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### Special Issue

## Women and Parapsychology Observations – Reflections

edited by

Cedar S. Leverett and Nancy L. Zingrone

Gesellschaft für Anomalistik

Institut für Grenzgebiete der  
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## PROFILE OF THE JOURNAL / PROFIL DER ZEITSCHRIFT

The *Journal of Anomalistics* sees itself as a scientific forum for promoting controversial discourse on scientific anomalies, extraordinary human experiences, and so-called parasciences. Empirical research reports, general papers on methodological, conceptual, philosophical, or history of science aspects, review articles, commentaries and discussion papers, and book reviews are published. Guiding research questions on scientific anomalies, extraordinary human experiences, as well as parasciences are those on truth content and explanatory models, on the psychosocial backgrounds of the associated belief systems, and on the social frameworks of anomaly-provoked advances in knowledge in science. Methodological pluralism, competing scientific theoretical approaches, and interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

Die *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* versteht sich als ein wissenschaftliches Forum zur Förderung eines kontroversen Diskurses über wissenschaftliche Anomalien, außergewöhnliche menschliche Erfahrungen und sog. Parawissenschaften. Veröffentlicht werden empirische Forschungsberichte, allgemeine Abhandlungen zu methodischen, konzeptuellen, philosophischen oder wissenschaftshistorischen Aspekten, Review-Artikel, Kommentare und Diskussionsbeiträge, sowie Buchrezensionen. Leitende Forschungsfragen zu wissenschaftlichen Anomalien, außergewöhnlichen menschlichen Erfahrungen sowie Parawissenschaften sind die nach Wahrheitsgehalt und Erklärungsmodellen, nach den psychosozialen Hintergründen der damit verbundenen Überzeugungssysteme, sowie nach den sozialen Rahmenbedingungen von durch Anomalien provozierten Erkenntnisfortschritt in der Wissenschaft. Methodenpluralismus, konkurrierende wissenschaftstheoretische Ansätze, sowie interdisziplinäre Zugänge sind erwünscht.

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## Editorial

### An Editorial Reflection on Women in Parapsychology from the Perspectives of St. Louis, Montreal, and Dublin, and the Pages of this Journal

NANCY L. ZINGRONE<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 2021, I heard from Cedar S. Leverett about a project that she and Gerhard Mayer, the editor of this journal, were embarking upon. Cedar and I had corresponded about the place of women in the parapsychological community and why there were more men researching, speaking, and serving in the higher positions of the field than women. I knew her from the Parapsychology Research and Education courses (otherwise known as the ParaMOOC) that my late husband, Carlos S. Alvarado (1955–2021) and I had been teaching for some years, with the support of Lisette Coly of the Parapsychology Foundation, and such colleagues as Natasha Chisdes and Bryan Williams.

Cedar attended some of our sessions over the years, and Gerhard had kindly given talks and interacted with the students as well. It was only a few months after Carlos had passed away when Cedar reached out. When she did so, I was still reeling from the loss and looking for a way to reawaken my interest in the field as well as preparing to re-educate myself so that I could carry forward some of Carlos's undone projects.

The Parapsychology Foundation (PF) had been at the core of my interest in the field, first as a place where I spent my extra money on proceedings and monographs while in college. It was the place that inspired me to take a master's degree, and the people who ran the PF both inspired and terrified me. The latter arose from the fact that Eileen Coly (1916–2013) and

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Lisette Coly seemed to think my career was worth watching. They felt that way about Carlos too, of course. But me? Well, I tried to be worthy of their attention.

Carlos and I spent one of our first PF conferences together in New Orleans soon after we met. He had been asked to deliver a talk on out-of-body (OBE) research (Alvarado, 1985) and I asked to be an observer. Six years later, the year after we were married, we were headed to Dublin for the *Women and Parapsychology* conference so that I could give a talk (Zingrone, 1994a) and he was invited to be an observer.

Needless to say, I was eager to work with Gerhard and Cedar on this project.

In thinking about how to introduce the content of this special issue, I wanted to include three events: one that I did not attend, but was, in hindsight, emblematic of the continuing effort to make visible the work of women in parapsychology; one organized by Carlos that explored both the work of women in the field but also the impact of gendered discourse on theory, research, and working lives; and, of course, the third being the 1991 conference in Dublin itself.

### ***St. Louis, 1978***

The 1978 Parapsychological Association roundtable on the history of women in parapsychology was presented at Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri to counteract the boycott by many female members, including myself, of that year's association meeting. Missouri was and still is one of the thirteen US-based states who have refused to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution that passed the US Congress in 1972. The three presenters felt that it was a better strategy to represent some of the most important women in the fields of psychical research and parapsychology, rather than allowing the formal presentations to take place without a substantive protest against Missouri's lack of support for equal rights for women. At the time, I disagreed.

Since researching a presentation (Zingrone, 2022) on the women of Society for Psychical Research recently, I think this strategy was well within the style of each of the women mentioned in the 1978 roundtable, that is, to provide evidence as to the importance of women and their contributions to our field. It succinctly answered that question, "What would Eleanor Sidgwick do?"

Sidgwick's answer was clear, whether to skepticism about SPR research into seemingly psychic phenomena, or in response to the 19th century notion that "academic education exhausted women and made them unfit for motherhood" (Sommer, 2013: 74). She was known to meet these challenges by systematically doing a study, gathering data and analyzing it at a high level of mathematical competency, and quietly but firmly presenting the results. No fuss, no muss, just science.



In the St. Louis symposium in 1978, three presentations were given. Janet L. Mitchell provided the first biographical sketch in the roundtable, that of the afore-mentioned Eleanor Sidgwick (1845–1936). While the complete text of Mitchell's contribution was not preserved, her abstract in *Research in Parapsychology 1978* (Roll, 1979) introduced Sidgwick's work for the Society for Psychical Research that spanned 48 years, from 1884 to 1932. Mitchell mentioned Sidgwick's contributions to two of the most important projects of the early SPR, *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), and the "Census of Hallucinations" (1894). Sidgwick had two terms as President (1908–1909) of the SPR, and as a "joint president of honor" with Oliver Lodge (1932), as well as holding important positions at Newnham College at Cambridge University. Her approach to the investigation of physical and mental mediums, the survival hypothesis, and her commentary on the cross-correspondences as evidence were also mentioned.

Athena Drewes presented a biographical sketch of Louisa E. Rhine (1891–1983), who would become the widow of J. B. Rhine two years later. At the time of the roundtable, Louisa Rhine had recently left the position of research director of the Institute of Parapsychology at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (now the Rhine Research Center), was a co-editor of the *Journal of Parapsychology*, and author of then-four substantive books on the subject (1961, 1967, 1970, 1975), the latter written for the adolescent reader. Her work in early PK investigations when she and her husband were at the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory, her important spontaneous case collection amassed over several decades, as well as her published papers based on her analysis of the case collection were also mentioned.

Finally, in the third presentation, Sally Drucker talked about Eileen J. Garrett (1893–1970) who founded the Parapsychology Foundation in New York in 1951. Some of Mrs. Garrett's childhood memories of her personal psychic experiences were discussed, and her training in London at the College of Psychic Science was also mentioned. Drucker described Garrett's skeptical attitude towards her experiences and her mediumship. This ability to question herself led Garrett to an intellectually deep interest in scientific parapsychology, and was probably the impetus for her habit of providing herself as a laboratory participant to the prominent investigators of the day. Garrett's publications (e.g., 1939, 1941, 1949, 1950, 1957, 1968), the 1953 Utrecht conference and the thematic PF conferences that followed Utrecht were also mentioned.

### ***Montreal, 1988***

In 1988, the Parapsychological Association met in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Carlos was aware of the work that his colleague, David J. Hess, was doing, and invited him to join us in the symposium Carlos was organizing for the Montreal convention. Hess obtained his master's degree in parapsychology at John F. Kennedy University in the late 1970s/early 1980s as had Carlos.

Hess's approach extended the scope of the symposium from the history and publication rates of women in psychical research and parapsychology to a more conceptual level (e. g., Alvarado, 1989; Zingrone, 1988). At the time Hess had just completed a PhD from Cornell University in anthropology for which he had done field work on spiritism and science in Brazil. Carlos and I were graduate students in the history department of Duke University hoping to obtain doctoral degrees in the history of science with an emphasis on psychology, psychiatry, and psychical research. Carlos's interest in women in psychical research and scientific parapsychology was a traditional concern of his, and I had been recently inspired by publications that illustrated the differing careers of women and men in psychology. The panel was titled "Gender Issues in Parapsychology" and was chaired by Rosemarie Pilkington.

Carlos's contribution, "The History of Women in Parapsychology: A Critique of Past Work and Suggestions for Further Research" was the first presentation in the symposium. Later published in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (Alvarado, 1989), his paper brought in the history of women in general, and the importance of "fundamental contributions to the historical record made by those persons or groups who have hitherto remained voiceless" (p. 234). Carlos not only illuminated the work of such Anglo-American researchers as Eleanor Sidgwick and Alice Johnson (e. g., Sidgwick & Johnson, 1892), and Dorothy R. Martin and Frances P. Stribic (e. g., 1938a, 1938b), but also women from Europe (e. g., Wassilko-Serecki, 1926), those who espoused a skeptical view (Tanner, 1910), and those who provided critical support services for men who were researchers (e. g., Tubby, 1956). Carlos also criticized encyclopedias (Fodor, 1933), histories of the field (Castellan, 1955), and academic treatments of the history of psychical research and parapsychology (Cerullo, 1982) for leaving the women out. His main point was that the state of affairs did not indicate a conspiracy to hide the accomplishments of women in science but rather "proceeded on the common assumption that outlining the work of prominent men in a field is sufficient to explore the history of a discipline" (p. 235). For the rest of his presentation, Carlos endeavored to make plain the consistent and important work of women in the field over its history and argued that those who write the history of psychical research and parapsychology should embrace the notion that our endeavors are "an aggregate of the experiences and efforts of the entire research community as it is constituted at any given time" (p. 236). The recommendations he included to expand and deepen the history of our field are still needed now (p. 240).

My paper for the symposium was inspired by a variety of conversations with Debra Weiner, Dorothy Pope (1905–2003) and other women in the field in the 1980s, as well as a course in quantitative history at Duke University. Carlos and I had started to follow and occasionally attend the conferences of Cheiron, an international society focused on the history of psychology as well. A great deal of work was being done at the time on the differential between women and men as professionals in psychology (e. g., Boice et al., 1985; Guyer & Fidell, 1973; Over, 1981, 1982). With Carlos as my research assistant in data processing (one of the benefits of a

marital collaboration), I gathered data on publication rates, and authorship patterns for men and women publishing in two periods, forty years apart: 1937 to 1946, and 1977 to 1986. The earlier range covered the first decade of publication of the *Journal of Parapsychology*, and the later range covered what was then the most recent decade of the *JP*. As a comparison, data was also taken from the *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research*. The overall habits (number of articles published in the target decade for both journals, average page length, and so on) were also included in the analysis. I provided a background on the topic from the wider literature of the history of science, women in science, and women in psychology, with a justification of using the term “gender” as it was used then in social sciences and humanities to denote the social role of “female” as opposed to using the term “sex differences” as was common in the era in psychology. Among the findings were that “18 to 24% of all publishing parapsychologists” (p. 340) were women. It was also apparent to me that “The overall disparities in percentages between males and females in both periods and for both journals” were “due to gender differences in scientific recruitment, training, orientation to work, job descriptions within laboratories, and opportunity to publish, as well as differing laboratory policies towards publishing” (ibid.). Not only were these findings in accord with research on the topic in other disciplines, but current research in various disciplines are still showing differentials in these areas, albeit with a higher percentage of the active scientists and academics presenting as female and more evidence for positive movement in gender parity in publishing, while finding gender differences in the choice of methodologies (e. g., Odic & Wojcik, 2020; Ross et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2017).

David Hess’s presentation, “Gender, Hierarchy, and the Psychic: An Interpretation of the Culture of Parapsychology,” was proof positive of a powerful interdisciplinary glance that interpreted terms and text in parapsychological research as a deeply held metaphor for the divergence of the feminine from the masculine. Hess argued that the language used in L. E. Rhine’s (1967) book, *ESP in Life and Lab* could be mapped on Freud’s understanding (e. g., Keller, 1985; Kofman, 1985) of the nature of woman as “disordered,” “secret,” and “elusive” when the subject is psychic phenomena in “life” (Hess, 1989: 105). In the “lab,” on the other hand, the Freudian map of the nature of man prevailed with the phenomena being discussed as “orderly,” and “law-abiding” (p. 104). Hess’s analysis was not only nuanced, but grounded in a variety of disciplines, with explanatory power and recommendations for future research that is in line with today’s understanding of gender stereotypes and how they mask the complexity of phenomena, individuals, and science.

In my recollection, the discussion focused more on the safer areas of the history of parapsychology with some push-back at the use of “gender” instead of “sex differences.” But Hess’s presentation and the full paper printed in the proceedings of that conference was ground-breaking for those of us who understood its importance at the time.

The Montreal symposium that Carlos organized took place three years before the conference that this issue honors. I don't remember if Rhea White, who organized the PF conference with Lisette Coly, also attended the 1988 PA conference, but certainly Hess cited her then-recent work (e.g., White, 1985) and in a later version of his paper intended for an anthology that Carlos and I were planning at the time, he cited one of her newer essays on gender (e.g., White, 1991) as well.

### ***Dublin, 1991***

The issue of women in parapsychology had long been a topic of conversation at the Parapsychology Foundation. How could it be others given that the PF was founded by two formidable women, Eileen Garrett and the Congresswoman from Ohio Frances Bolton (1885–1977). Rhea White (1931–2007) had been a grantee of the PF for many years. Her first job in the field was as a research fellow at the Duke University Parapsychology Laboratory from 1954 to 1958. From 1959 to her death in 2007, she had a relationship with the American Society for Psychical Research, beginning as a Research and Editorial Associate, then the editor of the ASPR's journal and in her later years serving as a consulting editor. In 1965 she obtained a master's in library science and began a job at the East Meadow Public Library in East Meadow, New York where she worked for thirty years. Her day job allowed her to write theoretical papers (e.g., White, 1960; 1984), a seminal methodological critique (e.g., White, 1964), and, of course, her work on feminism and parapsychology (e.g., White, 1994). She co-edited a variety of anthologies (e.g., White & Dale, 1973) and founded the *Parapsychology Abstracts International*, both projects a boon to scholars working before the age of internet libraries. Rhea's work led to promoting the term *Exceptional Human Experience* (EHE) and expanding the concepts in her bibliographic, encyclopedic, and theoretical work in her EHE background papers and journal. A long-time mentor to a number of us, Rhea was a perfect partner to Lisette Coly when the conference on women and parapsychology became a reality. She also served as the moderator for the conference sessions.

The idea for the conference originated with Lisette, though. In the early 1990s, as Lisette Coly was struggling with establishing a balance between being a mother of small children and an integral part of the Parapsychology Foundation's administration, she and her mother, Eileen Coly were having conversations about Mrs. Garrett's life and the difficulty that women in the field had with opportunity, credibility, and access to all the possible roles in parapsychology that could move the field forward. A conversation also took place with Gertrude Schmeidler (1912–2009) about how she balanced her married life, her children, and her long career as a research psychologist and professor at City University in New York. Lisette Coly, like other women of Lisette's and my age, were well aware of what it took to become successful as a colleague and researcher in the field. We learned from the stories told to us by women of the generations before us how difficult it was to sustain a career, especially if we were interested in

having a family. As Lisette Coly said recently (personal communication, December 5th, 2022), “No matter how hard we worked, we never seemed to get out of the back of the bus.”

In the conversations Lisette was having, the plan was formulated to focus on the state of women in parapsychology in an upcoming conference in the series that the Parapsychology Foundation had sustained since Mrs. Garrett and the Honorable Frances Bolton had organized the first international conference in the modern era. That first conference took place in 1953 in Utrecht in the Netherlands.

Following the overall structure of previous conferences, speakers were invited, and observers were either invited or had to seek permission to attend.

There was a change in way in which that structure was implemented in the *Women and Parapsychology* conference, though. Up until and after that conference, speakers presented academic papers on each of the two days of the conference. Each presentation was followed by an extended discussion session, there were two general discussion sessions on each of the two days, and both the papers and discussions were published in the proceedings.

Lisette Coly (personal communication, December 5th, 2022) said that, because she felt the discussions were the best part of the conferences, and because the women and parapsychology topic was breaking new ground and would undoubtedly lead to conversations about individual experiences as researchers and scholars, she thought that it was a good idea to use the second day for a brain-storming session. The point of the informal papers presented on the second day of the *Women and Parapsychology* conference was, therefore, focused on “getting to the bottom of our shared common problems” with the intention to attempt to find a solution to those problems.

The resulting conference was an extraordinary experience for many of us. Lisette and Eileen Coly opened the conference, and outlined the purpose of our meeting. Dublin, Ireland had been chosen in honor of Eileen Garrett’s birthplace in near-by County Meath.

Rhea White (1994b) started the conference off with an examination of the feminist approach to science. Jessica Utts (1994b) followed with a review of the social, institutional and cultural impact of gender on science theory and practice. Beverly Rubik (1994a) looked at the lack of the feminine archetype in parapsychological research. Susan Blackmore (1994) reviewed gender differences in belief in the paranormal. Joanne McMahon (1994) presented a biography of Eileen Garrett. Marilyn Schlitz (1994b) provided a cultural critique of women and power and the paranormal. Anjum Khilji (1994a) outlined the contributions to parapsychology of Muslim women. Ruth-Inge Heinze (1919–2007) (1994a) looked at the “life patterns” of women active in the field, and I (Zingrone, 1994a) reviewed the writings of an American cleric Frederic Marvin (1847–c1907) and the Italian Criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1836–1909) on the understanding of women mediums.

As in the traditional PF conferences that took place before and after the 1991 conference, the observers are picked and approved with their substantive participation in the discussion session in mind. In Dublin, the observers were Carlos, Marco Bischof, Gerd Hövelmann, Rebecca Hughes-Hartogs, Denise Iredell, Wanda Luke, Hans Michels, and Sean O'Donnell.

Among the discussion topics were: the tendency of parapsychologists to be apologetic about their position outside of mainstream science, David Hess's point made at the Montreal conference about "reversing the hierarchy" by the language we use to discuss our phenomena and our methods; the difficulties of restructuring methodology or redefining science as opposed to renegotiating professional roles for women in science; spirituality and parapsychology and the juxtaposition of gender culture within a country's culture; the impact of denoting psi phenomena as anomalous and how that clashes with the idea that these phenomena are universal. Finally, in the face of the predictability of the male paradigm, the question was asked whether it is better to integrate a reflexive process into science as opposed to trying to overturn the male paradigm. Other interesting points of view were raised and discussed as well.

In the second day of the *Women and Parapsychology* conference, each of the speakers discussed a variety of topics with an eye towards identifying the obstacles and barriers women encounter in science as a whole and in parapsychology. Anjum Khilji (1994b) discussed the different ways that Muslim countries approach the mystical life and what we would see as paranormal phenomena. Ruth-Inge Heinze (1994b) contrasted the lives of female shamanic practitioners in Korea to American women parapsychologists. I (Zingrone, 1994b) focused on my own experience which included male colleagues and mentors who nurtured my career, but also the experience of being invisible as a scientific colleague. I reported on an informal interview-based survey of women I knew in parapsychology to see how common my own experience was. From those conversations, I recommended some things that women can do to overcome whatever obstacles they encounter. Beverly Rubik (1994b) focused on Olga Worrall as well as how important it is to examine "the foundations of conventional science" (p. 228). Marilyn Schlitz (1994a) highlighted Sandra Harding's (1989) focus on "a robust gender-sensitive reflexivity practice" (p. 232). Susan Blackmore (1994) looked at the differences between women involved in the skeptic movement and women in parapsychology. Jessica Utts (1994a) reflected on how much being a woman did or did not influence her career. Rhea White (1994a) reviewed feminist theory as she understood it and concluded that "To ensure a full-fledged science of humankind, it will be necessary to develop and expand science itself" (p. 250). The discussion that resulted from the second presentations was nuanced, complicated and worth reading. In fact, if you haven't read this proceedings, I highly recommend it after you read this issue of the journal.

For Lisette Coly and Rhea White inviting men to be observers was a daunting task. While those who did attend participated in the formal discussions and in the social moments at meals,

gathering in the lobby, in near-by pubs or in restaurants to keep the conversations going, the low number of men who accepted invitations or requested them, however, was glaringly visible.

Some of us found ourselves trying to understand why the men who mentored us, who showed no sign of misogyny in their work with their female colleagues or students, but who, when questioned, dismissed the relevance of the conference outright. My impression was that many prominent men in the field at the time did not understand what the purpose of the conference was. Some men I admired asked me why I would think that the conference could possibly be relevant to them. Other male mentors and colleagues asked me nervously if any of the women at the conference had discussed their behavior towards women, as if we were gathering in Dublin to share a pint while maligning our male colleagues. There were very few men who assumed that the conference, like any other conference in the field, was engaged in the business of a substantive way to identify, articulate and solve theoretical, methodological, and professional problems, and even fewer who saw the need to examine gender stereotypes, or question the male paradigm of science.

### *In This Issue*

And now, thirty-one years later, Gerhard Mayer has opened the pages of the *Journal of Anomalistics / Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* not only to honor the existence and legacy of the Parapsychology Foundation's conference but also to provide an interdisciplinary, intersectional space for all the ways of approaching the topic of women and parapsychology. Our committee – Gerhard, Cedar and I – set to work making a list of individuals to contact to be invited authors. We put together a Call for Papers that was disseminated around the field. The survey was also advertised on chat lists and through e-mails. We vetted the initial submissions, organized the refereeing, and shared the jobs of providing guidance for revisions, and accepting the final set of papers. Gerhard organized a PA symposium on the topic that took place on November 19th with four of our authors.

The creativity, scholarship, and dedication to their papers of the authors has been astonishing. The resulting set of papers more than honor the 1991 Parapsychology Foundation conference; they extend, broaden, and deepen the themes that were treated in Dublin. The final order of the Table of Contents was brought to life by Gerhard. Four of the authors were invited to contribute to the issue: Fátima Regina Machado, Ina Schmied-Knittel, Jessica Utts, and Caroline Watt. The other six authors responded to the Call for Papers. The eleventh paper was written by Gerhard with editorial amendments made by Cedar and me.

The first section of the Table of Contents included four historical treatments. Caroline Watt's paper, "On Being a (White, Middle-Class) Women in Parapsychology," is a personal and substantive look at her experience in academia from being the first person in her family to go

to university to becoming the second Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh. The second paper was written by Ina Schmied-Knittel and is called “Occultism as a Resource. The Parapsychologist Fanny Moser (1872–1953).” The topic was the life and work of Moser, who took on parapsychology when she found herself caring for her dying husband and could no longer do field work in zoology. Moser’s second profession brought her to our field, and that life and work impacted not only on parapsychology in Germany but through her bequest to the IGPP, on the international community as well. The third paper, “Mrs. Lotte Böhringer (1917–2014) – ‘Anima of the Freiburg Institute’: A Personal Appreciation” by Eberhard Bauer, paints a portrait of an important member of the IGPP whose tireless dedication to the institute made all the difference for the administrative and scientific staff. The final historical treatment is a short critique of the tendency of historians of mediumship to study only the women mediums and not the men, making assumptions that may be a leap beyond the data. Renaud Evrard’s “Parapsychology and Women’s Emancipation: A Historical Cliché?” is not only an important corrective to recent history, but a challenge to the future history of mediumship.

The next two papers in the issue present the experiences of women in very different cultural environments. The first of these, “Being a Psi Researcher in Brazil: My Career and Perceptions as a Woman,” written by Fatima Regina Machado, covers not only her career, but gender issues in the field, and the secular and religious context of Brazil. Sonali Bhatt Marwaha wrote “A View from India on Women Achievers, Knowledge Systems, Psychology and Psi.” Her paper discussed not only her career, but the feminine and masculine in Indian philosophy, an in-depth look at theoretical issues in parapsychology, and how the understanding of our subject matter changes when embedded in the Indian knowledge system.

The next two papers return to methodology. The first of these is Donna Thomas’s paper, “Rethinking Methodologies in Parapsychological Research with Children.” Her work depicts the importance of understanding children’s perspectives and of according primacy to their experiences and ways of knowing in research of this type. Thomas draws complex lessons from previous discussions of various aspects of parapsychological methodologies, including striving to foreground voices that are often set aside in research. The next paper, by Jacob W. Glazier, “Feminism at the Forefront: A Critical Approach to Exceptional Experiences,” raises a variety of gender-based issues and the intersectionality of these problems with feminist theory. Ultimately his recommendations are methodological as well as theoretical.

The first of the final three papers in the issue is Jessica Utts “General and Personal Reflections on Succeeding as a Woman Science Researcher.” Her paper is unique in that she ties her commentary to her original substantive paper and her commentary in the 1991 *Women and Parapsychology* conference, updating it with new research on women’s lives as professionals in science, technology, engineering and mathematic (STEM) disciplines, and to her personal



experience working in parapsychology. Following, Utts's paper is the research report, "Women and Parapsychology 2022 – An Online Survey," by Gerhard, Cedar, and me. The paper reviews the construction of the questions, the data handling and analyses, and the results. Included also are a variety of comments made by the individuals who completed the survey and the conclusions we drew from the results.

The final paper in the issue, Christine Simmonds-Moore's "Feminizing the Paranormal" is a thorough-going treatment of a variety of theoretical stances in which "feminine approaches should be integrated with traditional masculine approaches in a 'both/and' approach drawn from transpersonal psychology" (Simmonds-Moore, 2022: 499). Her discussion presents a variety of theoretical and methodological innovations that have the potential to enhance our understanding of who we are individually, together, and in the natural world.

### ***Some Final Comments***

I was unnerved by the 1978 symposium at the time because of the inability of men and women in the United States to do something as simple as guarantee the rights of women and I thought the best thing women could do was walk away. But over time, I have come to see that Drewes, Mitchell, and Drucker did us a service by making sure, even in the Missouri of those years, that the stories of dedicated, intelligent women who made a difference were told.

I was heartened by the symposium in 1988 at Montreal, not only because I had the privilege of a marital collaboration with a man who was as dedicated as I was to making sure that the voices of women scientists and experiencers were heard. But I was also inspired by the point of view that David Hess brought to that symposium through his clear and careful analysis of gendered discourse and its impact on methodology, theory, and the lives of the women in the field.

I was shocked and thrilled to have been invited to bring the project I was working on to the *Women and Parapsychology* conference in Dublin in 1991, not only because Carlos was also invited to be an observer, but because the conference itself was another courageous, thought-provoking step made by the Colys and by Rhea White. The talks in the conference room, and the discussions over meals and in the lobby shined a light on what the field could be for all of us. Of course, there was the letdown afterwards of the otherwise egalitarian men who shrugged it off as a something that was at best, a little bit frivolous and at worst, absolutely not something they wanted to endure.

I was grateful as this project of this special issue was laid out to me, for Cedar's worry about the lack of women at the podium in one of her first Parapsychological Association conferences, and Gerhard's willingness to make sure that the *Women and Parapsychology* conference of 1991 was celebrated and extended in the pages of his journal.

For the first time, I think there is reason to hope that real, sustainable progress on this both/and expansion towards gender equity is coming. I hope that you are as inspired as I am, and if you won't be 101 thirty years from now like I will, that you may see that it is important to begin now to incorporate these ideas into your consciousness, to aim your own professional endeavors towards restoring lost voices, promoting equity in the workplace, and building an intellectual, social, and emotional world based on the fact that we are all in this together.

Enjoy the issue!

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## Eine editorische Reflexion über Frauen in der Parapsychologie aus den Perspektiven von St. Louis, Montreal und Dublin und den Seiten dieser Zeitschrift<sup>2</sup>

Im Herbst 2021 hörte ich von Cedar S. Leverett von einem Projekt, das sie und Gerhard Mayer, der Herausgeber dieser Zeitschrift, in Angriff genommen hatten. Cedar und ich hatten über die Stellung der Frauen in der parapsychologischen Gemeinschaft korrespondiert und darüber, warum es mehr Männer gibt, die forschen, Vorträge halten und höhere Positionen im Feld innehaben als Frauen. Ich kannte sie aus den Parapsychology-Research-and-Education-Kursen (auch bekannt als ParaMOOC), die mein verstorbener Mann Carlos S. Alvarado (1955–2021) und ich mit Unterstützung von Lisette Coly von der Parapsychology Foundation und Kolleginnen und Kollegen wie Natasha Chisdes und Bryan Williams einige Jahre lang gaben.

Cedar hatte im Laufe der Jahre an einigen unserer Kursitzungen teilgenommen, und Gerhard hatte freundlicherweise auch Vorträge gehalten und sich mit den Studenten ausgetauscht. Es waren nur einige Monate nach dem Tod von Carlos, als sich Cedar bei mir meldete. Als sie dies tat, war ich immer noch von dem Verlust überwältigt und suchte nach einer Möglichkeit, mein Interesse an diesem Bereich wiederzuerwecken und mich selbst umzugewöhnen, damit ich einige von Carlos' unerledigten Projekten weiterführen konnte.

Die Parapsychology Foundation (PF) stand im Mittelpunkt meines Interesses an diesem Gebiet, zunächst als ein Ort, an dem ich während meines Studiums mein zusätzliches Geld für Proceedings und Monografien ausgab. Dieser Ort inspirierte mich dazu, einen Master-Abschluss zu machen, und die Menschen, die die PF leiteten, begeisterten und erschreckten mich zugleich. Letzteres ergab sich aus der Tatsache, dass Eileen Coly (1916–2013) und Lisette Coly der Meinung zu sein schienen, meine Karriere sei es wert, im Auge behalten zu werden. Das empfanden sie natürlich auch bei Carlos. Aber bei mir? Nun, ich habe versucht, ihrer Aufmerksamkeit würdig zu sein.

Carlos und ich verbrachten eine unserer ersten PF-Konferenzen zusammen in New Orleans, kurz nachdem wir uns kennen gelernt hatten. Er war eingeladen worden, einen Vortrag über die Forschung zu außerkörperlichen Erfahrungen zu halten (Alvarado, 1985), und ich bat darum, als Beobachterin dabei zu sein. Sechs Jahre später, ein Jahr nach unserer Heirat, fuhren wir nach Dublin zur Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology*, damit ich einen Vortrag halten konnte (Zingrone, 1994a), und er wurde als Beobachter eingeladen.

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2 Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

Unnötig zu erwähnen, dass ich unbedingt mit Gerhard und Cedar an diesem Projekt arbeiten wollte.

Bei dem Nachdenken darüber, wie ich in den Inhalt dieser Sonderausgabe einführen könnte, wollte ich drei Veranstaltungen miteinbeziehen: eine, an der ich selbst nicht teilgenommen habe, die aber im Nachhinein sinnbildlich für die anhaltenden Bemühungen war, die Arbeit von Frauen in der Parapsychologie sichtbar zu machen; eine von Carlos organisierte Veranstaltung, die sowohl die Arbeit von Frauen auf diesem Gebiet als auch die Auswirkungen des geschlechtsspezifischen Diskurses auf Theorie, Forschung und Arbeitsleben untersuchte; und natürlich die schon erwähnte dritte, die Konferenz von 1991 in Dublin.

### ***St. Louis, 1978***

Der „Round Table“ der Parapsychological Association von 1978 über die Geschichte der Frauen in der Parapsychologie wurde an der Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri, veranstaltet, um dem Boykott der diesjährigen Tagung der Vereinigung durch viele weibliche Mitglieder, einschließlich mir, entgegenzuwirken. Missouri war und ist einer der dreizehn US-Bundesstaaten, die sich geweigert haben, den 1972 vom US-Kongress verabschiedeten Verfassungszusatz zur Gleichberechtigung zu ratifizieren. Die drei Vortragenden hielten es für eine bessere Strategie, einige der wichtigsten Frauen auf dem Gebiet der psychischen Forschung und der Parapsychologie vorzustellen, als die formellen Vorträge ohne einen substanziellen Protest gegen Missouris mangelnde Unterstützung der Gleichberechtigung von Frauen stattfinden zu lassen. Damals war ich anderer Meinung.

Seit ich kürzlich für einen Vortrag (Zingrone, 2022) über die Frauen der Society for Psychical Research recherchiert habe, denke ich, dass diese Strategie sehr gut dem Stil der Frauen entsprach, die in der Round-Table-Konferenz von 1978 erwähnt wurden, nämlich die Bedeutung von Frauen und ihre Beiträge zu unserem Fachgebiet zu belegen. Damit wurde die Frage „Was würde Eleanor Sidgwick tun?“ kurz und bündig beantwortet.

Sidgwicks Antwort war eindeutig, sei es auf die Skepsis gegenüber der SPR-Forschung zu scheinbar übersinnlichen Phänomenen, sei es als Antwort auf die Vorstellung des 19. Jahrhunderts, dass „akademische Bildung Frauen erschöpft und sie für die Mutterschaft ungeeignet macht“ (Sommer, 2013: 74). Sie war bekannt dafür, diesen Herausforderungen zu begegnen, indem sie systematisch eine Studie durchführte, Daten sammelte und diese mit hoher mathematischer Kompetenz analysierte und die Ergebnisse ruhig, aber bestimmt präsentierte. Kein Aufhebens, kein Durcheinander, nur Wissenschaft.

Auf dem Symposium in St. Louis 1978 wurden drei Vorträge gehalten. Janet L. Mitchell lieferte die erste biographische Skizze in der Runde, die der bereits erwähnten Eleanor Sidgwick

(1845–1936). Der vollständige Text von Mitchells Beitrag ist zwar nicht erhalten, aber ihre Zusammenfassung in *Research in Parapsychology 1978* (Roll, 1979) stellte Sidgwick's Arbeit für die Society for Psychical Research vor, die sich über 48 Jahre, von 1884 bis 1932, erstreckte. Mitchell erwähnte Sidgwick's Beiträge zu zwei der wichtigsten Projekte der frühen SPR, *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), und dem „Census of Hallucinations“ (1894). Sidgwick hatte zwei Amtszeiten als Präsidentin (1908–1909) der SPR und als „gemeinsame Ehrenpräsidentin“ mit Oliver Lodge (1932) sowie wichtige Positionen am Newnham College der Universität Cambridge inne. Ihr Ansatz zur Untersuchung von physischen und mentalen Medien, zur Survival-Hypothese und ihr Kommentar zu den Kreuz-Korrespondenzen (cross-correspondences) als Beweis wurden ebenfalls erwähnt.

Athena Drewes präsentierte eine biografische Skizze von Louisa E. Rhine (1891–1983), die zwei Jahre später die Witwe von J.B. Rhine werden sollte. Zum Zeitpunkt des Round-Table-Gesprächs hatte Louisa Rhine gerade die Position der Forschungsdirektorin des Instituts für Parapsychologie an der Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (heute das Rhine Research Center) verlassen, war Mitherausgeberin des *Journal of Parapsychology* und Autorin von damals vier grundlegenden Büchern zu diesem Thema (1961, 1967, 1970, 1975), von denen das letzte für jugendliche Leser geschrieben war. Erwähnt wurden auch ihre Arbeit in frühen PK-Untersuchungen, als sie und ihr Mann am Duke Parapsychology Laboratory tätig waren, ihre bedeutende Sammlung von Spontanfällen, die sie über mehrere Jahrzehnte hinweg zusammengetragen hatte, sowie ihre veröffentlichten Arbeiten, die auf ihrer Analyse der Fallsammlung beruhen.

In der dritten Präsentation schließlich sprach Sally Drucker über Eileen J. Garrett (1893–1970), die 1951 die Parapsychology Foundation in New York gründete. Einige von Garretts Kindheitserinnerungen an ihre persönlichen übersinnlichen Erfahrungen wurden erörtert, und auch ihre Ausbildung in London am College of Psychic Science wurde erwähnt. Drucker beschrieb Garretts skeptische Haltung gegenüber ihren eigenen Erfahrungen und ihrer Medialität. Diese Fähigkeit, sich selbst in Frage zu stellen, führte bei Garrett zu einem intellektuell tiefen Interesse an der wissenschaftlichen Parapsychologie und war wahrscheinlich der Anstoß für ihre Angewohnheit, sich den prominenten Forschern der Zeit als Laborteilnehmerin zur Verfügung zu stellen. Garretts Veröffentlichungen (z. B. 1939, 1941, 1949, 1950, 1957, 1968), die Utrechter Konferenz von 1953 und die auf Utrecht folgenden thematischen PF-Konferenzen wurden ebenfalls erwähnt.

### ***Montreal, 1988***

1988 tagte die Parapsychological Association in Montreal, Quebec, Kanada. Carlos wusste von der Arbeit seines Kollegen David J. Hess und lud ihn ein, an dem Symposium teilzunehmen, das er für den Kongress in Montreal organisierte. Hess hatte wie Carlos Ende der 1970er/Anfang der 1980er Jahre an der John-F.-Kennedy-Universität seinen Master-Abschluss



in Parapsychologie gemacht. Der Ansatz von Hess erweiterte den Rahmen des Symposiums von der Geschichte und den Publikationsraten von Frauen in der Parapsychologie um eine eher konzeptionelle Ebene (z. B. Alvarado, 1989; Zingrone, 1988). Zu dieser Zeit hatte Hess gerade seinen Dokortitel in Anthropologie an der Cornell University erworben, für den er Feldforschung zu Spiritismus und Wissenschaft in Brasilien durchgeführt hatte. Carlos und ich waren Doktoranden an der Geschichtsabteilung der Duke University und hofften auf einen Dokortitel in Wissenschaftsgeschichte mit Schwerpunkt Psychologie, Psychiatrie und Parapsychologie. Carlos' Interesse am Thema Frauen in der wissenschaftlichen Parapsychologie war ein traditionelles Anliegen von ihm, und ich war kurz zuvor durch Veröffentlichungen inspiriert worden, die die unterschiedlichen Karrieren von Frauen und Männern in der Psychologie illustrierten. Das Panel trug den Titel „Gender Issues in Parapsychology“ und wurde von Rosemarie Pilkington geleitet.

Der Beitrag von Carlos „The History of Women in Parapsychology: A Critique of Past Work and Suggestions for Further Research“ war der erste Vortrag des Symposiums. In seinem Beitrag, der später im *Journal of Parapsychology* (Alvarado, 1989) veröffentlicht wurde, ging es um die Geschichte der Frauen im Allgemeinen und um die Bedeutung „grundlegender Beiträge zur Geschichte, die von Personen oder Gruppen geleistet wurden, die bisher keine Stimme hatten“ (S. 234). Carlos beleuchtete nicht nur die Arbeit anglo-amerikanischer Forscherinnen wie Eleanor Sidgwick und Alice Johnson (z. B. Sidgwick & Johnson, 1892) sowie Dorothy R. Martin und Frances P. Stribic (z. B. 1938a, 1938b), sondern auch Frauen aus Europa (z. B. Wassilko-Serecki, 1926), solche, die eine skeptische Sichtweise vertraten (Tanner, 1910), und solche, die wichtige Unterstützung für Männer leisteten, die Forscher waren (z. B. Tubby, 1956). Carlos kritisierte auch, dass Enzyklopädien (Fodor, 1933), Geschichtsschreibungen über das Fachgebiet (Castellan, 1955) und akademische Abhandlungen über die Geschichte der Parapsychologie (Cerullo, 1982) die Frauen nicht berücksichtigten. Sein Hauptargument war, dass dies nicht auf eine Verschwörung hinweise, um die Leistungen von Frauen in der Wissenschaft zu verbergen, sondern dass man „von der allgemeinen Annahme ausgehe, dass die Darstellung der Arbeit prominenter Männer auf einem Gebiet ausreicht, um die Geschichte einer Disziplin zu erforschen“ (S. 235). Im weiteren Verlauf seines Vortrags bemühte sich Carlos, die beständige und wichtige Arbeit von Frauen auf diesem Gebiet im Laufe seiner Geschichte deutlich zu machen, und er argumentierte, dass diejenigen, die die Geschichte der Parapsychologie schreiben, sich die Vorstellung zu eigen machen sollten, dass unsere Bemühungen „eine Ansammlung der Erfahrungen und Bemühungen der gesamten Forschungsgemeinschaft sind, wie sie sich zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt zusammensetzt“ (S. 236). Die Empfehlungen, die er zur Erweiterung und Vertiefung der Geschichte unseres Fachgebiets gegeben hat, werden auch jetzt noch gebraucht (S. 240).

Mein Beitrag für das Symposium wurde durch eine Reihe von Gesprächen mit Debra Weiner, Dorothy Pope (1905–2003) und anderen Frauen in diesem Bereich in den 1980er Jahren sowie

durch einen Kurs in quantitativer Geschichte an der Duke University inspiriert. Carlos und ich hatten begonnen, die Konferenzen von Cheiron, einer internationalen Gesellschaft, die sich auch mit der Geschichte der Psychologie befasst, zu verfolgen und gelegentlich zu besuchen. Zu dieser Zeit wurde viel über die Unterschiede zwischen Frauen und Männern in der Psychologie geforscht (z. B. Boice et al., 1985; Guyer & Fidell, 1973; Over, 1981, 1982). Mit Carlos als meinem wissenschaftlichen Assistenten in der Datenverarbeitung (einer der Vorteile einer ehelichen Zusammenarbeit) sammelte ich Daten über Veröffentlichungsraten und Autorenschaftsmuster von Männern und Frauen, die während zweier Zeiträume im Abstand von vierzig Jahren publizierten: von 1937 bis 1946 und von 1977 bis 1986. Der frühere Zeitraum deckte das erste Jahrzehnt der Veröffentlichung des *Journal of Parapsychology* ab, der spätere das damals jüngste Jahrzehnt des *JP*. Zum Vergleich wurden auch Daten aus dem *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* herangezogen. Die allgemeinen Publikationsgewohnheiten (Anzahl der im Zieljahrzehnt veröffentlichten Artikel für beide Zeitschriften, durchschnittliche Seitenlänge usw.) wurden ebenfalls in die Analyse einbezogen. Ich lieferte den Hintergrund zu diesem Thema aus der allgemeinen Literatur zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, zu Frauen in der Wissenschaft und zu Frauen in der Psychologie, inklusive einer Begründung für die Verwendung des Begriffs „Gender“, wie er damals in den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften zur Bezeichnung der sozialen Rolle der „Frau“ verwendet wurde, im Gegensatz zur Verwendung des Begriffs „Geschlechtsunterschiede“ [sex differences], wie er damals in der Psychologie üblich war. Zu den Ergebnissen gehörte, dass „18 bis 24 % aller publizierenden Parapsychologen“ (S. 340) Frauen waren. Mir war auch klar, dass „die allgemeinen Unterschiede in den Prozentsätzen zwischen Männern und Frauen in beiden Zeiträumen und für beide Zeitschriften“ auf „geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede bei der wissenschaftlichen Rekrutierung, der Ausbildung, der Arbeitsorientierung, den Stellenbeschreibungen in den Labors und den Publikationsmöglichkeiten sowie auf eine unterschiedliche Veröffentlichungspolitik der Labors zurückzuführen sind“ (ebd.). Diese Ergebnisse stimmten nicht nur mit der Forschung zu diesem Thema in anderen Disziplinen überein, sondern die aktuelle Forschungslage in verschiedenen Disziplinen zeigt immer noch Unterschiede in diesen Bereichen, wenn auch mit einem höheren Prozentsatz der aktiven Wissenschaftler und Akademiker, die sich als weiblich präsentieren, und mehr Belegen für eine positive Entwicklung der Geschlechterparität beim Publizieren, während gleichzeitig geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede bei der Wahl der Methoden festgestellt werden (z. B. Odic & Wojcik, 2020; Ross et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2017).

Der Vortrag von David Hess, „Gender, Hierarchy, and the Psychic: An Interpretation of the Culture of Parapsychology“ war ein positiver Beleg für einen starken interdisziplinären Blick, der Begriffe und Texte in der parapsychologischen Forschung als eine tief verwurzelte Metapher für die Divergenz des Weiblichen vom Männlichen interpretierte. Hess argumentierte, dass die in L. E. Rhine's (1967) Buch *ESP in Life and Lab* verwendete Sprache auf Freuds Verständnis

(z. B. Keller, 1985; Kofman, 1985) der Natur der Frau als „ungeordnet“, „geheim“ und „schwer fassbar“ abgebildet werden kann, wenn es um parapsychologische Phänomene im „Leben“ geht (Hess, 1989: 105). Im „Labor“ hingegen herrschte das Freudsche Bild vom Wesen des Mannes vor, wobei die Phänomene als „geordnet“ und „Gesetzmäßigkeiten folgend“ bezeichnet wurden (S. 104). Die Analyse von Hess war nicht nur nuanciert, sondern in einer Vielzahl von Disziplinen verankert, mit Erklärungskraft und Empfehlungen für zukünftige Forschung, die dem heutigen Verständnis von Geschlechterstereotypen und davon, wie diese die Komplexität von Phänomenen, Individuen und Wissenschaft verschleiern, entspricht.

Wenn ich mich recht erinnere, konzentrierte sich die Diskussion mehr auf die sichereren Bereiche der Geschichte der Parapsychologie, wobei die Verwendung des Begriffs „Gender“ anstelle von „sex differences“ auf einigen Widerstand stieß. Aber der Vortrag von Hess und der vollständige Aufsatz, der in den Proceedings dieser Konferenz abgedruckt wurde, waren bahnbrechend für diejenigen von uns, die damals ihre Bedeutung verstanden.

Das von Carlos organisierte Symposium in Montreal fand drei Jahre vor der Konferenz statt, die in dieser Ausgabe gewürdigt wird. Ich weiß nicht mehr, ob Rhea White, die die PF-Konferenz zusammen mit Lisette Coly organisierte, auch an der PA-Konferenz von 1988 teilgenommen hat, aber auf jeden Fall zitierte Hess ihre damalige Arbeit (z. B. White, 1985), und in einer späteren Version seines Aufsatzes, der für einen von Carlos und mir geplanten Sammelband bestimmt war, zitierte er auch einen ihrer neueren Aufsätze über Gender (z. B. White, 1991).

### ***Dublin, 1991***

„Frauen in der Parapsychologie“ war schon lange ein Gesprächsthema in der Parapsychology Foundation. Wie könnte es auch anders sein, wenn man bedenkt, dass die PF von zwei beeindruckenden Frauen, Eileen Garrett und der Kongressabgeordneten aus Ohio, Frances Bolton (1885–1977), gegründet wurde. Rhea White (1931–2007) war langjährige Stipendiatin der PF. Ihre erste Stelle auf diesem Gebiet war die einer wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeiterin am Parapsychology Laboratory der Duke University von 1954 bis 1958. Von 1959 bis zu ihrem Tod im Jahr 2007 war sie mit der American Society for Psychical Research verbunden, zunächst als Research and Editorial Associate, dann als Herausgeberin des *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research (JASPR)* und in ihren späteren Jahren als beratende Redakteurin. 1965 erwarb sie einen Master-Abschluss in Bibliothekswissenschaft und trat eine Stelle an der East Meadow Public Library in East Meadow, New York, an, wo sie dreißig Jahre lang arbeitete. Dieser Tagesjob ermöglichte es ihr, theoretische Abhandlungen (z. B. White, 1960; 1984), eine bahnbrechende Methodenkritik (z. B. White, 1964) und natürlich ihre Arbeit über Feminismus und Parapsychologie (z. B. White, 1994) zu schreiben.

Sie war Mitherausgeberin einer Reihe von Sammelbänden (z.B. White & Dale, 1973) und gründete die *Parapsychology Abstracts International*, beides Projekte, die für Wissenschaftler vor dem Zeitalter der Internet-Bibliotheken ein Segen waren. Rheas Arbeit führte zur Förderung des Begriffs *Außergewöhnliche menschliche Erfahrung* [Exceptional Human Experience – EHE] und zur Erweiterung der Konzepte in ihrer bibliographischen, enzyklopädischen und theoretischen Arbeit in ihren EHE-Grundlagschriften und ihrer Zeitschrift. Als langjährige Mentorin für einige von uns war Rhea eine perfekte Partnerin für Lisette Coly, als die Konferenz über Frauen und Parapsychologie Wirklichkeit wurde. Rhea moderierte auch die Konferenzsitzungen.

Die Idee zu dieser Konferenz stammt jedoch von Lisette. In den frühen 1990er Jahren, als Lisette Coly damit zu kämpfen hatte, ein Gleichgewicht zwischen ihrer Tätigkeit als Mutter von kleinen Kindern und der Mitarbeit in der Verwaltung der Parapsychology Foundation herzustellen, unterhielten sie und ihre Mutter Eileen Coly sich über das Leben von Mrs. Garrett und die Schwierigkeiten, die Frauen in der Parapsychologie hatten, wenn es um Chancen, Glaubwürdigkeit und den Zugang zu all den möglichen Funktionen in der Parapsychologie ging, die das Feld voranbringen könnten. Auch mit Gertrude Schmeidler (1912–2009) fand ein Gespräch darüber statt, wie sie ihr Eheleben, ihre Kinder und ihre lange Karriere als Forschungspsychologin und Professorin an der City University in New York unter einen Hut brachte.

