

skeptiko

| science at the
| tipping point

Skeptiko Host Alex Tsakiris Interviews Dr. Chris French

9/14/09

1
00:00:14,529 --> 00:00:12,579
well indeed and on both counts and you

2
00:00:18,179 --> 00:00:14,539
know maybe you will find that in your

3
00:00:20,349 --> 00:00:18,189
work your collaboration with Professor

4
00:00:22,320 --> 00:00:20,359
Rupert sheldrick and maybe you want to

5
00:00:24,880 --> 00:00:22,330
bring folks a little bit up to date on

6
00:00:27,130 --> 00:00:24,890
the basics of what's going on and maybe

7
00:00:30,189 --> 00:00:27,140
what is happening currently with that

8
00:00:32,679 --> 00:00:30,199
work on telephone telepathy well we've

9
00:00:34,720 --> 00:00:32,689
from and I've known Rupert for a long

10
00:00:38,319 --> 00:00:34,730
time and I get on very well with on a

11
00:00:39,639 --> 00:00:38,329
personal level and and again I think we

12
00:00:42,700 --> 00:00:39,649
would be the case in point they've got

13
00:00:45,700 --> 00:00:42,710

what we was talking about of the and the

14

00:00:47,260 --> 00:00:45,710

bad meaning of the word double standard

15

00:00:50,439 --> 00:00:47,270

in the wider scientific community I

16

00:00:53,439 --> 00:00:50,449

think a lot of the time the criticisms

17

00:00:56,650 --> 00:00:53,449

that are directed a trooper are just not

18

00:00:59,979 --> 00:00:56,660

well founded at all and I think although

19

00:01:03,310 --> 00:00:59,989

I personally have never had any success

20

00:01:07,030 --> 00:01:03,320

in replicating the effect that Rupert

21

00:01:10,210 --> 00:01:07,040

needs to find not only that my project

22

00:01:12,219 --> 00:01:10,220

students who are not as skeptical as I

23

00:01:15,160 --> 00:01:12,229

am in fact Lee usually big fans of

24

00:01:17,740 --> 00:01:15,170

Rupert's they've also failed to

25

00:01:19,270 --> 00:01:17,750

replicate the effect that Rupert got

26

00:01:20,620 --> 00:01:19,280

maybe you want to talk a little bit

27

00:01:22,060 --> 00:01:20,630

about that talk about the field

28

00:01:23,590 --> 00:01:22,070

replications I think a lot of folks

29

00:01:25,780 --> 00:01:23,600

would be interested in that okay well

30

00:01:28,120 --> 00:01:25,790

there's been numerous times over the

31

00:01:29,679 --> 00:01:28,130

years I mean now I'm going to be just

32

00:01:31,630 --> 00:01:29,689

the nature of the job you want one

33

00:01:33,280 --> 00:01:31,640

typically has around about the ten

34

00:01:35,649 --> 00:01:33,290

project students who are looking for

35

00:01:39,249 --> 00:01:35,659

interesting projects to do for the final

36

00:01:40,480 --> 00:01:39,259

year thesis and every so often i will

37

00:01:43,810 --> 00:01:40,490

get someone who wants to try and

38

00:01:49,200 --> 00:01:43,820

replicate something that Rupert has

39

00:01:54,850 --> 00:01:49,210

reported most recently we did a

40

00:01:56,469 --> 00:01:54,860

telephone telepathy study now we didn't

41

00:01:58,480 --> 00:01:56,479

this has not been published yet the

42

00:02:03,999 --> 00:01:58,490

reason being that the intention was to

43

00:02:06,130 --> 00:02:04,009

actually collect more trials and so

44

00:02:07,920 --> 00:02:06,140

really anything I say now is kind of

45

00:02:12,120 --> 00:02:07,930

just a provisional

46

00:02:14,670 --> 00:02:12,130

no interim report okay but we did have a

47

00:02:17,220 --> 00:02:14,680

hundred trials with of data though the

48

00:02:19,320 --> 00:02:17,230

standard kind of setup which Rupert has

49

00:02:22,800 --> 00:02:19,330

used before in previous studies where

50

00:02:26,790 --> 00:02:22,810

you have for potential offenders one

51
00:02:29,370 --> 00:02:26,800
receiver one of the four send of these

52
00:02:31,230 --> 00:02:29,380
selected at random makes a call through

53
00:02:33,360 --> 00:02:31,240
to the receiver before the receiver pick

54
00:02:37,590 --> 00:02:33,370
the phone up they say who they think it

55
00:02:39,210 --> 00:02:37,600
