographic artifacts

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## Background

The causes of the photographic artifacts commonly known as “orbs” are most often **non-paranormal in nature** and include stray reflections or airborne particulates (e.g., dust, water vapor, or insects) highlighted by the camera’s flash (e.g., Storm, 2001; Schwartz & Creath, 2005).

Most, if not all, orb images that have been presented as evidence of the “paranormal” can be reproduced under controlled conditions using conventional means.

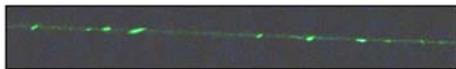
[Original Images Not Available for On-line Distribution]

There are aspects of the orb photographic phenomenon that may warrant further study:

- Orbs often appear in photographs taken at times or locations which the photographers associate with their deceased loved ones.
- Photographers often report feeling “compelled” or “inspired” to take a photograph at a specific time in a specific direction.
- Credentialed mediums have reported the deceased listing specific times and/or locations where they will “cause” (or have “caused”) orbs to show up in photographs as messages for the living.

Thus, while **orbs are not photographs of actual entities**, it is worth entertaining the possibility that some type of interaction occurs—be it physical, mental, or electronic—that results in these images.

## Results



(a) Raw, original cropped photograph of the target area (the brighter green portions are dust particles highlighted in the beam)



(b) Image converted to black and white with background removed

Figure 1. Representative images. The dark pixels in converted images (e.g., b) are quantified.

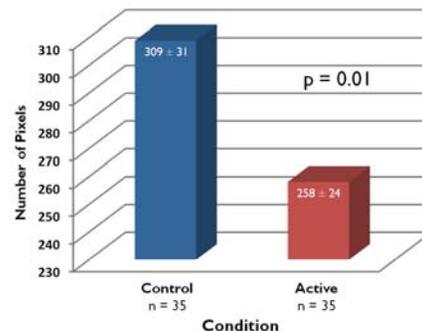
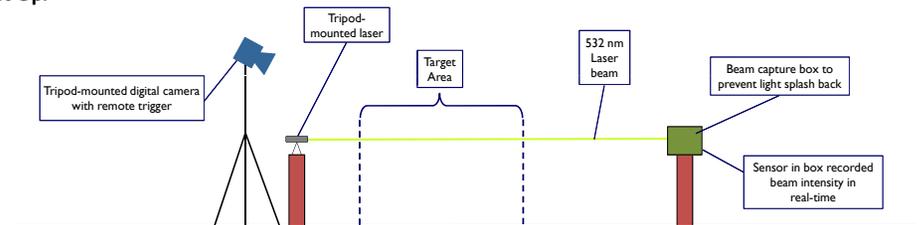


Figure 2. Mean (± SEM) number of pixels above background per photograph.

## Methods

**Hypothesis:** The deceased can “move” ambient dust particles into physical positions that will result in orbic artifacts when photographed.

**Set Up:**



**Protocol:**

Deceased individuals were invited to attempt to “push” more dust into the visible beam during active periods of data collection.

The numbers and position of highlighted airborne particulates were tracked and quantified: digital images of the target area were captured using extended exposures (3s) and the resulting images from active and control sessions were analyzed using image analysis software (ImageJ, NIH).

In addition, the intensity of the light beam in lux was monitored in real time to ensure that the output from the laser remained constant.

Active (A) and Control (C) data were collected over two independent sessions using CAAC ordering.

It is important to note that this study did not attempt to collect photographs containing orbic artifacts but instead addressed a potential mechanism.

## Discussion

**Conclusion**

There was significantly less dust in the path of the laser during active sessions as compared to control sessions. This is the reverse of what was requested.

**Interpretations**

There are several possible explanations for these results:

- The dust was moved out of the target area (possibly through psychokinesis) by the deceased
- The dust was moved out of the target area through psychokinesis by the experimenters
- Decision augmentation affected experimental design and/or timing
- Artifact or chance

**Value of the Protocol**

This protocol serves as a simple, quick, low cost method for testing for the presence of macro-psychokinesis (macroPK).

**Future Directions**

- Introduction of experimenter blinding
- Increased target detection area
- Feedback from Certified Research Mediums regarding the experiences of the deceased

**References**

Schwartz, G. E., & Creath, K. (2005). Anomalous orbic “spirit” photographs? A conventional optical explanation. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 19, 343–358.  
Storm, L. (2001). Photographic anomalies on the Internet. *International Journal of Parapsychology*, 12, 195–204.