Lisette Coly war sich, wie andere Frauen in Lisettes und meinem Alter, sehr wohl bewusst, was es braucht, um als Kollegin und Forscherin auf diesem Gebiet erfolgreich zu sein. Aus den Geschichten, die uns die Frauen der Generationen vor uns erzählten, wussten wir, wie schwierig es war, eine Karriere aufrechtzuerhalten, insbesondere wenn man eine Familie gründen wollte. Wie Lisette Coly kürzlich sagte (persönliche Mitteilung, 5. Dezember 2022): „Egal wie hart wir gearbeitet haben, wir schienen nie aus dem hinteren Teil des Busses herauszukommen.“

In den Gesprächen, die Lisette führte, wurde der Plan gefasst, den Stand der Frauen in der Parapsychologie auf einer bevorstehenden Konferenz in der Reihe zu behandeln, die die Parapsychology Foundation seit der ersten internationalen Konferenz der Neuzeit, die von Mrs. Garrett und der Honorable Frances Bolton organisiert worden war, aufrechterhalten hatte. Diese erste Konferenz fand 1953 in Utrecht in den Niederlanden statt.

Entsprechend der allgemeinen Struktur früherer Konferenzen wurden die Redner eingeladen; die Beobachter wurden entweder eingeladen oder mussten eine Genehmigung zur Teilnahme einholen.

Es gab jedoch eine Änderung in der Art und Weise, wie diese Struktur in der Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* umgesetzt wurde. Bis zu dieser Konferenz und auch danach hielten die Redner an jedem der beiden Konferenztage wissenschaftliche Vorträge. An jeden Vortrag schloss sich eine ausführliche Diskussionsrunde an, es gab zwei allgemeine Diskussionsrunden an

jedem der beiden Tage, und sowohl die Vorträge als auch die Diskussionen wurden in Tagungsbänden veröffentlicht.

Lisette Coly sagte (persönliche Mitteilung, 5. Dezember 2022), da sie die Diskussionen für den besten Teil der Konferenzen halte, das Thema Frauen und Parapsychologie Neuland betrete und zweifellos zu Gesprächen über individuelle Erfahrungen als Forscherin und Wissenschaftlerin führen werde, halte sie es für eine gute Idee, den zweiten Tag für ein Brainstorming zu nutzen. In den informellen Vorträgen am zweiten Tag der Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* ging es daher darum, „unseren gemeinsamen Problemen auf den Grund zu gehen“ und zu versuchen, eine Lösung für diese Probleme zu finden.

Die daraus resultierende Konferenz war für viele von uns ein außergewöhnliches Erlebnis. Lisette und Eileen Coly eröffneten sie und erläuterten den Zweck unseres Treffens. Dublin, in Irland, war zu Ehren von Eileen Garretts Geburtsort in der nahe gelegenen Grafschaft Meath ausgewählt worden.

Rhea White (1994b) eröffnete die Konferenz mit einer Untersuchung des feministischen Ansatzes in der Wissenschaft. Jessica Utts (1994b) folgte mit einem Überblick über die sozialen, institutionellen und kulturellen Auswirkungen des Geschlechts (gender) auf Wissenschaftstheorie und -praxis. Beverly Rubik (1994a) befasste sich mit dem Fehlen des weiblichen Archetyps in der parapsychologischen Forschung. Susan Blackmore (1994) untersuchte geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede im Glauben an das Paranormale. Joanne McMahon (1994) präsentierte eine Biographie von Eileen Garrett.

Marilyn Schlitz (1994b) lieferte eine Kulturkritik zu Frauen, Macht und dem Paranormalen. Anjum Khilji (1994a) skizzierte die Beiträge muslimischer Frauen zur Parapsychologie. Ruth-Inge Heinze (1919–2007) (1994a) untersuchte die „Lebensmuster“ von Frauen, die auf diesem Gebiet tätig sind, und ich (Zingrone, 1994a) untersuchte die Schriften des amerikanischen Geistlichen Frederic Marvin (1847–1907) und des italienischen Kriminologen Cesare Lombroso (1836–1909) hinsichtlich deren Verständnisses von weiblichen Medien.

Wie bei den traditionellen PF-Konferenzen, die vor und nach der Konferenz von 1991 stattfanden, wurden die Beobachter mit Blick auf ihre inhaltliche Beteiligung an der Diskussionsrunde ausgewählt und zugelassen. Beobachter in Dublin waren Carlos, Marco Bischof, Gerd Hövelmann, Rebecca Hughes-Hartogs, Denise Iredell, Wanda Luke, Hans Michels und Sean O'Donnell.

Zu den Diskussionsthemen gehörten: die Tendenz der Parapsychologen, ihre Position außerhalb der Mainstream-Wissenschaft apologetisch darzustellen; der von David Hess auf der Konferenz in Montreal gegebene Hinweis auf die „Umkehrung der Hierarchie“ durch die Sprache, die wir verwenden, um unsere Phänomene und unsere Methoden zu diskutieren; die Schwierigkeiten bei der Umstrukturierung der Methodik oder der Neudefinition der Wissenschaft im Gegensatz

zur Neuverhandlung der beruflichen Rollen von Frauen in der Wissenschaft; Spiritualität und Parapsychologie und das Nebeneinander von Geschlechterkulturen innerhalb der Kultur eines Landes; die Auswirkungen der Bezeichnung von Psi-Phänomenen als anomal und wie dies mit der Vorstellung kollidiert, dass diese Phänomene universell sind. Schließlich wurde angesichts der Vorhersagbarkeit des männlichen Paradigmas die Frage gestellt, ob es nicht besser sei, einen reflexiven Prozess in die Wissenschaft zu integrieren, als zu versuchen, das männliche Paradigma zu überwinden. Auch andere interessante Gesichtspunkte wurden angesprochen und diskutiert.

Am zweiten Tag der Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* diskutierten alle Rednerinnen eine Vielzahl von Themen mit dem Ziel, die Hindernisse und Barrieren zu ermitteln, auf die Frauen in der Wissenschaft insgesamt und in der Parapsychologie stoßen. Anjum Khilji (1994b) erörterte die unterschiedlichen Herangehensweisen der muslimischen Länder an das mystische Leben und an das, was wir als paranormale Phänomene ansehen würden. Ruth-Inge Heinze (1994b) verglich das Leben von schamanisch praktizierenden Frauen in Korea mit dem von amerikanischen Parapsychologinnen. Ich (Zingrone, 1994b) konzentrierte mich auf meine eigenen Erfahrungen, zu der männliche Kollegen und Mentoren gehörten, die meine Karriere förderten, aber auch die Erfahrung, als wissenschaftliche Kollegin unsichtbar zu sein. Ich berichtete über eine informelle, auf Interviews basierende Umfrage unter mir in der Parapsychologie bekannten Frauen, um zu sehen, wie verbreitet meine eigene Erfahrung ist. Auf der Grundlage dieser Gespräche empfahl ich einige Dinge, die Frauen tun können, um Hindernisse, welcher Art auch immer, zu überwinden, auf die sie stoßen. Beverly Rubik (1994b) konzentrierte sich auf Olga Worrall und darauf, wie wichtig es ist, „die Grundlagen der konventionellen Wissenschaft“ zu untersuchen (S. 228). Marilyn Schlitz (1994a) hob Sandra Hardings (1989) Fokus auf „eine robuste geschlechtersensible Praxis der Reflexivität“ hervor (S. 232). Susan Blackmore (1994) untersuchte die Unterschiede zwischen Frauen in der Skeptikerbewegung und Frauen in der Parapsychologie. Jessica Utts (1994a) reflektierte darüber, inwieweit das Frausein ihre Karriere beeinflusste oder nicht. Rhea White (1994a) gab einen Überblick über die feministische Theorie, wie sie sie versteht, und kam zu dem Schluss: „Um eine vollwertige Wissenschaft der Menschheit zu gewährleisten, ist es notwendig, die Wissenschaft selbst zu entwickeln und zu erweitern“ (S. 250). Die Diskussionen, die sich aus den Vorträgen des zweiten Tages ergaben, waren nuanciert, kompliziert und lesenswert. Wenn Sie diesen Tagungsband noch nicht gelesen haben, kann ich ihn nach der Lektüre der Ausgabe dieser Zeitschrift nur empfehlen.

Für Lisette Coly und Rhea White war es eine schwierige Aufgabe, Männer als Beobachter einzuladen. Diejenigen, die teilnahmen, beteiligten sich zwar an den formellen Diskussionen und an den geselligen Momenten bei den Mahlzeiten und trafen sich in der Lobby, in nahe gelegenen Kneipen oder in Restaurants, um die Gespräche fortzuführen, doch war die geringe Zahl der Männer, die Einladungen annahmen oder darum baten, unübersehbar.

Einige von uns versuchten zu verstehen, warum die Männer, die uns als Mentoren betreuten und in ihrer Arbeit mit den weiblichen Kollegen oder Studenten keine Anzeichen von Frauenfeindlichkeit zeigten, auf Nachfrage die Relevanz der Konferenz jedoch rundweg abtaten. Ich hatte den Eindruck, dass viele prominente Männer in diesem Bereich damals nicht verstanden, was der Zweck der Konferenz war. Einige von mir bewunderte Männer fragten mich, wie ich darauf käme, dass die Konferenz für sie relevant sein könnte. Andere männliche Mentoren und Kollegen erkundigten sich nervös bei mir, ob irgendeine der Frauen auf der Konferenz über ihr Verhalten gegenüber Frauen gesprochen hätte – als ob wir uns in Dublin treffen würden, um zusammen ein Bier zu trinken und dabei unsere männlichen Kollegen zu verleumden. Es gab nur sehr wenige Männer, die davon ausgingen, dass es bei dieser Konferenz wie bei jeder anderen in diesem Bereich darum ging, theoretische, methodologische und berufliche Probleme zu identifizieren, zu artikulieren und zu lösen, und noch weniger, die die Notwendigkeit sahen, Geschlechterstereotypen zu untersuchen oder das männliche Paradigma der Wissenschaft in Frage zu stellen.

### *In dieser Ausgabe*

Und nun, einunddreißig Jahre später, hat Gerhard Mayer mit der *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* die Möglichkeit eröffnet, nicht nur die Existenz und das Erbe der Konferenz der Parapsychology Foundation zu würdigen, sondern auch einen interdisziplinären, intersektionellen Raum für alle Arten der Annäherung an das Thema Frauen und Parapsychologie zu schaffen. Unser Komitee – Gerhard, Cedar und ich – machte sich an die Arbeit und erstellte eine Liste von Personen, die als eingeladene Autorinnen kontaktiert werden sollten. Außerdem erstellten wir einen Call for Papers, der im gesamten Feld verbreitet wurde. Die Umfrage wurde auch in Chatlisten und per E-Mail beworben. Wir überprüften die ersten Einreichungen, organisierten die Begutachtung und teilten uns die Aufgabe, Hinweise für die Überarbeitung zu geben und die endgültigen Beiträge anzunehmen. Gerhard organisierte ein PA-Symposium zu diesem Thema, das am 19. November unter Teilnahme von vier unserer Autorinnen stattfand.

Die Kreativität, die Gelehrsamkeit und die Hingabe der Autorinnen und Autoren an ihre Arbeiten waren erstaunlich. Die daraus resultierenden Beiträge sind mehr als eine Würdigung der Konferenz der Parapsychology Foundation von 1991; sie erweitern und vertiefen die Themen, die in Dublin behandelt wurden. Die endgültige Anordnung des Inhalts wurde von Gerhard vorgenommen. Vier Autorinnen waren eingeladen, einen Beitrag zu dieser Ausgabe zu leisten: Fátima Regina Machado, Ina Schmied-Knittel, Jessica Utts und Caroline Watt. Die anderen sechs Autorinnen und Autoren haben auf den Call for Papers geantwortet. Der elfte Beitrag wurde von Gerhard geschrieben und von Cedar und mir redaktionell überarbeitet.

Der erste Abschnitt des Inhaltsverzeichnisses enthält vier historische Abhandlungen. Caroline Watts Aufsatz „On Being a (White, Middle-Class) Woman in Parapsychology“ ist ein

persönlicher und inhaltlicher Blick auf ihre Erfahrungen in der akademischen Welt als erste Person in ihrer Familie, die eine Universität besuchte, bis hin zur Besetzung des zweiten Koestler-Lehrstuhls für Parapsychologie an der Universität Edinburgh. Der zweite Beitrag wurde von Ina Schmied-Knittel verfasst und trägt den Titel „Occultism as a Resource. The Parapsychologist Fanny Moser (1872–1953)“. Thema ist das Leben und die Arbeit von Fanny Moser, die sich der Parapsychologie zuwandte, als sie ihren sterbenden Mann pflegte und nicht mehr in der Lage war, zoologische Feldarbeit zu leisten. Mosers zweiter Beruf brachte sie zu unserem Fachgebiet, und ihr Leben und ihre Arbeit wirkten sich nicht nur auf die Parapsychologie in Deutschland aus, sondern durch ihr Vermächtnis an das IGPP auch auf die internationale Gemeinschaft.

Der dritte Beitrag, „Mrs. Lotte Böhringer (1917–2014) – ‘Anima of the Freiburg Institute’: A Personal Appreciation“ von Eberhard Bauer, porträtiert eine wichtige Mitarbeiterin des IGPP, die mit ihrem unermüdlichen Einsatz für das Institut den administrativen und wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeitern den Rücken stärkte. Die letzte historische Abhandlung ist eine kurze Kritik an der Tendenz von Historikern des Mediumismus, nur die weiblichen und nicht die männlichen Medien zu untersuchen und dabei Annahmen zu treffen, die über die Datenbasis hinausgehen können. Renaud Evrards „Parapsychology and Women’s Emancipation: A Historical Cliché?“ ist nicht nur ein wichtiges Korrektiv der jüngeren Geschichte, sondern auch eine Herausforderung für die zukünftige Geschichtsschreibung des Mediumismus.

Die nächsten beiden Beiträge in dieser Ausgabe befassen sich mit den Erfahrungen von Frauen in sehr unterschiedlichen kulturellen Umgebungen. Der erste von ihnen, „Being a Psi Researcher in Brazil: My Career and Perceptions as a Woman“ von Fatima Regina Machado befasst sich nicht nur mit ihrem eigenen beruflichen Werdegang, sondern auch mit geschlechtsspezifischen Fragen in diesem Bereich und mit dem säkularen und religiösen Kontext Brasiliens. Sonali Bhatt Marwaha schrieb „A View from India on Women Achievers, Knowledge Systems, Psychology and Psi“. In ihrem Beitrag geht es nicht nur um ihren Werdegang, sondern auch um das Weibliche und das Männliche in der indischen Philosophie, um einen eingehenden Blick auf theoretische Fragen der Parapsychologie und die Frage, wie sich das Verständnis unseres Fachgebiets ändert, wenn es in das indische Wissenssystem eingebettet wird.

Die nächsten beiden Beiträge befassen sich mit der Methodik. Der erste davon ist Donna Thomas’ Aufsatz „Rethinking Methodologies in Parapsychological Research with Children“. Ihre Arbeit zeigt, wie wichtig es ist, die Perspektive der Kinder zu verstehen und ihren Erfahrungen und Erkenntnissen in dieser Art von Forschung Vorrang einzuräumen. Thomas zieht komplexe Lehren aus früheren Diskussionen über verschiedene Aspekte der parapsychologischen Methodik, einschließlich des Bestrebens, Stimmen in den Vordergrund zu stellen, die in der Forschung oft beiseitegelegt werden. Der nächste Beitrag, „Feminism at the Forefront: A Critical Approach to Exceptional Experiences“ von Jacob W. Glazier, wirft eine Reihe von geschlechtsspezifischen



Fragen und die Überschneidungen dieser Probleme mit der feministischen Theorie auf. Letztlich sind seine Empfehlungen sowohl methodischer als auch theoretischer Natur.

Der erste der letzten drei themenheftbezogenen Beiträge ist Jessica Utts' „General and Personal Reflections on Succeeding as a Woman Science Researcher“. Ihre Arbeit ist insofern ungewöhnlich, als sie diese mit ihrem ursprünglichen inhaltlichen Beitrag und ihrem Kommentar auf der Konferenz „Women and Parapsychology“ von 1991 verknüpft und mit neuen Forschungsergebnissen über das Leben von berufstätigen Frauen in den Bereichen Wissenschaft, Technologie, Ingenieurwesen und Mathematik sowie mit ihren persönlichen Erfahrungen bei der Arbeit in der Parapsychologie aktualisiert. Dem Beitrag von Utts folgt der Forschungsbericht „Women and Parapsychology 2022 – An Online Survey“ von Gerhard, Cedar und mir. Der Bericht gibt einen Überblick über den Aufbau des Fragebogens, die Datenverarbeitung und -analyse sowie die Ergebnisse. Er enthält auch eine Reihe von Kommentaren der Personen, die an der Umfrage teilgenommen haben, sowie die Schlussfolgerungen, die wir aus den Ergebnissen gezogen haben.

Der letzte Aufsatz der Ausgabe, Christine Simmonds-Moores „Feminizing the Paranormal“, ist eine gründliche Behandlung einer Vielzahl von theoretischen Positionen, in denen „weibliche Ansätze mit traditionellen männlichen Ansätzen in einem ‚Sowohl-als-auch‘-Ansatz aus der transpersonalen Psychologie integriert werden sollen“ (Simmonds-Moore, 2022: 499). Sie stellt eine Reihe von theoretischen und methodologischen Innovationen vor, die das Potenzial haben, unser Verständnis davon zu verbessern, wer wir individuell, gemeinsam und in der natürlichen Welt sind.

### ***Einige abschließende Bemerkungen***

Das Symposium von 1978 hat mich damals entnervt, weil Männer und Frauen in den Vereinigten Staaten nicht in der Lage waren, etwas so Einfaches zu tun, wie die Rechte von Frauen zu garantieren, und ich dachte, das Beste, was Frauen tun könnten, wäre wegzugehen. Aber im Laufe der Zeit habe ich erkannt, dass Drewes, Mitchell und Drucker uns einen Dienst erwiesen haben, indem sie dafür sorgten, dass selbst im Missouri jener Jahre die Geschichten von engagierten, intelligenten Frauen, die etwas bewegt haben, erzählt wurden.

Das Symposium 1988 in Montreal hat mich ermutigt, nicht nur, weil ich das Privileg hatte, mit einem Mann zusammenzuarbeiten, der sich ebenso wie ich dafür einsetzte, dass die Stimmen von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Erfahrenden (experiencers) gehört wurden. Aber ich war auch inspiriert von der Sichtweise, die David Hess durch seine klare und sorgfältige Analyse des geschlechtsspezifischen Diskurses und dessen Auswirkungen auf Methodik, Theorie und das Leben der Frauen in diesem Bereich in das Symposium einbrachte.

Ich war schockiert und begeistert, als ich eingeladen wurde, das Projekt, an dem ich arbeitete, 1991 auf der Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* in Dublin vorzustellen, nicht nur, weil Carlos auch als Beobachter eingeladen war, sondern weil die Konferenz selbst ein weiterer mutiger, zum Nachdenken anregender Schritt der Colys und von Rhea White war. Die Vorträge im Konferenzraum sowie die Diskussionen bei den Mahlzeiten und in der Lobby warfen ein Licht darauf, was das Feld für uns alle sein könnte. Natürlich gab es danach die Enttäuschung der ansonsten egalitären Männer, die es als etwas abtaten, das bestenfalls ein bisschen frivol und im schlimmsten Fall absolut nicht etwas war, das sie ertragen wollten.

Ich war dankbar, als mir das Projekt dieser Sonderausgabe vorgelegt wurde; ich war ebenfalls dankbar für Cedars Unbehagen aufgrund des Fehlens von Frauen auf dem Podium bei einer ihrer ersten Konferenzen der Parapsychological Association und für Gerhards Bereitschaft, dafür zu sorgen, dass die Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* von 1991 in den Seiten seiner Zeitschrift gewürdigt und erweitert werden konnte.

Zum ersten Mal, denke ich, gibt es Grund zur Hoffnung, dass es bei dieser Sowohl-als-auch-Erweiterung in Richtung Geschlechtergerechtigkeit zu echten, nachhaltigen Fortschritten kommen wird. Ich hoffe, dass Sie genauso inspiriert sind wie ich; und wenn Sie in dreißig Jahren noch keine 101 Jahre alt sein werden wie ich, dann werden Sie vielleicht erkennen, dass es wichtig ist, jetzt damit zu beginnen, diese Ideen in Ihr Bewusstsein aufzunehmen, Ihre eigenen beruflichen Bemühungen darauf auszurichten, verloren gegangene Stimmen zurückzuholen, die Gleichberechtigung am Arbeitsplatz zu fördern und eine intellektuelle, soziale und emotionale Welt aufzubauen, die auf der Tatsache beruht, dass wir alle gemeinsam daran beteiligt sind.

Viel Spaß beim Lesen!

(Die Literaturliste befindet sich am Ende der englischen Version des Editorials auf den Seiten 237–240.)

## Editorial

### Between Two Worlds: Unmasking Commonly Shared Female Experiences of Women in Parapsychology

CEDAR S. LEVERETT<sup>1</sup>

There is a fascinating way external influences of synchronistic events grow lasting interest in parapsychology. This is highlighted by most of the authors' contributions of this special collection of articles, though some of the writing distances personal experience from scholarship. It is no mystery that scholarship and personal experience meet between two worlds: the worlds of objectivity "which has a long history of identification with masculine" (Keller, 1990: 42); and, the room where "male-dominated modes of expression" (Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1990: 165) are lacking. In this space, connections are inevitable; there, along with the observable phenomena, the impressions of ideology and considerations of methodology are processed. I think the special issue is an understated invitation to consider what women in parapsychology share as co-authors and co-creators of science through scientific and other literature.

"Women and parapsychology," for me, means seeing more women presenting their science at the Parapsychological Association conferences as well as attending. It means feminist research methods can only strengthen the field of parapsychology, its science and its applications. Furthermore, it means a careful examination of current existing institutes, modes of analysis and trends regarding thoughtful development of the field.

As a child, I grew up unthreatened (directly) by racial or gender constructs. Certainly before I knew it to be a feminine epistemology, my world view was about "female ways of knowing." My imagination did not follow male things or ideas. Gender, probably, has a place in parapsychology; one begins to automatically migrate to differences in the way females and males do

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science when the topic of “women and parapsychology” is looked at from the perspective of gender competitiveness. The best this separation can offer is a close-up look at mistakes and how to remedy them (or not).

Jaques Vallée gave the Rhine address in 2018 on August 16th at the 61st Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association at the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California. His view, that parapsychology should be a main actor instead of trailing a branch of science such as physics, and his reference to a former leader of the Institute for the Future,<sup>2</sup> that looking into the future requires revisiting a half century into the past,<sup>3</sup> became a curiosity-arousing, personal inspiration.

It is how I came to fully appreciate the seemingly little-noticed parapsychological contribution of a friend and mentor, Friederike Schriever, – a significant examination of precognitive dreams she conducted nearly forty years ago (Schriever, 1987).<sup>4</sup> A subject of interest to the director of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (IGPP, Freiburg), Hans Bender found her successful internship to be instrumental to the research goals of the establishment. Friederike, this woman and student of parapsychology at the time, perhaps unfamiliar to the scientific community, authored a paper about one woman’s experiences with precognitive dreams. The following explains how she came to know Bender:

During my psychology studies, I completed an internship at the IGPP in Freiburg in 1984 – out of pure curiosity as to how “borderline areas of psychology” could be scientifically dealt with. One of my professors had aroused my interest in this and established the contact. This is how I got to know Prof. Dr. Dr. Hans Bender. I was surprised by the variety of topics that belong to parapsychology and impressed by the scientific accuracy with which these topics were approached. Moreover, Bender, who was a charismatic personality, was able to inspire me for the contents, especially for the spontaneous phenomena.

After the six-week internship, Prof. Bender offered me a student assistant position at the institute, which I gladly accepted. Bender suggested various topics for me to work on, among others the extensive dream collection of Christine Mylius, who had observed that dreams always came true and thus wrote down her dreams for more than 30 years and sent them as well as later possible confirmations to the institute. Thus, an extensive collection

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2 <https://www.iftf.org/>

3 Jacques F. Vallée: J. B. Rhine Address to the 61st Annual PA Convention. “The Software of Consciousness: Intriguing Lessons and Lingering Puzzles on the far side of StarGate.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuVtUSLIi-A&t=2518s>

4 Dr. Friederike Schriever, a native of Germany, now currently the Director of the Marburg and Siegen LOS (Teaching Institute for Orthography & Language Competence), is also the widow of the late parapsychologist Gerd Hövelmann. She obtained her Ph.D. in 1998 with a thesis on cognitive structures behind paranormal beliefs.

of possible precognitive dreams was created, of which selected dreams and dream series were analyzed and published. However, there was no overall evaluation of the dream material, so I took on this task as part of my psychology thesis – an exciting task.<sup>5</sup>

The example of Christine Mylius shows that parapsychology is not limited to science, but is also open to lay research, that is, open to those who are willing to make their experiences available. Friederike immersed herself in her curiosity; subsequently, advancing research.

The Boulder, Colorado, 2016 mutual conference of the Parapsychological Association (PA) and the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE) sparked my introduction to the area of individual, familial and societal studies of the “Spuk” (= RSPK) type<sup>6</sup> as a subfield of parapsychology. It was primarily after meeting Stanley Krippner in January at Saybrook University (that same year), that he encouraged I seek student membership with the PA. I was his PhD student in the humanistic psychology program, interested in shamanism and told Stanley about one of my own precognitive dreams I had in 1995 involving an animal archetype. I noticed this archetypal energy of nurturing, courage in the face of adversity, intuition and mothering appeared in my personal, professional and academic life as if the dream itself were a life theme.

Needless to say, Stanley’s work regarding altered states of consciousness added to my eagerness to know more about anomalistics. Also, at a major Saybrook meeting, he presented me a copy of the *ITC Journal*, an astonishing beginning to other ways of knowing and seeking knowledge: for the first time in my life, information about Instrumental Transcommunication (ITC) and people building technological devices to experiment with the voices beyond death, an incomprehensible idea to me, suggested there is more to consider about “being here”. This is not possible, I thought, as I learned about Ernst Senkowski’s (1922–2015) work in a journal edited by Dr. Anabela Cardoso, a woman.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, this 2016 Boulder conference is where I learned about the IGPP. I attended a dream workshop by Dale Graff there, but as far as I can remember there was no historical reference to Schriever’s work. Yet, she provided the parapsychology community with a “single case study” of research for precognitive dreams before single case studies became more popular again. The conference united scholarship and personal experience. It was a catalyst for unavoidable pursuit for where I belonged – as female – as someone driven by the mystery of survival *and* the paranormal.

The IGPP approaches the paranormal human experience in an all-inclusive, almost stereotypically feminine way; in its *Biennial Report 2020–2021* available online, one can read (p. 9),

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5 Schriever, personal communication, December 4, 2022.

6 e. g., Huesmann & Schriever (2022), Roll (2004).

7 In the meantime, the publication of this magazine has been discontinued. (Editor's note)

One outstanding characteristic of the IGPP is its philosophy of neutrality and its institutional independence. At the centre is the investigation of frontier areas of psychology. Its topics and methods can be summarized with the term reflexive anomalistics.<sup>8</sup> Reflexive means an anomalistic, which, in the discourses in its field, is aware of the context of the epistemological characteristics of the examined phenomena and the particular methodological problems associated as well as the entanglement between subjective evidence, scientific data, and social discourse.<sup>9</sup>

Great gifts of parapsychology have come from joint pioneering efforts of women and men. Whether a preference for female or male ways of knowing fed the efforts, or shaped the results is not the exact view to assert at this time, but highly relevant is that we all have mothers and fathers. Our maternal-paternal beginnings incline how we know or go after what we want to know, constructed by the insights and particular involvements gained throughout the course of life (Keller, 1990: 49). Family sustains a gender tension linking us to seeing that the way we do science might be male-determined (ibid.: 51). However, the risks of partiality in this case ties us to a deprived outlook: “Not only does our characterization of science thereby become colored by the biases of patriarchy and sexism, but simultaneously our evaluation of masculine and feminine becomes affected by the prestige of science” (ibid.: 54). For the sake of parapsychology, it is simply imperative to be careful. Without being able to go into detail at this point, Louisa Rhine<sup>10</sup> collected examples of the paranormal that allow one to delve into personal case histories. J.B. Rhine's emphasis on experimental laboratory research greatly influenced the direction of experimental parapsychology at the time. Together they created a hallmark and shaped the way experimental parapsychology was done and how revealed paranormal experiences were collected and analyzed for a long time.

Referring again to the Petaluma conference, Dean Radin used a soft-sounding bell to gather the attendees after breaks. It occurred at this moment while writing, the thing most enchanting about his non-invasive, anti-crowd-control-bell-ringing-way he got everyone to sit down, is not that we all acted as cows herding into the room; no, he rang a little bell without any aggression whatsoever. *Wow, he'd make a great mom.* But hold on: what exactly does that bell have to do with being a great mom? Or a non-aggressive male? Or having a nurturing trait? Or a bullying trait? The bell rings of biases and preconceived ideas of what a man is and isn't supposed to do, be or know.

Toni Wolff, “an extraordinary woman” (Hart, 1995: 72), lived without recognition of her brilliance, especially from the community where it shone. Her essay “Strukturformen der

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8 cf. Mayer & Schetsche (2016).

9 [https://www.igpp.de/allg/Berichte/IGPP\\_BiennialReport\\_2020-2021.pdf](https://www.igpp.de/allg/Berichte/IGPP_BiennialReport_2020-2021.pdf)

10 Louisa E. Rhine obtained her Master of Science and PhD in Botany from the University of Chicago and moved later with her husband to Durham, NC, where the Rhine Research Center was established as successor to the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University.

weiblichen Psyche” was made public in 1934, translated in 1959 as “Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche,” and is considered foundational material of the Jungian analytic psychology. She hypothesized four “psychological functional types,” the *Mother*, *Hetaira*, *Amazon* and *Medial* as structures of the feminine psyche as it expresses in relation to man, crisscrossing and at any given time contrasting, controlling, collaborating generally or objectively in connected or unconscious ways in relation to each structure. She suggested these express at certain times during a woman’s lifetime, “As all four forms are found throughout cultural history, they are probably archetypal in nature. They also correspond to aspects of a man’s anima.” “The mother is caring and protective, supportive, giving, instructive” (Wolff, 1995: 80). “The *Hetaira* or companion is instinctively related to the personal psychology of the male;” its job is “to awaken the man’s individual psychic life” (ibid.: 82). A third structure is the *Amazon*: “her interest is directed toward an objective achievement, which she wants to accomplish by herself” (ibid.: 84). Finally, there is *The Medial Woman*. She considers, “It is this unconscious background that the mediumistic [medial] structures perceives. In this context one should not think of parapsychology, although the ordinary medium embodies its lowest, most unconscious level” (ibid.: 86).

According to her essay, this last structural type has been the source of women being identified as witches, evil, weak or altogether in need of being set free from her “demons” in other words, genius. There is so much more to her essay than there will be given attention in this editorial. She produced this work in a space of males doing science, in the social milieu of scholars, while she, obviously a naturally, highly skilled observer, supplied that which she contributed to literature and nevertheless was excluded.

She had a bond with Carl Gustav Jung. Through their relationship of mutual admiration, love and shared learnedness he grew a legacy. Alongside his wife Emma, Toni was Jung’s “inquiry” collaborator, a scientific accessory of his intuition, and personal necessity within a marriage that played a supporting role. Like it or not the activities of their “arrangement” – domestic and scholarly – were both public and private. Decades, Toni lived alongside C. G. Jung as a non-credentialed woman of psychoanalytic prowess making major contributions to Jung’s theories (Hart, 1995).

It was one day in 2020 after returning from an extended stay in Germany, that I discovered the \$2 issue of a journal with “Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche.”<sup>11</sup> Flipping through a book bin at a metaphysical store in Minneapolis, Minnesota, there it was; I bought it because the cover art reflects six images of C. G. Jung. Not until early in 2022 after the “Women and Parapsychology 2022” project began, did I open it. It was at that time, thumbing through the pages of the journal, that Toni Wolff’s life and contribution integrated with the Women and

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11 *Psychological Perspectives*, Issue 31, 25th Anniversary Reflections, Summer-Spring '95, published semi-annually by the C. G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles.

Parapsychology project; I did not want to leave this synchronicity unmentioned in the editorial of the special issue. It shook me to the core regarding ideas about women's methods of knowing. Noticing her status, I realized she was his muse. There were a few men wholly stunned by her vitality and in awe of her at the time. Others outright rejected her because she arrived on the scene without credentials. This quote is gripping:

Wolff was her father's favorite. When he died in 1910, her mother sent her to Jung for treatment of what today would be diagnosed as depression. Jung immediately sensed her aptitude for analysis, because in 1911 he invited her, along with his wife and several other women that showed promise, to the Weimar Psychoanalytic Congress.<sup>12</sup>

The end of the story with Toni Wolff and C.G. Jung is not beautiful. He spoke of her as "his second wife."<sup>13</sup> One could hardly hesitate to say her relationship with Jung weakened her, it had to have done something erosive to her. How much of what we know about Jung's emergence as a psychoanalyst is due to an agreement with a woman whose historical silencing refined contributions to his iconic success? And how much, now, does it all become an effect of his being in a dominant position among other male scientists? If it was out in the open that Toni empowered his fame then maybe this once socially accepted connection has somehow morphed into an undetectable relation to dominance that we all must caution ourselves to detect. Her daring life intimately involved an expert such as Jung. The whole problematic context calls into question the significance of his scientific fame.

Their social-scientific situation certainly contributes to women's standing among men whose practice is gaining knowledge to explore the world and loving women who make sacrifices, or who tolerate being shunned to help the men they love with presence. This affinity contributes to men's reputations as inventors and privileged leaders.

An individual such as Rhea White who edited along with Lisette Coly the proceedings of the 1991 *Women and Parapsychology* international conference findings at Dublin, Ireland (Coly & White, 1994), found her place among credentialed women scientists as contributors whose works are at the core of the paranormal. All these women have a single thing in common: all have contributed to the literature. Rhea White was awarded an honorary doctorate one year before she died.<sup>14</sup>

*Parapsychology: Sources of Information, Compiled under the auspices of the American Society for Psychical Research* by Rhea White and Laura A. Dale was published in 1973. It is an annotated

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12 <https://jungcurrents.com/women-and-carl-jung-toni-wolff>

13 <https://jungcurrents.com/women-and-carl-jung-toni-wolff>

14 [https://parapsych.org/articles/14/260/rhea\\_white.aspx](https://parapsych.org/articles/14/260/rhea_white.aspx)



bibliography of books, encyclopedic and other references to literature and people representing parapsychology. Rhea White's feverish documentation of *exceptional human experiences* (EHEs), mapped the field.<sup>15</sup> This in turn brought about possibilities to look at research methods from the perspectives of a woman who had an NDE that forever changed her. It was not mandatory that she spent the rest of her life to funnel her experience into an enormous resource for scientists. She questioned her experience, ultimately, and classified it in a framework of EHEs; in an attempt to make it possible to investigate the unexplained she focused the unexplained and repositioned parapsychology: this is what feminist research does. I suspect with the same eagerness Friederike Schriever did not ignore her curiosity, in the same way Fanny Moser<sup>16</sup> could not dismiss her conversion, a shared female experience combines to forge new approaches to knowing something.

Women's issues, issues of gender equity and questions of power differential between men and women doing science have somehow construed manly science vs. womanly science with a worn-out conversation about reliability, credulity and credentials.

Science as a way of knowing and experiencing the paranormal as a source of knowing can prompt one thinking creatively and radically about experience and scholarship and where they meet. The two come together in the writing in the special issue. It seems to draw on something universal. At the time this insight landed while I participated on the *Women and Parapsychology Revisited* PA symposium panel with Ina Schmied-Knittel, Christine Simmonds Moore and Nancy Zingrone, I said I did not know exactly what I meant. That same night, I discovered what I meant: that this universalized, or universality I perceive in all the articles – all of them – is an attempt to offer a narrative and critiques of a conflicted story; experiencers are not trained to deal with scholarship but scholars have rules for situating experiencers in the world. This, according to Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (1990) in her essay "The Vision of a Woman Shaman," has to do with a feminist critiquing of what is going on with women who assume a position of bringing into view the paranormal or extraordinary of their lives – particularly critical when the extraordinary is "ordinary". A critique such as this looks at the art of science, art itself and science as expressions involved in addressing standards while deconstructing them. Lowenhaupt Tsing proposes several approaches to feminist critiquing of written works by women, scientific works included:

One approach in feminist criticism has shown how common female experiences and connections among women authors have influenced female creativity [...] A second approach has emphasized the influence of dominant male traditions on the creative productions of women. This scholarly work has suggested that in writing, women incorporate dominant conventions at the same time as they invert them, resist them and transform them [...]

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15 See [www.ehe.org](http://www.ehe.org)

16 See the paper by Ina Schmied-Knittel (2022) in this issue.

(A) third feminist critical approach has drawn on French literary theory to argue that male dominance is involved in the very means of expression that both men and women use, that is language and particularly writing. Feminists using this approach have explored how female writing disrupts the masculinist structures basic to creative expression; female writing exposes and challenges writing's gender-asymmetric conditions (Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1990: 149–150).

It is an acknowledgment of a dynamic field with active contributors modernizing a critique of the times, the current motivation to integrate them scientifically with and among the lay person also known as the experiencer. Lowenhaupt Tsing indicates that it is not so much what is said in the absence of women's contributions but "who got to speak," (ibid.: 150) in their place.

*Carlos Alvarado "calls for studies of the role of women in parapsychology in order to obtain a more balanced view of the field ..." (Rhea White. 1994: 2)*

Friederike Schriever, Toni Wolff, Rhea White and Louisa Rhine contributed to the body of literature representative of parapsychology's progress in scientific scholarship, to the reflexive discourse, and for experiencers curious to understand the impact of the paranormal to one's personal life. All these women's work is the result of disciplined excellence in the field: developing hypothesis, observing, evaluating and documenting results that for bettering qualitative research is as necessary as measurable data for quantitative research methodology. Whether their approaches are inflexibly related to feminine epistemology is a matter of deliberation.

Earlier this year, Gerhard and I visited an exhibition *Supernatural America: The Paranormal in American Art* at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.<sup>17</sup> At the time of this visit, the bottom line of my exposure to research in parapsychology focused my attention on special people as subjects of parapsychology such as the "golden leaf lady" (Braude, 2007),<sup>18</sup> the psychic Nina Kulagina (1926–1990),<sup>19</sup> or Saint Bernadette Soubirous (1844–1879).<sup>20</sup> The male-oriented lens resulted in preconceived ideas about women in parapsychology, in other words, my prejudices were shaped by research. Visiting this exhibition shattered my preconceptions and unquestioned expectation that I would only see male art interpreting psi. I had no idea of the abundance of art by women that communicates to the world about anything about psi. Fascinatingly, women's journals were among the display documenting paranormal phenomena, showing that they are keeping track of their observations. This is data gathering by lay experiencers.

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17 <https://new.artsmia.org/exhibition/supernatural-america-the-paranormal-in-american-art>

18 Katie, the "golden leaf lady," was a woman on whose body spontaneously materialized golden foil.

19 cf. Conrad (2016).

20 Soubirous had visions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes in southwestern France. Lourdes became an important site of pilgrimage.

One of the effects of going to this exhibition was burning to know more about parapsychology. During one of my typical web-surfing moments, I checked the course list at the Rhine Education Center<sup>21</sup> and it happened to lead to “Art as Psi Portal to the Mysterious, Mystical, Magical & Miraculous.”<sup>22</sup> Once in the class, it seemed to pick up where the exhibition left off. It presented an additional historical timeline of perspectives about women’s roles in art, science, and culture of parapsychology. Women scholars and experiencers again intersect to dispel myths that the only role of women in parapsychology is to be second. The thing about both the class and the exhibition is that they were both community events. They both quickly bridged gaps of misperceptions about roles and active presence of women in these fields. Gender-biases of dominating males just cannot be sustained in these environments by viewing contributions of both sexes through sensory, visual and interactive experiences.

Where are women in parapsychology? They contribute to the building of knowledge bases and exploration of subjectivity through creative acts as in making art. Donna Thomas’ inclusionary methods explores children’s artistic images to evaluate and validate their accounts of unexplained experiences (Thomas, 2022, this issue). This step to sensitizing the treatment of parapsychology may allow for more visible limits as well as approaches to being able to see the limitations of research with less narrow precepts.

Throughout this special issue, it is clear that a diverse selection of essays symbolizes a collective of authors – authors valuing knowledge and discussions that at once identify the best ideas speaking for women and parapsychology. Furthermore, they speak for the most accessible solutions, or introductions of such necessities as keys to rethinking the old. But whether a trained academician or an experiencer with a knack for science, it is alarming to exist both in a liberated and repressed social and academic context, it is somewhat paralyzing. Is it possible that thinking about inequality as a feature reflected in narratives of controlling men is not a central concern of women and parapsychology? It is possible. Everywhere a little overlap of trained researcher-scholar types and devoted experiencer–practitioner kinds of thinkers can be found. Complexity vs. keeping it simple: it is hard to come to the best approach to comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, widely creative, conscious conclusions for women and parapsychology. How does the integration of women, science and parapsychology advance parapsychology? Science offers a variety of conversations rarely available among laypersons. It also leads, in the way that Jaques Vallée suggests parapsychology ought to. The flip side is that at any given point in life, we

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21 Rhine Education Center, 2741 Campus Walk Avenue Building 500 Durham, NC 27705. Rhine Research Center ([www.rhineonline.org](http://www.rhineonline.org))

22 Dr. Chantal Toporow, teacher, “This 4 week course is designed for anyone who wishes to gain a deeper understanding of how art has given us a series of clues about the Psi human experience.” <https://tinyurl.com/yc8hscrw>

are all experiencers. The paranormal does not discriminate, it does not pick and choose which ghost is best suited for research. Why should we, among scholars, separate the sexes for the sake of science?

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## Zwischen zwei Welten: Aufdeckung allgemein geteilter weiblicher Erfahrungen von Frauen in der Parapsychologie<sup>23</sup>

Es gibt eine faszinierende Art und Weise, wie externe Einflüsse synchronistischen Geschehens das Interesse an der Parapsychologie nachhaltig steigern. Dies wird durch die meisten Beiträge der Autorinnen und Autoren dieser speziellen Sammlung von Aufsätzen hervorgehoben, auch wenn einige der Texte persönliche Erfahrungen von wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen abgrenzen. Es ist kein Geheimnis, dass sich Wissenschaft und persönliche Erfahrung zwischen zwei Welten treffen: der Welt der Objektivität, „die eine lange Geschichte der Identifikation mit dem Männlichen hat“ (Keller, 1990: 42); und der Raum, in dem „männlich dominierte Ausdrucksformen“ fehlen (Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1990: 165). In diesem Raum sind Verbindungen unvermeidlich; dort werden neben den beobachtbaren Phänomenen auch weltanschauliche Eindrücke und Überlegungen zur Methodologie verarbeitet. Ich denke, dieses Themenheft ist eine unaufdringliche Einladung, darüber nachzudenken, was Frauen in der Parapsychologie als Mitautorinnen und Mitgestalterinnen der Wissenschaft durch wissenschaftliche und andere Literatur teilen.

„Frauen und Parapsychologie“ bedeutet für mich, dass mehr Frauen ihre Arbeit auf den Konferenzen der Parapsychological Association vorstellen. Es bedeutet, dass feministische Forschungsmethoden das Feld der Parapsychologie, ihre Wissenschaft und ihre Anwendungen stärken können. Darüber hinaus bedeutet es eine sorgfältige Auseinandersetzung mit derzeit bestehenden Instituten, Analysemethoden und Trends im Hinblick auf eine wohl überlegte Entwicklung des Feldes.

Als Kind bin ich ohne (direkte) Bedrohung durch Rassen- oder Geschlechtskonstrukte aufgewachsen. Bevor ich wusste, dass es sich um eine weibliche Epistemologie handelte, ging es in meiner Weltanschauung sicherlich um „weibliche Arten des Wissens“. Meine Vorstellungskraft hat sich nicht an männlichen Dingen oder Ideen orientiert. Wahrscheinlich hat „Gender“ einen Platz in der Parapsychologie; man beginnt automatisch zu Unterschieden in der Art und Weise zu gelangen, wie Frauen und Männer Wissenschaft betreiben, wenn das Thema „Frauen und Parapsychologie“ unter der Perspektive der Konkurrenzfähigkeit der Geschlechter betrachtet wird. Das Beste, was diese Trennung bieten kann, ist ein genauer Blick auf Fehler und wie man sie beheben kann (oder auch nicht).

Jaques Vallée hielt am 16. August 2018 auf der 61. Jahrestagung der Parapsychological Association am Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, Kalifornien, seine J.B. Rhine Address.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuVtUSLli-A>

Seine Ansicht, dass die Parapsychologie ein Hauptakteur sein sollte, anstatt einem Wissenschaftszweig wie der Physik hinterherzulaufen, und sein Hinweis auf einen ehemaligen Leiter des Institute for the Future,<sup>25</sup> dass der Blick in die Zukunft einen Rückblick auf ein halbes Jahrhundert in die Vergangenheit erfordert, wurden zu einer die Neugierde weckenden, persönlichen Inspiration.

Auf diese Weise lernte ich den scheinbar wenig beachteten parapsychologischen Beitrag einer Freundin und Mentorin, Friederike Schriever, voll und ganz zu schätzen – eine bedeutende Untersuchung präkognitiver Träume, die sie vor fast vierzig Jahren durchführte (Schriever, 1987).<sup>26</sup> Für den Leiter des Instituts für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (IGPP), Hans Bender, war ihr erfolgreiches Praktikum von großem Interesse für die Forschungsziele der Einrichtung. Friederike, diese Frau und damalige Studentin der Parapsychologie, die der wissenschaftlichen Gemeinschaft vielleicht nicht bekannt war, verfasste eine Abhandlung über die Erfahrungen einer Frau mit präkognitiven Träumen. Im Folgenden schildert sie, wie sie Bender kennengelernt hat:

Während meines Psychologiestudiums absolvierte ich 1984 ein Praktikum am IGPP in Freiburg – aus reiner Neugierde, wie man „Grenzbereiche der Psychologie“ wissenschaftlich bearbeiten könnte. Einer meiner Professoren hatte mein Interesse daran geweckt und den Kontakt hergestellt. So lernte ich Prof. Dr. Dr. Hans Bender kennen. Ich war überrascht von der Vielfalt der Themen, die zur Parapsychologie gehören, und beeindruckt von der wissenschaftlichen Genauigkeit, mit der diese Themen angegangen wurden. Außerdem konnte mich Bender, der eine charismatische Persönlichkeit war, für die Inhalte, insbesondere für die Spontanphänomene, begeistern.

Nach dem sechswöchigen Praktikum bot mir Prof. Bender eine studentische Hilfskraftstelle am Institut an, die ich gerne annahm. Bender schlug mir verschiedene Themen zur Bearbeitung vor, u. a. die umfangreiche Traumsammlung von Christine Mylius, die beobachtet hatte, dass Träume immer wahr werden, und deshalb über 30 Jahre lang ihre Träume aufschrieb und sie sowie deren spätere mögliche Bestätigungen an das Institut sandte. So entstand eine umfangreiche Sammlung möglicherweise präkognitiver Träume, von denen ausgewählte Träume und Traumreihen analysiert und veröffentlicht wurden. Eine Gesamtauswertung des Traummaterials gab es jedoch nicht, so dass ich diese Aufgabe im Rahmen meiner Psychologie-Diplomarbeit übernommen habe – eine spannende Aufgabe.<sup>27</sup>

Das Beispiel von Christine Mylius zeigt, dass die Parapsychologie nicht auf die Wissenschaft begrenzt, sondern auch offen für Laienforschung ist, also offen für diejenigen, die bereit sind,

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25 <https://www.iftf.org/>

26 Dr. Friederike Schriever ist die Institutsleiterin des LOS Marburg und des LOS Siegen. Sie ist die Witwe des verstorbenen Parapsychologen Gerd Hövelmann. Sie promovierte 1998 mit einer Arbeit über kognitive Strukturen hinter paranormale Überzeugungen.

27 Schriever, persönliche Mitteilung, 4. Dezember 2022.

ihre Erfahrungen verfügbar zu machen. Friederike vertiefte sich in ihre Neugierde und trieb damit die Forschung voran.

Die gemeinsame Konferenz der Parapsychological Association (PA) und der Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE) 2016 in Boulder, Colorado, gab den Anstoß für meine Einführung in den Bereich der individuellen, familiären und gesellschaftlichen Studien des „Spuk“-Typs (=RSPK)<sup>28</sup> als Teilbereich der Parapsychologie. Nachdem ich Stanley Krippner im Januar desselben Jahres an der Saybrook University kennengelernt hatte, ermutigte er mich, eine studentische Mitgliedschaft in der PA anzustreben. Ich war seine Doktorandin im Studiengang Humanistische Psychologie, interessierte mich für Schamanismus und erzählte Stanley von einem meiner eigenen präkognitiven Träume, den ich 1995 hatte und in dem ein Tierarchetyp vorkam. Ich bemerkte, dass diese archetypische Energie der Fürsorge, des Mutes angesichts von Widrigkeiten, der Intuition und der Bemutterung in meinem persönlichen, beruflichen und akademischen Leben auftauchte, als ob der Traum selbst ein Lebensthema wäre.