is what's calling and we video 72 quite

56
00:02:40,620 --> 00:02:39,220
hard to set up but we wanted to be able

57
00:02:42,240 --> 00:02:40,630
to film wanted to be very well

58
00:02:48,050 --> 00:02:42,250
controlled room to film the receiver

59
00:02:50,370 --> 00:02:48,060
want to film tender and obviously the

60
00:02:52,340 --> 00:02:50,380
receiver has therefore people they feel

61
00:02:55,080 --> 00:02:52,350
they've got this special rapport with

62
00:02:56,820 --> 00:02:55,090
you needing these two experimenters

63
00:02:58,650 --> 00:02:56,830

getting all those people in the right

64

00:03:02,130 --> 00:02:58,660

place at the right time can be an

65

00:03:03,420 --> 00:03:02,140

absolute logistical nightmare but this

66

00:03:05,670 --> 00:03:03,430

project students nice to get a hundred

67

00:03:09,300 --> 00:03:05,680

trials now those off came out can bang

68

00:03:11,400 --> 00:03:09,310

on champ pretty much either say there is

69

00:03:13,740 --> 00:03:11,410

an intention was to try to get up to 200

70

00:03:15,449 --> 00:03:13,750

trials and which simply just had we just

71

00:03:16,890 --> 00:03:15,459

found the logistics of it too difficult

72

00:03:18,509 --> 00:03:16,900

and it seems to be one of the things

73

00:03:20,310 --> 00:03:18,519

that now got the back burner I would

74

00:03:21,870 --> 00:03:20,320

like to finish that study off I'd like

75

00:03:24,750 --> 00:03:21,880

to report that study however the results

76

00:03:27,210 --> 00:03:24,760

came out whether it will ever actually

77

00:03:29,280 --> 00:03:27,220

happen or not I do not know at the

78

00:03:32,610 --> 00:03:29,290

moment we're trying to set up a new

79

00:03:34,550 --> 00:03:32,620

study Rupert's reading as you pleasure

80

00:03:37,289 --> 00:03:34,560

Leah where Rupert has a lot of online

81

00:03:43,229 --> 00:03:37,299

experiment that people can go to his

82

00:03:45,539 --> 00:03:43,239

website and try out we're trying it

83

00:03:48,420 --> 00:03:45,549

we're using that kind of setup that he's

84

00:03:50,729 --> 00:03:48,430

got there but I think it's important

85

00:03:53,520 --> 00:03:50,739

that we do in a well-controlled way now

86

00:03:54,840 --> 00:03:53,530

if we do manage to get the new version

87

00:03:58,080 --> 00:03:54,850

of this study up and running this is

88

00:03:59,940 --> 00:03:58,090

using mobile telephones rather than

89

00:04:02,940 --> 00:03:59,950

having four potential offenders it has

90

00:04:04,020 --> 00:04:02,950

three the three send is not as well

91

00:04:06,060 --> 00:04:04,030

controlled as what we were originally

92

00:04:07,350 --> 00:04:06,070

doing but it'd be a good starting point

93

00:04:10,860 --> 00:04:07,360

we can always go into a more controlled

94

00:04:12,390 --> 00:04:10,870

work after that the three then potential

95

00:04:14,160 --> 00:04:12,400

offenders can be going about doing their

96

00:04:16,110 --> 00:04:14,170

daily business as long as they are ready

97

00:04:18,780 --> 00:04:16,120

to take part in the experiment when they

98

00:04:21,060 --> 00:04:18,790

when they're told to do so and the whole

99

00:04:22,380 --> 00:04:21,070

thing is pretty much automated

100

00:04:25,590 --> 00:04:22,390

they were hoping to get that up and

101
00:04:27,330 --> 00:04:25,600
running fairly soon and then I've

102
00:04:29,040 --> 00:04:27,340
watched this space if we get significant

103
00:04:32,520 --> 00:04:29,050
results but as I said we've carried out

104
00:04:35,340 --> 00:04:32,530
some other stuff based on the software

105
00:04:38,760 --> 00:04:35,350
on Rupert's website I'm afraid we didn't

106
00:04:41,390 --> 00:04:38,770
get positive results in the past I've

107
00:04:44,130 --> 00:04:41,400
had project students looking at the

108
00:04:46,680 --> 00:04:44,140
detection of staring kind of paradigms

109
00:04:49,940 --> 00:04:46,690
again we didn't get poverty significant

110
00:04:52,740 --> 00:04:49,950
results so it's not someone to trying