Es erübrigt sich zu sagen, dass Stanleys Arbeit über veränderte Bewusstseinszustände mein Interesse an der Anomalistik noch verstärkte. Außerdem gab er mir bei einem wichtigen Saybrook-Treffen ein Exemplar des *ITC-Journals*, ein erstaunlicher Einstieg in andere Wege des Wissens und der Wissenssuche: Zum ersten Mal in meinem Leben deuteten Informationen über Instrumentelle Transkommunikation (ITC) und Menschen, die technische Geräte bauen, um mit Stimmen jenseits der Schwelle des Todes zu experimentieren, auf eine für mich bislang unverständliche Idee hin, dass es mehr über das „Hiersein“ zu betrachten gibt. *Das ist nicht möglich*, dachte ich, als ich von Ernst Senkowskis (1922–2015) Arbeit in einer Zeitschrift erfuhr, die von Dr. Anabela Cardoso, einer Frau, herausgegeben wurde.<sup>29</sup>

Auf jener Konferenz 2016 in Boulder erfuhr ich außerdem vom IGPP. Ich nahm dort an einem Traum-Workshop von Dale Graff teil, aber soweit ich mich erinnern kann, gab es keinen historischen Hinweis auf Schrievers Arbeit. Sie hat der parapsychologischen Gemeinschaft eine „Einzelfallstudie“ zur Erforschung präkognitiver Träume geliefert, bevor Einzelfallstudien wieder populärer wurden. Die Konferenz vereinte Wissenschaft und persönliche Erfahrung. Sie war ein Katalysator für die unvermeidliche Suche nach dem, wo ich hingehörte – als Frau – als jemand, der vom Geheimnis des Überlebens *und* des Paranormalen angetrieben wurde.

Das IGPP nähert sich der paranormalen menschlichen Erfahrung auf eine allumfassende, fast stereotypisch-weiblich anmutende Art und Weise an. Im online verfügbaren Zweijahresbericht 2020–2021 kann man lesen (S. 9):

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28 Z. B. Huesmann & Schriever (2022) und Roll (1976).

29 Inzwischen ist das Erscheinen dieser Zeitschrift eingestellt. (Anm. d. Red.)

Ein besonderes Merkmal des IGPP ist seine weltanschauliche Neutralität und institutionelle Unabhängigkeit. Im Kernbereich der Forschung stehen Grenzgebiete der Psychologie. Deren Themen und Methoden können unter dem Begriff „reflexive Anomalistik“ zusammengefasst werden.<sup>30</sup> „Reflexiv“ meint eine Anomalistik, die sich in diesem Zusammenhang der erkenntnistheoretischen Besonderheiten der von ihr untersuchten Phänomene und der damit verbundenen besonderen methodologischen Problemlagen sowie der Verschränkung zwischen subjektiven Evidenzen, wissenschaftlichen Daten und gesellschaftlichen Diskursen in ihrem Forschungsfeld bewusst ist.<sup>31</sup>

Große Geschenke der Parapsychologie sind aus gemeinsamen Pionierleistungen von Frauen und Männern hervorgegangen. Ob eine Präferenz für weibliche oder männliche Wissensformen die Bemühungen nährte oder die Ergebnisse prägte, lässt sich zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt nicht genau sagen, aber von großer Bedeutung ist, dass wir alle Mütter und Väter haben. Unsere mütterlichen und väterlichen Anfänge prägen die Art und Weise, wie wir wissen oder dem nachgehen, was wir wissen wollen, konstruiert durch die Einsichten und besonderen Verwicklungen, die im Laufe des Lebens gewonnen wurden (Keller, 1990: 49). Die Familie hält eine geschlechtsspezifische Spannung aufrecht, die sehen lässt, dass die Art und Weise, wie wir Wissenschaft betreiben, männlich bestimmt sein könnte (ebd.: 51). Die Gefahr der Parteilichkeit bindet uns in diesem Fall jedoch an eine deprivierte Sichtweise: „Nicht nur unsere Charakterisierung der Wissenschaft wird dadurch von den Vorurteilen des Patriarchats und des Sexismus gefärbt, sondern gleichzeitig wird unsere Bewertung des Männlichen und des Weiblichen durch das Prestige der Wissenschaft beeinflusst“ (ebd.: 54). Im Interesse der Parapsychologie ist es einfach unerlässlich, vorsichtig zu sein. Ohne an dieser Stelle ins Detail gehen zu können: Louisa Rhine sammelte Beispiele des Paranormalen, die es einem erlauben, in persönliche Fallgeschichten einzutauchen. J. B. Rhines Schwerpunktsetzung auf die experimentelle Laborforschung beeinflusste die Ausrichtung der experimentellen Parapsychologie zu jener Zeit sehr stark. Gemeinsam schufen sie ein Markenzeichen und prägten lange die Art und Weise, wie experimentelle Parapsychologie betrieben wurde und wie offenbarte paranormale Erfahrungen gesammelt und analysiert wurden.

Um noch einmal auf die PA-Konferenz in Petaluma zurückzukommen: Dean Radin benutzte eine sanft klingende Glocke, um die Teilnehmenden nach den Pausen zu versammeln. In diesem Moment kam mir beim Schreiben dieses Editorials in den Sinn, dass das Bezaubernde an seiner nicht-invasiven, Anti-Crowd-Control-Glocken-Klingel-Methode, mit der er alle dazu brachte, sich zu setzen, nicht darin bestand, dass wir uns alle wie Kühe verhielten, die in den Raum getrieben wurden; nein, er läutete eine kleine Glocke ohne jegliche Aggression. *Wow, er wäre eine tolle Mutter.* Aber Moment mal: Was genau hat dieses Glöckchen damit zu

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30 Vgl. Mayer & Schetsche (2016).

31 [https://www.igpp.de/allg/Berichte/IGPP\\_Taetigkeitsbericht\\_2020-2021.pdf](https://www.igpp.de/allg/Berichte/IGPP_Taetigkeitsbericht_2020-2021.pdf)



tun, eine tolle Mutter zu sein? Oder ein nicht-aggressiver Mann? Oder mit einem fürsorglichen Charakterzug? Oder mit einer herrischen Eigenschaft? Die Glocke steht für Vorurteile und vorgefasste Meinungen darüber, was ein Mann tun, sein oder wissen sollte und was nicht.

Toni Wolff, „eine außergewöhnliche Frau“ (Hart, 1995: 72), lebte ohne Anerkennung ihrer Brillanz, insbesondere von der Gemeinschaft, in der sie wirkte. Ihr Aufsatz „Strukturformen der weiblichen Psyche“ wurde 1934 veröffentlicht und gilt als grundlegendes Material der jungianischen analytischen Psychologie. Nach ihr gibt es vier „psychische Strukturformen“, *Mutter*, *Hetaira*, *Amazone* und *Mediale* als Strukturformen der weiblichen Psyche, wie sie sich bezogen auf den Mann ausdrücken, sich überkreuzen und zu jeder Zeit kontrastieren, kontrollieren, allgemein oder objektiv in Verbindung oder unbewusst in Bezug auf jede Struktur zusammenarbeiten (Wolff, 2003). Sie nahm an, dass diese zu bestimmten Zeiten im Leben einer Frau zum Ausdruck kommen: „Insofern alle vier Formen durch die Kulturgeschichte nachweisbar sind, dürfte es sich um archetypische Strukturen handeln. Sie entsprechen auch Aspekten der männlichen Anima“ (ebd.: 273). Die Strukturformen charakterisiert sie so: „Die *Mutter* ist mütterlich hegend und pflegend, helfend, charitativ, lehrend. [...] Die *Hetaira* oder Gefährtin ist instinktiv auf die *persönliche Psychologie* des Mannes bezogen [...]. Die Funktion der *Hetaira* wäre die Erweckerin des individuellen psychischen Lebens im Manne“ (ebd.: 274–275). Eine dritte Struktur ist die *Amazone*: „Ihr Interesse ist auf objektive Leistung gerichtet, die sie selber erfüllen will“ (ebd.: 277). Und schließlich gibt es noch die *mediale* Frau. Dazu bemerkt sie: „Diesen unbewussten Hintergrund nimmt die *mediale* Strukturform wahr. Es ist dabei nicht an Parapsychologie zu denken, obschon das gewöhnliche Medium die niederste, das heißt unbewußteste Stufe davon ist“ (ebd.: 278).

Ihrem Essay zufolge ist dieser letzte Strukturtypus die Ursache dafür, dass Frauen als Hexen, böse, schwach oder insgesamt als von ihren „Dämonen“, d. h. von ihrem Genie, befreit werden müssen. Ihr Aufsatz enthält so viel mehr, als in diesem Editorial Platz finden kann. Das Wichtigste ist jedoch, dass sie diese Arbeit in einem Raum von Wissenschaft betreibenden Männern, im sozialen Milieu von Gelehrten, verfasst hat und der Literatur hinzufügte und dennoch ausgeschlossen wurde.

Sie war mit Carl Gustav Jung verbunden. Durch ihre Beziehung, die von gegenseitiger Bewunderung, Liebe und geteilter Gelehrsamkeit geprägt war, hat er ein Vermächtnis hinterlassen. Neben seiner Frau Emma war Toni Jungs „forschende“ Mitarbeiterin, ein wissenschaftliches Hilfsmittel seiner Intuition und eine persönliche Notwendigkeit innerhalb einer Ehe, die eine unterstützende Rolle spielte. Wie dem auch sei, die Aktivitäten ihres „Arrangements“ – häuslich und wissenschaftlich – waren sowohl öffentlich als auch privat. Toni lebte jahrzehntelang an der Seite von C. G. Jung als eine nicht anerkannte Frau mit psychoanalytischen Fähigkeiten, die wichtige Beiträge zu Jungs Theorien leistete.

Es war im Jahr 2020, nachdem ich von einem längeren Aufenthalt aus Deutschland zurückgekehrt war, als ich die 2-Dollar-Schrift „Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche“ entdeckte.<sup>32</sup> Ich stöberte in einem Bücherkorb eines Esoterikgeschäftes in Minneapolis, Minnesota, und kaufte sie, weil das Titelbild sechs Bilder von C. G. Jung zeigte. Erst Anfang 2022, nach Beginn des Projekts „Women and Parapsychology 2022“, schlug ich sie auf. Als ich die Seiten der Zeitschrift durchblätterte, fügte sich das Leben und der Beitrag von Toni Wolff in das Projekt „Women and Parapsychology“ ein; diese Synchronizität wollte ich im Editorial der Sonderausgabe nicht unerwähnt lassen. Es beeindruckte mich zutiefst, was die Vorstellungen über die Art und Weise betrifft, wie Frauen Wissen produzieren. Als ich Toni Wolffs Status bemerkte, wurde mir klar, dass sie Jungs Muse war. Es gab damals einige Männer, die von ihrer Vitalität völlig überwältigt waren und sie bewunderten. Andere lehnten sie rundheraus ab, weil sie ohne „Legitimation“ auf der Bildfläche erschien. Dieses Zitat ist vielsagend:

Wolff war der Liebling ihres Vaters. Als er 1910 starb, schickte ihre Mutter sie zu Jung, um das zu behandeln, was man heute als Depression diagnostizieren würde. Jung erkannte sofort ihre Begabung für die Analyse, denn 1911 lud er sie zusammen mit seiner Frau und einigen anderen vielversprechenden Frauen zum Psychoanalytischen Kongress in Weimar ein.<sup>33</sup>

Das Ende der Geschichte mit Toni Wolff und C. G. Jung ist nicht schön. Er sprach von ihr als „seiner zweiten Frau“.<sup>34</sup> Man kann ohne zu zögern sagen, dass ihre Beziehung zu Jung sie geschwächt hat; es muss etwas Erosives mit ihr gemacht haben. Wie viel von dem, was wir über Jungs Auftreten als analytischer Psychologe wissen, ist auf eine Vereinbarung mit einer Frau zurückzuführen, deren historisches Schweigen einen Beitrag zu seinem ikonischen Erfolg leistete? Und inwieweit ist das alles eine Folge seiner dominanten Stellung unter anderen männlichen Wissenschaftlern? Wenn es offenkundig war, dass Toni seinen Ruhm vergrößert hat, dann hatte sich diese einst gesellschaftlich akzeptierte Verbindung vielleicht irgendwie in eine nicht nachweisbare Beziehung zur Dominanz verwandelt, die wir alle aufspüren müssen. Ihr kühnes Leben war eng mit einem Experten wie Jung verbunden. Der gesamte problematische Kontext stellt die Bedeutung seines wissenschaftlichen Ruhms in Frage.

Ihre gesellschaftliche Situation trägt sicherlich zur Stellung von Frauen unter Männern bei, deren Praxis darin besteht, Wissen zu erlangen, um die Welt zu erforschen, und darin, Frauen zu lieben, die Opfer bringen oder in Kauf nehmen, gemieden zu werden, um den Männern, die

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32 *Psychological Perspectives*, Ausgabe 31, 25th Anniversary Reflections, Sommer-Frühjahr '95, veröffentlicht halbjährlich vom C. G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles.

33 <https://jungcurrents.com/women-and-carl-jung-toni-wolff>

34 <https://jungcurrents.com/women-and-carl-jung-toni-wolff>

sie lieben, mit ihrer Präsenz zu helfen. Diese Affinität trägt zum Ruf der Männer als Erfinder und privilegierte Führer bei.

Eine Person wie Rhea White, die zusammen mit Lisette Coly den Tagungsband zur 1991 in Dublin, Irland, veranstalteten internationalen Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* herausgegeben hat, hat ihren Platz unter den anerkannten Wissenschaftlerinnen gefunden, deren Arbeiten im Zentrum der paranormalen Forschung stehen. All diese Frauen haben eines gemeinsam: Sie haben alle einen Beitrag zur Literatur geleistet. Rhea White wurde ein Jahr vor ihrem Tod die Ehrendoktorwürde verliehen.<sup>35</sup>

*Parapsychology: Sources of Information, Compiled under the auspices of the American Society for Psychical Research* von Rhea White und Laura A. Dale wurde 1973 veröffentlicht. Es ist eine kommentierte Bibliographie von Büchern, enzyklopädischen und anderen Verweisen auf Literatur und Personen, die die Parapsychologie repräsentieren. Rhea Whites fieberhafte Dokumentation *außergewöhnlicher menschlicher Erfahrungen* [exceptional human experiences – EHEs] hat das Feld kartiert.<sup>36</sup> Dies wiederum eröffnete die Möglichkeit, die Forschungsmethoden aus der Perspektive einer Frau zu betrachten, die eine Nahtoderfahrung hatte, die sie für immer veränderte. Es war nicht zwingend, dass sie den Rest ihres Lebens damit verbrachte, ihre Erfahrung in eine enorme Ressource für Wissenschaftler zu verwandeln. Sie befragte ihre eigene Erfahrung und ordnete sie in einen Rahmen außergewöhnlicher menschlicher Erfahrungen (EHEs) ein. In dem Versuch, die Erforschung des Unerklärten zu ermöglichen, richtete sie ihr Interesse ganz darauf und positionierte die Parapsychologie damit neu: Das ist es, was feministische Forschung tut. Ich vermute, mit dem gleichen Eifer, mit dem Friederike Schriever ihre Neugier nicht ignorierte, und auf die gleiche Weise, wie Fanny Moser<sup>37</sup> ihre „Konversion“ nicht abtun konnte, führt eine gemeinsame weibliche Erfahrung zu neuen Ansätze, Wissen zu erlangen.

Frauenfragen, Fragen der Geschlechtergerechtigkeit und Fragen des Machtgefälles zwischen Männern und Frauen in der Wissenschaft haben dazu geführt, dass männliche Wissenschaft vs. weibliche Wissenschaft mit einer abgedroschenen Diskussion über Zuverlässigkeit, Glaubwürdigkeit und Legitimation gleichgesetzt werden.

Die Wissenschaft als Erkenntnismethode und die Erfahrung des Paranormalen als Erkenntnisquelle können zu einem kreativen und radikalen Nachdenken über Erfahrung und Wissenschaft und deren Berührungspunkte führen. In den Texten des Sonderheftes kommen beide Aspekte zusammen. Es scheint sich um etwas Universelles zu handeln.

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35 [https://parapsych.org/articles/14/260/rhea\\_white.aspx](https://parapsych.org/articles/14/260/rhea_white.aspx)

36 Siehe [www.ehe.org](http://www.ehe.org)

37 Siehe den Beitrag von Ina Schmied-Knittel (2022) in dieser Ausgabe.

Als mir diese Einsicht während der Teilnahme an der Podiumsdiskussion des PA-Symposiums *Women and Parapsychology Revisited* mit Ina Schmied-Knittel, Christine Simmonds Moore und Nancy Zingrone kam, sagte ich, dass ich nicht genau wüsste, was ich damit meinte. Noch am selben Abend fand ich es heraus: dass diese Universalität oder Allgemeingültigkeit, die ich in allen Artikeln – in allen – wahrnehme, ein Versuch ist, eine Erzählung und Kritik einer widersprüchlichen Geschichte anzubieten; Erfahrende (experiencer) sind nicht darauf trainiert, sich mit der Wissenschaft auseinanderzusetzen, aber Wissenschaftler haben Regeln, um diejenigen, die entsprechende Erfahrungen machen, in der Welt zu verorten.

Laut Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (1990) hat dies, wie sie in ihrem Aufsatz „The Vision of a Woman Shaman“ schreibt, mit einer feministischen Kritik an dem zu tun, was mit Frauen vor sich geht, die das Paranormale oder Außergewöhnliche in ihrem Leben sichtbar machen – dies ist besonders kritisch, wenn das Außergewöhnliche „alltäglich“ ist. Eine solche Kritik betrachtet die „Kunst der Wissenschaft“, die Kunst selbst und die Wissenschaft als Ausdrucksweisen, die sich mit Normen auseinandersetzen und diese dekonstruieren. Lowenhaupt Tsing schlägt mehrere Ansätze vor für eine feministische Kritik an schriftlichen Werken von Frauen, auch an wissenschaftlichen Werken:

Ein Ansatz in der feministischen Kritik hat gezeigt, wie gemeinsame weibliche Erfahrungen und Verbindungen zwischen Autorinnen die weibliche Kreativität beeinflusst haben [...]. Ein zweiter Ansatz hat den Einfluss dominanter männlicher Traditionen auf die kreative Produktion von Frauen betont. Diese wissenschaftliche Arbeit legt nahe, dass Frauen beim Schreiben die herrschenden Konventionen übernehmen und sie gleichzeitig umkehren, ihnen widerstehen und sie umgestalten [...] (E)in dritter feministischer kritischer Ansatz stützt sich auf die französische Literaturtheorie, um zu argumentieren, dass die männliche Dominanz gerade in den Ausdrucksmitteln zum Tragen kommt, die sowohl Männer als auch Frauen verwenden, nämlich in der Sprache und insbesondere im Schreiben. Feministinnen, die diesen Ansatz verfolgen, haben untersucht, wie weibliches Schreiben die maskulinistischen Strukturen, die dem kreativen Ausdruck zugrunde liegen, unterbricht; weibliches Schreiben entlarvt und fordert die geschlechtsasymmetrischen Bedingungen des Schreibens heraus. (Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1990: 149–150)

Es ist die Anerkennung eines dynamischen Feldes mit aktiven Mitwirkenden, die eine Zeitkritik modernisieren, die aktuelle Motivation, sie wissenschaftlich mit und unter den Laien, auch bekannt als die Erfahrenden, zu integrieren. Lowenhaupt Tsing weist darauf hin, dass es nicht so sehr darum geht, was in Abwesenheit der Beiträge von Frauen gesagt wird, sondern darum, „wer an ihrer Stelle zu sprechen hat“ (S. 150).

Carlos Alvarado „fordert Studien zur Rolle der Frau in der Parapsychologie, um ein ausgewogeneres Bild von diesem Bereich zu erhalten ...“ (Rhea White. 1994: 2)

Friederike Schriever, Toni Wolff, Rhea White und Louisa Rhine trugen zu dem Literaturkorpus bei, der den Fortschritt der Parapsychologie in der wissenschaftlichen Forschung repräsentiert, zum reflexiven Diskurs und zu den Erfahrungen von Menschen, die neugierig darauf sind, die Auswirkungen des Paranormalen auf ihr persönliches Leben zu verstehen. Die Arbeit all dieser Frauen ist das Ergebnis disziplinierter exzellenter Leistungen auf diesem Gebiet: Entwicklung von Hypothesen, Beobachtung, Auswertung und Dokumentation von Ergebnissen, die für die Verbesserung der qualitativen Forschung ebenso notwendig sind wie messbare Daten für die quantitative Forschungsmethodik. Ob ihre Ansätze untrennbar mit der weiblichen Erkenntnistheorie verbunden sind, ist zu erwägen.

Zu Beginn dieses Jahres besuchten Gerhard und ich die Ausstellung *Supernatural America: The Paranormal in American Art* im Minneapolis Institute of Art.<sup>38</sup> Zum Zeitpunkt dieses Besuchs konzentrierte sich meine Aufmerksamkeit auf besondere Menschen als Subjekte der Parapsychologie wie die „Golden Leaf Lady“ (Braude, 2007),<sup>39</sup> die Hellseherin Nina Kulagina (1926–1990)<sup>40</sup> oder die heilige Bernadette Soubirous (1844–1879).<sup>41</sup> Die männlich orientierte Sichtweise führte zu vorgefassten Meinungen über Frauen in der Parapsychologie, mit anderen Worten, meine Vorurteile wurden durch die Forschung geprägt. Der Besuch dieser Ausstellung hat meine Vorurteile und unhinterfragte Erwartung, dass ich nur männliche Kunst sehen würde, die Psi interpretiert, zunichte gemacht. Ich hatte keine Ahnung von der Fülle der Kunst von Frauen, die der Welt etwas über Psi mitteilt. Faszinierenderweise waren auch Tagebücher von Frauen dabei, die paranormale Phänomene dokumentierten, was zeigt, dass sie ihre Beobachtungen festhielten. Dies ist eine Datenerfassung durch Laien, die außergewöhnliche Erfahrungen machten.

Eine der Auswirkungen des Besuchs dieser Ausstellung war, dass ich unbedingt mehr über Parapsychologie wissen wollte. In einem meiner typischen Web-Surf-Momente überprüfte ich die Kursliste des Rhine Education Center<sup>42</sup> und stieß auf „Art as Psi Portal to the Mysterious, Mystical, Magical & Miraculous“.<sup>43</sup> Der Kurs schien dort weiterzumachen, wo die Ausstellung aufgehört hatte. Es wurde mir ein zusätzlicher historischer Überblick über die Rolle der Frauen

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38 <https://new.artsmia.org/exhibition/supernatural-america-the-paranormal-in-american-art>

39 Katie, die „Golden Leaf Lady“, war eine Frau, auf deren Körper sich spontan goldene Folie materialisierte.

40 Siehe Conrad (2016).

41 Soubirous hatte Visionen von der Jungfrau Maria in Lourdes im Südwesten Frankreichs. Lourdes wurde ein wichtiger Wallfahrtsort.

42 Rhine Education Center ([www.rhineonline.org](http://www.rhineonline.org)).

43 Dr. Chantal Toporow, Kursleiterin: „Dieser 4-wöchige Kurs ist für jeden gedacht, der ein tieferes Verständnis dafür gewinnen möchte, wie die Kunst uns eine Reihe von Hinweisen auf die menschliche Psi-Erfahrung gegeben hat.“ <https://tinyurl.com/yc8hscrw>

in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Kultur der Parapsychologie gegeben. Wissenschaftlerinnen und „Experiencer“ treffen erneut aufeinander, um mit dem Mythos aufzuräumen, dass die einzige Rolle der Frauen in der Parapsychologie darin besteht, an zweiter Stelle zu stehen. Denn das war das Besondere an dem Kurs und der Ausstellung: beides waren Gemeinschaftsveranstaltungen. Beide überbrückten schnell die Kluft von falschen Vorstellungen über die Rolle und Präsenz von Frauen in diesen Bereichen. Geschlechtsspezifische Vorurteile gegenüber dominanten Männern können in diesen Bereichen nicht aufrechterhalten werden, wenn man die Beiträge beider Geschlechter durch sinnliche, visuelle und interaktive Erfahrungen betrachtet.

Wo sind die Frauen in der Parapsychologie? Sie tragen zum Aufbau von Wissensgrundlagen und zur Erforschung der Subjektivität durch kreative Akte wie beim Kunstschaffen bei. Donna Thomas' integrative Methode untersucht die künstlerischen Bilder von Kindern, um ihre Berichte über unerklärliche Erfahrungen zu bewerten und zu validieren (Thomas, 2022, in dieser Ausgabe). Dieser Schritt zur Sensibilisierung des Umgangs mit der Parapsychologie kann dazu führen, dass die Grenzen sichtbarer werden und dass die Grenzen der Forschung mit weniger engen Vorgaben gesehen werden können.

In diesem Sonderheft wird deutlich, dass eine vielfältige Auswahl von Aufsätzen ein Kollektiv von Autorinnen und Autoren symbolisiert, die Wissen und Diskussionen schätzen, und die gleichzeitig die besten Ideen für Frauen und Parapsychologie aufzeigen. Darüber hinaus sprechen sie für die zugänglichsten Lösungen oder Einführungen in solche Notwendigkeiten als Schlüssel zum Überdenken des Alten. Aber ob ausgebildete Akademikerin oder „Experiencerin“ mit einem Händchen für Wissenschaft – es ist beunruhigend, sowohl in einem befreiten als auch in einem unterdrückten sozialen und akademischen Kontext zu existieren, es ist in gewisser Weise lähmend. Ist es möglich, dass das Nachdenken über Ungleichheit als ein Merkmal, das sich in Erzählungen von kontrollierenden Männern widerspiegelt, kein zentrales Anliegen von Frauen und Parapsychologie ist? Es ist möglich. Überall findet sich eine kleine Überschneidung von ausgebildeten Forscher-Gelehrten-Typen und von hingebungsvollen „Experiencer“-Praktiker-Typen. Komplexität vs. Einfachheit: Es ist schwer, den besten Ansatz für umfassende, multidisziplinäre, weithin kreative und bewusste Schlussfolgerungen für Frauen und Parapsychologie zu finden. Wie kann die Integration von Frauen, Wissenschaft und Parapsychologie die Parapsychologie voranbringen? Die Wissenschaft bietet eine Vielfalt von Gesprächen, die unter Laien kaum möglich sind. Sie führt auch in die Richtung, die Jaques Vallée für die Parapsychologie vorschlägt. Die Kehrseite der Medaille ist, dass wir alle zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt im Leben „Experiencer“ sind. Das Paranormale diskriminiert nicht, es sucht sich nicht aus, welcher Geist (ghost) am besten für die Forschung geeignet ist. Warum sollten wir unter den Gelehrten um der Wissenschaft willen die Geschlechter trennen?

(Die Literaturliste befindet sich am Ende der englischen Version des Editorials auf Seite 263.)

## Editorial

### Editorial: Delayed Start of a Project

GERHARD MAYER<sup>1</sup>

Along with guest editor Cedar Leverett, I was on the train returning to Germany from the 2019 Parapsychological Association Congress in Paris. We were reviewing the event, and she mentioned her observation of the dominance of male presenters on the stage. My response was perhaps typically masculine, pointing out the unequal gender balance in membership of the Parapsychological Association and the possibility of paper submissions that would apply equally to women. I have also pointed out the difficulties in finding women willing to apply for the board of directors of the German Gesellschaft für Anomalistik [Society for Anomalistics], of which I am the executive director. But Cedar was not really satisfied with my response. She began her research on women and parapsychology and I added the conference proceedings of the 1991 conference *Women and Parapsychology*, held in Dublin, Ireland, and organized by the Parapsychology Foundation, to her list of publications to read, along with references to other historic women in parapsychology, e.g. Peter Mulacz's paper on the Eleonore Zugun case (Mulacz, 1999) and Ina Schmied-Knittel's work on Fanny Moser (Schmied-Knittel, 2022, this issue). Cedar suggested that I do a special issue on this topic, since I am the editor-in-chief of the bilingual *Journal of Anomalistics / Zeitschrift für Anomalistik*.

Thinking about it, I was hesitant and rather dismissive. Two objections came to mind. (1) Good science is not gender specific per se. So why talk about topics such as feminist methodology in science and things like that? (2) Is a journal's readership genuinely interested in such a topic? These concerns and other pressing projects made it easy to let the topic fade into the background.

In 2021 there were some changes with the journal. It became bilingual, got a new cover and an English translation of the German title. Additionally, the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) became co-publisher. At that point, we entered into

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negotiations with a publisher who wanted to include the journal in their program. Although there were advantages, we finally decided against the contract because it would have greatly restricted our freedom of designing the journal. A crucial point was the contractual need to plan in advance the content of the annual issues. This is difficult to achieve in anomalistics with its very limited number of authors and scientific submissions. One way to address the content problem is to publish special issues where you invite authors to contribute. In this situation, I remembered Cedar's suggestion. To make a long story short, the project to place the journal with a publisher was abandoned, but the project of a special issue on *Women and Parapsychology* remained and was realized now.

I invited Nancy Zingrone, as attendant of the 1991 conference, and Cedar, who brought up the idea of a special issue, to serve as guest editors, and was very happy that both agreed. With Cedar, a woman is involved who has not been in the field that long and who accordingly has a fresh view of the situation. Nancy, on the other hand, is a "veteran" of parapsychological research who is well connected in the research community, and can make a connection from then to now.

We designed and conducted an online survey directed to women active in the field of parapsychology and anomalistics (Mayer et al., 2022, this issue). I also organized a symposium for the Parapsychological Association, "Women and Parapsychology Revisited," recently held on November 19 of this year.<sup>2</sup>

And what about the two objections about gender specificity and readership mentioned above?

Comparing the research situation from 1991 with the current one in terms of methodology, a significant change can be noticed. What were then called feminist approaches or methods of parapsychological research (White, 1994) have now become an integral part of the arsenal of methods and are appreciated and used by women and men alike. Of course, there is still some bias toward evidence-oriented and complexity-reduced experimental research, which has been called "androcentric" (ibid.); but the value and importance of qualitative methods and process-oriented research for gaining knowledge in the field of parapsychology is now indisputably recognized by almost everyone. However, I learned during the course of the project in the discussions and through the essays submitted that a gendered approach that takes recent developments into account can be enriching and broaden perspectives. In this respect, I can only encourage all male researchers to critically question their preconceptions and orthodox basic assumptions and to suspend them at least temporarily.

This leads to the second objection: The 1991 conference aroused almost no interest among male research colleagues. The 2022 PA symposium also took place with a very small participation

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2 [https://www.parapsych.org/section/66/online\\_symposia.aspx](https://www.parapsych.org/section/66/online_symposia.aspx)



of men. Considering my own initial reaction to the proposal of this special issue, I can understand that, but find it unfortunate. At the end of the panel discussion of the symposium, the hope was expressed, including by me, that such an event “Women and Parapsychology” would no longer be necessary in 30 years. Of course, this hope stems from a socio-political desire for gender equality. However, an objection by Cedar Leverett and a comment by our mutual friend and colleague Patric Giesler influenced a revision in my opinion. The socio-political situation will permanently change, and the desire for a definitive solution is naïve. Therefore, such a topic will remain relevant, even if the sub-topics and focal points may change. The demand for political correctness at universities, for example, brings completely new aspects of the gender issue to light. The same applies to the LGBT discussion.

If we turn away from the socio-political sphere, we will also find reasons on the content level to have this topic on the agenda in the next 30 years. The perspective on women and parapsychology, and gender in parapsychology in general, will remain an interesting and stimulating topic that neither should be ignored nor dismissed. It is a significant element of the social context in which psi phenomena occur. For a better understanding of psi we have to take social contexts, gender, intercultural, and global perspectives into account. Therefore, the topic of “Women and Parapsychology” should not be seen as a necessary evil to be made obsolete by social changes, but as an opportunity and enrichment of our scientific knowledge efforts in the field of parapsychology and anomalistics. This is exemplified by the contributions in this special issue.

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## Editorial: Verzögerter Start eines Projekts

Ich saß zusammen mit Gastherausgeberin Cedar Leverett im Zug auf dem Rückweg nach Deutschland. Wir kamen vom Kongress der Parapsychological Association, der 2019 in Paris stattfand, und ließen die Veranstaltung Revue passieren. Cedar erwähnte die Dominanz der männlichen Vortragenden auf der Bühne, die sie beobachtete. Meine Antwort war vielleicht typisch männlich, indem ich auf das ungleiche Geschlechterverhältnis in der Mitgliedschaft der Parapsychological Association hinwies und auf die Möglichkeit, Vorträge einzureichen, die auch für Frauen gelten würden. Ich habe auch die Schwierigkeiten erwähnt, Frauen zu finden, die bereit sind, sich für den Vorstand der Gesellschaft für Anomalistik zu bewerben, deren Geschäftsführerin ich bin. Aber Cedar war mit meiner Antwort nicht wirklich zufrieden. Sie begann, über Frauen und Parapsychologie zu recherchieren, und ich machte sie, neben Hinweisen auf historische Frauen in der Parapsychologie, wie z. B. Peter Mulacz's Arbeit zum Fall Eleonore Zugun (Mulacz, 1999) und Ina Schmied-Knittels Studie zu Fanny Moser (Schmied-Knittel, 2022, in dieser Ausgabe), auf den Tagungsband der 1991 in Dublin, Irland, abgehaltenen und von der Parapsychology Foundation organisierten Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* aufmerksam. Cedar schlug mir als dem Chefredakteur der *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik* vor, ein Themenheft dazu zu machen.

Als ich darüber nachdachte, war ich zögerlich und eher ablehnend. Zwei Einwände kamen mir in den Sinn. (1) Gute Wissenschaft ist nicht per se geschlechtsspezifisch. Warum also über Themen wie feministische Methodik in der Wissenschaft und Ähnliches sprechen? (2) Ist die Leserschaft einer Zeitschrift wirklich an einem solchen Thema interessiert? Diese Bedenken und andere dringende Projekte machten es leicht, das Thema in den Hintergrund zu rücken.

Im Jahr 2021 gab es einige Änderungen bei der Zeitschrift. Sie wurde zweisprachig, bekam ein neues Cover und eine englische Übersetzung des deutschen Titels. Außerdem wurde das Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene Mitherausgeber. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt traten wir in Verhandlungen mit einem Verlag ein, der die Zeitschrift in sein Programm aufnehmen wollte. Obwohl dies mit einigen Vorteilen verbunden gewesen wäre, haben wir uns letztlich gegen einen Vertrag entschieden, weil er unsere Freiheit bei der Gestaltung der Zeitschrift stark eingeschränkt hätte. Ein entscheidender Punkt war die vertragliche Notwendigkeit, den Inhalt der jährlichen Ausgaben im Voraus zu planen. Dies ist in der Anomalistik mit ihrer sehr begrenzten Anzahl von Autoren und wissenschaftlichen Beiträgen nur schwer zu erreichen. Eine Möglichkeit, das inhaltliche Problem zu lösen, ist die Veröffentlichung von Themenheften, zu denen man Autorinnen und Autoren einlädt. In dieser Situation erinnerte ich mich an den Vorschlag von Cedar. Um es kurz zu machen: Das Projekt, die Zeitschrift bei einem Verlag unterzubringen, wurde aufgegeben, aber das Projekt eines Themenheftes zu *Women and Parapsychology* blieb bestehen und wurde nun realisiert.

Ich habe Nancy Zingrone, eine ehemalige Teilnehmerin der Konferenz von 1991, und Cedar, die die Idee für das Themenheft hatte, als Gastredakteurinnen eingeladen und war sehr froh, dass beide zugestimmt haben. Mit Cedar ist eine Frau beteiligt, die noch nicht so lange in diesem Bereich tätig ist und dementsprechend einen frischen Blick auf die Situation hat. Nancy hingegen ist eine „Veteranin“ der parapsychologischen Forschung, die in der Forschungsgemeinschaft gut vernetzt ist und eine Verbindung von damals zu heute herstellen kann.

Wir haben eine Online-Umfrage konzipiert und durchgeführt, die sich an Frauen richtete, die auf dem Gebiet der Parapsychologie und Anomalistik tätig sind (Mayer et al., 2022, in dieser Ausgabe). Außerdem habe ich für die Parapsychological Association ein Symposium mit dem Titel „Women and Parapsychology Revisited“ organisiert, das am 19. November dieses Jahres stattfand.<sup>3</sup>

Und was ist mit den beiden oben genannten Einwänden bezüglich Geschlechtsspezifität und Leserschaft?

Vergleicht man die Forschungssituation von 1991 mit der heutigen in Bezug auf die Methodik, so lässt sich ein deutlicher Wandel feststellen. Die damals als feministische Ansätze oder Methoden der parapsychologischen Forschung (White, 1994) bezeichneten Methoden sind heute fester Bestandteil des Methodenarsenals und werden von Frauen und Männern gleichermaßen geschätzt und genutzt. Natürlich gibt es immer noch eine gewisse Voreingenommenheit gegenüber der evidenzorientierten und komplexitätsreduzierten experimentellen Forschung, die als „androzentrisch“ (ebd.) bezeichnet wurde; aber der Wert und die Bedeutung qualitativer Methoden und prozessorientierter Forschung für den Erkenntnisgewinn auf dem Gebiet der Parapsychologie wird inzwischen von fast allen unbestritten anerkannt. Allerdings habe ich im Laufe des Projekts in den Diskussionen und durch die eingereichten Aufsätze gelernt, dass eine geschlechtsspezifische Herangehensweise, die den neueren Entwicklungen Rechnung trägt, bereichernd sein und die Perspektiven erweitern kann. Insofern kann ich allen männlichen Forschern nur ans Herz legen, ihre Vorurteile und orthodoxen Grundannahmen kritisch zu hinterfragen und zumindest vorübergehend auszusetzen.

Dies führt zum zweiten Einwand: Die Konferenz von 1991 stieß bei den männlichen Forscherkollegen auf fast kein Interesse. Auch das PA-Symposium 2022 fand mit einer sehr geringen Beteiligung von Männern statt. In Anbetracht meiner eigenen anfänglichen Reaktion auf den Vorschlag für dieses Themenheft kann ich das verstehen, finde es aber bedauerlich. Am Ende der Podiumsdiskussion des Symposiums wurde, auch von mir, die Hoffnung geäußert, dass eine solche Veranstaltung „Women and Parapsychology“ in 30 Jahren nicht mehr notwendig sein würde. Diese Hoffnung entspringt natürlich einem gesellschaftspolitischen Wunsch

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3 [https://www.parapsych.org/section/66/online\\_symposia.aspx](https://www.parapsych.org/section/66/online_symposia.aspx)

nach Gleichstellung der Geschlechter. Ein Einwand von Cedar Leverett und eine Bemerkung unseres gemeinsamen Freundes und Kollegen Patric Giesler haben jedoch zu einer Revision meiner Meinung geführt. Die gesellschaftspolitische Situation wird sich ständig ändern, und der Wunsch nach einer endgültigen Lösung ist naiv. Daher wird ein solches Thema relevant bleiben, auch wenn sich die Unterthemen und Schwerpunkte ändern mögen. Die Forderung nach Political Correctness an den Universitäten bringt zum Beispiel ganz neue Aspekte der Gender-Frage ans Licht. Das Gleiche gilt für die LGBT-Diskussion.

Wenn wir uns von der gesellschaftspolitischen Sphäre abwenden, werden wir auch auf inhaltlicher Ebene Gründe finden, dieses Thema in den nächsten 30 Jahren auf der Agenda zu haben. Die Perspektive auf Frauen und Parapsychologie und Gender in der Parapsychologie im Allgemeinen wird ein interessantes und anregendes Thema bleiben, das weder ignoriert noch als irrelevant abgetan werden sollte. Es ist ein bedeutsames Element des sozialen Kontextes, in dem Psi-Phänomene auftreten. Für ein besseres Verständnis von Psi müssen soziale Kontexte, Geschlecht, interkulturelle und globale Perspektiven berücksichtigt werden. Daher sollte das Thema „Women and Parapsychology“ nicht als notwendiges Übel betrachtet werden, das durch gesellschaftliche Veränderungen obsolet wird, sondern als Chance und Bereicherung unserer wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisbemühungen auf dem Gebiet der Parapsychologie und Anomalistik. Dies wird durch die Beiträge dieses Themenheftes exemplarisch veranschaulicht.

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# On Being a (White, Middle-Class) Woman in Parapsychology

CAROLINE WATT<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – In this paper the author provides a personal perspective on the theme of women in parapsychology. She reflects on her journey in academia, from being the first in her farming family to go to university, to joining the University of Edinburgh in 1986 as Research Assistant to the first Koestler Professor Robert Morris, to her current position as the second holder of the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology. Equality of opportunity is complex, and the author has benefitted greatly from the privileges of being white and middle-class, and of having an open-minded boss (indeed, she speculates that parapsychologists may be particularly open-minded). At the same time, she has experienced gender-related obstacles in her career, including periods of maternity leave, and disproportionate responsibility for dependants and housekeeping. The latter challenges have mostly been managed with part-time working. Perhaps as a consequence, progression to more senior academic positions (notably being promoted to the Koestler Chair in 2016 aged almost 54) has been slow relative to male colleagues. Studies of the profile of UK academics indicate that this is a typical experience for many female researchers. But the same data also show that other less privileged groups are even more poorly represented in academia, most notably black people. In 1994 Rhea White memorably highlighted the advantages of taking a feminist approach to parapsychology. This paper concludes by suggesting that parapsychological research – the questions that we ask, the methods that we employ, and what we learn as a result – will benefit from an even more inclusive academy.

*Keywords:* Feminist – feminism – decolonizing – decolonization – parapsychology – equal opportunity

## Über das Dasein als (weiße, bürgerliche) Frau in der Parapsychologie

**Zusammenfassung** – In diesem Beitrag gibt die Autorin eine persönliche Perspektive auf das Thema Frauen in der Parapsychologie. Sie blickt auf ihren akademischen Werdegang zurück, angefangen damit, dass sie die erste in ihrer Bauernfamilie war, die eine Universität besuchte, bis hin zu ihrem Eintritt in die University of Edinburgh im Jahr 1986 als Forschungsassistentin des ersten Koestler-Professors Robert Morris und zu ihrer derzeitigen Position als zweite Inhaberin des Koestler-

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Lehrstuhls für Parapsychologie. Chancengleichheit ist ein komplexes Thema, und die Autorin hat in hohem Maße von den Privilegien profitiert, weiß zu sein, zur Mittelschicht zu gehören und einen aufgeschlossenen Chef zu haben (tatsächlich vermutet sie, dass Parapsychologen besonders aufgeschlossen sein könnten). Gleichzeitig ist sie in ihrer Karriere auf geschlechtsspezifische Hindernisse gestoßen, darunter Zeiten des Mutterschaftsurlaubs und eine unverhältnismäßig große Verantwortung für Familienangehörige und den Haushalt. Die letztgenannten Herausforderungen wurden größtenteils mit Teilzeitarbeit bewältigt. Vielleicht als Folge davon war der Aufstieg in höhere akademische Positionen (insbesondere die Beförderung auf den Koestler-Lehrstuhl im Jahr 2016 im Alter von fast 54 Jahren) im Vergleich zu männlichen Kollegen langsam. Studien zum Profil britischer Akademiker zeigen, dass dies eine typische Erfahrung für viele Forscherinnen ist. Dieselben Daten zeigen aber auch, dass andere, weniger privilegierte Gruppen in der akademischen Welt noch schlechter vertreten sind, insbesondere Schwarze. Rhea White hat 1994 die Vorteile eines feministischen Ansatzes in der Parapsychologie hervorgehoben. Dieser Beitrag schließt mit dem Vorschlag, dass die parapsychologische Forschung – die Fragen, die wir stellen, die Methoden, die wir anwenden, und die Erkenntnisse, die wir daraus ziehen – von einer noch stärker integrativen Hochschulsituation profitieren wird.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Feministin – Feminismus – Entkolonialisierung – Dekolonialisierung – Parapsychologie – Chancengleichheit

When the editors kindly invited me to contribute to this special issue on women in parapsychology, I was flattered but replied that I felt unqualified because I had not conducted any research on this topic. So how could I make a meaningful contribution? This argument was insufficient to get me off the hook, because the editors felt that folk would be interested in my personal perspective and lived experience as a woman in parapsychology. Also (me and my big mouth) I had previously written on the topic when reviewing the proceedings of the Parapsychology Foundation's landmark *Women in Parapsychology* meeting (Watt, 1996). So, begging your indulgence dear reader, here we are. As the title suggest, it's not all about gender.

Currently I am privileged to be the second person to hold the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh. (The first was of course Robert L. Morris.) So how did I end up here? I was born in 1962 into a farming family in Scotland, the eldest of five children. While we were landowners so would be regarded as middle-class, everyone in the family manually laboured on the farm, especially my father. My sisters and I worked to earn and save money. My brothers were paid too but they were also in training to inherit the family business, whereas the girls would find their own way in the world. Perhaps this was a case where our gender paradoxically worked in our favour, as my sisters and I were therefore motivated to study and work hard to support ourselves.

In these formative years I have my mother (a person with dyslexia) to thank for feeding my voracious appetite for reading. I was educated at state schools, then was first in my family to go

to University – this was at St Andrews where I studied psychology. In my final year I chose to do my dissertation on sex role stereotyping and the concept of androgyny, under the supervision of fledgling social psychologist Dr Margie Wetherell. I had always been painfully aware of how girls' lives can be blighted by sex role stereotypes, something that still pains me on an almost daily basis (don't get me started ...). So I guess you could call me a feminist. Margie – also a feminist – went on to be a prominent researcher in discursive psychology, though my project was questionnaire-based and used quantitative methods. Already I was starting to follow a scientific path that Rhea White and many other scholars have characterized as androcentric (White, 1994).

I took my final degree exams in 1984, the same year that the press were reporting Edinburgh University's interest in the bequest of Arthur and Cynthia Koestler to support parapsychological research at a British University. Incredibly, given what later transpired, our exam paper on 'Contemporary Issues in Psychology' included the following question:

Arthur Koestler left half a million pounds to found a Chair of Parapsychology. Imagine that you succeed in the application to be the first Professor of Parapsychology at Edinburgh. In what way, if at all, would your research programme draw on methods, techniques, ideas and theories from other areas in psychology?

Yes reader, I opted to answer that question. I had always been curious about the paranormal although at that point in my life I'd had just one notable anomalous experience. This was when I was about 7 years old. I was happily running along a strip of grass in dappled sunlight under some trees and ... it's difficult to put into words, but I sort of felt that I flew out of my body for a few moments. Looking back, I suppose it was a kind of transcendent experience. It felt awesome and I tried to elicit the experience again by running repeatedly along the same patch of ground. But it only happened that one time. Later, as a teenager, my introduction to parapsychology came through books such as Lyall Watson's *Supernature* and Arthur Koestler's *The Roots of Coincidence*.

After I graduated, I took a shorthand and typing course so I could work as a temp secretary and pay the rent while I decided on my next steps. I kept an eye on the newspapers (no internet in those days!) and when the press reported that Bob Morris had been appointed as the new Koestler Professor, I speculatively sent him a carefully typed letter. I had secretarial skills, but also a psychology degree and an interest in parapsychology – could I be of any assistance? After some delay (Bob was still in Pittsburgh when I wrote), two powerful things happened to me. First, I received a hand-written reply from Bob inviting me to meet him and his colleagues once he was settled in Edinburgh (at this time John Beloff was retiring but still involved with supervising his PhD students Deborah Delaney and Julie Milton). In the rest of my career when dealing with unsolicited letters I have tried to remember Bob's encouraging response. Second, in his letter Bob addressed me as 'Ms' – way ahead of the times in Scotland at least. Both of these struck me as a sign of liberal

thinking which I think characterizes not only Bob but also many parapsychologists – after all, they have to be somewhat independent-minded to get into parapsychology in the first place.

When I eventually met Bob in his office at Edinburgh University, I explained to him somewhat apologetically that while I found the subject fascinating and could see lots of connections between it and my education in psychology, I had no strongly held personal beliefs about the paranormal. I told Bob about my childhood anomalous experience, and – typically for him – he put an encouraging spin on it, saying that I had acted like a scientist in trying to repeat the event. He appreciated my relatively neutral stance, saying that it could be disadvantageous to set out as a researcher with a particular model of the paranormal in mind. To cut a long story short, Bob eventually advertised for a research assistant, I applied and was appointed in 1986. (My parents must have been relieved to see my university education finally being put to good use, and I'm still a fast touch-typist!)

Returning to the theme of this special issue: While my first personal contact with academic parapsychologists was with two males in senior posts, the only two parapsychology PhD students at Edinburgh were both female. The new and surely terribly busy professor had gone out of his way to be encouraging *and* called me 'Ms'. So this brings me to my first point – that generally I don't think parapsychology has a particular problem with a lack of encouragement of women to enter the field. In part this could be because many more females than males choose to study psychology, a subject that is often a natural precursor for parapsychology. And – huge speculation on my part – it could also be because parapsychologists are more open to violating social norms.

BUT, compared to men, women in parapsychology (like women in any job) tend to have greater obstacles to overcome to progress in their jobs. This means more fall by the wayside, or are delayed in their career progression because they have career breaks or are working part-time so it takes longer to build a strong CV. In my own case, I married, had a total of about seven months of maternity leave when I was breast-feeding my two sons, and then worked part-time for several years because I took on the greater share of childcare and domestic tasks while my then-husband worked full-time. I was fortunate that I had a supportive boss and employer and could adjust my working hours and keep my job. Indeed with Bob's encouragement I was able to take a part-time PhD whilst still working and then got promoted to Research Fellow (huh, it's only just struck me that *Fellow* is a gendered term!).

I gradually strengthened my research, teaching and leadership profile and took on more senior roles, some instead of Bob who sadly died in 2004. Nevertheless I did not reach the highest grade – Professor – until 2016, when I was almost 54 years old. I did not lack aspiration – I had tried for promotion to Prof a few years before. But my CV was not strong enough first time round. My academic profile was subsequently strengthened in part by winning the Perrott-Warrick Senior Researcher award in 2010, and I am so grateful to Professor Bernard Carr and the Perrott-



Warrick committee for this vote of confidence. I succeeded in my second application for promotion and was honoured to become the second Koestler Professor at Edinburgh. More recently, I took on increased caring responsibilities for an ill family member, and returned to working part-time.

So that's how *my* academic career progressed. While I believe there is no shortage of women in parapsychology overall, my admittedly limited experience is that there are proportionately fewer female parapsychologists in senior positions compared to males. For eight years I have been the only female parapsychologist on the Bial Foundation Symposium's Organising Committee. We try to ensure good representation of female speakers at the Symposium, but especially in a small field like parapsychology this can be difficult to achieve. A similar trend is seen in Bial Foundation's Scientific Board which judges grant applications, in which I am one of eight female researchers amongst the 55 Board members. I believe this is because there are fewer senior female researchers to choose from. This trend that I have only anecdotally observed mirrors the findings of more systematic research in the UK. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reports that the proportion of female academic staff in 2010/11 was 42.2%, but only 19.8% of professors were female (HESA, 2012). Studies investigating this disparity (e.g., Ward 2001) show that, *even controlling for factors such as career breaks and publication history*, male academics are more likely to end up in senior positions than female academics. (Partly, researchers conclude, this is due to male academics being more likely to move to a different university for a new job, compared to female academics; Ward 2001.)

Thus far I have been writing about gender equality issues. But, as Rhea White so powerfully reminded us (White, 1994), gender also affects the questions we ask and the way we go about our research. Looking back on my career doing research and publishing mostly in experimental parapsychology, I can see how I internalized what White characterized as the dominant androcentric approach to research in parapsychology: doing studies where we attempted to control variables and objectively measure psi. The research that was getting published in leading journals followed this model. The research that was getting funded followed this model. Our universities' psychology departments also implicitly taught students to value this approach above others – and still do. I was not unaware of this bias at the time (see Watt, 1996). But more recently, as UK academics are encouraged to 'decolonize the curriculum' (e.g. Hack, 2020), increasingly White's call for fresh perspectives resonates. And this brings me to my final point.

Although more than 50% of the world's population is female I think we have to be mindful of the limitations that could accompany an overly narrow focus on gender as a potential barrier to participation in parapsychology and academia. While I've personally experienced gender-related challenges in my life, I've also benefitted from the considerable advantages of being white, middle class, English-speaking, and having a family and school that encouraged me into higher education and financial independence. When I look around at parapsychology conferences, I see men and

women who mostly look and sound like me (except with less of a Scottish accent, Brian Millar excepted!). Again this is just an anecdotal observation, but data from HESA backs it up. Taking ethnicity as a timely example, only 1.6% of UK all UK academic staff are black (7.9% are Asian), and 0.5% of UK university professors are black (HESA, 2012). This issue clearly goes far beyond parapsychology. Rhea White argued for the benefits of a feminist approach to parapsychology (White, 1994). Extending her argument, we must ask ourselves: to what degree does parapsychology's rather narrow researcher profile constrain the questions we pose and the way we do our research?

The women of my mother's background and generation tended not to have their own careers, or gave them up to become housewives when they married. In my generation, women in most westernized countries are in paid employment but still do the lion's share of unpaid labour. Women continue to be under-represented in academia compared to men. But other insidious inequalities also exist. Black people are even more under-represented compared to white people. Working class people are disempowered compared to middle class people. Older people are under-represented. People with visible and invisible disabilities face barriers. The voices of people who do not speak English are less easily heard. In this wider sense, most of academia, including parapsychology, suffers from a lack of diversity. If we can open the academy to a wider range of people, ultimately our understanding of paranormal beliefs and experiences will benefit from the more diverse perspectives and approaches that these individuals will bring to their work.

### Acknowledgement

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## Occultism as a Resource The Parapsychologist Fanny Moser (1872–1953)

INA SCHMIED-KNITTEL<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – Fanny Moser was a Swiss natural scientist who devoted the second half of her life to the study of occult phenomena, especially hauntings, and wrote two influential and extensive monographs on the subject. As one of the early female sponsors of the Freiburg Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health, she also provided the necessary support for the research institute and, in this respect, contributed to the establishment of a parapsychological research scene in Germany. The article first reconstructs Moser’s research biography, which is already remarkable because she was one of the very first female students and doctoral candidates in the German Empire. In a second step, it will be shown at which point and how exactly Moser was confronted with parapsychological topics and what role and function they had in her life. It will be shown that Moser’s engagement with parapsychology was situated in a dynamic field between subjective experiences of evidence, a personal crisis, and scientific self-empowerment, and that gender-specific factors also played a role. In this context it will be asked whether the publication of one’s own paranormal experiences and the introspection as a form of presentation represents a “typical female” aspect, since comparable statements by male parapsychologists are mostly absent in the scientific publications.

*Keywords:* gender – history of parapsychology – evidence – introspection – German Empire

### **Okkultismus als Ressource. Die Parapsychologin Fanny Moser (1872–1953)**

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – Fanny Moser war eine Schweizer Naturwissenschaftlerin, die die zweite Hälfte ihres Lebens der Erforschung okkultur Phänomene, insbesondere des Spuks, widmete und zwei einflussreiche und umfangreiche Monographien zu diesem Thema schrieb. Als eine der frühen Förderinnen des Freiburger Instituts für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene sorgte sie

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1 **Ina Schmied-Knittel** studied sociology at University of Konstanz; Doctorate/PhD in 2008 at University of Freiburg. Since 1998 research associate at the Freiburg “Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene.” Research, publications and teaching on extraordinary experiences, alternative knowledge and belief systems, medial thematization and presentation of the paranormal, history of occultism, near-death experiences, discourse analysis, sociology of knowledge, qualitative methods, etc. E-Mail: [schmied@igpp.de](mailto:schmied@igpp.de)

2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.

auch für die nötige Unterstützung des Forschungsinstituts und trug damit zum Aufbau einer parapsychologischen Forschungsszene in Deutschland bei. Der Beitrag rekonstruiert zunächst Mosers Forschungsbiographie, die schon deshalb bemerkenswert ist, weil sie eine der ersten Studentinnen und Doktorandinnen im Deutschen Kaiserreich überhaupt war. In einem zweiten Schritt soll gezeigt werden, wann und wie genau Moser mit parapsychologischen Themen konfrontiert wurde und welche Rolle und Funktion diese in ihrem Leben hatten. Es wird gezeigt, dass Mosers Auseinandersetzung mit der Parapsychologie in einem dynamischen Feld zwischen subjektiven Evidenzerfahrungen, persönlicher Krise und wissenschaftlicher Selbstermächtigung angesiedelt war und dass auch geschlechtsspezifische Faktoren eine Rolle spielten. In diesem Zusammenhang wird die Frage gestellt, ob die Veröffentlichung eigener paranormaler Erfahrungen und die Introspektion als Präsentationsform einen „typisch weiblichen“ Aspekt darstellt, da vergleichbare Aussagen von männlichen Parapsychologen in den wissenschaftlichen Publikationen meist fehlen.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Gender – Geschichte der Parapsychologie – Evidenzerfahrung – Introspektion – Deutsches Reich

### ***Introduction***

I begin this article with an unambiguous assertion: the history of German parapsychology in the 20th century would have been different without the contribution of Fanny Moser. At the end of her life Moser established a fund for parapsychological research and donated her library and part of her fortune to the “Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene” (hereinafter “IGPP”) in Freiburg. The IGPP had been founded in 1950 – barely three years before Moser’s death – as an independent research center for parapsychology. The success story of the IGPP as an internationally renowned research center for parapsychological topics is well known – and insofar Moser’s life and work is an essential part of the history of German parapsychology.<sup>3</sup> Apart from this, the academic development of parapsychology and its legitimization as a “normal” science were important concerns for Moser, who was herself a natural scientist and wrote two extensive books on occultism and poltergeists, which are considered important works of parapsychology today. However, it cannot be said that Fanny Moser is widely known, especially in non-German speaking countries. Her role as a researcher and promoter of German parapsychology has so far been perceived only in a sporadic way, except in very well-informed and interested professional circles.

This article wants to change that and bring up the role of women in German parapsychology. It reconstructs not only the remarkable biography of an early researcher, but also general questions in the context of gender-specific problems and limitations in science at the beginning of the 20th century. For international readers, this requires some knowledge of the German

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3 On the history of Freiburg parapsychology and the IGPP, especially under Hans Bender, see most recently Lux, 2021.

historical and cultural context. Because most of the sources used are from Germany, it is hoped that non-German readers will be able to take this specific viewpoint and recognize the incredible value of women like Fanny Moser.<sup>4</sup>

Let us briefly explain the structure and argumentation steps of this article: At first, we will describe Moser's biographical background and her path to becoming one of the first female students and PhD scientists in German Empire (section 2). In doing so, we outline the historical conditions and realities of educational policy to which the history of women in science is linked. In the late 19th century, the European universities were not gender-neutral in theory or practice. Higher education was clearly male-dominated, and the university enrollment (matriculation) of women was largely unthinkable or forbidden. Fanny Moser also had to struggle with such adversities and witnessed the resistance to women in the academic field personally. Moser's path to becoming a doctor of natural science is even more remarkable, and we will note that she became a renowned expert in zoology despite unfavorable conditions (section 3). Part four of the article describes Fanny Moser's way to psychical research. This was not at all automatically (or interest-based) predetermined, since Moser was (at least according to her own account) quite skeptical about occult topics as a young woman. Instead, she initially had other thematic interests and academic ambitions. Thus, it was ultimately private circumstances that brought Moser from zoology to occultism in the second half of her life. Her husband's serious illness required her domestic support and care. Relegated to intellectual isolation and academic solitude, Moser was looking for scientific challenges and chose occultism as her new field of research, whereby a subjective experience of evidence played a key role. The fact that she entered a controversial field of science leads to the question of the consequences associated with this decision. Section five explains that and how parapsychology provided some interesting resources for Fanny Moser. We will also see (section six) how she finally was able to secure her place in the history of science. In conclusion, the last part of the paper (seven) builds a bridge to the current question of this thematic issue and reconstructs aspects that go beyond the individual case. Here we will discuss, for example, the so-called "Mathilda effect" in science, the role of critical life events in women's professional biographies, and the question of personal paranormal experiences and belief systems.

### ***Fanny Moser (1872–1953): Biographical Sketch***

Because Fanny Moser has rarely been in the focus of the history of parapsychology (and especially not in an international/English-language context) a short biographical sketch will follow first.

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4 At this point, I would like to thank Cedar S. Leverett for her incredibly helpful comments, revision suggestions, and translation assistance. Her enthusiasm for Fanny Moser and all the other topics in this issue is impressive and her infectious enthusiasm made this a pleasure to work on.

Fanny Moser was born in 1872 into a very rich Swiss family. Her father, Heinrich Moser (1805–1874), was a factory owner who had achieved great prosperity by trading in clocks and watches in tsarist Russia. Her mother, Fanny von Sulzer-Wart (1848–1925), was more than 40 years younger than Moser and came from a distinguished Swiss family. The couple married despite of some resistance and had two daughters: Fanny (named after her mother) was the older one. Two years later, her younger sister Mentona was born. Only a few days after their birth, father Moser died completely unexpectedly after a cardiac arrest. His young wife inherited most of the legacy but was from then on her very own. At first, she bought a castle-like estate near Zurich, where she educated her daughters and attached great importance to an aristocratic, upper-middle-class society. The widow's social and intellectual



**Figure 1.** Fanny Moser. (Archive of the IGPP)

connections were far-reaching. In addition to writers, aristocrats and industrialists, academic personalities frequented the Moser house. A very influential group of visitors were psychiatrists: Eugen Bleuler, Auguste Forel, Oskar Vogt, Sigmund Freud – prominent names today in the history of psychiatry, at that time specialists in hypnosis and leaders in the treatment of hysterical disorders, from which the Moser widow also suffered. She repeatedly consulted (and changed) several doctors, including Sigmund Freud.<sup>5</sup>

But back to Fanny junior. In 1896, Moser was one of the first women ever to begin studying medicine in Freiburg, Germany. A little later, she decided to study biology and moved to

<sup>5</sup> In the history of psychology, Fanny Moser is one of Freud's first patients. Her case was published as a case vignette under the pseudonym *Emmy von N.* in Freud's early "Studies on hysteria" (Freud, 1895; see also Ellenberger, 2014).



**Figure 2.** Fanny Moser in Munich.  
(Archive of the IGPP)

the University of Munich for her degree, where in 1901 – again as one of the first women ever – she received her doctorate with a zoological dissertation. During her studies in Munich, she had met Jaroslav Hoppe (1878–1926), a Czech composer, and they married in 1903. The couple then moved to Berlin, where Fanny Moser aimed for an academic career. She did research at the Natural History Museum, wrote scientific papers on fish and jellyfish, which became her specialty, conducted studies and experiments at ocean and marine biology stations, and was on her way to become a recognized scientist and renowned zoologist. Then, however, several crises hit her: The First World War broke out in Europe, at the same time Jaroslav Hoppe was being diagnosed with an irreversible neurological disease, and in addition, a rift with her mother and the cancellation of her voluntary alimony and support led to financial problems for the couple. Fanny Moser had to leave Berlin and with her husband, who needed care, moved to his family in the Czech province.

Here Moser (who, incidentally, remained childless) cared for her husband until his death – a break in her private life and a rupture in her academic career, which had started out with great promise. And, at the same time, an explanation for Moser’s interest in occult research, which can be dated back to those years of nursing.

After the death of her husband, Fanny Moser returned to Germany (Munich) in the mid/late 1920s and wrote two voluminous masterpieces of German-language parapsychological research (Moser, 1935; Moser, 1950). In 1943 – Moser meanwhile had witnessed two world wars – she left Germany and settled in Zurich, where she lived until her death in 1953, researching and publishing about poltergeist phenomena until the end. Her decision to donate her legacy as the “Fanny Moser Foundation” to the IGPP must be seen in the light of her self-image as a scientist *and* parapsychologist: Her long years of research, combined with conviction, passion, but also

self-sacrifice and deprivation, should not only be considered as a scientific legacy for future researchers, above all, she wanted to establish psychical research as “science of the future” (Moser, 1935: 962) within university and society.

### *Fanny Moser’s Unusual Scientific Career*

From a gender perspective, the scientific biography of Fanny Moser is in fact role-specific, and this in several respects: First, she had to challenge normative role expectations, traditional images of women, and real barriers of admission at the end of the 19th century to realize her educational and professional aspirations at all. After that, private life events combined with expected gender roles (keyword: care work) interrupted her hard-fought status as a professional scientist. In the end, however, she managed the emancipatory retaking of her own life plans and the continuation of her scientific career, (only?) by choosing occultism as her object of research. We want to explore these aspects and start with Moser’s way of becoming a natural scientist.

The latter was not really intended, since at Moser’s time the life plans of upper-class girls and women almost conflicted with any emancipatory aspirations. Self-realization through (higher) education and employment was not an option in the prevailing gender relations of the bourgeoisie for a long time, and it took a while before women were allowed to study: it was not before 1901 (Heidelberg, Freiburg) and 1908 (Prussia) that women were admitted to German universities (Birn, 2015). In Switzerland, however, women were allowed to study much earlier: at the University of Zurich since 1867. The reason why Fanny Moser (she lived near Zurich) decided to study at the University of Freiburg in Germany is unfortunately unclear. Perhaps she wanted to get away from home, perhaps she had consciously chosen the Freiburg faculty, as one of the best.<sup>6</sup> Since German universities made exceptions for foreigners in the acceptance of women, Moser was able to apply there and, in 1896, – despite several obstacles and contradictions – she was indeed matriculated as one of the first female students in Freiburg. After some semesters of anatomy, Fanny Moser changed to biology and specialized in zoology. Shortly before the turn of the century, she moved to Munich to do her PhD under Richard Hertwig, a famous biologist who had made Munich University a center of zoological science. When she wrote and defended her dissertation in 1901, Moser was among the first women to receive a doctorate in Munich.

As far as the employment opportunities of the first female graduates were concerned, the situation was just as difficult. The transition from study to work was as problematic as admission

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6 Moser was certainly informed: The medical doctor and zoologist August Weismann, who at the time was considered one of the most important evolutionary theorists of the 19th century alongside Darwin and the founder of neo-Darwinism, was a professor at Freiburg University.





**Figure 3.** *Pyrostephos vanhoeffeni* (section). Drawing by Fanny Moser. In *Deutsche Südpolar-Expedition 1901-3, Band XVII, Tafel 29*. Georg Reimer, Berlin 1925. (Archive of the IGPP)

then moved to Berlin with her husband, because professional opportunities opened there: she was allowed to work for the Museum of Natural History. As far as the possibility of a university career or an equivalent scientific position was concerned, Moser's aspirations were limited. Salaried positions were available almost exclusively to male graduates, and even in the case of non-paid voluntary work or assistantships, women had to count on the acceptance and goodwill of professors and university authorities. After all, protection and relationships also played a role. After Moser's doctorate, it was her doctoral mentor, Hertwig, who supported her profes-

to universities had been before. At the beginning of the 20th century, women rarely found qualified positions and hardly had a chance of an academic career. Teaching licenses, (private) docent positions and professorships were limited to a habilitation degree, but only few women had such a degree.<sup>7</sup> In most German states, women's habilitations were still officially forbidden until 1920, which hindered women's admission to academic careers. Slightly more opportunities were offered by positions in the civil service, but this was mainly for teachers and lawyers. According to these difficult conditions in the academic field and the problematic situation of women's professional rights in general, the concrete career perspectives offered to the newly graduated biologist Fanny Moser were not very promising. So how was she able to make use of her academic qualification?

At first, Moser stayed in Munich and was allowed to do some minor assistant jobs for her mentor Richard Hertwig. She

<sup>7</sup> "Habilitation" (as a procedure for obtaining the highest university degree) has traditionally served in Germany as the formal qualification required to become a university professor. In the course of time it became customary in the German university system to write a "Habilitationsschrift" [habilitation thesis] after obtaining a doctorate if one wanted to obtain a professorship. The habilitation opens the way to a professorship. In the 20th century, German universities gradually admitted women to matriculation but not to habilitation. There were very few exceptions at that time.

sional ambitions by helping her with contacts, research projects and publication assignments, such as the position in Berlin. In addition, Hertwig had introduced her to the topic of jellyfish, setting the direction for a research field that became Moser's area of expertise. Her academic status, however, was still that of a "free" scientist, that means she received individual research, excursion and publication orders from non-university institutions (natural history museum, ministry), but was not employed. In principle, her research work was privately financed. It is therefore even more remarkable that Moser published more than 30 zoological papers in the years between 1902 and 1925, all of which appeared in prestigious journals. Her work – which often included first descriptions of unknown species as well as drawings of the animals that were both aesthetic and true to life – brought her more and more appreciation from other researchers. Both hard-working and independent, Moser built up a reputation as a renowned jellyfish expert, whose publications were cited and discussed in the specialist literature.

### *Moser's Way to Occultism*

While the historical conditions for Moser's professional development after her doctorate were apparently unfavorable, the results show a respectable career as a scientist. She must have been all the more disappointed when a private stroke of fate put an end to her career as a zoologist.

This hard blow of fate hit Fanny Moser in the middle of her creative period in Berlin. It was around 1915 when her husband was diagnosed with an terminal illness. With the diagnosis, his physical decline was sealed, inexorable and irreversible, and sooner or later he would be a nursing case. This was a double challenge in wartime and with financial difficulties. In 1917, the couple therefore moved to Hoppe's family in the Czech province, which meant that Moser was torn away from her scientific studies, professional activity, and intellectual fulfilment. Caring for her terminally ill husband on the edge of the world – this was not how she had imagined her life. Moser's diary notes reflect her despair; here is an extract: "(...) my situation is becoming increasingly bleak (...) My life is a heap of rubble (...) and all my plans and aspirations are destroyed. I have come to a terrible, hopeless dead end – no way out seems possible anywhere – should my life really waste away like this???"<sup>8</sup> In another passage she described the conflict between her own (not least scientific) claims and Jara's illness-related needs: "My life suffers from a dilemma – a dilemma between my own nature and character and the rights and claims of J[aras]. A middle way that does justice to both parts seems impossible (...) The guiding star, my support, and my happiness must now be my work – with it I must console myself, be content, and conquer the stormy heart."<sup>9</sup>

8 Archive of the IGPP, "Diary 1883–1942," dated: September 5, 1920 (Translations by ISK).

9 Ibid., dated: May 20, 1920.



**Figure 4.** Ex Libris Fanny Moser. (Archive of the IGPP)

professional caregivers, which made things easier and allowed freedom for her own interests. As a coping strategy, her scientific work played a major role, was for Moser a way to an end for autonomy, self-determination and not least distraction. At first, she was able to return to some zoological publication work that had been left behind. On the other hand, Moser was cut off from (new) zoological research material at her place of residence, as well as from laboratories, libraries, colleagues, collaborators, supporters and academic networks. In other words, Moser was virtually unemployed. She simply filled the gap with a new field of research: occultism. But how had it come about?

On the one hand, the entanglement is evident. When the care of her husband forced Fanny Moser to interrupt her zoological studies, when she was torn away from her relatively considerable and satisfying scientific career, and when she was forced to move from the vibrant city of Berlin to the Czech province, the subject helped her to find a welcome alternative in an already difficult time of private and social crisis experiences. On the other hand, we cannot assume that occultism was a more or less random stopgap for Moser. And in fact: concrete previous experiences and a steadily developing research interest also played a role. The central trigger

At the time she wrote these words, Moser was almost 50 years old and was obviously going through a serious life crisis. Her husband's illness had required her presence at home and care work for several years. Moser therefore had to stop her scientific activities. From today's perspective, we would characterize this situation as a critical life event, one that radically changes the existing life situation and forces the person to take measures of coping and adaptation. The possibilities for Moser were limited, however, because as his wife she could not free herself from her duties. Gender-specific fields of work and normative role had differentiated themselves in this regard, especially in the 19th century: Gainful employment was, after all, a male responsibility, while housework and care work were consistently female responsibilities. Somewhat wealthy, Moser could at least afford the support of profes-

was finally a personal experience Moser had had in Berlin in 1914, before her Czech exile. At that time, she had participated in a spiritualist séance more out of curiosity than anything else. Previously, she had heard from a friend that the medium, an inconspicuous Berlin housewife, was supposed to be able to “produce” phenomena and apparitions of the deceased. When Moser was visiting one of these sessions, she really experienced something extraordinary. After inexplicable rapping noises initially emanated from a large table, the table rose in front of the participants and floated up into the air several times, once even almost to the ceiling. Moser carefully examined the entire room and the table, but could discover nothing suspicious. She found no explanation for what she had observed, but ruled out fraud or manipulation for herself.<sup>10</sup> The experience knocked her completely off course and caused a real crisis of knowledge. For the first time and in an unexpected way, she felt confronted with the inadequacies of her scientific view of the world. Nevertheless, she initially suppressed the experience and continued with zoology, even spending a research period at a marine biology station in the Mediterranean.

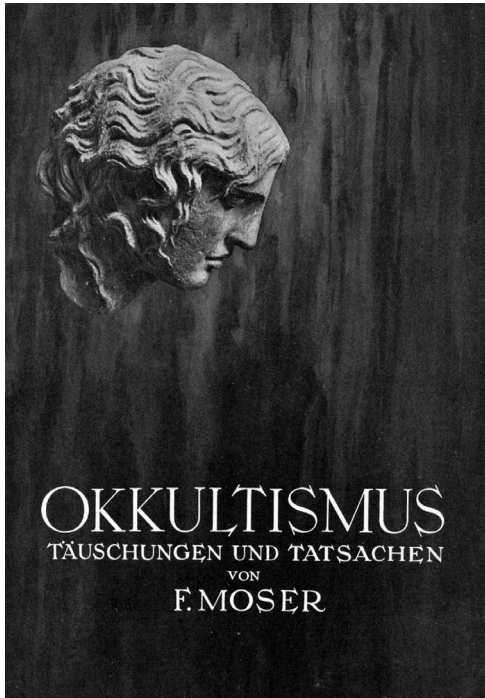
However, she did not let go of the subject completely. She searched literature, collected books about psychical research and became especially interested in the question of scientific explanations for occult phenomena, which she had experienced personally and quite convincingly. At the latest when she was isolated from her original field of research, this issue became an alternative field of research for Moser. In this respect, Moser’s engagement with occultism represents not only a private field of interest, but also an emancipatory self-empowerment. As a scientific research topic, occultism, being a relatively readily available resource (literature study), offered her a positive solution to her conflict between domestic concerns and scientific ambitions. Whether this was a “career-suitable” decision will be discussed in the following section.

### *Occultism as a Resource*

With scientifically skilled enthusiasm, Moser worked her way into occultism, collecting and reading almost all parapsychological literature, researching, and analyzing historical sources and current reports. About 15 years after leaving Berlin (and 10 years after the death of her husband), she published her book *Der Okkultismus – Täuschungen und Tatsachen* [Occultism – Deceptions and Facts] (Moser, 1935). In two volumes and nearly one thousand pages, it dealt with somnambulism, hypnosis, telepathy, messages from the deceased, precognition, apparitions, autoscopies, mediumism, apports, physical materializations, and human mediums. Countless historical sources, contemporary eyewitness reports and other case material were examined by Moser regarding the real nature of the phenomena. Her point of view was an animistic one, i. e. she primarily searched for scientific principles and discussed all possibilities of

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10 For the more detailed circumstances of this event, cf. Schellinger, 2017.



**Figure 5.** Book cover of Fanny Moser's *Der Okkultismus – Täuschungen und Tatsachen*, 1935. (Archive of the IGPP)

deception and fraud. She addressed the fleeting nature of most paranormal phenomena, but did not doubt in principle the existence of occult phenomena. Fanny Moser was convinced that there is an unexplained residue of facts for which no conclusive scientific explanations exist so far, and that the interest in occultism is therefore not per se unscientific.

Immediately after this publication, she moved on to the subject of hauntings. Moser continued her research for another 15 years and in 1950 her second book was published: *Spuk – Irrglaube oder Wahrglaube. Eine Frage der Menschheit* [Haunting – Misbelief or True Belief. A question of humanity]. Here Moser presented historical and contemporary haunting cases, discussed the cultural and historical significance of the subject, and reconstructed recurring patterns and characteristics of haunting reports. She did not manage to complete a second volume, in which she intended to provide a scientific explanation of haunting phenomena, because of her advanced age.

Moser never returned to her old research subject, jellyfish. The circumstances of her private life had separated her scientific vita into two parts – remarkably in the middle of her life. But occultism did not become just any available research substitute for Moser. Similar to the jellyfish before that, it became at least an equivalent life theme. Not only because the subject would occupy her for the rest of her life, but also because she struggled until desperation to demonstrate the scientific nature of the phenomena. While her initial attitude towards occultism was based on her socialization as a critical natural scientist, over the years she became a convinced researcher of occultism. It seems that the more intensively she dealt with occult phenomena and hauntings, the less she could and wanted to hide her intention to present undeniable evidence. She had finally started with this ambitious goal and had become passionate about the subject also because she saw in it both an epistemological challenge and a potential for (her) academic success. In her diary she had written: “The great goal in life is my occult work – a work for the future – I know that here lies a great, infinitely promising field of research which will revolutionize our whole thinking and

knowledge (...) – if I should succeed in helping it to a scientific breakthrough, then my life would have been worth all its struggles.”<sup>11</sup>

As an academic science representative, she hoped that haunting and occultism would enable her to investigate the commonly rejected anomalies based on strictly rational, scientifically trained research, and thus help to advance science in general. In the context of her private circumstances, occultism also represented a potential resource, and this in several respects: as regaining of her lost autonomy as a researcher, as an easily available field of research (unlike jellyfish), and – quite self-consciously – as a field with potential chances for personal success. Given her private researcher status, Moser did not have much to lose anyway. Even as a zoologist, she had no concrete chances of employment or promotion in the male-dominated science and university sector – despite her scientific qualifications, long-standing reputation, and proven expertise. In any case, even occultism did not change her personal research situation as a private scholar in a “home office.” Basically, Moser worked all her life as a private scholar in the original sense of the word: personally motivated, privately financed, and without an institutional network.

At most, a loss of status would have come from another side, because it must not be forgotten that occultism is a scientifically controversial field – or, to use a more neutral term: a heterodox field.<sup>12</sup> The debates about the epistemic status of the phenomena as well as about the field of research itself (as “real” science, pseudoscience or parascience) have been always virulent. Until today, the epistemic status of parapsychology is negotiated in permanent controversy, and even at Moser’s time parapsychology was not an academic discipline. But the scientific distance is only one side of the coin. The other is the great popularity of psychical research, even among scientists. From the very beginning, the occult exerted a strong fascination on scientists and (albeit very few) women scientists, combined with the vision of understanding the phenomena within the framework of scientific thought. Last but not least, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the modern sciences themselves had prepared the field: The discovery of electromagnetic waves, electricity and X-rays, the invention of wireless telegraphy, telephone and radio – the list of scientific findings that were considered to confirm (previously) hidden, invisible forces is long (see e. g., Voss, 2020). Internationally renowned researchers such as William James, Max Dessoir, Charles Richet, C. G. Jung, Pierre Janet, and many others were intensively involved in parapsychology, publishing books and essays and participating in the heated debates about the nature and status of occult phenomena and the possibility of their recording by scientific methods. With two extensive books, several essays, and numerous favorable reviews, Moser finally joined the circle of such scientists. She had also created a small network of scientific con-

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11 Archive of the IGPP, “Diary 1883–1942,” dated May 20, 1920.

12 On the concept of heterodoxy, see Schetsche & Schmied-Knittel, 2018. See also Schmied-Knittel, 2021.

tacts. Her correspondence reflects numerous contacts with notable colleagues and renowned scientists of her time: Eugen Bleuler, a Swiss psychiatrist and humanist most notable for his contributions to the understanding of mental illness (he coined the term “schizophrenia”), C.G. Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology (he wrote Moser the preface for her “Spuk” book), or Pascual Jordan, a German theoretical and mathematical physicist who made significant contributions to quantum mechanics and quantum field theory.<sup>13</sup> Moser’s scientific contacts also included the most renowned representatives of German parapsychology: Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, Carl Graf von Klinckowstroem, Hans Bender, Gerda Walther, Hans Driesch, and she also corresponded with colleagues from England and the USA. She sent copies of her books to Gardner Murphy, Harry Price, Eileen Garrett, and J.B. Rhine. Although there were individual reviews as a result, due to language barriers Moser’s work has received little attention in the English-speaking world (to this day). Moser’s efforts to realize authorized translations of her two works ultimately failed because of financing.

But even in Germany and in her Swiss homeland, Moser’s position as parapsychological authority is not a hundred percent success story. Although she was able to find a publisher for her books, she had to finance them exclusively privately. Due to her lack of institutional affiliation, she also had to manage her own arrangements: publishers, reviews, multipliers, supporters, publication opportunities. In addition, the social developments were very unfavorable. When Moser’s *Occultism* was published, Germany was on the edge of the Second World War and, at the latest after Rudolf Hess’ flight to England, astrology, esotericism and occultism were becoming negative target of the Nazis.<sup>14</sup> Moser’s book was also temporarily confiscated. Accordingly, there were few opportunities for publication during this time, and this perhaps explains why Moser published only a few parapsychological papers. Her relatively limited list of publications could, on the other hand, be the reason why she often found herself unmentioned. Colleagues like Tischner, Driesch or Bender more often achieved to be addressed as an authority by the media or by other researchers. They also succeeded in making an academic career “despite” parapsychology: Hans Driesch was (however already in the 1920s) a chair holder in Leipzig. Hans Bender got a professorship in Strasbourg under the Nazis. The male colleagues were also in responsible positions in parapsychological associations. Driesch, for example, temporarily

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13 Reading Moser’s papers, it is at the same time remarkable how little Moser intended to build a bridge between her original discipline of biology and parapsychology. Colleagues of the time had certainly stated their position on theoretical and methodological issues and even established a kind of neo-vitalistic paradigm. Hans Driesch (1867–1941), like Moser a zoologist and holder of a philosophical chair at the University of Leipzig, for example, belonged to this tradition (cf. Nahm, 2021). After all, Moser cited Driesch’s book, but she did not contextualize it.

14 For example, compare Staudenmaier, 2014; see also Black & Kurlander, 2015.

was the president of the Society for Psychological Research, and Hans Bender made himself a director when he founded his own parapsychological research institute in 1950.

It cannot be said that Moser had no ambitions in this regard. On the contrary the university location of parapsychology was an important concern for her. However, when she underlined her parapsychological expertise with her second book on hauntings, she was almost 80 years old and thus recognizably old for academic influence. And so, she used another way to make a name for herself: Her research should become effective as a scientific legacy within the framework of a foundation.

### *Fanny Moser Becomes Immortal*

There was no question for Fanny Moser that her parapsychological research had to be continued. She had already outlined the corresponding program in her first book on occultism. At that time, she had stated as the most important result that despite all possibilities of deception, fraud and alternative explanations, there is an undeniable rest of occult facts which passes all critical examinations and proves “that occultism is more than misbelief” (Moser, 1950: 21). In this respect, science has no right to ridicule, reject, or ignore the occult reports, but rather has a responsibility to “examine them scientifically on all sides” (Moser, 1952: 13). Apart from that, as Moser points out, occultism also touches on quite fundamental research topics and theories: sensory illusions, hallucinations, perceptual processes, and the role of the unconscious, for example, and, of course, epistemological questions of philosophy. With this potential, which was both innovative and progressive, occultism was in Moser’s eyes “a science of the future” (Moser, 1935: 962) and therefore in need of support as well as promotion. Moser had put the idea of transferring her scientific estate and her remaining capital to a foundation in the 1940s. She made several conditions for her future foundation: Content-wise, the foundation should be concerned with the research of occult phenomena, especially hauntings; the foundation should be supported by academic experts and an established scientific institution (and ideally in Switzerland); and it should be named after Moser. However, several inquiries in her Swiss home country were unsuccessful because the institutions contacted (including the C. G. Jung Institute and the University of Zurich) demonstrated little interest or commitment. Fortunately, things were different with Hans Bender in Freiburg. Moser and Bender, who was 35 years younger, had known each other since the mid-1930s, when Bender, a young university psychologist, had been one of the first in Germany with a doctoral thesis on a parapsychological topic. Over the years, they were in regular, even friendly, dialogue, informing each other about the status of their work, discussing parapsychological developments and interesting case studies. From the beginning, Moser was impressed by Bender, a young, dynamic academic and a thoroughly charming and charismatic type. He also represented a clearly scientific approach





**Figure 6.** Professor Dr. Hans Bender, founder of the IGPP in front of a painting of Fanny Moser.  
(Archive of the IGPP)

to occult phenomena and was well connected in the academic field. When Bender founded his own parapsychological research institute in Freiburg in 1950, things became clear for Moser. She arranged in her will that the Fanny Moser Foundation should belong to Bender's institute and handed over her research library, her scientific heritage and finally – quasi as a monetary value – her Munich properties. In this way, the Fanny Moser Foundation made possible a basic equipment of Bender's institute. In 1954, at the latest, Bender was appointed regular professor at the University of Freiburg, where he formed the basis for the academic establishment of parapsychology. Apart from that, it was especially the haunting cases and Bender's field investigations that attracted great public attention and made the Freiburg institute and its director famous. In Moser's sense, he had successfully advanced the topics Moser had initiated. Bender

was grateful and loyal to Moser's legacy. Therefore, in the 1970s, he arranged for a new edition of Moser's books (Moser, 1974; Moser, 1977). If Moser might not have been given full attention during her lifetime, she finally saved her position as author of two standard works of German parapsychology of the 20th century with these new editions – each provided with well-meaning introductions by the meanwhile extremely popular Bender. In the context of her foundation at the Freiburg Institute, Moser's scientific legacy is still effective today and her vision of a "science of the future" has become reality. And the scientist Fanny Moser became immortal.

### *Conclusion*

The presentations of Moser's scientific curriculum vitae from a gender perspective should have been plausible. So let us briefly summarize: Fanny Moser's academic career fell into a time when women had to fight for access to university and for an academic career and remained underprivileged. Moser had personally experienced the patriarchal resistance against girls at secondary schools, women at universities and married scientists in occupations – and had self-confidently opposed it from the very beginning. The conditions under which she could conduct research and work were anything but career-friendly. Nevertheless, Moser earned an expert status in zoology, conducted research (even if mostly unpaid) at museums and for other non-university institutions, published in scientific journals, and these works were also cited in academic circles. But this is only the first half of her academic life, because a critical life event forced her to give up her scientific activities. In addition, there was a paranormal demonstration that shook Moser's scientific point of view. In this private crisis, she made a substantive break that may seem unfamiliar from today's perspective. Fanny Moser decided to focus on psychical research and thus became a marginal scientist in a double sense: a private researcher in the controversial field of parapsychology. But her decision was also associated with opportunities. It meant a new, above all epistemic challenge for the unemployed scientist and a return to her former autonomy, which she had lost in her (unintended) role as a care-given wife. It was certainly not her first intention that she would end up having a long-lasting influence as one of the early benefactors of a successful scientific institution. Nevertheless, one cannot deny her philanthropic motives. With the image of her influential and successful father in mind, who had already made himself immortal as an industrial pioneer during his lifetime (with the construction of a railroad line and a hydroelectric power plant) and is revered in her Swiss homeland to this day, Fanny Moser probably also had her sights set on a "monument". In this respect, a foundation, especially one named after Moser, was an opportunity to strengthen her reputation beyond her death and to secure the official respect that she received little of as a young natural scientist.

So much for Moser's specific case history, which may be what Alvarado (1989: 237) characterized as "contribution approach." By this he meant contributions that mainly focus on the

effect of specific women on specific ideas – in other words, single cases. It is obvious that such accounts are rather limited regarding broader questions and generalizations. Therefore, I have tried to make connections to general topics wherever possible. Finally, I would like to try to identify corresponding topics of the complex “women and parapsychology,” but also to point out open questions in this context.

First, **gender relations and historical aspects**: Moser’s case provides a deep insight into historical processes, especially into the effects of social change between the 19th and 20th century. Her educational and professional biography illustrates very clearly the initiation of a corresponding of cultural change and its implications for gender relations. This is also where the benefit of a gender-specific perspective is to be found: Moser’s biography reflects the “great” history with its developments, contradictions, and transformations. Even if questions about the educational discrimination of girls and women, the history of women’s studies, or the gender history of academic professions have been sufficiently researched in the meantime, this perspective is still worthwhile. Single case studies broaden the empirical basis or lead to new aspects. Moreover, they enable the introduction of actors who have rarely or never been in the focus of the history of science. It is significant that the estate of Fanny Moser – after all, the first patron of the Freiburg Institute – lay for decades almost unsorted in the research archive of the IGPP.<sup>15</sup> (And isn’t it equally significant that it took an interested female scholar to initiate this research project?)

Second, **Matilda Effect**: The fate of the “invisible” researcher is one that Moser shares with many women. Carlos S. Alvarado and Nancy L. Zingrone were among the first to point out this structural deficit in parapsychology. As academic representatives of the field and experts in the history of science, they observed a large gap of women in parapsychology on different levels. For example, Zingrone (1988: 325) criticized that the perception of and engagement with women from within the field was even less than in other disciplines (that also did not stand out much at the time). Alvarado (1989: 234) also mentioned the lack of attention paid to female scientists in parapsychology, as evidenced, for example, by the lower frequency of biographical works on women (“almost nothing has been done on the work of women parapsychologists”). If at all, only a few popular representatives were mentioned (and even these less frequently than their male colleagues), while the equally important work of lesser-known women was neither considered nor appreciated, or was easily dismissed as “assistant work” (Alvarado, 1989: 241). The lack of attention in the history of parapsychology is only one side, the other concerns the current participation of women in the parapsychological enterprise, such as career path trajectories, employment opportunities and publication practice, that even today are mostly biased to

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15 There are exceptions and some publications with special interests, e.g., Schellinger, 2017, and Bauer, 2010. Previous biographically oriented accounts date from the 1980s: Wanner, 1981, and Bauer, 1986.

the disadvantage of female researchers. A 1991 conference of the Parapsychological Foundation systematically focused on these issues (Coly & White, 1994). The papers addressed a wide range of topics: from the importance of historical female parapsychologists (scholars as well as mediums), to the observed hierarchy of experimental (mostly male researchers) and case studies (female researchers), to the question of gender differences in belief in the paranormal (“Are women more sheepish?”), to the discussion of feminist approaches. Although the contributions were manifold and the position of parapsychology is very special due to its scientifically controversial status, the participants came back again and again to general structural deficits towards women or female researchers and recognized social, institutional, and cultural influences of gender in the field of science in general. Whether parapsychology or psychology, biology or nutritional science, pedagogy, or art: women generally receive less recognition than men, even if their work is just as important. The phenomenon of how female scientists’ contributions can be overlooked or misattributed to their male colleagues is known as the “Matilda Effect.” The effect was postulated by the historian of science Margaret W. Rossiter and published in 1993, after that PF conference (Rossiter, 1993). From today’s point of view, the initiators of 1991 must therefore be considered to have had a visionary feeling for groundbreaking questions. At the same time, it is shocking how little has been done in this respect. There is still room for improvement, and there is still a lot to be done.

Third, **gender-specific circumstances and critical life events**: This point refers to the observation that gender-relevant dispositions influence women’s life stories. In Moser’s case, for example, a women-specific role expectation required her to quit her zoological work and led her to parapsychological research. The example points to the need to consider not only the above-mentioned historical conditions, social problems, and societal contexts, but also women-specific life events, such as conflicts between domestic issues and a professional life. Alvarado (1989: 243) provided the impressive example of Louisa Rhine, to which Moser’s case easily fits. For clarification, he is quoted again here:

In the case of L. E. Rhine, for example, we know that her work with children was the only type of work she could during the period of her life when she was confined to her home (...) Unable to escape her domestic work, she administered ESP tests to her children and neighborhood children. In this case a gender-specific constraint led her to a particular type of parapsychological research.

In fact, both cases represent women’s specific life situations: child education here, care work there – basically a typical work-life balance problem for women. Both cases also show what positive outcomes can follow personal crises. Various meta-analyses and studies have shown that women have a higher level of stress due to critical events than men and experience significantly more critical events, especially in the context of interpersonal relationships (cf. Filipp &

Aymanns, 2018, esp. pp. 361ff.). Nevertheless, there are good reasons for including the gender perspective only as one analytical dimension among numerous others. Do not almost all people have experiences with critical life events? And are not there also personal life crises among male researchers? Other personality characteristics, such as age, education and, not least, religiosity, are also significant for the perception, occurrence, and management of critical life events. The extent to which people emerge strengthened from a crisis depends not only on their gender. Especially in the case of spiritual crises, the perspectives of developmental psychology, memory research, biography and conversion research provide at least equally fruitful approaches.

Fourth, **experiences of evidence and paranormal beliefs:** Of course, Moser's second career as a parapsychologist can be reconstructed in the context of the educational biography outlined above, with its gendered and historical backgrounds. Far too often, however, it is overlooked that the scientific investigation of such anomalies often corresponds with concrete evidential experiences and personal convictions. The biologist Fanny Moser experienced such a paranormal event during a mediumistic séance. The experience triggered a deep emotional and intellectual crisis and in basically a conversion. The formerly skeptical natural scientist was suddenly convinced that what can be seen and proven is only the surface of an essentially mysterious world. Moser herself declared the occult table levitation as the "hour of birth" of her "new mind-set" (Moser, 1936: 30) and even published her conversion experience as well as other personal points of contact with occult topics and experiences. In her first book on occultism, she described her personal experience in detail and even declared the levitation experience to be the very cause of her research (Moser, 1935: 33–47). Like most conversion stories, Moser's account shows a typical "trinity". The central motif is always a turning point (or conversion): In Moser's case, her scientific life with a skeptical attitude before the event, the evidential experience itself (and an associated crisis of knowledge or science), and finally a new, life-changing belief system or at least a revised scientific worldview. We find such descriptions of personal paranormal experiences also in publications of other representatives of parapsychology, such as Gerda Walther, Louisa Rhine and Rhea White. The scientific literature does indeed contain indications that women are generally more willing to share personal experiences and private life crises, while men are generally less willing to open about themselves (Filipp & Aymanns, 2018: 364). It is an interesting question whether the autobiographical presentation of personal crisis and exceptional experiences in the context of parapsychology is rather a female characteristic. At this point, however, we can only speculate. The incomplete knowledge of the literature forbids a hasty judgment. In direct comparison with Moser's colleagues and contemporaries, however, it is noticeable that private themes are less obvious in the publications of the men. It is true that, as far as the persons Hans Bender, Hans Driesch, C. G. Jung, or Eugen Bleuler are concerned, personal encounters with paranormal events and their positive attitudes towards occult phenomena are well known. In private letters, for example, Hans Bender repeatedly

communicated dreams with paranormal content to Fanny Moser. But these references mostly come from third hand, from anecdotal reports of colleagues or biographies written later. To the best of our knowledge, neither Bender, Driesch, nor Bleuler have published their personal paranormal experiences in their *scientific* writings or declared their own paranormal experiences publicly as starting point of their psychical research. Whether the principled insistence on the permanent separation of science and séance is appropriate in every case is another question – and, in my opinion, a question beyond gender differences. Without her openness to séances and her insistence on paranormal phenomena, the remarkable life of Fanny Moser would certainly have been less remarkable. And the success story of Hans Bender and the German parapsychology in the 20th century would have been different without her contribution.

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## Okkultismus als Ressource. Die Parapsychologin Fanny Moser (1872–1953)

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung*

Im letzten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts geboren, musste sich Fanny Moser (1872–1953) ihren Weg in die Wissenschaft noch hart erkämpfen. Nach erfolgreicher Promotion zunächst anerkannte Meeresbiologin, widmete sie sich in der zweiten Lebenshälfte ausschließlich parapsychologischen Fragen und war überzeugt, dass im Okkultismus die „Wissenschaft der Zukunft“ liegt. In der Konsequenz stiftete sie ihr Vermögen dem Freiburger Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene und trug damit zur Etablierung einer parapsychologischen Forschungslandschaft in Deutschland bei. Der Beitrag rekonstruiert zunächst Fanny Mosers Wissenschaftsbiographie, die schon deshalb bemerkenswert ist, weil sie Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts zu den allerersten Studentinnen an deutschen Universitäten gehörte. In einem zweiten Schritt zeigen wir, wann und wie Moser mit parapsychologischen Themen konfrontiert wurde, und fragen, welche Rolle und Funktion diese in ihrem Leben einnahmen. Es wird deutlich, dass Mosers Hinwendung zur Parapsychologie in einem Spannungsfeld zwischen subjektiven Evidenzerfahrungen, persönlichen Krisen und beruflichem Autonomiestreben angesiedelt war und dass dabei auch geschlechtsspezifische Aspekte eine Rolle spielten. Diese betreffen zunächst die allgemeinen historischen Bedingungen und bildungspolitischen Realitäten von Frauen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts, als das Hochschulwesen noch eindeutig männerdominiert und die Immatrikulation von Frauen weitgehend undenkbar oder sogar verboten war. Umso bemerkenswerter ist der akademische Werdegang Mosers, die trotz widriger Umstände in Zoologie promoviert und eine anerkannte Expertin für Quallen wird. Frauenspezifisch waren schließlich auch die Umstände, die Moser in der zweiten Hälfte ihres Lebens von der Zoologie zum Okkultismus führten. Die schwere Krankheit ihres Ehemannes erforderte ihre Unterstützung und häusliche Pflege und damit letztlich die Aufgabe ihrer ohnehin „untypischen“ Berufstätigkeit. Zu akademischer und intellektueller Isolation verbannt, suchte Moser in dieser Phase nach neuen Herausforderungen und wählte den Okkultismus als künftiges Forschungsfeld – nicht zuletzt, weil sie etwa zeitgleich ein tiefgreifendes persönliches Evidenzerlebnis bei einer mediumistischen Séance gemacht hatte. Dass Moser sich mit Fragen nach Mediumismus, Spiritismus, Spuk, Erscheinungen, Telepathie, Präkognition und ähnlichen Phänomenen in ein durchaus umstrittenes Wissenschaftsgebiet vorwagte, ist eine Sache. Wir werden aber auch aufzeigen, dass der Okkultismus für die Wissenschaftlerin ebenso interessante Ressourcen bereithielt und ihr schließlich sogar die Möglichkeit eröffnete, sich einen Platz in der Parapsychologiegeschichte zu sichern. Der Beitrag endet mit einer über den Einzelfall hinausgehenden Reflexion über den Gewinn einer geschlechterforschenden Perspektive, insbesondere was die Rolle kritischer Lebensereignisse und den Stellenwert von persönlichen Erfahrungen und weltanschaulichen Haltungen in den Berufsbiographien von Frauen und Männern betrifft.