111
00:04:54,960 --> 00:04:52,750
well I don't know I think we just have

112
00:04:57,690 --> 00:04:54,970
to see and continue to try it I think

113
00:05:01,410 --> 00:04:57,700

that's also one of the problems in this

114

00:05:03,810 --> 00:05:01,420

area of research is exactly matching

115

00:05:05,730 --> 00:05:03,820

someone else's protocol is difficult and

116

00:05:07,410 --> 00:05:05,740

it's hard to know what you're taking in

117

00:05:11,340 --> 00:05:07,420

what you're taking out we did a little

118

00:05:14,130 --> 00:05:11,350

experiment here just as a precursor to a

119

00:05:15,840 --> 00:05:14,140

university experiment we did one at

120

00:05:19,140 --> 00:05:15,850

open-source science where I'm involved

121

00:05:21,660 --> 00:05:19,150

with shell drochs dogs dogs that no and

122

00:05:23,900 --> 00:05:21,670

found that to be a somewhat of a

123

00:05:28,170 --> 00:05:23,910

logistical nightmare in terms of finding

124

00:05:31,020 --> 00:05:28,180

owners but in the end I think we did

125

00:05:32,820 --> 00:05:31,030

find a couple of folks who showed

126

00:05:35,210 --> 00:05:32,830

exactly the phenomena that we were

127

00:05:38,040 --> 00:05:35,220

talking about and it was a matter of

128

00:05:40,500 --> 00:05:38,050

kind of staying with it and going

129

00:05:41,850 --> 00:05:40,510

through a lot of different experiments

130

00:05:42,840 --> 00:05:41,860

with a lot of different dogs and trying

131

00:05:45,240 --> 00:05:42,850

a lot of different dog owner

132

00:05:47,250 --> 00:05:45,250

combinations so I think it would be

133

00:05:49,400 --> 00:05:47,260

interesting to see what you come up with

134

00:05:52,260 --> 00:05:49,410

it'd be interesting to see shell Drix

135

00:05:53,970 --> 00:05:52,270

response to that and to see that work go

136

00:05:56,400 --> 00:05:53,980

on because i think the collaboration

137

00:05:58,620 --> 00:05:56,410

part is often very difficult and it just

138

00:06:01,650 --> 00:05:58,630

doesn't seem to ever really happen in a

139

00:06:03,000 --> 00:06:01,660

way that incorporates in both sides kind

140

00:06:04,680 --> 00:06:03,010

of views and I think that's where some

141

00:06:07,950 --> 00:06:04,690

of the problems have been in the past I

142

00:06:11,840 --> 00:06:07,960

think I'm not some truth in that I'm is

143

00:06:15,060 --> 00:06:11,850

also again I'm not dying so specifically

144

00:06:16,890 --> 00:06:15,070

Rupert I think I mean I think there's

145

00:06:18,630 --> 00:06:16,900

another problem there in terms of the

146

00:06:21,770 --> 00:06:18,640

way that outcomes of experiments can be

147

00:06:24,540 --> 00:06:21,780

then interpreted though for example in

148

00:06:26,070 --> 00:06:24,550

cases of previous attempts at

149

00:06:29,159 --> 00:06:26,080

replicating the telephone telepathy

150

00:06:30,900 --> 00:06:29,169

stuff if the results do replicate then

151
00:06:32,790 --> 00:06:30,910
Rupert obviously quite happy to accept

152
00:06:35,010 --> 00:06:32,800
them if they don't replicate you can

153
00:06:35,310 --> 00:06:35,020
usually point to some kind of changing

154
00:06:37,500 --> 00:06:35,320
pro

155
00:06:41,340 --> 00:06:37,510
to call that might be responsible now it

156
00:06:43,020 --> 00:06:41,350
makes perfect sense to me that Rupert

157
00:06:45,300 --> 00:06:43,030
who sincerely believes that these are

158
00:06:48,150 --> 00:06:45,310
really fact it's going to look at this

159
00:06:49,890 --> 00:06:48,160
and say well okay I know I've got a real

160
00:06:51,300 --> 00:06:49,900
phenomenon is a why didn't it show up in

161
00:06:53,490 --> 00:06:51,310
experiment well it must be because of

162
00:06:55,230 --> 00:06:53,500
this change in protocol but I'm also

163
00:06:57,090 --> 00:06:55,240

pretty sure that have the experiment

164

00:06:59,400 --> 00:06:57,100

produced property significant results

165

00:07:00,930 --> 00:06:59,410

Rupert would have quite happily accepted