Mrs. Lotte Böhringer (1917–1994)  
The „Anima of the Freiburg Institute“  
A Personal Appreciation

EBERHARD BAUER<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – The dominant and most popular figure in German parapsychology after the Second World War was Professor Hans Bender, who founded in 1950 the “Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e.V.” (IGPP for short) [Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health] in his birthplace and hometown of Freiburg im Breisgau, directed it until his death on 7 May 1991 and represented the field of scientific parapsychology in research and teaching at the University of Freiburg for decades between 1954 and 1975 as an internationally renowned professor of frontier areas of psychology. In his attempts to build up the IGPP and to realize a central wish of his scientific life, Bender received decisive help and support by Mrs Lotte Böhringer (1917–1994) who became his close collaborator quite early in 1946, when he developed his first plans to build an Institute devoted to parapsychological research and its social implications under the label “Grenzgebiete der Psychologie.” Mrs. Böhringer was educated as a commercial employee and she left no trace in the formal parapsychological literature, except figuring in some pictures documenting the early history of the IGPP, mostly taken by a professional photographer Leif Geiges (1915–1990), who helped to popularize the Institute and its founder. It was decisively thanks to her initiative, her ingenuity and her sense of reality that the Institute could be built during the post war years on a plot of land in the city of Freiburg in a most beautiful location. After the IGPP building was completed in 1950, Mrs. Böhringer moved into a flat inside that building where she stayed all her life. The Institute and its social life became the center of her life, comparable to an ‘apple of her eye’ (Augapfel). In summary, one could describe her role as “Geschäftsführerin” (manager) responsible for all possible aspects of the daily life of the Institute. So, understandably, Professor Bender used to characterize Lotte Böhringer as “Seele des Instituts” (Anima of the Institute).

*Keywords:* IGPP – Hans Bender – supporting staff – role of women in science – parapsychology

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1 **Eberhard Bauer** is a psychologist by training and was for many years an assistant of Prof. Hans Bender. He is a council member and the deputy director of the IGPP. Bauer knew Lotte Böhringer since his student times, when he started an internship as a psychology student at the IGPP in 1967. So, this contribution is written from a personal perspective. – Thanks are due to the IGPP archivist Uwe Schellinger, M. A., for his archival research and to Andreas Fischer for his help and support regarding the selection and reproduction of pictures illustrating this essay.

## Frau Lotte Böhringer (1917–1994) – die „Anima des Freiburger Instituts“ Eine persönliche Würdigung

**Zusammenfassung** – Die dominierende und populärste Figur der deutschen Parapsychologie nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg war Hans Bender, der 1950 in seiner Geburts- und Heimatstadt Freiburg im Breisgau das „Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e. V.“ (IGPP) gründete, es bis zu seinem Tode am 7. Mai 1991 leitete und von 1954 bis 1975 als international bekannter Professor für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie das Fach Parapsychologie jahrzehntelang in Forschung und Lehre an der Universität Freiburg vertrat. Bei seinem Versuch, das Institut zu errichten und damit einen zentralen Wunsch seines wissenschaftlichen Lebens zu verwirklichen, erhielt Bender entscheidende Hilfe und Unterstützung von Frau Lotte Böhringer (1917–1994), die schon 1946, als er seine ersten Pläne zum Aufbau eines Instituts für Grenzgebietenforschung und ihre gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen unter der Bezeichnung „Grenzgebiete der Psychologie“ konzipierte, seine enge Mitarbeiterin wurde. Frau Böhringer, von Beruf kaufmännische Angestellte, hat in der formalen parapsychologischen Literatur keine Spuren hinterlassen, außer auf einigen Bildern, die die frühe Geschichte des IGPP dokumentieren, meist aufgenommen von einem professionellen Fotografen, Leif Geiges, (1915–1990), der half, das Institut und seinen Gründer bekannt zu machen. Ihrer Initiative, ihrem Einfallsreichtum und ihrem Realitätssinn war es maßgeblich zu verdanken, dass das Institut in den Nachkriegsjahren auf einem Grundstück in der Stadt Freiburg in schönster Lage errichtet werden konnte. Nach der Fertigstellung des IGPP-Gebäudes im Jahre 1950 bezog Frau Böhringer eine Wohnung in diesem Gebäude, in der sie ihr ganzes Leben lang blieb. Das Institut und sein soziales Leben wurden zu ihrem Lebensmittelpunkt, quasi ihr „Augapfel“. In ihrer Rolle als „Geschäftsführerin“ war sie für alle möglichen Aspekte des täglichen Lebens des Instituts verantwortlich. Verständlich also, dass Professor Bender Lotte Böhringer als „Seele (anima) des Instituts“ bezeichnete.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* IGPP – Hans Bender – Unterstützungspersonal – Rolle von Frauen in der Wissenschaft – Parapsychologie

In a remarkable conversation with his successor Prof. Johannes Mischo (1930–2001), published in 1983, where he reviewed stations of his own scientific biography, Prof. Hans Bender (1907–1991), the founder of the IGPP, was asked by Johannes Mischo: “What actually motivated you after the end of the Second World War and gave you the courage to set up the Institute on the Eichhalde, which you then called Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene?” Bender’s answer was quite characteristic: “The conviction that parapsychology practised in an attic [Mansarde] was regarded as a suspect hobby, but located in a representative Institute building would attract attention. Supported by Mrs Lotte Böhringer – still the anima of the Institute today – I became a businessman, wishful thinking and daydreaming anticipation of the goal became money in a field of the ‘attraction of the relatable’” [Anziehungskraft des Bezügliehen] (Mischo, 1983: 18f.).

At the time of this interview, 1983, Bender could look back on a long international career: He had become the dominant and most popular figure in German parapsychology after World War II and had represented the field of scientific parapsychology in research and teaching at the University of Freiburg for decades between 1954 and 1975 as an internationally renowned professor of frontier areas of psychology.<sup>2</sup> So it is important that he mentioned in this context Mrs Lotte Böhringer (1917–1994) who played indeed a most important role when it came to the realization of Hans Bender’s central wish, namely creating “a representative Institute building.” Bender was intrigued by this idea quite early in his academic career, when he founded a “Grenzwissenschaftliches Institut” [Institute for Frontier Science] at the so-called Reichsuniversität Straßburg during the war.<sup>3</sup> In 1946, after returning to his birthplace and hometown of Freiburg im Breisgau, he created a “Forschungsgemeinschaft für psychologische Grenzgebiete” [Research Association for Psychological Frontier Areas], where Lotte Böhringer started to work on September 16, 1946, as “Geschäftsführerin” (managing director). In a document dated August 31, 1948, Bender describes her activities as follows: “During her two-year tenure, she has worked with extraordinary diligence and great care to build up the Institute while at the same time leading other enterprises in the research association. Mrs Böhringer will take over the administration of a permanent position in the Institute” (see Figure 1).

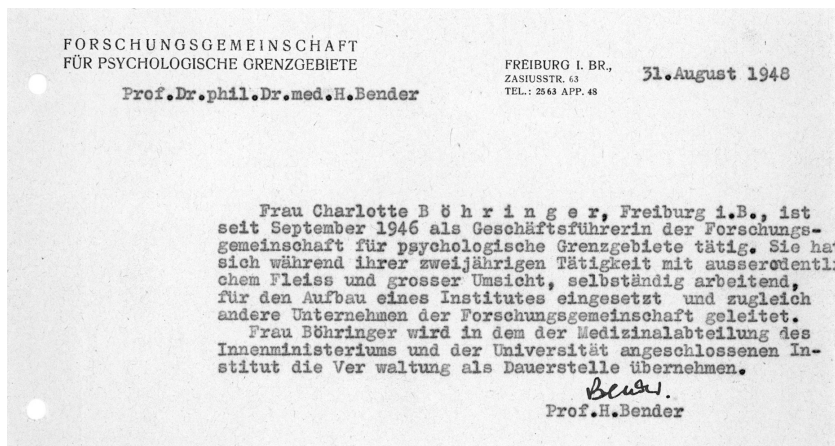


Figure 1. Prof. Bender’s letter describing Lotte Böhringer’s activities 1948 within the “Forschungsgemeinschaft.” (Archive of the IGPP)

- 2 For Hans Bender’s biography and his academic career at Freiburg University see the recent monograph by historian Anna Lux (2021) who was granted access to the Bender papers at the IGPP.
- 3 For details of this episode see the book by Frank-Rutger Hausmann (2006), esp. pp. 101ff.

In retrospect, it is mainly thanks to her initiative and ingenuity that the beautiful building erected on the property of the city of Freiburg came into being from the laboriously collected funds in the time of ruins and hunger. After the IGPP building was completed in 1950, Mrs. Böhringer moved into an apartment in this building, which became the center of her whole life (see Figure 2).

When talking about the history of his Institute, Bender never forgot to mention, that Lotte Böhringer did everything to make this building possible, she fed the workers, took care of the furnishings, tended the garden and supervised the library. When the research work began, she took an organizational part in the investigations and stood in at the typewriter when there was not enough money for a secretary.

When in 1953 a bequest from the Swiss biologist and parapsychologist Fanny Moser (1872–1953) secured the financial situation of the Institute to a modest extent,<sup>4</sup> Mrs Böhringer prudently, caringly and always sparingly took over the administration of this foundation and remained what she was: everywhere and always ready for action, personally modest, but equally practical in her thinking, determined and clear about the financial possibilities and limits of the Institute.

The “Eichhalde Institute,” as it was called at that time, was Bender’s most personal creation. Under his direction (and with the tireless collaboration of Lotte Böhringer), it became a centre of lively research, information and educational work in Germany for more than thirty years, to which – thanks to the growing popularity of its director – countless people turned for advice



**Figure 2.** View at the Eichhalde-Institut – Lotte Böhringer’s flat can be recognized by three small windows in the attic (from left). (Archive of the IGPP)

<sup>4</sup> cf. Schmied-Knittel (2022, this issue).



**Figure 3.** Lotte Böhringer as assistant in the background taking notes during a (staged) glass tilting session. (Archive of the IGPP)

and help. In the early 1950s, with the help of the professional photographer Leif Geiges (1915–1990),<sup>5</sup> numerous articles and interviews appeared in newspapers and popular magazines about Bender and the Freiburg Institute, sometimes featuring Lotte Böhringer in a white coat as a research assistant (Figures 3–5).

So it is understandable that a never-ending stream of visitors from all over the world praised the special location of the Institute with its beautiful view over the Rhine plain – called “magic hill” – and the hospitality of the Institute’s director. Visitors included mediums and magicians, astrologers and ufologists, radiesthesists and dowzers, witches and healers, gurus and charlatans, spiritistic believers and diehard sceptics, psychotics and serious scientists, school classes and student groups, television crews and hardened journalists – they all came to Freiburg to see and talk to Hans Bender, the famous “Spukprofessor.”

In dealing with all these visitors of a quite different personal and personal background, Lotte Böhringer’s empathy and at the same

time her clear and determining sense of reality proved to be quite helpful. There is one telling anecdote to illustrate this point:

In the early 1950s, a woman, a former Red Cross nurse who had been declared “possessed” by a Catholic priest, visited the Institute to be examined by Prof. Bender and a befriended psychiatrist. Mrs. Böhringer had a spontaneous personal contact with this woman in need. Because of the care and attention the client received during her visit, she wanted to personally demonstrate her “possession” state to Lotte Böhringer. When the bells of the Freiburg cathedral began to ring at twelve o’clock on Saturday, the “devil” inside the “possessed” woman began to growl and announced that he would “appear” at two o’clock in the afternoon. The intrepid Mrs. Böhringer interrupted the “devil” and said in her own unmistakable way: “Nix da! I have

<sup>5</sup> cf. Fischer & Vaitl (Eds., 2021) for an exhibition catalog on photographs by Geiges.

my usual lunch break from 2pm to 4pm! This is my time to eat and sleep a little! Nothing will happen here before four o’clock!” Finally, the “devil” complied with Mrs Böhringer’s strict instructions. He “appeared” duely after four o’ clock. Her resolute manner had put even the “very worst” (Allerärgsten) in his place...<sup>6</sup>

In private talks, Hans Bender sometimes commented on “Lotte’s” spontaneous paranormal experiences and dreams. A striking example found also anonymously entrance in his first book on parapsychology that he published after World War II, in 1954, the year when he received his personal chair for “Grenzgebiete der Psychologie” [Frontier Areas of Psychology] at Freiburg University. Hans Bender points out that paranormal impressions usually reflect the real facts in a very blurred, diffuse and only fragmentary way and describes the following example:

... in a case in which I myself was involved as an unconscious “transmitter.” I was driving in a very old car an hour before midnight on the motorway from Heidelberg to



**Figure 4.** (above) Lotte Böhringer during a (staged) session with a pendulum.

**Figure 5.** (below) Lotte Böhringer observing the demonstration of an alleged “metal bender” who had visited the Institute. (Archive of the IGPP)

<sup>6</sup> Lotte Böhringer’s realistic down-to-earth attitude is also reflected in the one and only interview which she gave during her lifetime shortly after Bender’s death, to a local newspaper on the occasion of her 45 years jubilee at the IGPP. It has the telling title “Weltfremd? Von wegen” [Otherworldly? No way] (Rüffer, 1991).

Karlsruhe and was asked by a black man in uniform to give him a lift. The man was behaving unusually in the car, was grumpy and tense. I got a bit spooked and imagined that in a state of emergency he might be up to no good and perhaps try to seize the car and get rid of me. I started an English conversation aimed at telling him that he would have little pleasure in driving such an old vehicle. He made little reply, and I finally contented myself with watching his bony hands. A co-worker [L.B.] received me quite unexpectedly the next morning with the words: “You were scared. Between 11 and 12 o’clock in the night you broke down on the motorway. A man came along and threatened you. You said: ‘I am a poor professor.’ He threw you onto the roadway. I can still see the hands, the horrible, big bony hands” (Bender, 1954: 14–15).

Bender referred to this incident reported by Lotte to explain the unconscious dynamics of such impressions. He writes (Bender, 1954: 15): “In a waking dream fantasy, my co-worker had experienced this scene around the time of the event. It is remarkable that she does not understand English. It is apparently a fragmentary telepathic transmission, which was probably triggered by my affect and represented in a dreamlike vision a conglomeration of my fearful expectations, my expressions reduced to a concise formula and a central perceptual content: the hands.”

Lotte Böhringer’s important services to the Freiburg Institute were officially recognized: On December 14, 1987, she was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, on which occasion the Dean of the University of Freiburg congratulated her, although she had never formally been a member of the University of Freiburg. She outlived Hans Bender, the founder of the IGPP, by three years, while she was pleased to note that, due to his former efforts, a new chapter in the history of the IGPP was opened after the Holler Foundation in Munich had informed the IGPP Council that the Institute could count on new and substantial funding. This story is told elsewhere (see Vaitl, 2020).

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**Figure 6.** Lotte Böhringer and the IGPP-Team in 1959.

*First row (left to right):* Arno Müller (1930–2005, scientific collaborator, later Professor of Forensic Psychology, University of Saarbrücken), Lotte Böhringer (1917–1994, Managing IGPP Director), Inge Strauch (1932–2017, scientific assistant, later Professor of Clinical Psychology, University of Zurich, Switzerland), Hans Bender (1907–1991, IGPP Director, Professor for Frontiers Area of Psychology, University of Freiburg).

*Second Row (left to right):* Gerhard Sannwald (1929–1983, scientific assistant, later Market Researcher), Mrs. Eckert (Secretary), Johannes Mischo (1930–2001, scientific assistant, later Bender’s successor at University of Freiburg and IGPP Director 1991–2001).



## Parapsychology and Women's Emancipation: A Historical Cliché?

RENAUD EVRARD<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – Becoming mediums or psychics is framed as an opportunity for feminist commitment. Through the paranormal, the classical view of domesticized and dominated women was challenged by new cultural norms pertaining to gender and corporeality. But is this claim reliable, or is this a historical reconstruction in order to culturalize a scientific controversy, which sidesteps examination of experimental evidence? No empirical studies support this claim. The culturalist interpretation that spiritualist mediumship was above all a privileged mode of expression for oppressed women should therefore be put into perspective.

*Keywords:* feminism – history – mediumship – spiritualism

### **Parapsychologie und Frauenemanzipation: ein historisches Klischee?**

**Erweiterte Zusammenfassung** – Medium oder Hellseherin zu werden, wird als Chance für feministisches Engagement angesehen. Durch das Paranormale wurde die klassische Sichtweise von häuslichen und dominierten Frauen durch neue kulturelle Normen in Bezug auf Geschlecht und Körperlichkeit in Frage gestellt. Die meisten Medien, Hellseher und Heiler seien Frauen gewesen. Aber ist diese Behauptung, die von mehreren Historikern aufgestellt wurde, glaubwürdig, oder handelt es sich um eine historische Rekonstruktion, um eine wissenschaftliche Kontroverse zu kulturalisieren, die einer Prüfung experimenteller Evidenz ausweicht? In der Tat gibt es keine empirischen Studien, die diese Behauptung stützen. Die wenigen Daten, die wir finden konnten, zeigten kein solches Missverhältnis zwischen Frauen und Männern. Parapsychologische Studien über geschlechtsspezifische Unterschiede in der Psi-Leistung waren ebenso selten und nicht schlüssig. Wir plädieren daher für eine vollständig symmetrische Betrachtung der Geschichte der psychischen Forschung und des Spiritismus und prüfen, ob dieser Emanzipationskatalysator nicht ein gemeinsames Merkmal aller in diesen Bereichen tätigen Männer und Frauen ist. Einigen Autoren zufolge handelte es sich eher um die gesellschaftliche Rezeption des Spiritualismus, die einen Diskurs der pejorativen Feminisierung hervorbrachte. In dieser Sichtweise wird eine Gleichsetzung von Paranormalität, Weiblichkeit

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und Marginalität aufrechterhalten. Die kulturalistische Deutung, spiritistische Medialität sei vor allem eine privilegierte Ausdrucksweise unterdrückter Frauen, sollte daher relativiert werden. Durch das Ableiten in einen scheinbar feministischen Diskurs, der das Paranormale als einen Ausweg für vom Patriarchat unterdrückte Frauen sieht, könnten einige Historiker die stigmatisierenden Kategorien reproduzieren, die sie eigentlich zu beschreiben und zu analysieren versuchen sollten. Dies unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit einer geschlechtergerechten soziokulturellen Darstellung, die auch die männliche Medialität und die Vielfalt der Art und Weise, wie Männer die Medialität als Beruf und Identität in ihren historischen Kontexten aufrechterhalten haben, einschließt.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Feminismus – Geschichte – Mediumismus – Spiritualismus

### ***A Common Unsupported Claim Introduction***

It's a common claim by historians of spiritualism and psychical research that women found a voice and emancipated themselves through their new roles as mediums or psychics. But we should encourage a fully symmetrical approach to the history of psychical research and spiritualism, and look, for instance, if this catalyst of emancipation – if it existed – is not a common characteristic for all the men and women involved in these fields.

Very recently, the philosopher Philippe Baudouin devoted an illustrated book to women with paranormal “gifts.” In a sentence of her preface, the historian Nicole Edelman affirms that most sleepwalkers, seers, visionaries, mediums, healers etc. “are women” (Edelman, in Baudouin, 2021: 13). This statement, however, is not examined in the rest of the book.

This is not the first time the historian has made this estimate. She is presented in Baudouin's book as “the first in France to take up the question of spiritualism as a historian, studying the role and the path of women within this movement.” In her work (Edelman, 1995), in which she focused on seers, healers and visionaries in France from 1875 to 1914, she estimated that 80% of mediums were women. Spiritualism is presented as an opportunity: “To become a medium,” remarks Nicole Edelman, “is to change one's state, to make possible the transgression of the social norms established by a century so hard on women” (Edelman, as cited in Baudouin, 2021: 19).

In a similar vein, Giulia Katherine Hoffmann begins her dissertation on “female mediumship in Britain and America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” by casually stating: “That most of them were women signals how Spiritualist mediumship offered the potential for mediums to challenge nineteenth-century gender norms” (Hoffmann, 2014: 4).

There is an abundant cultural history literature that looks at Victorian era (or Third Republic in France) psychic research and spiritualism through the lens of the feminine, with a similar axiom of a greater propensity of women than men involved in the field (Braude,

2001; Galvan, 2010; Lehman, 2009; Lowry, 2013; Oppenheim, 1985; Owen, 1990). Are we so certain of this?

We have not been able to trace the origin of this hypothesis, but we see it promoted from all sides within the framework of a feminist reading of the history of science from the 1970s. Statements regarding the predominance of female in this area can even be traced back to Mesmerism and Hypnotism currents (Schüttpez & Voss, 2020). Even if this social-cultural feminist approaches of how mediumship as a profession worked for some women, we should expect an equally nuanced investigation into how mediumship as a profession worked for men.

### *Where is the data?*

The historian R. Laurence Moore (1975) also devoted a study to spiritualist mediumship in Victorian America, though he does not make the mistake of confusing historical data with social discourse. He shows that mediumship has, progressively and by certain actors, been associated with stereotypical notions of femininity: Mediums were assumed to be “passive,” “impressionable,” and “extremely sensitive.” These very traits had long been used to justify excluding women from participating meaningfully in public life. According to Moore (1975: 201–202), “Mediumship became a professional role identified primarily with women, even though many of the practitioners of the mediums’ art were men.” He quoted a census of spirit mediums which was conducted in 1859 and showed a fairly even balance between the sexes (121 women as against 110 men; Clark, 1859). He selected some cases as per D.D. Home (Lamont, 2005) to claim that “some of the most famous of the nineteenth-century spirit communicators” (Moore, 1975: 202) were men.

Rather than expressing selective opinions, historian Lynn L. Sharp (2006: 120–121, note 92) has attempted to use an empirical method. She estimates, from the French *Revue Spirite* for the years 1869–1879, that two thirds of mediums were male, and suggests the same amount in the private groups she documented. This is a fragmented figure which illustrates the imprecision of the data.

The researcher Michel Granger (2020) has devoted an exhaustive and masterly study to ectoplasmic mediums. Of 350 documented cases of ectoplasmy, 182 mediums are men and 168 are women. Furthermore, a quarter of women operate in pairs with their husbands.

Almost all previous historical narratives rely on the assumption that most mediums are women, but evidence is still lacking. It would be necessary to draw on such systematic studies, for example, by examining the gender of the subjects studied by the researchers, in a given research group, to be differentiated from the testimonies received and the press reports. A study by women researchers is also worthwhile.

### *Is Such a Claim Really Feminist?*

The historical literature abounds of evidence for the feminist liberation theme. In this genre of cultural history literature, the predominance of women is interpreted as a sign of their emancipation. Alexandra Owen (1990) has shown how female mediums and even psychic healers challenged Victorian gender norms. She argued that women achieved this position of authority within the movement because of the Spiritualists' belief that they possessed the traits of sensitivity and passivity necessary for mediumship. In a similar vein, Ann Braude (2001) argued that mediums achieved leadership positions in spiritualism and the women's rights movement through their mediumistic skills, but by embodying idealized feminine attributes. Jill Galvan (2010) and Giulia Katherine Hoffmann (2014) have developed a more complex view, where female mediums applied both idealization and disruption of gender norms.

In no case these historians discuss works showing possible gender differences in parapsychological performance. As a matter of fact, these works are so rare (Bierman & Scholte, 2002; Dunne, 1998; McCraty, Atkinson, & Bradley, 2004; Watt, Fraser, & Hopkinson, 2006), that it is still not possible to conclude that such gender differences exist in this field (Hinman, 2017).

Moore (1975) argued it was more a case of the social reception of spiritualism, which produced a discourse of pejorative feminization:

Despite Home, however, and despite other men allegedly adept at invoking spirits, the popular impression persisted that mediumship was female. Newspapers hostile to the vogue of spiritualism, and there were many of them, characterized male mediums as 'addle-headed feminine men.' (Thomson, 1855) For, according to unfriendly accounts, mediumship represented above all else the corruption of femininity. (Moore, 1975: 202)

This quote shows how essential it is to look at the social context of men and women as mediums, whether their experiences were idealizing or disrupting the understanding of masculinity and femininity. Moore provides an analysis of this process by focusing on the literature on female mediums, while emphasizing that he is dealing with only a sample of the available material, since there is just as much material available on male mediums that he did not consider in his work (Moore, 1975: 206). And yet, there are relatively few studies that seek to overcome this gender bias.

The cultural interpretation that spiritualist mediumship was above all a privileged mode of expression for oppressed women should be put into perspective. At the expense of historical data, this retrospective vision maintains an assimilation between paranormal, femininity and marginality. This is a characteristic of the Trickster archetype identified by Hansen (2001), which is also connected with deception, cheating, and untrustworthiness. Why should it neces-

sarily be a women's issue? This gender bias supposedly embracing the feminist cause can even turn into a caricature. For instance, Baudouin (2021) equates the strict experimental controls exercised on subjects with abuse of a masculine dominant position, forgetting that the same operations were applied to male subjects for contextual epistemological reasons.

With regard to parapsychologists, this gender bias was less obvious. For instance, in the first volume of the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Julian Ochorowicz (1884: 278) argues that “women are no-more susceptible than man” to hypnosis and the mystic influence of magnetizers, despite the ideas of that time regarding hysterical women. However, other researchers, notably Frank Podmore (1896), spread a gendered and pejorative theory towards young girls who would be responsible for poltergeist cases, by means of frauds. This “naughty little girl theory” (Evrard, 2020; Podmore, 1898–1899) was based on a ridiculously small sample of 11 cases, 8 of which involved young girls. Another specialist of poltergeists, William G. Roll (1977: 386), stated that “apparently sex was generally not important in determining agency.” On the basis of a collection of 54 cases investigated by the IGPP, Huesmann and Schriever (2022) found 56% male and 44% female focus persons among a total of 52 focus persons. A female trend is far from obvious. This reinforces the need for a gender balance sociocultural narrative that includes male mediumship and the variety of how men sustained mediumship as a profession and an identity in their historical contexts.

The issue of paranormal performances should not be confused with those of paranormal beliefs or experiences. Gender differences may appear in the reporting of such beliefs and experiences (Sagher, Butzer & Wahbeh, 2019), but this may be explained by various factors which are still not clear (Wish, 2014).

### ***Conclusion***

There is the marked absence of facts supported by verifiable evidence, meaning that the feminization of Victorian spiritualism implicitly operates as a prejudice, relaying stereotypes that serve neither history as a discipline nor feminist epistemology. This essay consists mainly of one point of critique against a feminist hypothesis which should lead to a more thorough research that we are not providing here.

Though there are indeed engaging and pertinent female trajectories in the history of spiritualism and psychical research, the generalization of certain so-called feminist interpretations is more than a historical cliché. By slipping into a seemingly feminist discourse that sees the paranormal as a way out for women oppressed by the patriarchy, some historians may reproduce the stigmatizing categories they should arguably be seeking to describe and analyze, according to Moore (1975).

We can understand that the scientific evidence of psychical research and spiritualism belongs to an entirely different discipline, outside most historians' agenda. But this lack of interdisciplinarity can have important consequences. Some historians have found in this cultural perspective a way to deal with these complicated questions without bringing to the forefront the scientific controversies raised by the data produced by researchers. This introduces an epistemological issue about how scientific questions, like the underlying paranormal abilities in men or women (when or if it exists in the way it is claimed), is a prerequisite that needs to be addressed by historical approaches. In 1999, during a conference on the history of psychical research (published later: Bensaude-Vincent & Blondel, 2002), philosopher Bertrand Méheust was criticized for using historical investigation to assess the clairvoyance ability of the nineteenth century somnambulist Alexis Didier (Méheust, 2003). The historian Nicole Edelman, proponent of a cultural and feminist approach to the paranormal, claimed such approach goes beyond the standard method of historians who are "not dealing with facts," an epistemological precaution extremely frequent in the writings of French historians (Evrard, 2016). Méheust replied that, while historians are studying the Second World War, considering extermination camps as facts is a prerequisite and not an afterthought. Méheust's argument is that historians demonstrate a double standard with heterodox objects, and ultimately hijack the historical method to "culturalize" and thus "de-naturalize" certain issues, which in fact participates in their eviction from the scientific field.

It is therefore with a certain irony that we can demand that these cultural historians explain on what evidence they base their assertions about gender differences in the paranormal. Until it is demonstrated that parapsychological abilities are not equally distributed between the sexes, or that certain gender characteristics are necessary conditions for their expression, we are merely dealing with representations and stereotypes, drawn from these historical contexts or from the contexts in which these stories are reconstructed, at the crossroads of an eclectic mixture of sociocultural influences. This essay focuses on the historical imbalance in the treatment of psychical research and spiritualism, in its personal and social contexts, and encourages a remedy that would consist in developing a fully symmetrical approach, not only in relation to gender, but in relation to the imbalance between cultural and scientific approaches, and in the equally asymmetrical treatment of orthodox and heterodox facts (Evrard, 2016; Schetsche & Schmied-Knittel, 2018).

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## Being a Psi Researcher in Brazil: My Career and Perceptions as a Woman

FATIMA REGINA MACHADO<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – This paper presents my career as a psi researcher in Brazil with a focus on obstacles and strategies to establish the study of psi in the academy, which includes my work with anomalistic psychology. Implications of religious and therapeutic perspectives for the development of parapsychology in the country are discussed. Gender issues are also addressed: the invisibility of female researchers/collaborators in the field and perspectives that reinforce the stereotype of women as unbalanced and naturally more connected to the paranormal and to religious/supernatural attributions to paranormal events than men, although surveys conducted in the country do not necessarily corroborate that. Besides efforts to establish psi research in academy, I also mention my actions to try to deconstruct the popular image of women – especially teenager girls – as inevitably unbalanced and connected to paranormal events. Finally, I comment and suggest guidelines to deal with gender issues and religiosity as a constitutive trait of subjectivity based on my own practices as a teacher, researcher, and clinical psychologist.

*Keywords:* parapsychology in Brazil – anomalistic psychology – academic psi research – gender issues

### **Eine Psi-Forscherin in Brasilien: Meine Karriere und meine Wahrnehmungen als Frau**

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – In diesem Beitrag wird mein Werdegang als Psi-Forscherin in Brasilien vorgestellt, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf den Hindernissen und Strategien zur Etablierung der Psi-Forschung an der Universität liegt, wozu auch meine Arbeit mit anomalistischer Psychologie gehört.

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.

Die Auswirkungen religiöser und therapeutischer Perspektiven auf die Entwicklung der Parapsychologie in diesem Land werden diskutiert. Auch geschlechtsspezifische Fragen werden angesprochen: die Unsichtbarkeit von Forscherinnen und Mitarbeiterinnen in diesem Bereich sowie Perspektiven, die das Stereotyp verstärken, dass Frauen unausgeglichen sind und von Natur aus mehr mit dem Paranormalen und religiösen/übersinnlichen Zuschreibungen zu paranormalen Ereignissen zu tun haben als Männer, obwohl in dem Land durchgeführte Umfragen dies nicht unbedingt bestätigen. Neben den Bemühungen, die Psi-Forschung in der Akademie zu etablieren, erwähne ich auch meine Bemühungen, mit denen ich versuche, das populäre Bild von Frauen – insbesondere von Teenager-Mädchen – als zwangsläufig unausgeglichen und mit paranormalen Ereignissen verbunden zu dekonstruieren. Abschließend kommentiere ich meine eigene Praxis als Lehrerin, Forscherin und klinische Psychologin und schlage Leitlinien für den Umgang mit Geschlechterfragen und Religiosität als konstitutives Merkmal der Subjektivität vor.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Parapsychologie in Indien – anomalistische Psychologie – akademische Psi-Forschung – Genderfragen

### ***Being a Psi Researcher in Brazil: My Career and Perceptions as a Woman***

Parapsychology in Brazil is a contradictory and multifaceted field marked by competition for space and complicated by diverse types of popular beliefs, especially ones based on religion and not on science. Being a psi researcher in this context means having to deal with those particular issues in addition to the gender issues that pervade society and labor relations in general – especially when, like me, your husband is your work partner, which can be very productive or challenging as that relationship highlights gender issues in some circumstances. In this paper, besides the complexities of parapsychology in the Brazilian context – which encompasses stereotypes of women and the paranormal as a consequence of theoretical, political, and religious propositions – I report my trajectory as a psi researcher in Brazil from the awakening of my interest in the field to the present, and I discuss challenges faced and my strategies to establish and maintain psi research in academia.

I also present some female characters of the history of parapsychology in the country that somehow – by identification or by the expression of contrasting ideas and actions – influenced my trajectory and the field. Usually, these women are not as well-remembered as their male colleagues and they may be doomed to be forgotten like so many others who have gotten lost in the commonly very masculine framework of History. I remember that when I attended the 1993 Summer Study Program (SSP) at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (FRNM) in Durham, North Carolina, USA, now known as the Rhine Research Center, there was a class on *Women and Parapsychology* scheduled to be taught by Nancy L. Zingrone and

Carlos S. Alvarado. In an informal conversation before the class, a colleague questioned why “that topic” had been included in the program, because he thought that it was not at all important. His comments were the first time that I was sensitized to the importance of discussing the history and status of women in the field topic and I decided to work in a direction that could contribute to the development of psi research, deconstruct stereotyped views of women in the field, and maintain the visibility not only of women working in the field now but also our female predecessors.

### *Roots of My Interest in Psi Research*

In my childhood, I loved playing at being a teacher. I wanted to study archaeology, as I fancifully thought that this way, I could unravel the “secrets of humanity.” Those were the deepest roots of my vocation for, and interest in research. Also from childhood came my taste for extraordinary stories, especially because of my two grandfathers, my paternal grandfather Luiz, and my maternal grandfather Alberto. Both were excellent storytellers, and among their narratives, there were always daunting and haunting tales that provoked fear and curiosity in me. Interestingly, my grandfather Luiz’s narratives always maintained an atmosphere of mystery for being suggestive of something supernatural. My *nonno* Alberto’s tales in their turn usually went toward naturalistic explanations (supposed or resulting from his own investigation) for the “supposed anomalous cases” he reported. So, I commonly found myself in an interesting intermediate zone between natural and supernatural perspectives, but I usually tended towards the investigative possibility of unraveling anomalous events. My interest and fascination with ghost stories and particularly psychokinetic events and poltergeist cases came from their influence.

When I was in high school, training to become an elementary school teacher, I had my first contact with psychology in my educational psychology classes and with parapsychology in my religious education classes. I was studying in a Catholic school, and it was then common that parapsychological events were considered to be linked to religious explanations. We were offered a parapsychology introductory course taught by Father Sandro Schiattarella, a member of Father Oscar González Quevedo’s team. Quevedo, a Spanish Jesuit priest, was famous in Brazilian media and well-known in the county as an exponent of parapsychology. I thought Father Schiattarella’s course would be a good opportunity to answer any questions I had from my grandfathers’ stories. Instead, the course raised even more questions about the limits between human potential and possible supernatural interventions. The questions mounted because the teacher used to take almost the whole class time to tell us the cases (especially poltergeist cases), but almost no time left to present the resolution of the cases in detail. So, curiosity kept accompanying me all the time.

By that time, also in high school, we watched the movie *Somewhere in Time*, directed by Jeannot Szwarc (1980), based on Richard Matheson's book originally titled *Bid Time Return* (1976). My classmates and I were impressed by the possibility of traveling in time, even if mentally, by means of a relaxation technique, a kind of self-hypnosis. We were very excited about that possibility, but one of our teachers (who was a nun) discouraged us from trying it because, according to her, "it was too dangerous, and we could go to the past and never come back" (in psychological terms, referring to psychopathology). The fact that she never said it was impossible – she just said it was dangerous – piqued my curiosities even more. Then I attended a course focused on mind control techniques that did not convince me either, and my questions on extrasensory perception and anomalous physical events persisted.

Two years after completing high school, I decided to study Languages and Literature to get a bachelor and licentiate degree, while continuing my activities as an elementary school teacher. There, by chance, I discovered that my questions about extraordinary/anomalous cases were scientifically studied. It was 1991. In an informal conversation with Wellington Zangari, a young psychologist and university teacher I met at the faculty, I asked him to give me a psychological explanation for an unusual dream I had had, a dream that seemed (in my naïve interpretation) suggestive of some extraordinary memory of a past life/time. Then I discovered he was interested and engaged in parapsychological studies. From that conversation on, I looked for more information about parapsychology and realized that what was called parapsychology in Brazil was very different from what was practiced abroad. From then on, I focused my research interests on parapsychological topics. Zangari became my psi research colleague and life partner, which was/is great and challenging at the same time for various reasons.

This very personal introduction I hope helps to understand my choices, my research focus, and the political actions I have carried out in my career as a psi researcher "in essence."

### ***Parapsychology in Brazilian Context: Grounds of Emergence***

Information on European psychical research and métapsychique, and the American approach to parapsychological research came to Brazil in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, respectively, and were disseminated through the filters of Catholic and Kardecist spiritualist perspectives that were competing for historical and social reasons (Machado, 1996). This was especially true of the Brazilian Spiritist Federation,<sup>3</sup> which supported book translations. Whether biases or publicity appeals, pro-Spiritist ideas can be seen, for instance, in the translation of Hid-

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3 The Brazilian Spiritist Federation is an organization founded in 1884 with the mission of spreading Spiritist doctrine and promoting the unification of Brazilian Spiritist institutions – which, in fact, never were really unified to this day.

den Channels of the Mind (Rhine, L. E, 1961), translated to Portuguese as *Canais Ocultos do Espírito (Hidden Channels of the Spirit)* (Rhine, L. E., 1961/1966).

Catholicism was introduced in Brazil in the colonial period, from the 16th century, and was considered the official religion until 1889. African mediumistic religions and practices were socially condemned and seen as unworthy of respect by society, and their cults and cultural manifestations were forbidden. In the second half of the 19th century, the dissemination of Kardecist Spiritist beliefs resulted in more and more supporters of and adepts in mediumistic practices.

With the Proclamation of the Brazilian Republic in 1889 and its secularization, religious freedom rights were guaranteed by law (cf. Decree No. 119-A of January 7, 1890). However, paradoxically, the Brazilian Criminal Code defined Spiritist practices as well as any healing practice without proper medical clearance as crimes against health and a public order established a penalty of six months in prison and payment of a fine (cf. Decree No. 847, October 11, 1890, art. 156 and 157). By that time, “*Spiritism*” was a polysemic term, commonly used to designate different mediumistic religions. Medicine scientific practices were considered a mark of society’s scientific progress and evolution, and there were efforts by medical professionals to combat whatever was considered charlatanism (Gomes, 2011).

The illegality of mediumistic practices was based not only on the maintenance of power by the Catholic Church (Miguel, 2010), but was also strongly anchored in medical arguments that considered mediumship pathological and peculiarly linked to women, not only in the Brazilian context but also in other countries (Maraldi et al., 2010; Zingrone, 1994a). As mediumship in Brazil is particularly linked to the religious sphere – differently from channeling in other contexts – pathologizing and criminalizing mediumship meant delegitimizing religious practices. These conflicts had consequences for the introduction and development of parapsychology in Brazil.

Despite the efforts of some representatives of the Catholic Church, the legal and medical communities, the expansion of Spiritism and mediumistic practices could not be contained (cf. Machado, 1996). For this reason, in the early 1960s, Spanish Jesuit Oscar Gonzales Quevedo moved to Brazil and took on the mission of clarifying “Spiritist absurdities” for the people and otherwise combat Spiritism.<sup>4</sup> Quevedo undertook a true crusade against mediumistic reli-

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4 It is unclear whether Father Quevedo was really commissioned by his Jesuit superiors to combat mediumistic religions in Brazil by using parapsychology as a tool or whether his work was based on his personal choice. Maybe a mix of these reasons, considering that his work was complementary to the work carried out by Friar Boaventura Kloppenburg (1919–2009), who combated “religious confusion” arising from religious syncretism, and like the work carried out by Carlos Maria de Heredia (1872–1951), a Mexican magician and Jesuit priest who was a debunker of claims of Spiritist phenomena. In an interview in the 1980s, Quevedo said that “his mission” was suggested by a priest when Quevedo was a Theology university student. The video is published by the *Instituto Padre*

gions (Kardecist Spiritism and the Afro-Brazilian religions) using parapsychology as a tool.<sup>5</sup> In 1970, he founded the *Centro Latino-Americano de Parapsicologia* (CLAP) [Latin American Center of Parapsychology]. According to him, parapsychology offered scientific evidence to demystify the so-called Spiritist phenomena that would be found in mere misinterpretation of parapsychological phenomena inherent to living human beings, like extrasensory perception and telekinesis, the latest resulting from detachment of body's telergy, a supposed physical force that influenced environment causing paranormal physical events (Quevedo, 1973, 1974/1982, 1968/1983). In Quevedo's view, parapsychology could also be an instrumental science to distinguish between false and true miracles, the later, he believed, only occurring in the Catholic context<sup>6</sup> (Quevedo, 1996).

Quevedo not only naturalized Spiritist phenomena but also pathologized parapsychological phenomena. He warned about the risks of fostering mediumistic practices because they could result from physical and psychic imbalances and/or caused mental illnesses, besides being psychically contagious (e.g., Quevedo, 1968/1983: 47). Quevedo gained popularity in the media and his ideas were quickly spread. Consistent with his warnings about mental harm caused by fostering mediumship, Quevedo was against parapsychological experimental research, because in his opinion, submitting subjects to experimental tasks would be harmful<sup>7</sup>. Contradictorily, in some of his writings Quevedo highlighted the importance of experimental studies that would have proved the existence of human parapsychological capacities and ruled out the existence of supernatural agency.

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*Quevedo de Parapsicologia* [Padre Quevedo Institute for Parapsychology] (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMAijfDxLw>).

- 5 There is evidence that Quevedo distorted information about researchers' approaches and studies to defend his own point of view about Spiritism phenomena (Martinez-Taboas, 1993).
- 6 Father Quevedo was not seen with sympathy by the "whole" Catholic Church. He had opponents even within his Jesuit colleagues. Especially his ideas about the demons – discussed in his doctoral dissertation – were considered very controversial by Quevedo's superiors. In his conception, demons cannot act among human beings, i.e., cannot interfere in our world. His PhD dissertation was published in 1981 in a two-volume edition with the title *Antes que os Demônios Voltem* [*Before Demons Come Back*], but soon after that, the books were collected from bookstores, and Quevedo was prohibited of carrying out public activities from 1982 to 1988. CLAP was closed in 1984 and reopened in smaller facilities when Quevedo restarted his activities. His book on demons was republished years later (Quevedo, 1989) and then reduced to only one volume. Quevedo used to explain that as the change in size resulted from a review of the manuscript that he carried out himself. CLAP was closed in 2012 when Quevedo was suffering from serious health problems. There was no interest in the Society of Jesus to keep CLAP open.
- 7 Especially in interviews granted to the mainstream media and in his courses, Father Quevedo emphasized the danger of promoting paranormal phenomena, both in religious and experimental contexts (e.g., Quevedo, 1989, 2000).

Quevedo's main opponent was the Spiritist engineer Hernani Guimarães Andrade. They debated especially indirectly through their writings and opinions publicized by print media. Andrade's arguments in favor of Spiritism were also supposedly based on scientific parapsychological research and the notion that parapsychology could benefit from Spiritism. In Andrade's words (when using one of his pseudonyms Lawrence Blacksmith):<sup>8</sup> "Spiritism could be adopted by Parapsychology as the theory for which it has been searching for so long" (Blacksmith, 1979: 17). Andrade and his collaborators carried out field and experimental research concerning physical forces that had been implicated in psi phenomena, but their interpretations for results were biased towards Spiritist hypotheses, with the addition of the tenets of Afro-Brazilian religions, and black magic specifically in poltergeist cases, which, Andrade (1966, 1988) argued, could be scientifically demonstrated.

The war of words between Catholics and Spiritists sustained in biased interpretations of parapsychology, remained fierce especially from the 1960s until the mid-1990s, when it began to cool off (Hess, 1987; Machado, 1996; Machado & Zangari, 2017; Zangari & Machado, 2001).

Interestingly enough, despite the fact that women were/are said to be more prone to or gifted with mediumship and experiences of parapsychological phenomena than men, the outstanding Brazilian mediums who mostly aroused the interest of researchers and media, and stood out on the national scene were men such as Mirabelli, Peixotinho, Chico Xavier, and mediums said to embody the spirit of Dr. Fritz, a German physician, like Zé Arigó, Edson Cavalcante Queiroz, Rubens Farias Jr., and João de Abadiânia also known as John of God – the latter condemned to jail in 2019 for several crimes, including sexual abuse against his female consultants. The female mediums who were/are well-known such as Dona Otília, Mãe Dinah, Ederlázil, and Márcia Fernandes are not, or were not commonly seen as reliable as male mediums even in Spiritist religious circles. Perhaps this situation illustrates the need to legitimize the Spiritist system of beliefs and practices. Female figures are less likely to be considered very trustworthy due to stereotypes of women as prone to fantasy and hysteria.

Besides the so-called Catholic and Spiritist parapsychologies, there were other approaches and meanings given to parapsychology in the country, such as that of the Brazilian Franciscan Friar Albino Aresi<sup>9</sup> (e.g., 1972; 1978) who used parapsychology as a foundation for his therapeutic practices to cure various diseases.<sup>10</sup>

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8 In his writings, besides using his real name (particularly in his books), Andrade used pseudonyms (e.g., Lawrence Blacksmith and K.W. Goldstein) particularly when writing in Spiritist journals answering criticisms against Spiritism and defending it.

9 Aresi died in 1988.

10 cf. <http://clanicamenssana.com.br/asp/institucional.asp>

Similarly, Pedro Grisa<sup>11</sup> promoted his own version of clinical parapsychology as therapy, offering parapsychological treatment for diverse ailments – especially depression – besides training people to apply his healing method as therapists (e.g., Grisa, 1990, 1996). He named his approach an “independent scientific school of parapsychology” (cf. <https://ipappicuritiba.com.br/o-ipappi/>).

Several people claiming to be endowed with psychic powers called (and still call) themselves (or are popularly called) parapsychologists, as a synonym for paranormal. So, there are also propositions of ways of measuring parapsychological powers, such as the Parapsychometric Report created by Artemio Longhi (1979); and techniques to control and train parapsychological abilities, as proposed by Marcos Alija Ramos (1970).

In short, in the complex Brazilian context, parapsychology was disseminated in multifaceted ways, being concomitantly seen as “the science that would redeem human ignorance related to Spiritist beliefs,” “the science that would prove the Spiritist truths,” “a curative scientifically based therapy,” and “a set of techniques to control paranormal abilities,” depending on the interests of specific leaders or groups.

### ***Female Parapsychologists in Brazil: Protagonists or Mere Supporting Actresses?***

Analyzing the intricacies of that history we find women who contributed to diverse controversial parapsychological approaches, and in favor of a scientific perspective. Commonly, however, they are not mentioned in historical reviews. In this section, I highlight some of them and their contributions.

Suzuko Hashizume was Andrade’s main collaborator, having worked with him from 1966 to 2003. She was the research director of the *Brazilian Institute for Psychobiophysical Research* (IBPP) founded by him in 1963. In addition to attending and presenting works at national and international events, she participated with Andrade in poltergeist investigations and cases suggestive of reincarnation, besides carrying institute’s administrative tasks. After Andrade’s death in 2003, Hashizume became the official guardian of the IBPP’s collection. In an interview, she described her role in the field as follows:

I work behind the scenes. I currently limit myself to taking care of the research collection that Dr. Hernani carried out during his lifetime, and also of the library he left in my care. I assist people from Brazil or abroad interested in the work carried out by him, and I also arrange for the reprinting of his books which are out of print, but which are valuable current sources of information. I can say that I am the point of reference for anyone interested

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11 Grisa died in 2017.



in the work carried out by this icon of Spiritist Science: Hernani Guimarães Andrade. (Gobbo, 2009)

More recently, Hashizume donated the collection to the Spiritist Museum of São Paulo, so currently, the material is preserved by the Spiritist Federation of São Paulo.

Among Quevedo's female collaborators Maria do Carmo Pagan Forti and Márcia Regina Cobêro stand out. From 1975 to 1980, besides administrative work at the *Centro Latino-Americano de Parapsicologia* (CLAP), Forti was a spontaneous cases researcher. After leaving CLAP, she continued her parapsychological studies with other groups (including ours) until finally devoting herself more specifically to the study of popular religiosity and to her academic career as a psychologist, with a master's degree in Religious Studies (Forti, 1997) and a PhD in philosophy (Forti, 2013).

Márcia Cobêro worked with Quevedo for 30 years, from the 1980s. Besides administrative work at CLAP, she was part of Quevedo's team of parapsychology teachers and lecturers, but she never had an academic career. After Quevedo retired with health problems and CLAP was closed by his Jesuit superiors, Cobêro founded the *Father Quevedo Institute* (IPQ) in 2012, where she maintained CLAP's collection (about 10,000 volumes on parapsychology and religious subjects, and a museum with materials of spontaneous cases research and religious objects). Cobêro keeps the IPQ active, but in 2021 the collection was acquired by me and Zangari and is currently located in our laboratory at the University of São Paulo.

Although not as well-known as Pedro Grisa and Friar Albino Aresi, the psychologist and self-declared parapsychologist Maria Lídia Gomes de Mattos is a representative of the clinical approach, linking parapsychology to therapeutic practices (Mattos, 1987). She started her activities in 1970, lecturing and teaching courses on mind power, ufology, and her practices with hypnosis, memory regression, and past life therapy, besides participating in television shows especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Mattos was never engaged with academic-scientific parapsychological research, however, she mentions her several academic degrees as credentials for her competence, as well as her father, Augusto Gomes de Mattos, who pioneered the memory regression technique in Brazil. It is not uncommon for women to anchor their claims to competence in a male mentor or family member.

Still in the 1970s, I highlight Adelaide Petters Lessa, who obtained the first PhD degree with experimental research on precognition at the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo (IP-USP), after a period of research internship at FRNM in Durham. Her pioneer research was published as a book (Lessa, 1975), but she is "quite unknown" in the field perhaps because she discontinued her work in parapsychology post-PhD.

Female colleagues affiliated to the *Institute for Psychobiophysical Research of Pernambuco* (IPPP) usually are not mentioned in historical reviews of the field. IPPP was inspired by but not connected to Andrade's IBPP. It was founded in 1973 in the Northeast of Brazil in Recife by Valter da Rosa Borges and male cofounders interested in the study of paranormal phenomena, first in a Spiritist approach and later trying a more scientific direction. From IPPP, I highlight Selma Maria Duarte da Rosa Borges, Borges's wife and supporter, Terezinha Acioli Lins de Lima, Júlia da Silva Caruso, Maria Salete do Rêgo Barros Melo, and Isa Wanessa Rocha Lima. Particularly Isa Lima investigated and wrote on poltergeist phenomena, besides conducting a paranormal psycho-pictography case study and remote viewing experimental sections (cf. Borges, 2000). She and other IPPP members were affiliated with the Parapsychological Association in the 1990s. Unfortunately, Isa Lima left the field to work as a psychologist.

When I entered the field in 1991, I was in closer contact with female Brazilian colleagues, who were important not only for the field, but also for my journey because of their support, partnership, and discussions especially in the 1990s and early 2000s; Vera Lúcia O'Reilly Cabral Barrionuevo (Vera Barrionuevo) and Ileamar Rebecca Uba (Lya Uba) were the most important of them. Barrionuevo and Uba were undergraduate and graduate students at the *Faculty of Biopsychic Sciences of Paraná* (later *Spiritist Integrated Faculties*, popularly known as *Spiritist Faculty*), founded by Neyda Nerbass Ulysséa and her husband Octávio Melchíades Ulysséa, who supported an unaccredited undergraduate program in parapsychology in 1979 that was active until 2016. In the 1990s, the faculty supported an unaccredited graduate parapsychology program, active until 2020. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, their Spiritist approach to the study of paranormal events turned into a "more" scientific approach with the *Experimental Parapsychology and Experimental Parapsychology Practice* classes taught by Joe de Assis Garcia (currently not active in the field), a physicist. He started a study group on ganzfeld methodology in 1988 and attended the 1991 Summer Study Program in FRNM which amplified contacts with other Brazilian and foreign institutions and researchers. As de Assis Garcia's outstanding students, Vera Barrionuevo and Lya Uba also became teachers there. We attended the 1993 SSP together at FRNM, an occasion when we strengthened our contacts and did some collaborative work. With Uba's and Tarcisio Pallú's collaboration, Barrionuevo pioneered the first ganzfeld laboratory at the Spiritist Faculty in Brazil from 1993 to 1996. Barrionuevo and Pallú also founded the *Center for the Study of Dreams* and published the journal *Fator Psi*. Besides teaching, Uba headed the undergraduate program for a period. Barrionuevo, Uba, and their colleagues were affiliated with the Parapsychological Association and helped to boost the scientific parapsychological perspective in Brazil in contrast to religious-based parapsychological perspectives. Unfortunately, Vera Barrionuevo and Lya Uba left the field, but undeniably they were important contributors for a turning point in the 1990s. Fabio Eduardo da Silva, Pallú's former student and later teacher at the Spiritist Faculty, continued the work with ganzfeld

experiments from 1997 to 2008. He received two grants from Bial Foundation (in 2001 and 2003) and could set a well-structured automatic ganzfeld laboratory at the faculty. He counted on the support and collaborative work of researchers and colleagues, as Kathy Dalton and Joe Garcia, at first, and later, Margareth A. Bleichwel, Sibebe A. Pilato, Celso C. Cordeiro, Maurício Y.A. da Silva and Reginaldo Hiraoka.

I also highlight Ana Elfride de Castro's work. She coordinated the Spiritist Faculty's parapsychology undergraduate program from 1987 to 1992 and from 1997 to 2002. She wrote a monograph with a didactical proposal for counseling internship activities in their parapsychology program (Castro, 1988). Her proposal was later used as the basis for a model of counseling developed especially by Tarcísio Pallú.

Considering the different types of work done by women in Brazilian parapsychology, interestingly the women who played a fundamental role for the dissemination and maintenance of religious-based "parapsychologies" placed themselves "behind the scenes" or as supporting actresses. They do not assume nor vindicate their leading role, keeping themselves (and their work) subordinated to the prominent male figure of reference in their area in the field. Out of their very specific context of action in their groups, they are rarely mentioned in the history of the field, not even as supporting agents.

Even women who assume a more independent, protagonist role – even in collaborative works with male colleagues – are at risk of disappearing in history, as pointed out by Alvarado (1989). Analyzing the lack of attention to the role of women not only in the history of parapsychology but in every scientific field, especially until the 1970s, Rhea White (1994: 2) attributed that to the basic androcentric view of science that reinforces conservative social and scientific experimental paradigms. This may explain, at least partially, women's invisibility.

In the Brazilian context, we see a repetition of the process of engagement and subsequent abandonment or detachment from the field, especially by women dedicated to parapsychological scientific research. Leaving the field seems to be a mostly female phenomenon. I think that should be investigated in depth. Opening the trail is important but guaranteeing the continuity of the work done is fundamental to the field – and particularly to the researchers.

### ***My Multidisciplinary Trajectory: Perspectives, Strategies, Gains, and Losses***

My first steps in psi research were taken in the early 1990s at *Eclipsy – the Institute for Scientific Research in Parapsychology*, originally a study group started in the 1980s by Wellington Zangari, Rodolfo Teixeira, and Paulo Costamilan. Soon I was more and more

engaged in the field.<sup>12</sup> I witnessed and contributed to the transformations of Eclipsy<sup>13</sup> until it became InterPsi – Laboratory of Psychosocial Studies “Belief, Subjectivity, Culture and Health” in 2020, the current iteration of our laboratory/research group headed by Zangari and me. It was established in 2010 at the Institute for Psychology of the University (IP-USP) of São Paulo, the most important Brazilian university ([www.interpsi.org](http://www.interpsi.org)). “How we got there” was a long journey of personal efforts and maturation, involving needs and strategies to develop and/or conduct psi research in our country.

My multidisciplinary academic trajectory may seem very odd to many people – including some of those who (at least supposedly) pursue the ideal of interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity. It was not “straight” from the point of view of dedication to a specific academic area, but guided by my interest in psi experiences (focusing on psi experiencers), the ways of interpreting them, and the social, religious, and academic-political consequences of that. In Brazil, there was no accredited parapsychology program, neither a parapsychology chair nor a unit in any university. I was guided by looking for academic contexts in which I could develop research projects on parapsychological topics.

Zangari and I thought psychology was the best area to encompass psi research considering our approach, but we were conscious of intersections of interests with other areas such as physics. However, because of biased conceptions of parapsychology, especially psychology programs were reticent about activities even nominally linked to parapsychology, although psychology’s origins as a field are strongly connected to the study of alleged paranormal experiences, especially mediumistic ones (Alvarado et al., 2007). Even though Adelaide Petters Lessa had obtained her PhD in psychology with an experimental precognition study (Lessa, 1975), she left the field, and her work was interrupted a long time ago, so it was necessary to re-open the trail once again. As a strategy, Zangari and I planned to look for research opportunities

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12 Besides my activities in Brazil, I got engaged in the international community, being the first Brazilian woman affiliated with the Parapsychological Association in 1992, later becoming an associate and then a full member. I served on the Board of Directors (2014–2015). Besides being engaged in initiatives to organize the field in Latin America in the 1990s, in 2001, I became an international affiliate of the Parapsychology Foundation and was given the 1998 G. R. Schmeidler Award for Outstanding Student (with Wellington Zangari), and the 2003 D. Scott Rogo Award for Parapsychological Literature. My contact with the international community was always fruitful, especially with some very supportive colleagues such as Nancy L. Zingrone, Carlos S. Alvarado, and Stanley Krippner. I have done collaborative work including an experimental study (Radin et al., 2002) as well as coauthored papers (e.g., Alvarado et al., 2017; Machado & Alvarado, 1997).

13 An important contribution to the field was the publication of the *Brazilian Journal of Parapsychology* edited by Eclipsy. That helped to start breaking language barriers because we translated foreign papers into Portuguese in addition to publishing papers written by Brazilians. Unfortunately, for financial reasons the journal had only four issues.

in diverse areas, and, as insiders, inserting non-religious-based parapsychological studies and topics in the academy, while spreading good quality information on the field, demonstrating “empirically” that carrying out good scientific practices related to parapsychology was possible. So, we worked on both joint and individual projects with the same strategic goals. In this section, I highlight my trajectory, contributions to the psi research field and their consequences, and finally my perceptions as a woman in the field.

My training as a university teacher and researcher in different areas had a very positive and pragmatic consequence: that gave me opportunities of working as a hired teacher in mainstream academic areas and be paid for that, while working at the same time on psi research development in Brazil, that brought me no financial support at all. Another important gain was having the fruitful opportunity to look at psi experiences and parapsychology from different perspectives, enriching my comprehension of them. The main loss: I could not be as dedicated to parapsychology as I wished to be. I had to dedicate a considerable part of my time to other readings and subjects and try to reconcile everything was quite stressful sometimes.

After attending the 1993 Summer Study Program at FRNM and completing my undergraduate program in Languages and Literature, from 1994 to 2009 I developed research projects in graduate programs with topics related to psi research. Especially in the 1990s and early 2000, Zangari and I also invested time in collaborating with magazine articles and participating in radio and TV shows, sometimes debating with representatives of religious-based and/or therapeutic parapsychology. We started to use the term *psi research* (an unknown term in Brazil, then) in our studies and speeches, alternating with parapsychology, to differentiate our work from other “parapsychologies.” In my research reports and academic writings, I was always very careful to introduce psi research topics and references, especially in peer-reviewed specialized journals, because strategically that allowed me to call the academy’s attention to parapsychology conducted with academic-scientific standards, in contrast to other approaches that were so popular in Brazil.

My master’s research was developed in the Religious Studies Graduate Program of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP) from 1994 to 1996. I conducted a historical review of the parapsychological field and compared Quevedo’s and Andrade’s approaches to parapsychology and parapsychological phenomena in general. I discussed their religious biases focusing on their investigative procedures and explanations for poltergeist cases and compared their approaches with William Roll’s research approach to poltergeist cases (Machado, 1996). Quevedo and his team’s pathological view of parapsychological events, and the generalization of teenagers’ roles in the phenomena, mainly girls, caught my attention (cf. Friederichs, 1980; IPQ, n.d.). Apriori determinations of teenagers’ role in poltergeist cases are added to the popular stereotyped and stigmatized image of women as susceptible to crises, pathologies,

weaknesses, and disturbances disseminated since the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century (cf. Zingrone, 1994a). These ideas about women's natures both reinforced stereotypes and hindered research. Especially when a poltergeist case is covered by the media, it is usual for people to look for someone to hold responsible for the occurrences. If there is a teenager in the case – especially a teenage girl – she is usually considered the poltergeist agent even before some investigation is done. Her routine is disturbed, and her social relations are ruined by stigmatization. Unfortunately, I have seen situations like this in Brazil. I talked about the problem on TV shows, and in courses and lectures. My goal was to deconstruct the popular image of women – especially teenage girls – as inevitably unbalanced poltergeist epicenters.

Our research group was renamed Inter Psi in 1995, highlighting our interdisciplinary approach to the study of frontier areas in psychology, but still mainly focusing on parapsychological studies. For some time, Inter Psi was located at Faculty Anhembi Morumbi, where Zangari and I were teachers. After Zangari and I finished our master's degrees, we tried to move Inter Psi to PUC-SP as a study group linked to the Religious Studies Graduate Program. However, although our master's theses had been highly praised by the Board of Examiners,<sup>14</sup> our study group proposal<sup>15</sup> was vetoed by one of the most influential professors in the program because, according to him, "parapsychology was such a delicate matter that would demand higher academically qualified people to deal with that in the program" (*sic*). As we were not allowed to establish our study group in the program – which was quite frustrating – and they did not offer a PhD program in religious studies at that time yet, we sought other programs to have our PhD degrees and I decided on the communication and semiotics program at PUC-SP. Zangari at first decided on a philosophy program and later psychology programs.

For my PhD degree in communication and semiotics, from 1997 to 2003, I continued my studies of poltergeists, focusing on the communication-related function and meaning of poltergeist phenomena by considering their experiential reality for experiencers. I was interested in analyzing poltergeist events as a language, a contextualized way of expression, focusing on the semiotic *modus operandi*. For that, I conducted: narrative and semiotic analyses of twenty-five cases collected from my research reports of field investigations, interviews with researchers who investigated poltergeist cases in loco, interviews with participants of poltergeist cases whose testimony could be certified by other witnesses, and case reports published in specialized journals between 1950 and 2000 (*Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, Journal of*

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14 Stanley Krippner was an invited member of the Board of Examiners.

15 Maria do Carmo Pagan Forti was a member of Eclipsy then. She was with Zangari and I when we presented the proposal to establish our study group at PUC-SP linked to the Religious Studies Program, where she was still a master's student at the time.

*the American Society for Psychical Research, and Journal of Parapsychology*).<sup>16</sup> To be selected, reports should have contained: contextualization of the poltergeist occurrences, a description of the psychological environment, persons' reactions to the supposed psychokinetic events, and the outcome of the case. Fraudulent and supposedly genuine cases were considered, because the experiential reality was the focus and not anomalous processes (Machado, 2003). From my analyses it was possible to: (a) provide evidence that both men and women, in different age groups, can be protagonists of poltergeist cases, relativizing the female role in the cases; (b) highlight the importance of considering cases as a group construction; (c) criticize studies that focus only on physical aspects of poltergeist cases, ignoring their context and people involved in it; and (d) criticize the discarding of fraudulent cases, disregarding motivations and psychological issues involved in the use of a subterfuge such as the simulation of poltergeist events as a way of expression and problem solving, because genuine and fraudulent cases are similar in terms of function and the process by which meaning was made.

I was awarded a scholarship by a scientific research funding governmental agency<sup>17</sup> for my communication and semiotics graduate course, and a grant – from the same agency – for a four-month research internship at University of Indiana – Bloomington, in the Center for Applied Semiotics while I was a PhD student. Those were two expressive gains not only for me, personally, but for the field, helping to deconstruct the popular idea that academia would always be closed to and reject research on parapsychological phenomena/experiences. The approach and consistency of the project made a difference. The trail was widening ...

While I was doing my PhD in communication and semiotics, we were able to establish our study group at PUC-SP, linked to the Peircean Studies Center of the Communication and Semiotics Graduate Program, with the support of my academic advisor, Dr. Lucia Santaella. Our study group proposal was based on the fact that Charles Sanders Peirce, the reference author for my semiotic analyses, had been interested in psychical research and telepathy studies. He was William James's friend and had corresponded with Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney, debating his methodological critiques (Pierce, 1887a, 1887b) of *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney et al., 1886/1970). Apart from that, Peirce discussed the concept of interconnectivity, which raised an interesting conceptual discussion about the *modus operandi* of psi phenomena (Zangari, 2000). Thus, we established Inter Psi as a study group at PUC-SP from 1999 to 2009.

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16 The bibliographic research was done at *Eileen Garret Library* in New York with Parapsychology Foundation support.

17 CAPES – Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel, a foundation within the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

In that period, Inter Psi activities and our participation in academic events helped make our perspective for the scientific study of psi even better known as clearly different and apart from the old disputes related to parapsychology in Brazil. Our perspective was considered “a third way” for those interested in psi phenomena/experiences and related experiences but dissatisfied with religion-based or therapeutic parapsychological approaches. The work started in the 1990s was coming into its own.

Even before obtaining my PhD degree in communication and semiotics, I was thinking about being a post-doctoral fellow in psychology. We had prepared the ground for a differentiated view of parapsychological research in the academy, and it was time to get closer to psychology, traditionally more rejecting of the parapsychological approach. That seemed to be “the last frontier” to be crossed.

Thanks to the pioneering work of Geraldo José de Paiva, since the 1980s the psychology of religion had been established as a research area in the Social Psychology Graduate Program of the Institute for Psychology at the University of São Paulo (IP-USP). That seemed a very promising program to invest in. I was planning to survey psi experiences in the country for my post-doctoral research at the IP-USP. But, in meantime, I had the opportunity of getting a position as a semiotics teacher at the *School of Communication and Philosophy* of PUC-SP, and according to USP statute then, I could not be a post-doctorate fellow if I was employed by other university, because post-doctoral internship required full-time dedication. I decided to take the position at PUC-SP – working there from 2003 to 2008 – and turned my post-doctoral research project into another doctoral research project, so that I could work and continue my psi research plans simultaneously. This explains why I decided to take my second PhD degree.

For my PhD in Psychology, I conducted an intersectional survey to investigate the prevalence of psi-related experiences in the Brazilian context and check their association with beliefs, attitudes, and subjective well-being. For that, I developed the Q-PRP – Questionnaire of Prevalence and Relevance of Psi, taking Palmer’s questionnaire as a baseline (1979), translating some of its questions to Portuguese and including new questions, such as those asking participants their attributions of causality to their psi experiences (for details, see Machado, 2009).[1] To mention some key results, I found that 82.7% of the participants[2] (N=306) reported having had at least one psi experience (74.2% at least one ESP experience and 55.9% at least one PK experience), a much higher prevalence than found in surveys conducted in other countries. Also, 74.2% of experiencers considered their psi experience(s) important or relevant to their lives in some way, for example, impacting decision making and influencing beliefs, attitudes, and practices. I found no significant difference in the prevalence of anomalous experiences between men and women ( $\chi^2 = .340$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .560$ ), but women ( $d = 2.2$ ) were significantly more likely to report their psi experiences ( $\chi^2 = 4,831$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .028$ ) than men ( $d = -2.2$ ), and



perhaps this behavior made them seem more prone to psi experiences. Again, the belief that women were much more prone to psi experiences was relativized by empirical data. Causes attributed to the experiences were generally congruent with participants' religious beliefs/postures, but there were religious people who made naturalistic attributions and some agnostics or atheists who made supernaturalistic attributions to their experiences. Religion was considered a good resource to cope with psi experiences ( $\chi^2 = 63.52$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p = .000$ ) significantly more by evangelicals ( $d = 2.7$ ) and Kardecist spiritualists ( $d = 5.4$ ) participants. Findings confirmed the importance of psi experiences as a subjective part of daily life independently of its ontological status, but even so raise questions on possible anomalous processes underlying subjective experiences. Especially important fruits of my research are the other studies replicating or inspired by my study (e.g., Batista, 2016; Reichow, 2017; Torres, 2016).

Soon after I got my PhD in psychology, besides being a co-director of Inter Psi with Zangari at PUC-SP, I became a research member of the Laboratory for Social Psychology of Religion (LabPsiRel) founded and headed by Geraldo José de Paiva at the IP-USP. Besides being an insider in psychological academic mainstream, an important gain associated with this position was the expansion of possibilities for conducting intersection research between religious and anomalous experiences. This work was highlighted in my second PhD dissertation. At our suggestion, LabPsiRel team conducted a cross-cultural comparative study between religious paranormal beliefs and classical paranormal beliefs (Zangari et al., 2013), funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), a governmental funding agency in Brazil.

Zangari had been appointed to a position at USP in 2008, and in 2009 we decided to migrate Inter Psi from PUC-SP to USP where it could be incorporated properly into the mainstream psychology domain. We had started to study anomalistic psychology in depth in Inter Psi, and it seemed a very promising approach, since “researchers in anomalistic psychology are not closed to the study of the psi hypothesis, although they emphasize the psychological processes underlying paranormal claims” (Zangari & Machado, 2012). That seemed a good strategic solution: form a skeptical hypothesis on anomalous experiences/phenomena, study/test it, be honestly open to the findings. As we were still crossing the borders of psychology, that seemed a very promising approach, considering the ability of that strategy opening to new possibilities for the study of anomalous experiences. More recent developments in the field (cf. Cardeña et al., 2013; French & Stone, 2013; Holtz et al., 2012) provided support for the usefulness of such an approach, so we decided to assume it as research area. “Anomalistic psychology” and “anomalous experience” were terms unknown in the country until then and, because they were “weird,” we had the opportunity to present and clarify them.

After lots of explanations, justifications, and some administrative meetings to clarify Inter Psi aims and activities to the university congregation, Inter Psi was established at the Institute for Psychology of USP, then named Inter Psi – Laboratory of Anomalistic Psychology and Psychosocial Processes. Paradoxically, moving away from parapsychology was a guarantee for the scientific study of psi. The study of psi was welcome in academia, but “parapsychology” was not, that term still being seen as a synonym of pseudoscience and alternative therapies that were not evidence-based. Even so, we have promoted a dialogue between psychology of religion, parapsychology, and anomalistic psychology studies, the latter seen in a more inclusive way, always taking care to respect the limits of each area (Zangari & Machado, 2011). It is debatable whether the avoidance of the term parapsychology is a gain or a loss. But at least the field of study has been preserved and is more active than ever in Brazil, not only at USP but also in other university institutions:

This almost negative form of studying the psi hypothesis has gotten some acceptance at some Brazilian universities. Thus, at least in Brazil, the field of anomalistic psychology has represented not only the opening for the academic study of psychological experiences, beliefs, and/or paranormal claims, but also the normalization of the scientific study of psi hypothesis. (Zangari & Machado, 2012: 66)

Since 2017, I have been collaborating with the Social Psychology Graduate Program at IP-USP as a teacher of graduate students. I have masters and doctorate students under my supervision and also teach the course *Anomalous Experiences: A Critical Introduction to Anomalistic Psychology and its Relations with Social Psychology*, and other courses on the Psychology of Belief and the Psychology of Religion, in which we always discuss aspects of psi research.

Attendance and participation in conferences and seminars have helped to break down standing barriers and prejudices against psi research and brought anomalous experiences to the open discussion in psychology. Publications are especially instrumental in this process, including my own writings and coauthored papers as well as the translation I did for the publication in Portuguese of *Varieties of anomalous experience: Examining the scientific evidence* (Cardena et al., 2013). However, I must honestly say that as soon as the term “anomalous experience” became known, it started to be adopted by people who practice pseudoscience, apparently as an attempt to imply that their practices are in line with what is done at USP so as to increase their status and validate their practices and belief systems. Things like this also occur in other areas, too – as the use of the term quantic to validate alternative beliefs and practices has become commonplace. “It is like drying ice,” as we say in Brazil, but at least, after important advances in the field, we are in a better position as an academic reference point to clarify/confront these “misuses.”

My trajectory, which until the end of my second doctorate had been in the direction of unlinking psi research and psi experiences from religious-biased approaches, more recently turned towards understanding the interpretative accommodation between religious and anomalous experiences – especially psi-related ones – and its importance to the constitution of subjectivity and identity as fundamental human aspects. (But I never surrendered to nor support religion-based approaches to parapsychology.) Processes of meaning attribution and coping with anomalous experiences outline significant consequences experiencers' lives and are linked to the development of their identity. So, dealing with paranormal or religious beliefs/disbeliefs is dealing with people's essence in the last instance. Destroying/deconstructing beliefs is deconstructing people. For ethical questions, when studying people's experiences, that aspect must be considered, but cannot prevent the rigorous scientific investigation of human phenomena.

Unfortunately, clinical management of complaints related to anomalous/religious experiences are barely (or are not) discussed in psychology training and, consequently, are neglected in professional psychological practices. Experience reports are easily disregarded, pathologized, or entangled in the psychologists' personal beliefs due to their professional unpreparedness to deal with their own beliefs and the content of anomalous/religious experiences brought to them by patients to the clinical context (Machado & Zangari, 2016). Therefore, in addition to research, I have also worked on aspects related to clinical psychologists' attitudes towards anomalous/religious experiences. I finished my training as a clinical psychologist in 2015 and in 2017 I started the Inter Psi's Clinical Nucleus at USP, a mixture of study group and service that gathers some of Inter Psi members who are clinical psychologists. We discuss and carry out studies on clinical demands related to anomalous/religious experiences and differential diagnosis, in addition to producing materials and offering clinical supervision to psychologists dealing with such demands (e. g., Machado & Zangari, 2021; Zangari & Machado, 2018a, 2018b).

An important point I have discussed is how male and female psychologists and/or researchers deal with their own beliefs and disbeliefs, whether they are scientific, political, or religious. No problem in having religious beliefs (I myself have my own), but it is fundamental to avoid inappropriate epistemological miscellany in research and/or professional practices. For that, we have been working with the methodological principle of exclusion of the transcendent as proposed by Theodore Flournoy (Flournoy, 1903; Zangari & Machado, 2016).

From reflections about our work in the field, the maturation of ideas and interdisciplinary connections, in 2020, when celebrating 10 years at USP, again InterPsi (now written "together") has gained a new extensive and descriptive name indicating dimensions we focus on from a psychosocial point of view, considering their intrinsic relationship: InterPsi – Laboratory for Psychosocial Studies "Belief, Subjectivity, Culture and Health." Specificities are explicit in its

research lines, and encompass the study of anomalous/religious experiences, and obviously psi-related-experiences, my particular focus of interest.

Remembering my trajectory, I see that an important trail was open for those interested in psi research in Brazil, even though we still do not have an accredited program in parapsychology/psi research or anomalistic psychology, nor a unit or chair in a Brazilian university as happens in Europe. But I strongly consider that we have advanced psi research significantly. I myself, however, do not earn money to make my living nor have a stable position as a psi researcher yet. But yet is a hopeful word. I am working to keep the trail open and increasingly broad because psi research deals with fundamental aspects of subjectivity. I still encourage and help prepare young female and male researchers to continue in the field, carving out their own territory.

### ***Being a “Female Wife Researcher” Made/Makes Any Difference?***

The general situation of women in the labor market in Brazil and the disparity of wages is similar to other countries who struggle with gender inequality. On average, the wage gap between men and women in Brazil is around 22%, even when comparing people in the same job and with the same education level. The result is that women’s wages are generally the lowest wage-earners, according to the National Household Sample Survey (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics], 2021). Brazil ranks 93rd regarding pay equality in the international ranking of 156 countries, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021). Despite the general situation, I have never known of salary differentials for the same positions and functions held by men and women with same educational level in academy. The number of women with higher academic degrees in Brazil has increased, equaling, and even exceeding the number of graduate males. However, data analyzed according to the theoretical categorization of the intersectionality of social markers (cf. Acker, 2006) point to social markers overlapping, such as gender and race for social inequality that make evident disparities between men and women and between white and black women in higher education, with a prevalence of white and male faculty members (Ferreira et al., 2022). Even though a significant social change is evidenced by the growing or even higher number of female than male teachers in Brazilian universities over the last two decades, the access of women to prominent academic positions (e.g., higher education teaching careers, as leadership positions and/or participation in higher education bodies) is problematized (Moshikovich & Almeida, 2015: 749). In fact, these trends can vary from institution to institution and among areas of knowledge. Depending on the context, men are still more likely to occupy higher positions within universities’ organizational framework.

I have never had a salary to work specifically as a psi researcher, but when I was employed as a university teacher or asked for grants and I obtained them, there was no difference in the amount received by male colleagues who occupied similar positions or applied and got the same kind of grant. Brazilian universities and research funding agencies have fair criteria in awarding grants, independently of gender. The projects are evaluated by judges who are not privy to gender knowledge to guarantee that equity in the granting process. There is also an interesting criterion for teaching staff compositions: a programs' number of male and female teachers is one of the criteria in educational ranking. Even so, some areas – especially hard sciences and technology – are still mostly masculine.

In my academic career, honestly, I have not encountered barriers because I am a woman. *Ms. Parapsychology* (in Portuguese, parapsychology is a feminine term) had some trouble due to biased approaches and prejudice about parapsychology that permeate both society in general and the academic environment. However, specifically “being a woman” did not prevent or hinder my access to graduate programs as a student, nor my work as a teacher, nor my access to some prominent positions (e. g., I was the Executive Director and coordinator of a study group at the International Center for Peircean Studies for ten years; I was the deputy head of my department at PUC-SP for three years, having a woman as my boss – which was great – and we both never had problems with our male colleagues for being women; I also served the Parapsychology Association Board of Directors). But I am conscious that this is not the rule for many women in academia.

I would like to point out, however, that particularly when my husband and I work closer, in the same group or context, gender biases do become evident, especially “behind the scenes” or not so “behind.” Some illustrative – and quite repetitive – situations are:

- Being ignored at conferences, lectures, or research meetings by fellow researchers (especially male, and – but more rarely – female) who address only Zangari, completely disregarding my presence.
- Some people asking me about Zangari's schedule and to take messages to him as if I was his secretary.
- Colleagues mentioning some work I did as if that was his work – or mentioning some of our coauthored works as if he was the only author.
- A male colleague addressing his answers to Zangari when I had been the one who asked the questions (that happened in an international committee we worked together).
- Good ideas presented by me at some meetings were later attributed to my husband; or were disregarded only to be proposed by a male colleague and then accepted as interesting by the group.

- Being charged with the responsibility of calming Zangari's mood in some tense situations with colleagues because "that is my role as a wife," disregarding the fact that I am a researcher who can evaluate situations and deal with him as a colleague.
- I was told more than once that my love for Zangari is admirable, since I accompany him in his field of interest – disregarding my own will, my legitimate personal choice for the field, and the fact that although my husband and I are partners we do not always have the same opinions or research topics of interest.

Situations like those could be discouraging – and sometimes, they really are. However, they also motivate me to confront them and not accept invisibility. Obviously, working together for 30 years, Zangari and I have inevitably exerted a mutual influence on each other. Together we have "opened a trail," with joint projects or working, each of us, with each own projects, keeping in mind that supporting and leading roles can be alternated depending on the situation. That is about partnership and not subservience or domination. Some people doubt this is possible, but we have worked to make (and keep) it possible, even if it is hard, because we are immersed in a sexist culture and in daily life we can be caught in traps, but we can go out. As Jessica Utts pointed out when writing on past reflections and prospects for women and parapsychology:

... we must be aware of how the expectations of those around us are influencing our behavior, our research ideas, and our modes of thinking, and not fall into the "good girl" trap at the expense of choosing our own directions. ... [and] we must learn when it matters that we are women and when it does not. Accusation of bias when it does not exist will ultimately destroy our credibility. (Utts, 1994: 239)

Once, in the 1990s, my colleague and friend Vera Barrionuevo told me that I was not the "feminine, gentle and docile" type – and that she was not that type either! – and at that moment I did not understand exactly what that meant – whether it was a good or bad. I realized later that it was a compliment. I am not docile nor a "good girl" from the point of view of letting myself be dominated by sexist views about female behavior or the "place" that women should occupy. I am convinced that real partnership between women and men and collaboration with other women are fruitful and can teach us many things about our research object, our field of work, and life. I always try to sensitize my students and colleagues to this.

### *Concluding remarks*

My outstanding colleague and friend Nancy L. Zingrone – who also had the luck and challenge of being married to an outstanding research colleague – presented very smart and accurate guidelines/advice at the occasion of the 1991 International Conference Women and Parapsy-

chology promoted by the Parapsychology Foundation, which was held when I was starting to study parapsychology seriously. Concluding her presentation on women and parapsychology, she said: “things are better now than they were, but we still have a long way to go.” Now, 31 years after that conference was held, those guidelines are still valid and necessary, despite many advances we have experienced. I highlight four guidelines that encompass the other ones somehow: (1) “learn what you need to know ... don’t rely on others to pull you through;” (2) “promote equal access and equal participation for everybody, male or female, white or minority ... of [any] culture;” (3) “don’t accept invisibility” [I would add “and do not let female colleagues be invisible”]; (4) “carve out your own territory and publish, publish, publish” (Zingrone, 1994b: 225). Truly, publishing is like immortality since we carve out our work and leave our mark in the material world.

As to not accepting invisibility (our own or of others), I have adopted gendered writing. I use inclusive language and purposely give more visibility to women referred in the texts. (Male and female language purists hate that. Well ... “let them fight”!) Another problem is “the supremacy of the last name” to refer to people, what makes their gender unclear. So, I mix the use of last name with first and last name together to make it clear in the text. Language morphology and academic writing rules are full of sexist traps, and we should be alert to that. Also, in my presentations and lectures, I use photos of referred male and female researchers in my slides, what helps to illustrate the presence of women in science. Such points are part of not letting female colleagues and reference authors become invisible, too.

I have been trying to follow Zingrone’s guidelines, inspired by strong women in the field, especially Louisa E. Rhine (my first inspiration), Nancy L. Zingrone and the female Parapsychology Foundation dynasty (Eileen Garret, Eileen Coly and Lisette Coly). They were/are instrumental in the development of my work. I hope my contributions to the field can also somewhat inspire more women (and men, of course) to do (or when doing) psi research.

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### **Eine Psi-Forscherin in Brasilien: Meine Karriere und meine Wahrnehmungen als Frau**

#### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung*<sup>18</sup>

Informationen über die europäische „psychische Forschung“, die auch als „wissenschaftlicher Okkultismus“ oder in Frankreich als „métapsychique“ bezeichnet wurde, sowie der amerikanischen Ansatz der parapsychologischen Forschung kamen im späten 19. bzw. frühen 20. Jahrhundert nach Brasilien und wurden dort, im Unterschied zu wissenschaftlichen Ansätzen, durch die Filter religiöser Perspektiven – insbesondere katholischer und spiritistischer – verbreitet. So entwickelte sich die Parapsychologie in Brasilien als ein widersprüchliches und vielschichtiges Feld, das historisch durch die Verwendung der Parapsychologie als Instrument zur Unterstützung oder Legitimierung religiöser Perspektiven in einseitiger Weise gekennzeichnet ist. Insbesondere die katholische Sichtweise, deren wichtigster Vertreter von den 1960er- bis zu den 1990er-Jahren Pater Oscar Gonzalez Quevedo war, verstärkte und popularisierte das Stereotyp, dass Frauen von Natur aus stärker mit dem Paranormalen verbunden seien als Männer. Quevedo pathologisierte parapsychologische Phänomene, indem er vor den Risiken der Förderung medialer Praktiken warnte, da diese angeblich aus physischen und psychischen Ungleichgewichten resultieren oder psychische Krankheiten verursachen würden und zudem psychisch ansteckend seien. Er verstärkte das populäre Bild von Frauen – insbesondere von Mädchen im Teenageralter – als fast zwangsläufig unausgeglichene „Spuk-Epizentren“. Obwohl die in Brasilien durchgeführten Umfragen dies nicht unbedingt bestätigen, ist das Stereotyp der „unausgegliehenen“ oder „besessenen“ Frauen immer noch sehr stark. In der Tat schwankt der Status der Frauen im Volksmund hauptsächlich zwischen „unausgegliehen“ (katholische Sichtweise) und „begabt“ (spiritistische Sichtweise). Quevedos Sichtweise basierte vor allem auf

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18 Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

seiner Mission, die Ausbreitung des Spiritismus in Brasilien zu bekämpfen, was auch bedeutete, dass er experimentelle parapsychologische Studien verurteilte. Sie würden sich mit menschlichen Fähigkeiten befassen oder diese fördern, die angeblich geistige Schäden verursachen. Da mediale Praktiken in Brasilien – anders als Channeling in anderen Kontexten – besonders mit der religiösen Sphäre verbunden sind, bedeutete die Pathologisierung und Kriminalisierung der Medialität, wie sie von Medizinerinnen und Gesetzen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts vorgenommen wurde, eine Delegitimierung religiöser Praktiken.

Eine Psi-Forscherin in Brasilien zu sein, bedeutet, sich mit diesen besonderen Themen auseinandersetzen zu müssen, zusätzlich zu den Geschlechterfragen, die die Gesellschaft und die Arbeitsbeziehungen im Allgemeinen durchdringen – besonders wenn, wie bei mir, der Arbeitspartner der Ehemann ist, was sehr produktiv, aber auch herausfordernd sein kann, da dabei Geschlechterfragen bei vielen Gelegenheiten in den Vordergrund treten. Ich stelle Frauen vor, die zu verschiedenen kontroversen parapsychologischen Ansätzen beigetragen und sich für eine wissenschaftliche Perspektive auf diesem Feld in Brasilien eingesetzt haben, die jedoch in historischen Rückblicken häufig nicht erwähnt werden. Interessanterweise spielten Frauen, die eine grundlegende Rolle bei der Verbreitung und Aufrechterhaltung religiös begründeter „Parapsychologien“ spielten, eine Rolle „hinter den Kulissen“ oder als „Nebendarstellerinnen“. Sie nehmen ihre Führungsrolle nicht an und verfechten sie auch nicht, sondern ordnen sich (und ihre Arbeit) der prominenten männlichen Bezugsperson in ihrem Fachgebiet unter. Selbst Frauen, die eine eigenständigere Protagonistenrolle einnehmen – auch in kollaborativen Arbeiten mit männlichen Kollegen – laufen Gefahr, in der Geschichte zu verschwinden, wie Alvarado (1989) feststellte. Im brasilianischen Kontext beobachten wir eine Wiederholung des Prozesses des Engagements und des anschließenden Verlassens oder der Loslösung vom Feld insbesondere bei Frauen, die sich der parapsychologischen wissenschaftlichen Forschung verschrieben haben. Die Öffnung des Weges ist wichtig, doch die Gewährleistung der Kontinuität der geleisteten Arbeit ist von grundlegender Bedeutung für das Feld – und insbesondere für die Forscherinnen. In diese Richtung habe ich gearbeitet. Die Unsichtbarkeit von Frauen (unsere eigene oder die anderer) sollte nicht akzeptiert werden. Eine der Strategien, die ich anwende, um die Unsichtbarkeit von Frauen zu vermeiden, ist, neben der Offenlegung historischer Beiträge von Forscherinnen, die Verwendung einer geschlechtsspezifischen Schreibweise, um Forscherinnen und ihre früheren und aktuellen Beiträge sichtbar zu machen.

Mein Interesse an der Psi-Forschung wurde in meiner Kindheit geweckt, als ich mich häufig in einer interessanten Zwischenzone zwischen natürlichen und übernatürlichen Sichtweisen befand, während ich meinen Großvätern zuhörte, die beängstigende und gespenstische Geschichten erzählten. Solche Geschichten riefen in mir Angst und Neugier hervor, namentlich, weil sie von Erzählungen, die auf ein übernatürliches Wirken hindeuteten (wie sie mein Großvater väterlicherseits erzählte), bis hin zu naturalistischen Erklärungen für „vermeintlich

anomale Fälle“ (wie sie mein Großvater mütterlicherseits ansprach) reichten. Als ich 1991 als Universitätsstudentin zufällig herausfand, dass sich das, was man in Brasilien Parapsychologie nannte, sehr von dem unterschied, was im Ausland praktiziert wurde, beschloss ich, Psi-Forscherin zu werden, nicht nur, um Psi zu untersuchen, sondern auch, um gute Informationen über das Forschungsgebiet weiterzugeben und die Psi-Forschung an der Universität zu etablieren.

In Brasilien gab es weder ein akkreditiertes Parapsychologieprogramm, noch einen Lehrstuhl für Parapsychologie, noch eine Abteilung an einer Universität. So habe ich nach Forschungsmöglichkeiten in verschiedenen Bereichen gesucht und als Insiderin nicht-religiöse parapsychologische Studien und Themen in die Akademie eingebracht; gleichzeitig verbreitete ich qualitativ hochwertige Informationen über das Gebiet und wies „empirisch“ nach, dass gute wissenschaftliche Praktiken im Zusammenhang mit der Parapsychologie möglich waren. Strategisch gesehen habe ich in und mit verschiedenen Disziplinen und Bereichen gearbeitet – vor allem in den Bereichen Religionswissenschaft, Semiotik, Psychologie, Religionspsychologie und anomalistische Psychologie – und dabei immer Personen, die Psi-Erlebnisse haben bzw. hatten, in den Mittelpunkt meiner Forschungsprojekte und Schriften gestellt. Paradoxerweise garantierte die – in gewisser Weise – Abkehr von der Parapsychologie die wissenschaftliche Erforschung von Psi. Sie hat gute Früchte getragen, und heute bin ich eine(r) der Leiter(innen) eines Labors und unterrichte gemeinsam mit anderen an der wichtigsten öffentlichen Universität des Landes innerhalb von Grund- und Aufbaustudiengängen zu Themen der Psi-Forschung.

In Anbetracht meiner derzeitigen Arbeit in diesem Bereich weise ich auf einige wichtige Fragen hin und diskutiere beispielsweise, wie man als Psi-Forscherin und klinische Psychologin respektvoll mit persönlichen religiösen Überzeugungen umgeht und wie man geschlechtsspezifischen Vorurteilen insbesondere „hinter den Kulissen“ oder auch nicht so „dahinter“ begegnet. Wir sind Teil einer sexistischen Kultur und im alltäglichen Leben können wir leicht in Fallen tappen. Deshalb ist es wichtig, dass wir uns bewusst sind, dass es bei der Arbeit mit männlichen Kollegen um Partnerschaft und nicht um Unterwerfung oder Dominanz gehen muss.

Zusammenfassend sehe ich, dass ein wichtiger Weg für diejenigen eröffnet wurde, die sich für Psi-Forschung in Brasilien interessieren, auch wenn wir immer noch keinen akkreditierten Studiengang für Parapsychologie, Psi-Forschung oder anomalistische Psychologie haben; wir haben im Unterschied zur europäischen Situation auch noch keine Abteilung oder keinen Lehrstuhl an einer brasilianischen Universität. Aber ich bin fest davon überzeugt, dass wir die Psi-Forschung erheblich vorangebracht haben. Ich hoffe, dass meine Forschungsbeiträge mehr Frauen – und auch Männer – zur Psi-Forschung inspirieren können.

# A View From India on Women Achievers, Knowledge Systems, Psychology, and Psi

SONALI BHATT MARWAHA<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – In the millennia old cultural moorings of the Indian sub-continent, the feminine principle, Shakti (prakṛti, primordial cosmic energy, nature), is a core principle. Shakti is venerated in her benign and malevolent forms across the country. Despite the uncertainties of life, human nature, and society, women have played a significant role in the survival and progress of this ancient civilization. Indian women, in the formal and informal sectors, have contributed to the knowledge systems and the scientific enterprise. In the first part of this paper, I present a brief historical background on the status of women, and few recent examples of Indian women achievers. As a psi theorist, my interest rests in understanding the phenomena, for which understanding core concepts becomes a necessity. India is home to a diversity of philosophical schools and a vast body of literature that cover the body-mind-consciousness complex, with several scholars from the past to the present, contributing their views. Based in the Indian knowledge systems, Indian psychology has much to contribute to the theoretical issues in psi. In the context of this special issue, an inter- and intra-school discussion becomes too vast. Thus, in this paper I take the approach of presenting a consolidated view without fidelity to any specific school of thought. In the first section relevant core concepts are briefly described. This is followed by briefly describing the views on psi perceptions, both in agreement and disagreement, as noted by scholars from the various schools of thought.

**Keywords:** Indian women achievers – Indian knowledge systems – Indian psychology core concepts – psi in Indian psychology

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## Ein Blick aus Indien auf erfolgreiche Frauen, Wissenssysteme, Psychologie und Psi

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – In der jahrtausendealten Kultur des indischen Subkontinents ist das weibliche Prinzip, Shakti (prakṛti, kosmische Urenergie, Natur), ein zentrales Prinzip. Shakti wird in ihren gütigen und böartigen Formen im ganzen Land verehrt. Trotz der Unwägbarkeiten des Lebens, der menschlichen Natur und der Gesellschaft haben Frauen eine bedeutende Rolle für das Überleben und den Fortschritt dieser alten Zivilisation gespielt. Indische Frauen haben sowohl im formellen als auch im informellen Sektor zu den Wissenssystemen und dem wissenschaftlichen Betrieb beigetragen. Im ersten Teil dieses Beitrags gebe ich einen kurzen historischen Überblick über den Status der Frauen und stelle einige Beispiele indischer Frauen vor, die in jüngster Zeit viel erreicht haben. Als Psi-Theoretikerin liegt mein Interesse darin, die Phänomene zu verstehen, wofür das Verständnis der Kernkonzepte eine Notwendigkeit ist. Indien beherbergt eine Vielzahl philosophischer Schulen und eine umfangreiche Literatur, die sich mit dem Komplex Körper-Geist-Bewusstsein befasst, wobei mehrere Gelehrte von der Vergangenheit bis zur Gegenwart ihre Ansichten beisteuern. Auf der Grundlage der indischen Wissenssysteme hat die indische Psychologie viel zu den theoretischen Fragen des Psi beigetragen. Im Rahmen dieses Sonderheftes würde eine schulübergreifende und schulinterne Diskussion zu weit führen. Daher verfolge ich in diesem Beitrag den Ansatz, eine konsolidierte Sichtweise ohne Bindung an eine bestimmte Denkschule zu präsentieren. Im ersten Abschnitt werden die relevanten Kernkonzepte kurz beschrieben. Anschließend werden die übereinstimmenden und abweichenden Auffassungen der Wissenschaftler und Wissenschaftlerinnen der verschiedenen Denkschulen zu Psi-Wahrnehmungen kurz beschrieben.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Indische erfolgreiche Frauen – indische Wissenssysteme – Kernkonzepte der indischen Psychologie – Psi in der indischen Psychologie

### *Introduction*

Academic work on women's issues tends to focus on their oppression and drudgery in every aspect of life, presenting a depressing view of their lives. This is a complex issue greatly dependent on the culture, society, and economic status of both the family and the nation. Women play a pivotal role in nurturing the helpless human infant, the most dependent of all infants in the natural world, and provide stability for the family – the core unit of social organization in our species, greatly influenced by human nature in all its colors; women are also achievers in all walks of life, from the simplest to the most complex.

On evaluating my own work experience as a woman in several domains of activity – clinical, teaching, research – with a variety of groups of people, my biggest challenges came from dealing with a chronic health problem, and cross-cultural issues in addressing western vs Indian

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.

points of view in psychology and parapsychology. As a psi researcher, the position of being “outside the gates of [mainstream] science” (Broderick, 2007), despite proposing a pan-human brain-based hypothesis for understanding the mechanism of informational psi (IΨ; i. e., extra-sensory perception, anomalous cognition, precognition), and for the very same reasons being outside the gates of “mainstream” parapsychology, is the most perplexing part of my experience in psi research, aside from the subject matter of course. After familiarizing myself with the discipline of parapsychology, fundamental concepts such as consciousness, theory of mind, and especially the survival hypothesis were conflicting with a mind encultured in a different culture and language, despite being educated in and proficient in English.

### *Cross-Cultural Psychology*

Cross-cultural psychology is defined as “[...] the study: of similarities and differences in individual psychological functioning in various cultural and ethnocultural groups; of the relationships between psychological variables and socio-cultural, ecological and biological variables; and of ongoing changes in these variables” (Berry, Poortinga, et al., 2002: 3). However, psychology as taught in India has been “imported lock, stock, and barrel from the West, and was first implanted in 1916 at Calcutta University” (Dalal, 2014: 65), thus, its practice has followed the western approach in subject matter. Much of what we were taught from leading standard western textbooks was quite different from our lived experiences. Approaches such as that of behaviorism, Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, Eric Berne, were misfits in the Indian milieu, even in the urban cosmopolitan cities. Application of western psychotherapeutic models to a non-western culture have been substantially discussed (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Manickam, 2010; Misra & Gergen, 1993; Neki, 1975; Poortinga, Pandey, et al., 1997). In discussing cross-cultural issues Bhargava, Kumar, and Gupta (2017) state: “Culture impacts the expression and understanding of psychopathology and also determines the acceptability of treatment. Recent literature underscores the efficacy of the western models in Indian context when embedded in Indian concepts like ‘Bhagvad Gita’ and ‘guru–chela’ [teacher–student] relationship.”

One of the key issues in cross-cultural psychology is the classification of societies into collectivist and individualistic societies, a dimension that can be found in many kinds of analyses. Individualistic societies emphasize autonomy and self-independence, whereas collectivist societies lay emphasis on networks of relationships and interdependence of groups (family, social, peer, village, nation) (Darwish & Huber, 2003; Misra, 2001, Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988). India is an example of a collectivist society. Interestingly, while at the social and personal level India is collectivist, at the spiritual level it follows an individualistic path in that the goal is self-realization at a metaphysical level.

Areas of daily living have different cultural basis. For example, “bed sharing” of infants with parents, which continues to be “controversial for nighttime caregiving in the U.S. today, as in most of the West. ...” (Barry & McKenna, 2022; McKenna & McDade, 2005). New mothers in India will be severely chastised by their mother and grandmothers if they opted for isolating the child. As Barry (2022) states, “A vast amount of scientific evidence points to the role of co-sleeping in the evolution of infant sleep regulation, as co-sleeping is part of an ancient behavioral complex (including breastfeeding) representing the biopsychosocial microenvironment in which human infants co-evolved with their mothers through millions of years of human history.”

An often-repeated psychology class room anecdote was that “psychology is the psychology of the American sophomore.” Henry (2006) states: “Twenty years have passed since Sears (1986) alerted social psychologists to the many possible dangers faced by relying on a database composed mostly of students, especially with respect to the generalizability of the theoretical conclusions we come to.” As Sears (1986: 515) wrote:

This article suggests that social psychology has risked such biases because of its heavy dependence during the past 25 years on a very narrow data base: college student subjects tested in the academic laboratory with academic like materials. My concern is that overdependence on this one narrow data base may have unwittingly led us to a portrait of human nature that describes rather accurately the behavior of American college students in an academic context but distorts human social behavior more generally.

Recently Cooper, McCord, and Socha (2010) wrote: “In many cases, the so-called ‘college-sophomore problem’ is not a problem.” However, it may be a problem from the cross-cultural perspective, unless we are addressing species-specific aspects such as perception of sensory ranges.

Cross-cultural issues have also been raised in the context of psi research. As Maraldi and Krippner (2019: 306) state:

Research has begun to unveil the cognitive and personality correlates of anomalous experiences (AEs). Unfortunately, cultural differences have received markedly less attention. Questions exist regarding whether the Western description of AEs, as possibly nonordinary or exceptional, is valid across cultures. Scant research on AEs has been conducted in non-English-speaking countries, and few systematic cross-cultural comparisons have been carried out.

As a Hindu Indian, I am culturally embedded in the idea of ‘rebirth’ and narrations of precognitive dreams – they are considered as part of the realities of life. Introduced to psi investigation as an academic discipline, my interest grew after I looked at the data. Naturally, the next question is how does this happen. Several years down the line, I was faced with the cross-cultural

question. Thus, although this special issue is on women and parapsychology, I decided to present a view from India. Instead of providing comparative data between two cultural groups on various parameters, presenting an overview of Indian psychology and its implications for psi theory is appropriate. For the readership of this journal, in this paper I provide a glimpse of the Indian view.

In India, through the millennia, across regional cultural differences in dress, food habits, and language, there is a common thread that binds her people to a cultural ethos that is, paradoxically, both same and different. Thus, in Part I of this paper, in tune with the theme of this special issue, is a summary of the “feminine” in Hindu dharma, and contribution of women to the Indian Civilization and Nation. As a basis for understanding Indic perspectives of psi, in Part II an overview of Indian knowledge systems (IKS), core concepts of Indian psychology, the nature of time, saṃsāra (cycle of birth and death) and karma, and Indic explorations in informational psi are discussed. These are the core constructs of Hinduness or Hindutva; *tattva* is the essence or substance of anything. In the Yoga tradition the five tattva or elements are earth (*pṛthvī*), water (*āpas*), fire (*agni*), air (*vāyu*) and space (*ākāśa*). Each element is the manifestation of primal cosmic energy (*Śakti*).

## *Part I*

### *The Feminine in Hindu Dharma*

Ardhanārīśvara, the androgynous form of Śiva (puruṣa, primordial Self, Consciousness, the masculine) and Śakti (prakṛti, primordial matter, energy, the feminine) represents the regenerative power of the Universe (Figure 1). This duality of the masculine and the feminine is seen in “the popular religious beliefs of India, Śiva-Śakti of the Tantras, Puruṣa-Prakṛti of Sāṃkhya, Brahman-Māyā of Vedānta, and Viṣṇu-Lakṣhmī, Rāma-Sitā and Kṛiṣṇa-Rādhā of Vaiṣṇavism all mean the same” (Madhavananda & Majumdar, 1953: 68).

Śakti as the divine mother, divine feminine is reflected in the many goddesses (*devī*) that are at the center of daily life, each having specific attributes and rituals associated with them. The three principle feminine deities known since the earliest Ṛg Vedic period (~4500–5000 BCE) are worshipped with, and independent of their masculine forms: Pārvatī devī (goddess of wealth, fortune, power, beauty, fertility and prosperity), Lakṣmī devī (goddess of power, energy, nourishment, harmony, love, beauty, devotion, and motherhood), and Saraswati devī (goddess of arts, music, learning, knowledge, and wisdom); every seeker pays obeisance to them (Bansal, 2005; Kinsley, 1997).



**Figure 1.** A three-armed Ardhanārīśvara sculpture, 11th century, Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple, Tamil Nadu, India. Variations of this figure are seen across temples in India.

Image Credit: ASI monument number N-TN-C94.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gangaikonda\\_cholapuram\\_sculptures\\_04.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gangaikonda_cholapuram_sculptures_04.jpg)



**Figure 2.** Devī Durgā and her nine forms.

Images: Wikimedia Commons, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durga>

Das, S. (2020, August 27). Navadurga and the 9 Forms of the Hindu Goddess Durga.

<https://www.learnreligions.com/nine-forms-of-goddess-durga-1770307>

Devī Durgā, a form of Pārvatī devī, is worshipped and celebrated through the year across the country. Particularly during the Navrātri (nine nights) festival in her honor, in September–October, she is celebrated in her various forms: Shailaputri (Daughter of Mountain), Bhramacharini (Mother of Devotion and Penance), Chandraghanta (Destroyer of Demons), Kushmanda (Goddess of the Cosmic Egg), Skandamata (Goddess of Motherhood and Children), Katyayani (Goddess of Power), Kalaratri (Goddess of Auspiciousness and Courage); Mahagauri (Goddess of Beauty and Women), and Siddhidhatri (Goddess of Supernatural Powers or Siddhis, that is perfection of yoga and attainments) (Figure 2).

The feminine is also revered as Maa Bhūmi (Mother Earth) and Maa Bhārati or Bhārata Mātā (Mother India – Bhārata is the civilizational name of India, stated as such even in the post-independence Constitution – “India, that is Bharat”). As Madhavananda and Majumdar (1953: 86) state, this also “explains the general Indian tendency towards the deification of the mother in the social, and even in the domestic life. Not only the mother, but women, as a class, are regarded as the incarnation of the Devi.” (This enduring principle forms an unbroken chain from the ~7000 BCE Sindhu-Saraswati Civilization (Bakshi, 2019; Mallam, 2022) to the on-going present in Hindu<sup>3</sup> or Sanātan Dharma (the eternal and intrinsic nature of things).<sup>4</sup> Based on the experiences and teachings of ordinary people, scientists, and scholars it is reflected in the beliefs, practices, philosophies, and wisdom of the Hindus.

### ***Contribution of Women to the Indian Civilization and Nation***

Based on textual evidence, Madhavananda and Majumdar (1953: 87–111) have traced the status of women’s education from the early Vedic age [~3000 BCE<sup>5</sup>], Brāhmaṇa-Upaniṣadic age (c. 1000 BCE to c. 500 BCE), Smṛiti-Purāṇa period (c. 500 BCE to 600 CE), to the modern era. In the pre-modern ages, Vedic studies began with *upanayana* [thread ceremony] or sacred initiation which was performed usually at the age of eight, for girls and boys. Women enjoyed equal opportunities for studentship and work in all branches of Vedic literature including the sciences, such as astronomy, physics, mathematics, medicine, equally with men. There is ample evidence to show women studied the Vedas as well as composed hymns that were later admitted to the sacred canon (Dwivedi & Malik, 2022). The earliest literature, the Ṛg Veda, contains hymns composed by as many as twenty-seven *Brahmavādinī*(s) or women seers. Women enjoyed the same religious privileges as men, participating as equals in religious rituals together or alone, depending on the ritual being performed – practices that continue to this day. They also participated in agricultural and industrial activity such as making arrows, and excelled in the fine arts, music and dance. Women students were divided into two classes, *Brahmavādinī* who were lifelong students of theology and philosophy, and *Sadyodvāhās* who studied till the

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- 3 The term Hindu comes from the Sanskrit word Sindhu referring to the Indus River, was initially used by foreigners to refer to those who lived near the river Indus. The term “Hinduism” is partly a Western construct, formulated by orientalist who represented a loosely knit religious tradition as a unified system of beliefs and practices (Sugirtharajah, 2002).
  - 4 Dharma defies an exact rendering into English or any other language; it does not refer to a system of abstract ideas or beliefs having no essential connection with life nor is it a set of rules to be blindly followed in daily life (Malhotra & Babaji, 2020: 184).
  - 5 Recent archaeological and DNA evidence is altering the dates that were hitherto applied (Price, 2019). Hence, the dates provided here are approximations as noted in the referenced texts.

age of 15–18, which was the age of marriage (Altekar, 1938: 13). Altekar (ibid.) analyzes that since about 300 BCE, various factors led to the decrease in the marriage age of women, from the earlier 15–18 age group, led to a steady decline in their education. “By the beginning of the Christian era pre-puberty marriages became the order of the day. Naturally, this meant a serious handicap to advanced studies, which could not be obviously finished before the age of 12 or 13, which was the new marriage age” (pp. 18–19).<sup>6</sup> During the Muslim rule, beginning around 12th century CE, the percentage of literacy among Hindu women went further down with great rapidity (p. 27).

The noted American historian and philosopher William Durant (1930: 55) observed:

When the British came [early 17th century], there was, throughout India, a system of communal schools, managed by the village communities. The agents of the East India Company destroyed these village communities, and took no steps to replace the schools; even today [1930] ... they stand at only 66 per cent of their number a hundred years ago. There are now in India 730,000 villages, and only 162,015 primary schools. Only 7 per cent of the boys and 1 per cent of the girls receive schooling, i. e. 4 per cent of the whole.

While earlier in several provinces the literacy level was widespread, by the end of the 19th century, India saw 93% illiteracy (Durant, 1930: 45–47). As Tharoor (2016: 130) points out: “The British left India with a literacy rate of 16 per cent, and a female literacy rate of 8 per cent – only one of every twelve Indian women could read and write in 1947.”

In 1848 Savitribai Phule along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, founded India’s first girls’ school in Pune, Maharashtra. She also became the first Indian woman to become a teacher in this period. In 1916, social reformer Maharishi Dhondo Keshav Karve founded the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) Women’s University in Mumbai, the first women’s university in India as well as in South-East Asia. The motto of the University is “An Enlightened Woman is a Source of Infinite Strength.” The first five women graduated in 1921 from this University – I am one of the millions of beneficiaries of the foresight of Maharishi Karve.

Physicist Rohini Godbole (2002: 108) states, “In India there are no social barriers to the science (particularly mathematics and physics) education of girl students. The fact that the majority of teachers are women, even for math and physics, definitely provides the girl student with confidence that she can study these subjects.” She further states that at the college level the 30–40% women students take up science subjects; biological and chemical sciences have a larger representation of women. Despite the many challenges across the country, the New Education Policy 2020 aims to increase the gross enrollment ratio (GER) to 100% in preschool to secondary level by 2030 whereas GER in Higher Education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018)

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6 Presently the legal marriage age for men is 21 years and for women is 18 years. There are plans to amend the law and make it 21 years for both.





**Figure 3.** Women achievers from various fields receiving the Padma Shri award from the President of India. (1) *Prof. Veena Tandon* (Padma Shri [PS] 2016), pioneered research on parasites affecting livestock and also helped in understanding of parasite biodiversity on North-Eastern region. (2) *Lakshmikutty Amma* (PS 2018), tribal woman from Kerala who provides herbal treatments for poisoning from snake and insect bites, preparing over 500 Herbal Medicines from memory. (3) *Prof. Rohini Godbole* (PS 2019), Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, known for her work on the design and implementation of two particle colliders, the Large Hadron Collider and the Next Linear Collider, at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research. She is a part of the International Detector Advisory Group for the International Linear Collider (ILC) at CERN. (4) *Smt. Rahibai Soma Popere* (PS 2020), known as “seed mother”, she is a self-taught tribal woman farmer, famous globally for her work in agro bio-diversity conservation. (5) *Tulasi Gowda* (PS 2020), a Halakki tribal woman famous as the Encyclopedia of Forest due to her vast knowledge of diverse species of plants and herbs. (6) *Trinity Saioo* (PS 2020), tribal woman farmer who spearheaded the women-led turmeric farming movement in Meghalaya, enabling the women to triple their incomes. (7) *Air Marshal Dr. Smt. Padmavathy Bandopadhyay* (PS 2020), PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.), Aviation Medicine Specialist, first woman Air Marshal of Indian Air Force. (8) *Dr. Leela Joshi* (PS 2020), gynaecologist and social worker known for her work with tribal women and teenage girls suffering from anaemia in Ratlam district. Images: (Government Open Data License - India [GODL]).

Source: All the images have been taken from <https://www.padmaawards.gov.in/Gallery2022.aspx>

to 50% by 2035 (PIB, 2022a), including other schemes for the welfare of the girl child (PIB, 2022b). With increasing number of educational facilities for higher education such as the Indian Institute for Technology, Indian Institute for Management, medical colleges across the country, and increased funding for this sector, the future holds promise for women and men in India. The results are slowly becoming visible with first generation students, including girls, from small villages and towns succeeding in medical entrance exams to various colleges (Kumari, 2020).

Contemporary Indian women have played stellar roles in all aspects of public life, arts, literature, social work, sports, science. As Gupte, Gyanchandani, et al. (2002: 171) state: “Indian women have held most political positions of importance, such as prime minister, chief ministers



**Figure 4.** Women achievers from various fields receiving the Padma Shri award from the President of India. (1) *Dr. Meenakshi Jain* (Padma Shri [PS] 2020) senior historian and political scientist, known for her scholarly contributions to Indian history. (2) *Manjamma Jogati* (PS 2021), transgender folk dancer of Jogamma heritage, first transwoman President of Karnataka Janapada Academy. (3) *Pappammal* (PS 2021), 105 year old organic farmer from Coimbatore, cultivating varieties of millets, pulses, and vegetables for over nine decades. (4) *Birubala Rabha* (PS 2021), decades-old crusader against witch-hunting from Goalpara, working across Northeast India, at risk to her own life. (5) *Smt. Bhuri Bai* (PS 2021), acclaimed painter from the Bhil tribal community transforming the art form from the traditional rock paintings to paper and canvas, recipient of several state awards. (6) *Basanti Devi* (PS 2022), environmentalist from Pithoragarh, known for her contribution towards revitalizing the Kosi River. (7) *Dr. Sosame Iype* (PS 2022), animal husbandry practitioner and academician from Thrissur, led conservation efforts to save and promote indigenous Vechur Cattle. (8) *Prof. Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay* (PS 2022), eminent computer scientist and machine intelligence expert – first woman director of the Indian Statistical Institute. Images: (Government Open Data License - India [GODL]).

Source: All the images have been taken from <https://www.padmaawards.gov.in/Gallery2022.aspx>

of various states, and leaders of legislatures. Women have also held positions of prominence in the judiciary and in other professions.” Several are recognized each year for their contribution by receiving Government of India’s civilian awards. The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honors of India announced annually on the eve of Republic Day. Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award for distinguished service seeks to recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved; some notable examples from recent years are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

Despite the frailties of human nature, changing socio-political pressures and constraints, the difficulties of oppression and violence through successive centuries of invasions, the continuation of the reverence of the feminine through millennia old traditions are reflected in the changing roles and reemergence of achievements of women in Indian society. Throughout

its history, women have played a contributory role in society, from participating in attaining freedom for India from the British colonial powers, contributing to the formal and informal sectors of education, industry and science, and most importantly, being the foundation for a strong collectivist society. Women across the millennia have played, and continue to play, a vital role in providing leadership to this civilization and nation in all domains of life. Several early examples of their contributions can be found in Madhavanand and Majumdar (1953). The recently elected President of India Hon. Smt. Droupadi Murmu, who dedicated her life to the welfare of her tribal community is a reflection of the Hindu cultural ethos.

To conclude this section, it may be accurate to state that the long tradition of venerating the feminine provides a different framework for women in the present compared to other cultures where the feminine is not so regarded. When there are lapses and social strife, a reminder of the cultural ethos hopefully brings in a course correction. Indian society, as a whole, is in the midst of changes borne out of the recent increasing pace of development including in basic facilities that greatly benefit women. Considering the upheavals in the lives of women in several countries around the world, the uncertainties of life, and the treacheries of human nature, Indian women, by and large, are in a free and safe space.

## *Part II*

### *Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)*

In his book *What Is This thing Called Science?* Alan Chalmers (2013) attempts to answer this question by examining all its complexities. After perusing its contents, I found the most concise definition of science on the NASA website for children: “Science consists of observing the world by watching, listening, observing, and recording. Science is curiosity in thoughtful action about the world and how it behaves” (SpacePlace, 2022). As Chalmers has adequately discussed, it is an evolving idea of our understanding of the world we live in; theories of the past are sometimes falsified with the data and theory from today, leaving the question open about errors that scientists in the future will find in the theories of today.

In the context of the stereotypical origins of science, Medin and Bang (2014: 3–4) have commented that:

Some people in this corner also are fond of the story of the development of science according to which it basically started in Greece, was nurtured in Europe during “the Enlightenment” and the associated triumph of reason, and eventually grew into modern science (a.k.a. “Western science”). Only in the West has science been cleanly severed from the irrationality of magic and superstition.

Elshakry (2010: 102) has commented that the “[...] debates over the nature of ‘Western science’ that had been initiated by missionaries, particularly British and American Protestants, who enlisted science in the service of their proselytizing efforts; they were also among the first to use the term ‘Western science’ itself.” However, the British historian Professor David Arnold (2000: 1) states:

Although the history of science, technology and medicine continues to be presented in general histories as a record of Western discovery and dissemination, it has become more widely acknowledged than a generation or two ago that *not* [emphasis added] all such histories can be conflated into a single story of European achievement or saga of European enterprise overseas.

A brief overview of Professor Joseph Needham’s monumental work *Science and Civilization in China*, started in 1954 and further work still being prepared by the Needham Research Institute, is a testimony to the scientific developments in ancient China. The 27 volumes, so far, include disciplines such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, physiology, agriculture, paper and printing, textiles, botany, military technology, fermentations and food science, medicine, ceramic technology (Needham Research Institute, 2022).

India has a vast history and records of scientific developments and technological advances, covering all disciplines of modern science. Intellectually vibrant, the philosophical and scientific work developed in the several ancient universities. For example, the Takshaśilā/Taxila University (estd. ~5th–6th c. BCE till about 6th c. CE) is amongst the oldest and well-known centers of higher learning in ancient India, located near present day Rawalpindi, Pakistan; Nalanda (3rd c. BCE to the 13th c. CE) in Bihar; Valabhi (c. 600 CE – 1200 CE) in Gujarat; Vikramshila (c. 800 CE – 1203 CE) in Bihar. Scholars from across India and outside (Babylonia-now Iraq, Persia-now Iran, Greece, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor-now Turkey, Arabia, China, Korea, Japan, and Indonesia) attended these centers of learning, leaving behind accounts of their visits. Over the ages, these universities were destroyed by hordes of invaders (Apte, 1900; Barua, 2016; Jain, 2011; Puri, 2020).

The contemporary Indian ethos finds its roots in the ancient past, with a continuation of beliefs and practices. With a tradition of debate where the opponent’s view is first understood and presented (pūrvapakṣa), before stating one’s own view (uttarapakṣa), ensuring that a proponent was well-versed in the opponent’s view, the intellectual culture saw several points of views being extensively discussed; this tradition has, however, been on the decline in modern times. In the Indic view knowledge is sacred. An enormous corpus of literature is associated with Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain knowledge systems, to which one can refer for its beliefs, principles, philosophies, and scientific advances. As Feuerstein, Kak, and Frawley (2001: xv) state:

Clearly, there are a number of reasons why we should be interested in India. Some relate to the origins of science and religion, others concern our yearning for knowledge of self and humanity's future destiny. The Indic culture area provides us with extensive material, across a very broad time span, that can help us understand the earliest history of ideas. The ancient Indic texts are layered in such a fashion that we can see the gradual development of mathematical, physical, linguistic, and psychological concepts. We find that their authors were deeply interested in cognitive science, in which they were so advanced that their insights may yet prove useful to modern science.

Tracing the roots of the Indus-Saraswati civilization Feuerstein, Kak, and Frawley (2001: xv-xviii) state:

According to the archaeological record, there is an unbroken tradition going back to about 8000 B. C. The earliest textual source is the Rig-Veda, which is a compilation of very ancient material. Astronomical references in this and other Vedic works recall events in the third to fifth millennium and earlier. The recent geological discovery that the Sarasvati, the preeminent river of Rig-Vedic times, went dry around 1900 B. C. as a result of tectonic upheavals implies that the Rig-Veda must be dated prior to this date. According to tradition, which scholars are finally beginning to take more seriously, the R̥g Veda is the creation of a period preceding 3100 B. C.

The Sanskrit word "Veda" literally means "knowledge" or "wisdom." The oldest of the four Veda(s) is the Rig-Veda. It is a compendium of poetry, legend, mythology, ritual, ancient science and culture, and, above all, ancient religion, yoga and spirituality. The Rig-Veda contains the same profound myths and archetypal images of man and nature that many of us are exploring today in psychology, anthropology, shamanism and in yoga practices such as Tantra (Frawley, 1992: 23). The Sama Veda is the liturgical manual or the chanting or singing of the Vedic hymns. The Yajur Veda consists of hymns that are in the form of sacrificial formulas or prayers like the other Vedic collections, and can be understood as promoting an inward, spiritual attitude within the framework of the Vedic sacrificial religion. The Athārva Veda is a late edition to the corpus of literature in continuation of the others (Feuerstein, Kak, & Frawley, 2001: 16–36).

The twelve major schools of Indian philosophy can be broadly divided into Vedic and non-Vedic schools. The six Vedic traditions can be arranged in three sets that are akin to each other: Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta (a. k. a. Upaniṣad). The Upaniṣads (~800–500 BCE) speak of two kinds of science: knowledge of the Paramātman, the one and only supreme principle and the ultimate reality (*parā vidyā*) and knowledge of the empirical world (*aparā vidyā*) (Kak, 2022: 23; Chakrabarti, 1996: 135). The six non-Vedic traditions come under the following three heads: Cārvāka or Lokāyatā (materialism), Jainism, Buddhism, which has four sub-divisions: Vaibhāṣika (direct realism), Sautāntrika (indirect realism), Yogācāra (idealism), and Madhyamika (nihilism) (Misra, 2013: 249–250).

<b>The Sanātana Dharma [Eternal Tradition] Literature</b>	
The vast collection of literature includes additional texts and subtexts, evolution of ideas, commentaries by scholars within and between knowledge systems, translations from the original Sanskrit, Pāli and Prakrit into multiple languages, from the past to the present.	
<p><b>Vedic Texts (~No. of subtexts)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Veda</i>: Rg Veda (~17), Yajur Veda (~54), Sama Veda (~19), Atharva Veda (~11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Subdivisions</i>: Samhitas, Brāhmaṇa, Aranyakas, Upanishads</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Vedāṅga</i> (Limbs of Veda) (~6x16)</li> <li>• <i>Upa Veda</i> (applied knowledge) (~6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayurveda (Medicine) (3 principal texts)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Brāhmaṇa</i> (~20)</li> <li>• <i>Darśana</i>: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta/Upaniṣads (~108)</li> <li>• <i>Tertiary Texts</i>: Maha-Purāṇa (~19), Upa-Purāṇa (~18)</li> <li>• <i>Dharma Śāstra</i> (Law Books) (~21), Additional Texts (~7)</li> <li>• <i>Kāvya</i> (Poetics) (~14)</li> <li>• <i>Bhakti Śāstra</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Itihāś (History)</i>: Rāmāyana, Mahabharata</li> <li>• <i>Supplementary</i>: Bhagavad Gītā, Harivamsa, Yoga Vasīṣṭha</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Vaiṣṇava Texts</i>: Pāñcarātra āgama (~210)</li> <li>• <i>Śaiva Texts</i>: Śaiva Āgama (~28)</li> <li>• <i>Śakta Tantra</i>: (~35)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Jain:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Digambara Siddhānta</i>: Ādi purāṇa, Dravyasamgraha, Rātna Karanda Sravakachara, Pancastikayasara, Pravachanasara, Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya, Sathkhandagama, Samayasara, Sarvārthasiddhi, Siribhoovalaya, Niyamasara, Jnanarava, Mahapurana, Mulachara, Tiloya Panatti</li> <li>• <i>Śvētāmbara Siddhānta</i>: Angās (12), Upāngas (12), Chedasūtras (6), Mūlasūtras (4), Cūlikasūtras (2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Buddhist: Tripitaka</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Vinaya-piṭaka</i>: Sutta-vibhanga, Khandaka (2 subtexts), Parivāra, Mahā-vibhaṅga, Bhikkhuni-vibhaṅga</li> <li>• <i>Sutta-piṭaka</i>: Digha-nikāya, Majjhima-nikāya, Samyutta- nikāya, Anguttara- nikāya, Khuddaka- nikāya (15 books)</li> <li>• <i>Abhidhamma-piṭaka</i>: Vibhaṅga, Dhātu-kathā, Puggala-paññatti, Kathā-vatthu, Yamaka, Paṭṭhāna</li> <li>• Additional texts in Prakrit, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Sinhalese in Mahāyāna tradition</li> </ul> <p><b>Cārvāka/Lokāyatā</b> (atheistic, materialism)</p> <p><b>Śramaṇa – Ājīvika</b> (atheistic, materialism)</p>

**Figure 5.** The Sanātana Dharma collection of literature including Vedic and non-Vedic systems.

Figure 5 illustrates the collection of Indic literature, on the foundation of which commentaries, developments, translations, further analysis, and interpretation of core concepts, including contemporary work is written.<sup>7</sup> Attempting to understand the Indian Knowledge Systems is like the Buddhist parable from the *Tittha sutta* (~500 BCE of the five blind men and the elephant) (Ireland, 2007).

In his Foreword to the *Introduction to Indian Knowledge System* Prof. S. Sadagopan (2022: 23) states:

IKS (Indian Knowledge System) have evolved over centuries, in fact, over millenniums. It has a wide range, and the well-known among them being Astronomy, including planetary

<sup>7</sup> The British National Library holds a collection of about 10,800 Sanskrit and Pali manuscripts from pre-modern and modern periods and 1,700 Pali manuscripts, including over 3,500 Sanskrit and Gandhari manuscript fragments from North-Western India and Central Asia in Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts dating from the 1st to 11th centuries AD. Hindu manuscripts covering philosophy, theology, literature, law, science, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, and medicine date from the 10th century or earlier. Additionally, they hold a collection of about 600 Vedic manuscripts including accented versions and ritual texts, including some of the earliest known Buddhist manuscripts. This collection grew out of the activities of the first patrons of Indology studies who served in India as employees of the East India Company. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/sanskrit>



**Figure 6.** Shree Padmanabhsamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Image credits: Photograph by (1) Masha <https://pixahive.com/photo/temple-10/> (free to use); (2) These photographs were taken during September 23, 2017 equinox. Credits: Vijayan Madhavan (Narayanan & Simha, 2021).

movements, solar-centric world, shape and diameter of the Earth; Health and Well-being, including plants & herbs, surgical procedures; Mathematics and Computing, including the discovery of zero, decimal system of numerals, and approximation algorithms for computation of Pi; Languages and Linguistics, including Panini's Sanskrit grammar; Metallurgy, including steel-making and zinc-smelting; and Public Administration, including Good Governance and Taxation.

Other disciplines with a vast body of texts include: geometry, logic, physics, ontology, architecture and civil engineering, ship-building, chemistry, mechanics, acoustics, plants and plant life, classification of animals, consciousness studies and cognitive science, poetics, music, performing arts and sculpture, jurisprudence, economics, politics and statecraft (Bhattacharya & Naik, 2008; Chattopadhyaya, 1986; Ghosh, 2018; Kak, 1995/2005, 1999; Kaṇāda & Kak, 2016; Rao, 2011; Sarma, 2015; Seal, 1915; Swaminathan, 2020).

A translation of some of the original Sanskrit texts is also available, for e.g., the three volume *Suśruta Saṃhitā* (6th c. BCE), the foundational text of Āyurveda which includes anatomy, physiology, disease/disorders, medicine, and surgery (Bhishagratna, 1907, 1911, 1916). Suśruta is recognized as a pioneer in surgery by contemporary practitioners. Recently Columbia University recognized the pioneering work of Maharishi Suśruta in plastic surgery (Banerjee, Ezer, & Nanda, 2011; Columbia University, 2015; Leffler, Klebanov, et al., 2020; Whitaker, Karoo, et al., 2007).

Considering the antiquity of IKS, questions regarding methodological issues may be raised to determine their scientific status. In addition to detailed reviews of methodology of IKS (Lele,

2006), scholars are examining the reliability of early conclusions. For example, in a preliminary attempt, Sriram and Venkatesh (2019) examined the accuracy of astronomical instruments mentioned in the *Kātyāyana Śulbasūtra* (~350 BCE) to the later *Siddhānta* (mathematical astronomy) texts from the fifth century CE onwards. Using a simple variant of the board-instrument of Bhāskara-II to measure the hour angle of the Sun, the maximum error was of the order of 5 degrees.

The integration of the scientific methods used – theoretical, experimental, technological, and applied – can be best exemplified in the tower of the ancient Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Kerala (see Figure 6). The unique tower is in that way designed, that on the exact two days of Equinox (March 21, September 23), one gets to see the setting of the sun aligned and passing exactly through these windows in roughly 5 minutes intervals (Sharma, 2021).

### ***Indian Psychology: Core Concepts***

Indian psychology grew out of the recognition that the subject matter of contemporary psychology is embedded in the IKS, which has much to offer to the historical and contemporary understanding of the nature of reality, consciousness, theory of mind, perception and cognition, emotion and will, and knowledge of the self from the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain perspectives. From their early developments, the concepts have been discussed by scholars within and between the knowledge systems. Several publications have systematized the philosophies for contemporary psychology students (e.g., Cornelissen, Misra, & Varma, 2011/2013; Kalupahana, 1987; Mehta, 2002/1957; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016; Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008; Sinha, 1931/1999, 1934/1969, 1958/2008, 1961/2008). In the following, a brief description of the core concepts are presented (Figure 7).

#### ***Paramātman***

The concept of Paramātman (a.k.a. Puruṣa, Ātman, Brahman, Parama Śīva) does not refer to a god-head as in the western sense; it refers to the Universal/Absolute Self, Cosmic or Ultimate Consciousness. This concept of “pure” Consciousness, Paramātman, is at the core of psychology in the Indian tradition since the time of the Upaniṣads (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016: viii). Consciousness (with an upper case ‘C’) is thought to be “the essence of Ātman [upper case Ā], a primal, immanent self that is ultimately identified with Brahman – a pure, transcendental, subject-object-less consciousness that underlies and provides the ground of being of both Man and Nature” (Sen, 2008; Velmans, 2009: 139). To be clear, the term “Consciousness” for Paramātman does not refer to brain-based consciousness and does not lend itself to a consciousness-based theory of psi phenomena.



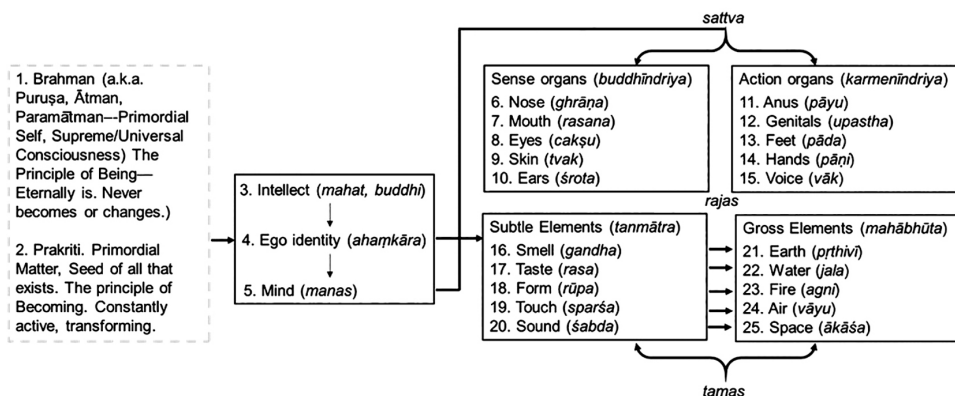


Figure 7. Twenty-five original or ultimate principles/elements (*tattva*) of the objective world according to Sāṃkhya IKS. Figure adapted from Miller, 2018.

### Sense of Self/ “I”-ness/ātman

The ātman [lower case ā] is a part of Paramātman. It is the conscious and intelligent principle within the inert mind-body complex, and is a part of Paramātman; i. e., the individual (ātman) is a part of the cosmic universal. The *Bhagavad Gītā*<sup>8</sup> (2.13–2.27) describes ātman as unbreakable and incombustible; it can neither be dampened nor dried. It is all-pervading, as it is found everywhere, within different forms of life, from the largest plants and animals to the smallest micro-organisms. It is unalterable, immutable, and primordial. It is without any origination or beginning, immortal and ageless. As a person sheds worn-out garments and wears new ones, likewise, at the time of death, the ātman casts off its worn-out body and enters a new one. The physical body, which is cremated on death, is only the receptacle for the ātman. In contrast, Christianity accepts the soul as created anew. (Malhotra & Babaji, 2020: 92–94; Yogananda, 1999).

### Jīvātman (Person/ “me”-ness)

The Upaniṣad(s) contain the seeds that evolved into *jīvātman*, which literally means a living being – the individualized self (Yogananda, 1999); it is the closest to what is called a “person” or the “subjective self”, in contemporary psychology. It is the subjective self commonly conceived as a knower (*jñātā*), enjoyer/sufferer (*bhōktā*), and agent (*kartā*). The ātman is the transcendental subject “I” whereas *jīvātman* is the empirical subject “me.” It is also known as the embodied self

8 All *Bhagavad Gītā* verses (Chapter:verse) are quoted from *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* (Sanskrit Text with Hindi and English Translation, Gītā Press, Gorakhpur).

(*dehīn*). These terms are genderless. All phenomenal experiences are attributed to *jīva* [life] or *dehīn* [embodied], while *ātman* is ‘experience-less,’ as the term experience is understood with reference to an empirical subject. Based on the attributes of *jīvātman*, several other terms are also used, for instance: *sansārin* – involved in worldly enjoyment and activity; *prajñā* – self as cognizer; *śārīrin* – one who is embodied; *samprasāda* – the self-sense present in dream (Cornelissen, Misra, & Verma, 2013: 333–334; Rao & Paranjpe, 2016; Yogananda, 1999).

*Jīvātman* is an integral part of *Paramātman*. Every *jīvātman* reaps the fruits of its own karma (actions) and a sin committed by one person has nothing to do with another (Malhotra & Babaji, 2020: 94–101). The aim of the *jīvātman* is to seek *mokṣa* (*muktī*) or liberation from the cycle of birth and death and merging with the True Self, *Paramātman*. In principle, this is seen as the ultimate aim of life, and an ideal. To attain this goal, Hinduism speaks of four paths (*mārga*): *jñāna mārga* (the path of knowledge), *karma mārga* (the path of action), *bhakti mārga* (the path of devotion), and the *yoga mārga* (the path of meditation). An individual has the freedom of choice to adopt the most suitable path or take multiple paths depending on one’s innate nature, abilities, likes and dislikes.

### *Manas (Mind, Buddhi, Citta) – The Seat of Cognition, Volition, Feelings, and Actions*

The Vedic model of the mind is best epitomized by the famous chariot metaphor found in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Here a person is compared to a chariot that is pulled in different directions by the horses yoked to it; the unruly horses represent the senses in their undisciplined state. The driver holding the reins is the mind, and next to the driver/mind stands the charioteer, representing the Self, which is pure awareness and perfect unity (Feuerstein, Kak, & Frawley, 2001: 221–222).

In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika systems (~600 BCE), “minds are not empty slates; the very constitution of the mind provides some knowledge of the nature of the world. The four means (*pramāṇas*) through which correct knowledge is acquired are direct perception, inference, analogy, and verbal testimony” (Kak, 2016). Most of the schools of Indian philosophy consider that mind (*manas*) cannot be equated with self (*ātman*) who is the knower. It is considered as a substance and an instrument of knowledge. The materiality of mind has been very strongly emphasized by the Sāṃkhya system (Chennakesavan, 1980).

Rao and Paranjpe (2016: 100) have described the three levels of functioning of the mind: *manas* – the ‘central processor’ that assimilates the information acquired by the senses; *ahaṃkāra* the self-referencing, subjective function, and *buddhi* – the decision making faculty. These three functions of the mind are collectively referred to as the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), which is distinct from the senses regarded as external organs. Misra (2013:

254–255) has described the functions of the mind as stated in the Aitareya, Chândogya, and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad(s), and the Yoga system: awareness, perception, discrimination, intelligence and thought, wisdom, insight, concentrated reflection, steadfastness, steadiness and unsteadiness, wandering, restrained, meditation, one-pointed concentration, thoughtfulness, memory, remembrance, forgetfulness, distracted, conception, doubt, belief, disbelief, purpose, desire for a thing, desire for possession, shame, and fear.

### *Indriya(s) and the Sensory-Motor Apparatus*

In the IKS, the mind is the main instrument in the cognitive process. In its function it makes use of the body, mostly the sensory-motor system (*indriya*). Consequently, the senses constitute a very important segment of the mind-body complex. As stated in the *Sāṃkhya Kārika* (XXXV), the senses are gateways to knowledge and the mind (*citta*) functions as the gatekeeper. As the internal organ, the mind is the interconnecting instrumentality that helps to interface the *jīvātman* (me-ness) with the unconscious objects (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016: 100).

The anatomical existence of the bodily organs – heart, stomach, brain-matter, intestines, liver, spleen, uterus, etc. – are mentioned in the Rig Veda. The Tantra school (~4000 BCE) discovered the human nervous system or rather the cerebrospinal system, which led to the identification of the brain as the seat of human consciousness (Chattopadhyaya, 1973/1959: 335). According to their description of neuroanatomy there are two nerve-cords (*nāḍī* or nerves) running parallel to the central cord (*suṣumṇā nāḍī*), which stretches from near the pelvic curve to the brain. Within the *suṣumṇā* is another nerve cord, called the *vajrakhya nāḍī*, within which is the innermost core of the central cord. They distinguished between the motor nerves (*ājñāvahā nāḍī*) and sensory nerves (*manovahā nāḍī*), further identifying the different sensory nerves: olfactory nerves (*gandhavahā nāḍī*), optic nerves (*rūpavahā nāḍī*), auditory nerves (*śabdavahā nāḍī*), gustatory nerves (*rasavahā nāḍī*) and tactile nerves (*sparśavahā nāḍī*) (Seal, 1915: 218–219; Sinha, 1986/1933: 1).

Maharishi Suśruta's medical and surgical treatise, the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* (about 1000 and 800 BCE), is a comprehensive compendium with 184 chapters, description of 1120 illnesses, 700 medicinal plants, 64 preparations from mineral sources and 57 preparations based on animal sources (Dwivedi & Dwivedi, 2007). Suśruta identified eleven sense organs – five organs of knowledge, five organs of action, and the mind – which in combination with the atomic essence of the material principles of sound, light, taste, smell, etc. produce the sense of touch, sight, hearing, etc. The process of perception occurs in little or no time by the mind (*manas*) through the senses; the self (*ātman*) goes where the mind goes. The sensory and motor functions have a nerve force (*vāyu*) which moves and spreads across the body. In addition to being a physical or

organic force, it also has a spiritual aspect (Bhishagratna, 1907: xii, xl). He regarded the heart as the seat of consciousness (Bhishagratna, 1911: xii-xl; Sinha, 1986/1933: 8).

Maharishi Suśruta described various kinds of sense disorders. For instance, in explaining the mechanism of the visual system he provides a physical description of the various parts of the eye: sclera (white of the eye), muscles, iris in which the pupil is located, the blood vessels, and the secretory ducts, and how they are held together. He was aware of the fact that external signals impinge on the senses. For the visual system he had determined that the angle of reflection is equal to the angle of incidence, and that the same ray which impinges upon the retina serves the double purpose of illumining the eye and the external world, and is in itself converted into the sensation of light (Sinha, 1986/1933: 326–327; Bhishagratna, 1907: xix).

### *The Bhagavad Gītā and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga System*

Composed in Sanskrit, the *Mahābhārata* is the historical epic, of the events leading up to the great war between the cousins Kauravas and the Pandavas in Kurukshetra in present day Haryana State in India (dated about 3137 BCE, Kak, 2012). Faced with the prospect of engaging in battle with his elders, gurus (teachers), family, and clan, the great warrior Arjuna is consumed by guilt and becomes despondent on the battlefield. Shri Krishna, his charioteer, assuages his moral dilemma by narrating the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is a rendition of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system; Sāṃkhya (enumeration) is one of the earliest Vedic philosophies that enumerates the body and the mind. It is a synthesis of Karma (action), Jñāna (knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion) yoga.

According to the Sāṃkhya tradition, everything exists in the present moment; nothing goes out of existence, and nothing comes into existence. The qualities of things are mass, energy and essence. Three sets of principles are identified: First are a set of twenty five basic principles, comprising the five basic principles, five sense capacities, five action capacities, five subtle elements, and five gross elements. In the early Sāṃkhya *prakṛti* (primordial matter) is primary and the *puruṣa* (primordial consciousness) is an evolute of *prakṛti*, i. e. an emergent property of matter. Second are the fundamental predispositions (*bhāva*) or instinctual tendencies that guide the human being. These include meritorious behavior (*dharma*), knowledge (*jñāna*), nonattachment (*vairāgya*), power (*aiśvarya*), demeritorious behavior (*adharma*), ignorance (*ajñāna*), attachment (*avairāgya*), and impotence (*aniśvarya*). Third relate to the phenomenal, empirical world of ordinary life, which are formed by the interaction of the twenty five basic principles and the eight predispositions. These generate fifty categories of 'phenomenal creation.' These are (i) five fundamental misconceptions and include ignorance, confusion or preoccupation with one's own identity, extreme confusion or passionate attachment, (ii)

twenty-eight categories of perceptual, motor, and mental dysfunctions, (iii) nine categories for a reasonably balanced and conventional mendicant life, and (iv) eight categories representing authentic attainments (Larson & Bhattacharya, 1987: 48–56).

### *Guṇa (Attributes, Quality)*

The Sāṃkhya (enumeration, reasoning) system developed the notion of *guṇa* (cords, strands, threads) of *prakṛti* (primordial materiality), of which there are three (*triguṇa*) strands, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, which can be observed in physical states. When matter (*prakṛti*) is in a state of *sattva* (equilibrium), no creation or modification of matter occurs; it is when matter is in a state of *rajas* (activity or flux) or *tamas* (disequilibrium, chaos), that creation or modification of matter occurs. Thus, activity and disequilibrium are an essential part of existence. This tripartite process encompasses the entire range of objective and subjective reality, whether manifest or unmanifest. It becomes the ‘thread’ that runs through and ties together the essential core throughout the natural world and of all ordinary experiences.

From an objective perspective, the *triguṇa* process is a continuing flow of primal material energy that is capable of spontaneous activity (*rajas*), rational ordering (*sattva*), and determinate formulation or objectivation (*tamas*); all manifestations of primary material energy are purposeful, coherent, and objective. From a subjective perspective, it is a continuing flow of experience that is capable of pre-reflective spontaneous desiring or longing (*rajas*), reflective discerning or discriminating (*sattva*), and continuing awareness of an opaque, enveloping world (*tamas*). Thus, according to Sāṃkhya there is no polarity or bifurcation of subjective and objective within the tripartite process, no ontological distinction between “mind” and “matter” or “thought” and “extension.” The mind is thus a constituent of the primal material energy as are trees, stones, or other manifestations of gross matter. Ordinary awareness or thinking is but a “moment,” or constituent, of the continuous *triguṇa* process (Larson & Bhattacharya, 1987: 66–68). The *triguṇa* theory is being empirically investigated in the modern context of personality and its influences (e.g., Anuradha & Kumar, 2015; Murthy & Kumar, 2007; Rao & Harigopal, 1979; Singh & Gupta, 2021; Singh, Jain, et al., 2016).

### *The Nature of Time in the Indian Knowledge Systems*

The perspectives on post-mortem survival or rebirth is also dependent on a culture’s understanding of the nature of time. Philosophers across cultures and over time have tried to understand the nature of time. According to C. K. Raju (2003: 36), to address the question ‘is there life after death?’ depends upon the nature of time – is time linear or cyclic?

The Indian knowledge systems (IKS) have long debated the multifaceted nature of time in its metaphysical, logical, and epistemological aspects and offer a wide spectrum of well-formulated views about time (*kāla*) (Duquette & Ramasubramanian, 2017: 43). In his translation of the nearly 2,500-year old Vaiśeṣika Sutra of Kaṇāda, Kak (Kaṇāda & Kak, 2016: 5–6) writes

Since the universe cannot arise out of nothing, it must be infinitely old. Since it must evolve, there are cycles of chaos and order or creation and destruction. The Ṛgveda speaks of the universe being infinite in size. A famous mantra speaks of how taking infinity out of infinity leaves it unchanged. This indicates that paradoxical properties of the notion of infinity were known. The world is also taken to be infinitely old. Beyond the solar system, other similar systems were postulated. An infinite size of the universe logically led to the acceptance of many worlds.

Thus, while the universe is beginningless (*anādi*), with no notion of an absolute first creation or beginning to time, there are cycles of creation (Coward, 1999: 22). In her extensive review of the nature of time in the IKS, Balslev (1999: 145–146) states:

The idea of world-cycle (*kalpa*) is a general feature of Indian mythology and philosophy. In the literature of the *Purāṇas*, one encounters a grandiose conception of the cosmological process in terms of repeated creation and dissolution. As an example of the gigantic scale of measurement for time one could refer to the *Vāyu Purāṇa* where a world-cycle is conceived as a day of Brahmā, the creator god, followed by his night, i. e. cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*). The timespan of a world-cycle is divided and sub-divided according to different scales as equivalent to so many manvantaras, mahāyugas, yugas etc. The whole process is calculated in terms of billions of human years. It is very likely that the idea is associated with Vedic astronomy. The world-cycles can be compared to one another in terms of generic similarity just as one day resembles another, but the idea of exact repetition involving the return of the particulars does not occur. The idea of world cycles occurs in the epics as well as in the *Upaniṣads*.

She further states:

[...] in a confrontation of the Greek, the Judeo-Christian and the Indian traditions regarding the problem of time, the most familiar observation that is made is centered on the idea of cyclic vs. linear time. It is held that the Greek and the Indian traditions have cherished a cyclic conception of time, whereas the Judeo-Christian traditions have maintained a linear conception. This common point of difference which is often focused upon has, evidently, important bearings on different problems connected with time. [...] The linear notion of time in the biblical context implies that time has a beginning and an end, the cyclic does not grant that. (1999: 141)

In the context of this brief discussion on time, in the following section the concept of *saṃsāra* (cycle of birth and death) and karma are discussed.

### *Saṃsāra (Cycle of Birth and Death) and Karma*

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, in all their branches, accept the underlying doctrines of karma and saṃsāra (cycle of birth and death), and believe that man must be morally and spiritually perfected before he can attain mokṣa/nirvāṇa, i. e. liberation from the cycle of birth and death (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 2014: xxvii). Both these terms are part of our spoken language vocabulary.

There is a fundamental difference in the meaning of saṃsāra in the Indic view and western parapsychology on post-mortem survival, reincarnation, rebirth and the survival hypothesis. (To distinguish between the western and Indic views, I use the term saṃsāra in this paper.) In describing the western view Sudduth (2016: 25–26) states:

The majority of Western philosophers and religious thinkers who have affirmed life after death have meant by this that the human person, the individual self, or soul will persist after biological death [...] personal survival entails the postmortem persistence of a center of self-awareness, or a first person perspective, with powers of perception/knowledge and intentional causal agency, as these are essential properties of human persons.

To dispel the confusion between the various terminologies it may be appropriate to state that in the Indic view it is the ātman—the non-gendered “I-ness” – the core self which is a part of the Paramātman (universal, primordial Self) that survives, and not the “me” in a semi-physical form with an autobiographical memory; the body is cremated on death, thus there is no physical form that will manifest itself to interact with the environment. As stated in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (2.22): “As a person sheds worn-out garments and wears new ones, likewise, at the time of death, the ātman casts off its worn-out body and enters a new one.” In the western context, it is the jīvātman (me-ness) that survives. As Sudduth (2016: 105) states:

[...] the re-embodiment on earth of some formerly living person [with] ... living persons claiming alleged past-life memories as a particular formerly living person (herein after “previous personality”), describing with varying levels of detail alleged facts about the public and personal life of the previous personality, exhibiting behavioral patterns characteristic of the previous personality, and in some cases exhibiting birthmarks associated with the previous personality.

However, as Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (4.5), “Arjuna, you and I have passed through many births; I remember them all; you do not remember.” That is, the ātman does not have omnipresent memory; only a fully liberated soul can remember all births, deaths, and their interim periods that leaves the body on death (Yogananda, 1999: 689).

From the earliest times, skeptics have disbelieved life after death. Ajit Kesakambali, a contemporary of the Buddha, strongly disavowed life after death.

A human being is built up of the four elements. When he dies the earthly in him returns and relapses to the earth [...] The four bearers on the bier as a fifth take his dead body away; till they reach the burning-ground men utter forth eulogies, but there his bones are bleached, and his offerings end in ashes. (Raju, 2003: 28)

But the key insight which illuminates the mystery of life after death and connects early forms of the belief to current physics is this: the belief in the soul originally presumed the physical context of a quasi-cyclic cosmos or 'cyclic' time – not only individuals but the entire cosmos was believed to recur approximately. (Raju, 2003: 31)

The Indian materialists Cārvāka/Lokāyatā (~500 BCE) scholars have argued against the concept of rebirth on the grounds that there is no self other than the body which is endowed with consciousness. Moreover, it is not logically justifiable as the destruction of the body, or death, means the end of one's worldly existence for good. There is, thus, no need to assume that there is some eternal being, a distinct self, which may survive even after death and pass from births to births (Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya, 1990: 110–111).

Karma and saṃsāra are the instrumentalities by which the moral order of the universe is worked out in life (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 2014: xxvii). Traced to the earliest Vedic literature "karma" means action in all its forms. Explained in Chapter 3 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the karma construct is extensively examined in the literature within and between the knowledge systems, including the Buddhist and Jain literature. As stated in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (4.17) the intricacies of the deeper workings about karma (action) are unfathomable. For the lay person it is well explained in the *Bhagavad Gītā* how it plays out in life. It is an intrinsic part of the Indic ethos and embedded in its many spoken languages, passed across generations by the oral and literary tradition. To expand on its meaning I refer to a popular work on the "The Theory of Karma," originally written in Gujarati by Shri Hirabhai Thakkar (1991) and translated into several Indian languages.

The fundamental principle of this law is that every action creates a reaction, everyone earns the fruits of their actions, and one must perform ones duties without seeking a reward. Thus the 'Law of Karma' is the law of (1) action and reaction, (2) cause and effect, (3) effort and destiny, all of which are equal and opposite. The distinct features of the Law are: it is eternal and universal, it is applicable across all cycles of the universe in the past, present and future; the law is perfect without a single exception, and not amenable to changes. The application of this law is beyond manipulation, intervention or corruptibility. It governs all aspects of the infinite universe, its natural laws, the inception, maintenance and dissolution of all the animate bodies and inanimate objects. The most important feature is that everything is destined to bear the fruits of its actions, bitter or sweet, and there is no exception and escape from its consequences, even if one feigns ignorance of the law.



Bhattacharjee (2021: 153–154) has explained the various ways in which karma is classified:

Voluntary Action or Aichhika Karma is an action performed knowingly and willingly by self conscious and self-determining person with desire, pre-vision and free choice of means and ends, voluntary action is done by a spring of action and this action is also done by feeling of want. The bodily actions produce changes in the external world and these changes are called consequences [5].

Non-voluntary Action or Anaichhika Karma: nonvoluntary actions are those actions which are devoid of moral quality and cannot be judged as right or wrong. Nonvoluntary action is also considered as reflex actions or automatic actions which responses to sensory stimulation and these actions are not controlled by consciousness. By repetition non-voluntary actions are fixed as habits and become automatic.

Every karma or voluntary action is divided into three classes as (a) Sancita karma or reserved stock, (b) Prarabdha karma or fruit bearing action and (c) Kriyamana karma or current action.

Sancita Karma (Reserve Stock): Every action performed in the form of a potentially [potentiality] (ardsta0 [sic! – adrishta, unseen/unknown] which results [in] pleasurable or painful experience to the doer in a subsequent birth or in the present birth. Sancita karma or accumulated potentially [potentiality] is responsible for the good and evil impulse of our mind [6].

Kriyamana Karma (Current Action): A karma which is being performed with some interested motive as well as with attachment, sense of doer ship and which is being gathered in this life is called kriyaman karma.

Parabdha Karma (Fruit Bearing Action): Huge stock of accumulated action, consisting of virtuous as well as sinful deeds, an action is taken out to serve one life time and this action which has begun to bear fruit and which will be exhausted only on their fruit being enjoyed and not otherwise, is known as prarabdha karma.

According to Indian thinkers, further division of action is sakama karma, i. e. attached or desirous action and niskama karma, i. e. non-attached or selfless action.

Sakama Karma: Sakama karma, i. e. attached action is that action when one does not realize that real essence of the object of the world and which is performed with some desires. So actions which come under the influence of the law of karma are those which are performed with the conscious desire of achieving of worldly pleasure are known as attached action.

Niskama Karma: niskama karma, i. e. disinterested actions are those actions which are performed without any conscious intention, i. e. completely devoid of desire. The ideal of niskama karma may be taken as a synthesis between pravrtti and nivrtti in Indian's ethical system. Pravrtti is the path of active life with the object of attaining heaven. On the other hand, nivrtti is the path of total renunciation of works. [...] niskama karma is neither naiskarma (inaction) nor karma (action) with an eye upon the fruit thereof.

The meaning of *niṣkāma* karma is stated in a well-known verse from the *Bhagavad Gītā* (2.47): “Your right is to work only and never to the fruit thereof. Do not consider yourself to be the cause of the fruit of action; nor let your attachment be to inaction.”

### ***Indic Explorations in Informational Psi (IΨ)***

In this section, a glimpse of the Indic discussion on psi is presented. Since the core of “supernormal” perception is the apprehension of the past and future, I use the term informational psi (IΨ) in this discussion, as acquiring non-inferential information from the external world is the core of psi. IΨ is defined as *the transfer of information, which is based on entropic considerations, arising from a distant point in spacetime leading to the local acquisition of non-inferential information by an atypical perceptual ability* (Marwaha & May, 2019). As a theorist of psi phenomena, understanding the key concepts becomes vital. Striding between the Indian and western traditions in psi, at times there is confusion regarding the concepts under study. From a theoretical point of view, I am a proponent of the signal-based process-oriented model of IΨ that aims to understand the process from the information source and transmission (physics domain) and signal processing and experience (neuroscience domain) point of view (Marwaha & May, 2015, 2019). Following an extensive review of neuroscience-psi studies, Bryan Williams (2015: 106) states: “Rather than being ‘above and beyond’ the brain [...] psi is actually more on par with the known workings of the brain than one might initially think.” Theoretical models based on the quantum metaphor, non-local, transpersonal consciousness proves to be a point of conflict (Atmanspacher, Römer, & Walach, 2002; Houtkooper, 2002; Tart, 2002; Walker, 1984; Williams, 2021). The primary disagreement comes from the question of how to define consciousness. Defining ‘consciousness’ has been a vexatious issue; an entire issue of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* (Vol. 16, No. 5, 2009) was devoted to the topic of defining consciousness, without agreeing to an acceptable definition.

The IKS examined various aspects of perception and cognition, recognizing their physical basis. Theories were developed, exploring topics such as recognition, memory and imagination, perception of space, time and movement, cognitions, self, illusions, dreams, abnormal perceptions, thought and language. Informational psi (IΨ) has been extensively discussed by all the Indic schools in acceptance and denial. Precognitive dreams were also recognized and discussed within the context of the specific knowledge system (Rao, 2011: 499–526; Sinha, 1986/1933, 1969). The implications are very clear: IΨ is a phenomenon that has been observed in humans cross-culturally, across different ages, lending support to the view that it is an innate ability and a valid phenomenon. It was not until the turn of the 20th century that laboratory-based research was conducted to examine the validity of the phenomenon. Empirical data has also led to the conclusion that IΨ is a valid phenomenon (Bem & Honorton, 1994; Cardeña,

2018; May & Marwaha, 2019; Mossbridge & Radin, 2018; Rhine, Pratt, et al., 1940/2018; Richet, 1923; Utts, 1996).

In the IKS, perception is of two kinds: ordinary perception of everyday life and super-normal perception (perception of past and future). “Super-normal” perception or IΨ, is accepted as a natural phenomenon by the Nyāya (system of logic), Vaiśeṣika (system of physical reality), Sāṃkhya (classification of existence), Yoga (self-realization), Vedānta (nature of reality), Jain (atheistic dualism), Buddhist (no-soul, logic) systems, whereas the Mīmāṃsā (nature of dharma and rituals) and Cārvāka/Lokāyatā (materialism) denied it. However, with the empirical evidence and a sensory-based model of IΨ, the present day Mīmāṃsaka and Cārvāka/Lokāyatā scholars can be persuaded to alter their position.

In this section we focus primarily on the discussions examining the validity of the psi and the process of psi as suggested by various scholars of IKS. Since the detailed arguments for and against the validity of the phenomenon are rather extensive within and between schools, I take the approach of addressing some key theoretical questions that are translatable to our present questions regarding the IΨ phenomenon: (1) What is yogic perception, i. e. IΨ ability? (2) Does everyone have IΨ ability? (3) How is the perception of the past and future possible? (4) Is IΨ perception the same as perceived in the past or more than that? (5) What if the IΨ perceptions are later contradicted? (6) Is psi sensory or produced by the mind? (7) Is telepathy possible? While there are specific Sanskrit terminologies used by various scholars with substantially more details than presented here, I have summarized the key arguments here. These serve to provide one more perspective on the validity of IΨ aside from the contemporary empirical data. Connecting the past with the present also provides a direction on the explanatory model that is suited to understand the process of IΨ.

Possibly contributing to the general acceptance of IΨ as a natural phenomenon in Indian culture is the incident from the widely known Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*. It narrates the Kurukshetra War between two families, the Kaurava(s) and the Pandav(s) for the throne of Hastinapura (North India). Maharishi Vyāsaḥ calls upon Sanjaya to narrate the events on the battlefield to the blind King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Vyāsaḥ says:

“Sanjaya shall see all the events of the battle directly. He shall have such a divine inward eye.” Vyāsaḥ continued. “O king! Sanjaya has inward eyes. He will tell you everything about the battle. He will be knowing all. Whenever he thinks of it he will see everything that takes place in the day and in the night in open, and in secret. No weapon will cut him and no weariness will affect him” (Ganguli, 1883, Bhīṣma parva, section 2).

In discussing IΨ, i. e., “super-normal” perceptions, across the different schools, Jadunath Sinha states:

The Indian treatment of super-normal perceptions is more descriptive than explanatory. [...] Super-normal perceptions are above the general laws and conditions of normal perceptions. They transcend the categories of time, space, and causality, and apprehend the real nature of things divested of all their accidental associations of names, concepts, and so forth. So we cannot understand their nature by appealing to the facts of ordinary perceptions. We must have a conception of these higher grades of super-normal perception on the basis of speculation, unless we ourselves attain the stage of higher intuitions. (1933/1986: 334).

In his three volumes on cognitive psychology in the Indian knowledge systems (IKS) Jadunath Sinha (1933/1986, 1961, 1969) has organized the material under different topics, and laid out the views of scholars from different IKS as noted above; Sinha's work is my primary source of reference. In this paper I have not adhered to the Sanskrit terminology but have adapted it to current terminology to lay out the arguments, both in acceptance and denial of the validity of IY phenomenon, by early Indic scholars. While the finer nuances and details are beyond the scope of this paper, especially regarding inter-school and between-scholars discussions, three basic points can be identified: (1) IY of the past and future is a valid phenomenon. (2) IY is an innate ability, which is also obtained by long-term practice of meditation. (3) The sensory systems are involved in IY perceptions.

### 1. What is Yogic Perception, i. e. IY Ability?

Yogic perception is an extrasensory perception or intuition of a future event. It is described as a mental and extraordinary perception where the past and present are merged and are present in a physical substance in some condition. Yogic perception (IY) is the direct and immediate perception of distant, past, future, and subtle objects. The Sāṃkhya scholars describe IY as a mental and extraordinary perception as the past is present as merged in the material cause and the future also is present in the material cause in a potential condition. Of the Nyāya scholars, Bhāsarjña (c. 900–950 CE) defines IY perception as the immediate knowledge of objects removed in space, time and nature; Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (c. 820–900 CE) describes it as the perception of subtle, hidden, remote, past, and future objects and considers it to be the highest excellence of human perception.

### 2. Does everyone have IY ability?

As stated in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* (YS 4.1), IY proficiency may be present from birth, developed through long term yoga-meditation practice and discipline, and the use of certain herbs. On rare occasions ordinary persons may also have psi experiences, in which case it may be known as intuition. While no reason is given as to why the IY ability is developed or why particular powers are attained as the result of meditation, Sinha (1933/1986: 350) writes, these are the facts of actual experience, and they have been recorded as such.

There are five different kinds of IΨ proficiency: sages, yogin(s), innate ability, consumers of certain herbs, and ordinary people with rare IΨ experiences. The difference between these groups is primarily the degree of IΨ abilities.

Sages are those who have attained *samādhi*. The Śaṅkara Vedāntist Mahādeva Sarasvatī Muni divides *samādhi* into *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta* *samādhi*. He defines *samādhi* as

[...] an unbroken stream of mental functions having for their object the pure consciousness (Brahman) without the distinction of subject and object. In this stage the mental modes are not entirely destroyed; they have for their object Brahman or pure consciousness and are transformed into it. In it the consciousness of subject and object drops off all together, but the mental modes remain concentrated in and transformed into pure consciousness; it is the result of the utmost perfection of the practice of concentration. [...] *asamprajñāta samādhi* [is] the complete suppression of all mental functions (*sarvadhīnirodha*) on the suppression of the *samprajñāta samādhi*. He explains it as the transformation of the mind into the form of Brahman or pure consciousness without the medium of mental modes which are entirely destroyed. (Sinha, 1986/1933: 351–352)

The IΨ ability of Sages is perceptual in character, since it is not produced by inference and so forth; but it differs from ordinary perception in that it is not produced by the sense organs, but by the mind (*manas*) with the help of certain powers acquired. Some of these miraculous powers are clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, interpretation of veridical dreams, understanding the language of animals, memory of past lives, knowledge of the past and the future, the distant and the subtle, and knowledge of the self (*puruṣa*) (Sinha, 1933/1986: 350). Understanding Sagic IΨ is beyond the scope of current psi research, hence we keep this at a side for now.

It is important to state that the goal of yoga-meditation and the human endeavor is Self-realization and find one's liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of birth and death, which takes several lifetimes to achieve. "Again, yoga practitioners are reminded repeatedly that they must ignore and not indulge in the paranormal phenomena. This again is an acknowledgment that the intuitive abilities like psi should not be seen as instrumental for ego gratification but considered as signposts in the process of personal transformation towards reaching the goal of perfection" (Rao, 2011: 773). The yogins are warned that "[...] they should not possess any attachment for these powers nor feel pride in their acquisition" (Larson & Bhattacharya, 2008: 530). While it may not be ethically appropriate to empirically examine Sages, a neuroscience based yogic theory of consciousness has been developed to understand the *samādhi* state (Tripathi & Bharadwaj, 2021).

Yogin(s), persons with innate IΨ ability, consumers of certain herbs, and ordinary people have been described as having IΨ ability. Common across these groups is the perception of the

past and future. In current times, these are the main groups that are participants – with atypical ability or psi gifted – in empirical investigations of IΨ.

A yogin is a long-term meditation practitioner who has achieved IΨ ability but has not reached the state of a Sage. Several studies have been done with long-term meditation practitioners and the development of psi abilities; however, the results are inconclusive (Cardeña, 2021; Sedlmeier, 2018). As Roney-Dougal and Solfvin (2011) report, “Overall, psi scores did not exceed chance expectation.” However, they also report that an advanced group of meditators performed better on psi tasks than did short time practitioners (Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2006). The question whether the yogin has an innate psi ability or not may be a critical factor in the development of IΨ ability even in long-term meditators (Marwaha, 2016). Recent studies in brain plasticity indicate that long-term meditation may result in the reorganization of the neural structure, connections or functions (Laukkonen & Slagter, 2021; Magan, Yadav, et al., 2019; Tang, Friston, & Tang, 2020), which may result in the development of IΨ ability (Marwaha & May, 2015). Further inquiry into this line of investigation may lead to results that do not contradict with Indic thinking on psi abilities, especially since sense-organs are its *modus operandi*.

Indic thought also states that the consumption of certain herbs, along with meditation and innate ability, may also result in IΨ ability. In his reviews of psychedelic use and varieties of psi experiences Luke (2020: 29) states that “altered states of consciousness, as opposed to psychedelic chemicals per se, seem to be key in the induction of such experiences, at least where they are not congenital.” As stated, IKS also states that on rare occasions ordinary persons may also have an IΨ experience.

### **3. How is the Perception of the Past and Future Possible?**

The ancient Indic scholars consider perception of the past and future as a valid source of knowledge. They also ask: How can the past be perceived when it is non-existent? Is the past non-existent in relation to the past time, or is it non-existent in relation to the time when it was perceived? How can the past come into contact with the sense-organs to produce IΨ perception? These are questions to which we do not have answers even today; however, advances in science may enable us to address these questions.

The Indic proponents of IΨ perception state that it is possible to perceive the past and future as they are present in a physical substance in some condition. The present alone is real. Everything exists at the present moment; nothing goes out of existence, and nothing comes into existence. The past is present as merged in the material cause and the future also is present in the material cause in a potential condition. The various qualities of things are only modes of energy acting in different collocations of the original mass (*tamas*) energy (*rajas*) and essence

(sattva). Hence, future objects are present as latent or potential, and the so-called past objects are present as sublatent, and only those things which are present are actual. The temporal order of perceptions is a construction of the intellect; there can be no aggregate of moments in reality (Sinha, 1969: 138–139).

This explanation makes it easier to conceive of IΨ perception. In recent times attempts have been made to empirically examine these questions in the context of actual or probable futures (Marwaha & May, 2016; Radin 1988; Steinkamp, 1999).

#### 4. Is IΨ Perception the Same as Perceived in the Past or More Than That?

If the object perceived by IΨ is the same as was cognized in the past, then intense meditation may have enhanced the memory and recall of past experiences, or it is illusory as it perceives that which is non-existent. *If the IΨ perception is regarded as perceptual in character, then it has to be produced by the general conditions under which sensory perceptions occur.* The Mīmāṃsaka, who reject IΨ, nevertheless admit that recognition, which is a kind of perception, can apprehend the past as well as the present, and that a flash of intuition in ordinary life (pratibhājñāna) can apprehend the future as future (Sinha, 1986/1933: 366). Analyzing remote viewing (RV) examples we sometimes find that the respondent is not familiar with the target and hence does not recognize it but provides an accurate description of the target. For example, an RV respondent accurately describes a static rocket motor test as steam locomotive with a “rain-making machine” (Marwaha & May, 2015: 5).

#### 5. What if the IΨ Perceptions are Later Contradicted?

The simple answer to this is that if the precognized potential future becomes actualized and is verified, then it is a valid perception. An example is given to illustrate this: A young girl precognizes (pre-telephone days) that her brother will arrive the next day. *When the IΨ is actually verified with the arrival of the brother, her intuition cannot be regarded as invalid.* It may be argued that it is simply a case of chance coincidence, and that consequently, the intuition is invalid. The answer to this objection is that there is no evidence to prove that it is a case of chance coincidence. When an IΨ intuition of the future is actually verified by a subsequent event, it can never be regarded as invalid. Further, a verified precognition is neither doubtful nor illusory because it agrees with the real nature of its object, nor an oscillation of the mind between two alternatives. Moreover, since the response based on intuition is not generated by inference, it cannot be considered a valid inference, comparison, and testimony. If IΨ is rejected on the grounds that there is no physical representation of an IΨ perception, such as the “throbbing of the eyes”, *then inference also would have to be considered as doubtful as there is no physical evidence of it,* aside from the response that is generated by the mind. *Both inference*

and IY are not illusory in that they both correspond to verified facts, and hence valid knowledge. (Sinha, 1969: 125–130).

## 6. Is Psi Sensory or Produced by the Mind?

Since the psi percept is not produced by inference, *one view is that psi is acquired through the senses (external organs) made acute through innate ability or by the use of herbs, which is also dependent on an innate ability, i. e., herbs will enhance an innate propensity for IY perception.* The other view is that the perception is produced by the mind (internal organ) acquired through the practice of meditation or use of herbs. Praśastapāda (~ 6th c. CE) considers IY perception on par with normal senses and valid knowledge as it is produced by the sense-organs (Sinha, 1969: 132).

Objections against IY perception are based on the grounds that the sensory organs cannot have cognitions of the objects in the distant, past, and future, as they cannot directly perceive them. A sense-organ can never transcend its natural limitations, even when it attains the highest degree of perfection by intense meditation; however, *they can enable the percipient to perform to the natural capacities of the sense-organs that are limited by the specific domains in which they function and cannot transcend their natural limitations* (Sinha, 1986/1933). However, as Marwaha and May (2020) have stated: “[...] even within the ranges of what is termed ‘normal’ human perceptual limits, there are outliers on both sides of the curve, whereby those individuals may have the ability to perceive ranges that are beyond the normative ranges but within the species-specific limitations.”

## 7. Is Telepathy Possible?

According to the Jains, the universe consists of physical sub-atomic particles (karmic matter) everywhere. The destruction of certain types of karmic-matter that obscure knowledge enables a person to be telepathic and have direct or immediate knowledge or perception. Patañjali states that a person’s mental processes can be perceived, however, it is based on the concentration of the mind on their *external behavior*, but *not* objects (Sinha, 1986/1933: 366).

Jain scholars Jinabhadra, Maladhari Hemacandra, etc., hold the view “A person possessing the faculty of telepathy perceives the states of the mind-substance directly, but cognises the external objects thought by the mind *only through inference.*” Hemacandra, commenting upon the statement of Jinabhadra, says that a thinker may think about a material as well as a non-material object. It is a unanimous fact that for one who is not omniscient, it is impossible to perceive a non-material object directly. Hence, it must be admitted that one possessed of the power of telepathy knows the object thought by others *only by way of inference, and not directly.* In other words, only the mental states of a person can be directly perceived by the power of



telepathy. (Or, this could be the result of precognition, Marwaha & May, 2019.) As regards the external objects that form the contents of those states, it is not possible to cognize them in a direct manner. It is the function of inference to know them. *Telepathy is directly associated with the states of the mind, and not with the objects* (Mehta, 1955: 106–107). Hence, it is indirect and inferential.

### ***Concluding Note***

Representing a cultural ethos, rebirth of the ātman is a core principle in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain beliefs and society. While cross-cultural influences may show western perspectives in a survey on the survival hypothesis with the Indian population, the Indic perspective does not lend itself to the survival hypothesis or physical mediumship construct in the western sense. As quoted earlier: “As a person sheds worn-out garments and wears new ones, likewise, at the time of death, the ātman casts off its worn-out body and enters a new one.” (*Bhagavad Gītā* 2.22)

To summarize the Indic view on IΨ:

- IΨ appears to be a species-specific rather than a culture-specific ability. A better understanding of the underlying basis may enable us to expand the inquiry to other species.
- IΨ was a widely discussed phenomenon in the IKS, based on observations of the phenomenon. A key takeaway is that the extensive discussion on the perceptions of past and future have been observed across millennia, serving as one more data point to establish the validity of informational psi (IΨ).
- Since the definition of Consciousness (Ātman, Brahman, Paramātman), self (ātman) refers to a metaphysical reality, it may not form the process by which IΨ perception occurs. The process is through the jīvātman (me-ness) which functions through the body.
- In the Indic view time is cyclical, whereas in the western view time is linear. The implications of this, if any, for psi and particularly the survival hypothesis would be interesting requiring an in-depth analysis of the two views.
- In the IKS view, if IΨ is rejected on the grounds that there is no physical evidence for it, then inference also has to be rejected as there is no physical evidence for the process of inference.
- The sensory system was implicated as the basis for its mechanism.
- The innate ability of the individual permits IΨ ability, but within species-specific constraints.

- While telepathy is acknowledged, the telepathic communication is based on the inference from behavior and mental states.
- In the Indic perspective, the concept of guṇa “the continuing flow of primal material energy that is capable of spontaneous activity (rajas), rational ordering (sattva), and determinate formulation or objectivation (tamas)” is a dynamic changing concept even from the perspective of personality, and is a bio-physiological complex. While an undefined innate sensory-based ability and/or long-term meditation has been implicated in psi, the question of personality type as a contributing factor to psi may be questioned. However, for a person with an innate psi ability, a sattvic (calm) state may be more conducive to IΨ experience, rather than a rajasic (agitated) or tamasic (dull, low, lazy) state.

Extensive discussions on the implications of the remote viewing data led Edwin May and I to a signal-based process-oriented model for the understanding of IΨ. For psi researchers consciousness is the central idea for understanding psi phenomena. However, this exploration of the IKS view on IΨ also leads to a signal-based approach, as sensory systems are implicated. Thus, we find two different methods of investigation leading to the same conclusion. This conclusion merits exploration, which may lead to a better understanding of the process of psi.

To conclude, a cross-cultural view provides a different perspective on how to tackle the problem of psi. The curiosity of the human mind to find answers to difficult questions is an ongoing pursuit, and expanding our quest to all points of views opens us to ideas we have not previously considered.

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## Ein Blick aus Indien auf erfolgreiche Frauen, Wissenssysteme, Psychologie und Psi

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung*<sup>9</sup>

Eine kulturübergreifende Untersuchung des menschlichen Verhaltens erweitert unser Verständnis der Welt, in der wir leben, und zeigt uns Perspektiven auf, die uns nicht vertraut sind. Es gibt einen deutlichen Unterschied zwischen der indischen und der westlichen Perspektive, der alle Aspekte unseres Verständnisses der Welt, einschließlich der Psi-Phänomene, beeinflusst. In diesem Beitrag wird ein Überblick über die Kernkonstrukte des Sanātan Dharma gegeben, die ewigen Gesetze der indischen Zivilisation, die Hindutva (Tattva ist die Essenz oder Substanz von allem) darstellen. In Teil I werden eine Zusammenfassung des „Weiblichen“ im hinduistischen Dharma, ein kurzer historischer Hintergrund zum Status der Frauen und einige Beispiele indischer Frauen aus jüngerer Zeit erörtert. Als Grundlage für das Verständnis der indischen Perspektiven auf Psi werden in Teil II ein Überblick über indische Wissenssysteme (Indian knowledge systems) und Kernkonzepte der indischen Psychologie erörtert.

In den Jahrtausende alten kulturellen Verankerungen des indischen Subkontinents Ardhanārīśvara, repräsentiert die androgyne Form von Śiva (Puruṣa, Ur-Selbst, Bewusstsein, das Männliche) und Śakti (Prakṛti, Ur-Materie, Energie, das Weibliche) die regenerative Kraft des Universums und ist ein wesentlicher Aspekt der spirituell-kulturellen Landschaft. Śakti als göttliche Mutter spiegelt sich in den vielen *Devī(s)* wider, die im Mittelpunkt des täglichen Lebens stehen und mit denen jeweils spezifische Attribute und Rituale verbunden sind. Die

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9 Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

drei wichtigsten weiblichen Gottheiten, die seit der frühesten R̥g-vedischen Zeit bekannt sind, werden von allen unabhängig von ihren männlichen Formen verehrt.

Trotz der Schwächen der menschlichen Natur, des gesellschaftspolitischen Drucks und der Zwänge, der Schwierigkeiten der Unterdrückung und der Gewalt durch aufeinander folgende Jahrhunderte von Invasionen spiegelt sich das Fortbestehen der Verehrung des Weiblichen durch Jahrtausende alte Traditionen in den sich wandelnden Rollen und Errungenschaften der Frauen in der indischen Gesellschaft wider. Frauen genossen gleiche Chancen bei der Ausbildung und nahmen als Gleichberechtigte an religiösen Ritualen teil. Indische Frauen haben im formellen und informellen Sektor zu den Wissenssystemen und dem wissenschaftlichen Betrieb beigetragen. Frauen spielen eine wichtige Rolle für das Überleben und den Fortschritt dieser alten Zivilisation.

Indien ist die Heimat einer Vielzahl philosophischer Schulen und einer umfangreiche Literatur, die sich mit dem Komplex Körper-Geist-Bewusstsein befasst. Auf der Grundlage der indischen Wissenssysteme kann die indische Psychologie viel zu den theoretischen Fragen von Psi(-Phänomenen) beitragen. Da eine Diskussion zwischen und innerhalb von Schulen den Rahmen dieses Aufsatzes sprengen würde, werde ich eine konsolidierte Sichtweise ohne Bindung an eine bestimmte Denkschule präsentieren. Nach einer kurzen Beschreibung der Kernkonzepte werden die indischen Ansichten über Psi-Wahrnehmungen sowohl im Hinblick auf Zustimmung als auch Ablehnung diskutiert. Zu den besprochenen Kernthemen gehören folgende:

1. Paramātman (auch Puruṣa, Ātman, Brahman, Parama Śiva) bezieht sich auf das universelle/absolute Selbst, das kosmische oder ultimative Bewusstsein; es bezieht sich nicht auf eine Gottheit wie im westlichen Sinne. Um das klarzustellen, der Begriff „Bewusstsein“ für Paramātman bezieht sich nicht auf das gehirn-basierte Bewusstsein und eignet sich nicht für eine bewussts-basierte Theorie der Psi-Phänomene.
2. Selbstbewusstsein/„Ich“-heit („I“-ness)/Ātman ist ein Teil von Paramātman und das bewusste und intelligente Prinzip innerhalb des trägen Geist-Körper-Komplexes.
3. Jīvātman /„Ich“-heit („me“-ness), was wörtlich lebendes Wesen bedeutet, kommt dem am nächsten, was man eine „Person“ oder das „subjektive Selbst“ nennt, das allgemein als Wissender, Genießender/Leidender und Handelnder verstanden wird. Der Ātman ist das transzendente Subjekt-„Ich“ (subject „I“), während der Jīvātman das empirische Subjekt-„Ich“ (subject „me“) ist.
4. *Manas* (Geist) ist der Sitz der Erkenntnis, des Willens, der Gefühle und der Handlungen. Die meisten Schulen der indischen Philosophie sind der Ansicht, dass der Geist nicht mit dem Selbst (Ātman) gleichgesetzt werden kann. Die drei Funktionsebenen des Geistes sind: *Manas*, das die durch die Sinne aufgenommenen Informationen

aufnimmt; *Ahaṃkāra*, die selbstbezogene, subjektive Funktion und *Buddhi*, das Entscheidungsvermögen.

5. Indriya(s), der sensorisch-motorische Apparat, stellt ein sehr wichtiges Segment des Geist-Körper-Komplexes dar.
6. *Guṇa* (Attribute, Qualität). Das Sāṃkhya-System entwickelte die Vorstellung von *Guṇa* (Schnüre, Stränge, Fäden) von Prakṛti (Urmaterie), von denen es drei Stränge gibt: *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*. Wenn sich die Materie (Prakṛti) in einem Zustand von *Sattva* (Gleichgewicht) befindet, findet keine Erschaffung oder Veränderung der Materie statt; erst wenn sich die Materie in einem Zustand von *Rajas* (Aktivität oder Fluss) oder *Tamas* (Ungleichgewicht, Chaos) befindet, findet die Erschaffung oder Veränderung der Materie statt. Somit sind Aktivität und Ungleichgewicht ein wesentlicher Bestandteil der Existenz.

Es gibt einen grundlegenden Unterschied zwischen der indischen Sichtweise und der westlichen Parapsychologie in Bezug auf das postmortale Überleben. Die Perspektiven auf das postmortale Überleben oder die Wiedergeburt hängen auch von einem kulturellen Verständnis der Natur der Zeit ab. Die griechische und die indische Tradition haben eine zyklische Vorstellung von Zeit, während die jüdisch-christliche Tradition eine lineare Vorstellung vertritt. Nach indischer Auffassung überlebt der Ātman – die geschlechtsneutrale „Ich“-heit („I“-ness) –, das Kernselbst, das ein Teil des Paramātman ist, und nicht das „Ich“ („me“), in einer halbphysischen Form mit einem autobiografischen Gedächtnis; der Körper wird beim Tod eingäschert, daher gibt es keine physische Form, die sich manifestiert und mit der Umwelt interagiert. Die zugrundeliegende Lehre ist die von Karma und Saṃsāra (Kreislauf von Geburt und Tod) sowie der Glaube, dass der Mensch moralisch und spirituell vervollkommen werden muss, bevor er Mokṣa/Nirvana, d. h. die Befreiung vom Kreislauf von Geburt und Tod, erreichen kann. Nach westlicher Auffassung wird die menschliche Person oder Seele nach dem biologischen Tod fortbestehen. Persönliches Überleben bedeutet, dass nach dem Tod ein Zentrum des Selbstbewusstseins mit Wahrnehmungs-/Wissensfähigkeiten und absichtsvollem kausalem Handeln fortbesteht, da dies wesentliche Eigenschaften der menschlichen Person sind.

Nach indischer Auffassung gibt es zwei Arten der Wahrnehmung: die gewöhnliche Wahrnehmung des täglichen Lebens und die übernormale Wahrnehmung (Wahrnehmung von Vergangenheit und Zukunft), die von allen Denkschulen außer der Mīmāṃsā und der Cārvāka/Lokāyatā als natürliches Phänomen akzeptiert wird. Während die Feinheiten und Details zu übernormalen Wahrnehmungen den Rahmen dieser Abhandlung sprengen würden, können drei grundlegende Punkte identifiziert werden: Die Wahrnehmung von Vergangenheit und Zukunft ist ein gültiges Phänomen, sie ist eine angeborene Fähigkeit, die auch durch langfristige Meditationspraxis erlangt wird, und die Sinnessysteme sind daran beteiligt.

# Rethinking Methodologies in Parapsychology Research with Children

DONNA THOMAS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – In contemporary parapsychology research, children are missing. The wealth of literature with adults highlights children’s paranormal experiences as an under-researched topic. Through this article, I argue for children’s inclusion in parapsychology research, but with a caveat – as active agents, rather than passive objects. I consider the convergences between missing children and absent women researchers in parapsychology and argue for a rethinking of traditional research methodologies in the field of parapsychology. Traditional methodologies rooted in a patriarchal system could explain the exclusion of children, and the othering of women researchers in the field. I include a discussion around my own research with children, which produces different kinds of meanings and data in the act of knowledge production around paranormal or unexplained experiences.

**Keywords:** children – women – parapsychology – methodologies – matriarchal – patriarchal – participatory

## Methoden in der parapsychologischen Forschung mit Kindern neu überdenken

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – In der gegenwärtigen parapsychologischen Forschung fehlen Kinder. An der Fülle der Literatur über Erwachsene wird deutlich, dass die paranormalen Erfahrungen von Kindern noch nicht ausreichend erforscht sind. In diesem Artikel plädiere ich für die Einbeziehung von Kindern in die parapsychologische Forschung, allerdings mit einem Vorbehalt – als aktive Akteure und nicht als passive Forschungsobjekte. Ich ziehe die Konvergenzen zwischen fehlenden Kindern und abwesenden Forscherinnen in der Parapsychologie in Betracht und plädiere für ein Überdenken der traditionellen Forschungsmethoden im Bereich der Parapsychologie. Traditionelle Methoden, die in einem patriarchalischen System verwurzelt sind, könnten den Ausschluss von Kindern und die Aus-

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung findet sich am Ende des Artikels.

grenzung von Forscherinnen auf diesem Gebiet erklären. Ich schließe eine Diskussion über meine eigene Forschung mit Kindern ein, die verschiedene Arten von Bedeutungen und Daten im Akt der Wissensproduktion über paranormale oder unerklärliche Erfahrungen hervorbringt.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Kinder – Frauen – Parapsychologie – Methoden – matriarchal – patriarchal – partizipatorisch

These crowds and crowds of little children are strangely absent from the written record... there is something mysterious about the silence of all these multitudes of babes in arms, toddlers and adolescents in the statements men made about their own existence.

Laslett (1977)

### ***Introduction***

When I received an invitation to write an article for this special issue of *women in parapsychology*, I discovered some interesting convergences between missing children in parapsychology (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a) and women researchers troubled by their positioning in the field. Scholars such as Nancy Zingrone (2019), Caroline Watt (1996), Beverly Rubik (1994) and Marilyn Schlitz (1994), have charted the neglect of women in parapsychology and a lack of attention to women's involvement in the field (see Alvarado, 1988). Children are also neglected in parapsychology research, rarely involved and often subject to objectification and silencing (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). The convergences between women in parapsychology and children on the margins of research are compelling. As a woman researcher exploring children's unexplained experiences, I may have missed the obvious.

I contemplated whether men researchers often include the voices of children in parapsychology research, those so-called tiny-adults, *irrationalists*, who cannot distinguish reality from fantasy (see Piaget, 1929/2002). I realized as a woman social scientist, taking an excursion into the fields of parapsychology and philosophy, it was primarily men scientists, such as David Luke, Bernardo Kastrup and Chris Roe, who had valued and supported children's insights and living experiences. Carlos Alvarado (1989) was one of the first male parapsychologists to bring attention to the troubles for women in the field. Alvarado (1989: 234) reflects on the absence of women researchers from the canon, highlighting the "common assumption that outlining the work of prominent men in a field is sufficient to explore the history of a discipline." The issue may be gendered but involving children can reveal how the root of the trouble may extend into how science is motivated, enacted and valued in the modern world. In a way that is dismissive of *othered* epistemologies, methodologies and philosophies. Instead dedicated to "the prevailing empiricist paradigm that has tended to dominate scientific endeavours" (Watt, 1996: 85).

I was introduced to the 1991 conference *Women and Parapsychology*, quite recently by the editors of this special issue (see Leverett, 2022; Zingrone, 2022), following a presentation I delivered for the Society for Scientific Exploration and the Parapsychological Association 2022. The absence of children in modern parapsychology research was clearly demonstrated at the recent conference, with my presentation the only one concerned with children. I argued for the importance of children's living experiences, for *strange* research methods which facilitated children as active agents rather than passive objects. I touched on some of the discrepancies between how women researchers may conduct experiments in different ways to men researchers (see Blackmore, 1980; Drucker, Drewes & Rubin, 1977; Rhine, 1962) – at the time not realizing these hints were entangled with the concerns of other women researchers in parapsychology. It seems, when women researchers invite children into parapsychology studies, they can apply methodologies which challenge the traditional and resist the patriarchal. For example, Louisa Rhine in the 1960's handpicked 218 letters written by children, out of a dataset of 30,000 (see Drewes, 2002). This huge task must have been undertaken with attentive care, gathering the children, and foregrounding their stories, within a male-dominated field of science. Drewes and Drucker (1977; 1990) introduced candies into experiments and Susan Blackmore (1980) used soft toys in ESP testing. These are, in some ways, methods designed with the child in mind, an attentiveness and intuition to what makes research more meaningful and interesting for children. The juxtaposition of candies and teddy bears in rigorous scientific experiments will be pursued later.

Through this article, I argue for children's inclusion in parapsychology research – but with a caveat – in a participatory way, as active agents, rather than passive objects (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). I consider inequality for women and children in parapsychology as the result of a masculine order of science and its hegemony within research practice. The invitation into this special issue that children have been afforded, offers a potential to expand on accidental convergences, and hopefully contributes to the ongoing discussions about women, research and paradigms, but perhaps with a difference – as I'll be bringing the children to work.

### *Children, Women and Science*

Nancy Zingrone in 1988, wrote about the inequality found in academic publication practices in two prominent parapsychology journals<sup>3</sup> between 1937–1986. Zingrone summarizes how two thirds of the journals' authors were male, noting how “disparities between rates and habits of males and females in parapsychology conform to some extent to those obtained in other disciplines” (1988: 321). Zingrone (1988 – see also Zingrone & Alvarado, 2019) importantly draws attention to what socially constitutes inequality for women in science. Academic writing

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3 *Journal of Parapsychology* & *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*.

itself embodies the “normative regimes of the phallogocentric symbolic order” (see Handforth & Taylor, 2016: 628), or masculine discourse. Scientific practice is a type of knowledge production imbued with a hegemonic regularity of the rational and the ordered (see Handforth & Taylor, 2016). It is a symbolic order that has historically seen women and children written out of history by male theory and language (see Pinggong, 2018). Feminist scholars interested in language and psychology, such as Helen Cixous (1977), Luce Irigaray (1981) and Julia Kristeva (1980), bring attention to the phallogocentric order of science. These feminist scholars claim the site of a different kind of feminine discourse, described by Irigaray as *parler femme*, by Cixous as *écriture féminine* and by Kristeva as the *semiotic* (see Pinggong, 2018):

Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history by her own movement [...] When I say ‘woman’, I’m speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history.

Cixous et al., *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 1976

Cixous’ (1977: 875) *universal woman as subject* is a force, a semiotic with the potential to break “an arid millennial ground”. It is women’s imaginary as “inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms” (ibid.: 877) – similar with children’s playing, drawing and creativity when sharing experiences and meanings (see Thomas, 2021, 2022b). *L’écriture féminine* (feminist writing) is seen in the autoethnographic (Ellis et al., 2010), writing the body, metaphor and symbology. Never considered science, the semiotic of women – and children – juxtaposes the mathematical, statistical and linguistic. Certain methodologies can privilege *l’écriture féminine*, such as qualitative or participatory approaches to research, where stories, art and the body are prioritized as valuable research data. The hierarchy of research methodologies in parapsychology that heavily relies on patriarchal discourse, appears to position qualitative research at the bottom, as White (1994: 6) notes “*in the missionary position*.”

The 1991 conference proceedings of *Women in Parapsychology* (see Coly & White, 1994), challenges a patriarchal scientific model which excludes *othered* epistemologies and methodologies. With children, epistemologies emerge as a spatial flow, a manifestation of multiple voices and images which splatter the patriarchal ordering of scientific discourse. Children in parapsychology research make us question the “pre-existing, formalized, methods-driven methodologies ... that are never enough for the too much of inquiry” (St. Pierre, 2008: 608). Utts (1994) highlights the binaries inherent in male-orientated parapsychology research, such as hard data over soft data and dualism over unity. When I consider the way children were researched *on* historically, the emphasis on gathering hard data to evidence children’s psi abilities comes to the fore. Many cause and effect school experiments on children ran between the 1950’s – 1970’s (see Rhine & Pratt, 1957; Van Busschbach, 1956), with minimal attention paid to any socio-cultural



factors that can influence children's experiences. Psi experiments with children were rooted in the masculine ordering of science, limiting exploration around children's extra-sensory perception, within a reductionist model of materialism.

The materialist paradigm influences how children, and their experiences are often measured in adult-orientated studies. Past ESP research *on* children appeal to Piagetian cognitive development models to measure intelligence and capabilities of children (see Drucker, Drewes & Rubin, 1977). Child development and assumptions made about children's capacities to authentically engage in research are two problematic areas that warrant examination. Measuring children's cognitive capacities creates "yardsticks by which children progress and development is measured and found wanting" (see Murriss, 2017: 1). Piaget's model has been appropriated and reduced in modern society, rendering children as "dominated by the irrational, ludistic tendencies or magical thinking, largely unable to distinguish fantasy from reality until seven or eight years of age when concrete logic develops" (Wigger, 2019: 29). Contemporary research in childhood studies significantly challenges this view of children and their capacity to engage in research (Anderson, 1998; Dan et al., 2019; Larkins et al., 2015; Murriss, 2017; see Punch, 2002). Scholars argue for a redefinition of certain ideas such as intelligence, considered multiple rather than monolithic (Gardner, 1983), the social rather than egocentric nature of children (Harris, 2000), how children's thinking processes can be complex (see Barrett, 2012; Murriss, 2017); and how logical young minds can be, even in imaginative play (see Dias & Harris, 1988, see Wigger, 2019). What comes to the fore is the nature and shape of children's knowledge, their *logic* and complex cognitive processes – their semiotic, their archetype of spontaneity, impulsiveness and creativity – which demands a rethinking of research methodologies.

Research involving children will often apply adult-centred methods, creating barriers for children's significant engagement in research practice (see Punch, 2002). Traditional methods which embody the regularity of the rational and ordered, immediately exclude any epistemological authority of children over their own experiences. In the past, experiments were mostly conducted in school contexts, viewed as natural testing sites (see Rhine & Pratt, 1957) where scores of children could be tested on. For example, in 1941, A. A. Foster conducted ESP-related tests with "50 plains-Indian children" (Foster, 1943: 94) in a Canadian state-governed school. The aim of the study was to test the effectiveness of a new type of ESP test against a standard technique. The intention for Foster to be inclusive by producing "*the only published report with Indians as subjects*" (ibid.: 95), masks the atrocities inflicted on children from First Nation communities in state-run schools. For readers who may not be aware of the histories of these children, their stories are filled with separation from their families and communities, their languages, knowledges and belief systems, ignored, silenced, abused and replaced with western doctrine (see Malloy, 2017). The tests were delivered by adults-in-authority, representative of an abusive system into which these children were forcibly placed.

The effect of teacher-pupil relationships in ESP testing with children in schools was examined by Anderson and White (1963). Their results show how positive teacher-pupil relationships can affect ESP scores. Drucker, Drewes & Rubin (1977) identified how children perform better on ESP related tests in their own homes, rather than in school. The neglect of interactional, social and cultural factors which congregate around the moment of ESP testing in children is problematic for women, men, children and the field (see Maraldi & Krippner, 2019). The neglect of *soft data*, when soft data is crucial, is an act of the phallogocentric order. Interconnections in research spaces is something Beverley Rubik examines in her 1991/1994 contribution to *Women and Parapsychology*. Rubik endorses the feminine archetype in parapsychology, seeing the masculine archetype as that which aims to tame and measure nature – an attitude inherent to physicalist metaphysics. The experimenter, the participant and the target are interconnected and should be considered in studies on the paranormal, according to Rubik (1994). Where I particularly join with Rubik, is with her call for participants to co-design experiments, hypothesis and target selection (see 1994). Rubik is alluding to participatory research practice, an approach I use with children in research. As a style of enquiry that emerged in fields such as childhood studies in the early 1990's (see Larkins et al., 2015), participatory research developed alongside sociological paradigm shifts. Participatory research creates opportunities for children to be acknowledged as competent social actors rather than passive objects of research (see Dixon et al., 2019). It is an approach that is showing to offer astounding potentials for involving children in parapsychology research (see Thomas, 2021).

A central focus of feminist and participatory research with children is epistemology. These approaches to research open debate around who can be a knower, what can be known and what constitutes and validates knowledge (see Stanley & Wise, 2013). In my own studies with children, I argue how children's experiences and ways of being can also catalyze ontological concern, through exploring the nature of self and experience, and examining the ways children's experiences challenge the dominant materialist scientific paradigm (see Thomas, 2022b). White (1994) examines knowledge and queries whether feminist approaches to science are relevant for parapsychology research. White (1994) notes how some questions are not amenable to experimental scrutiny, so they are not asked. Even in the case of subjective phenomena such as near-death experiences that are resistant to experimental study (see Irwin, 1995). The now vast literature on NDEs is seeping into mainstream healthcare systems, with new guidelines for researching NDEs recently published (see Parnia et al., 2022). Unfortunately, children are relegated to a footnote in the guidance, with a fleeting reference made to case study research (see *ibid.*, 2022). Yet another example of missing children, a travesty as the article is concerned with *future directions* in NDE research.

White (1994) calls for a plural approach to parapsychology, where other forms of knowledge and methodologies are valued. Women researchers in the past adapted experimental methods

to suit child subjects such as the candies and toys mentioned earlier (see Blackmore, 1980; Drucker, Drewes & Rubin, 1977). It reveals a tension between their intuitions, perhaps *lecriture feminine* methodologies, with an orientation to the dominant, patriarchal scientific paradigm. An unconscious move “to speak and write as men do so to enter history, when logically speaking it is a history our speech should disrupt” (see Gauthier, 1986). Children’s semiosis, or ways for representing their experiences converge with *women’s discourse* (see Irigaray, 1981), the schizoid position of being simultaneously in history and not in history, written out of history by male theory (see Pinggong, 2018). Louisa Rhine in some ways fought for the recognition of children’s epistemologies contained in their letters. Marilyn Schlitz (1994) reflects on her own tension as a women researcher, describing her ‘mixed orientation’ towards parapsychological research (see Watt, 1996). Schlitz refers to Louisa Rhine’s letters, demonstrating the paradox between her appreciation of children’s accounts and “her reluctance to challenge the underlying assumptions of J.B. Rhine’s experimental approach to psi phenomena” (Irwin, 1995). I recognize my own tensions too, appreciating the scientific experiment while advocating for *othered* children, methodologies and epistemologies. I wrangle with validating claims about children, on behalf of children, and despair at times with the business of re-authoring and *re-languaging* children’s experiences, to suit rule-governed journals and troubling reviewers.

For feminist researchers and in research with children, criticisms are often levied against methodological rigor and validity (see Dallimore, 2000). Scientific criteria such as validity and replicability may not be applicable to research practice with children, their living experiences and epistemologies. Blehenberg et al. (2013) argue that external validity and reliability are less significant for research with people, for example, repeating a measurement is practical rather than feasible. Validity can take on different meanings and processes, as in the case of *transactional validity*, a common approach in participatory research involving co-analysis with participants – “heralded as a stronger version of validity reached through triangulation” (Caretta & Perez, 2019: 360). Emotional expression as an epistemological principle (see Stanley & Wise, 2013) can be a signal of validity from a child. Often, children can express emotional responses (fear, delight, wonder) when they share their accounts. Attention to language can reveal how children will use validation strategies in their reporting, bringing witnesses and reported speech into their paranormal stories where possible, utilizing nominalizations (see Thomas, 2021). Long silences between words show deep reflection and the search to find adequate ways to describe what they have experienced. The trouble of missing children and women researchers in the field of parapsychology is reflective of the larger issue of the *othering* of epistemologies, semiosis and methodologies in mainstream science, rather than biased men scientists.

### *Children in Parapsychology*

For children to come into the space of the special issue of women and parapsychology, signifies an important move towards involving children in parapsychology research. The wealth of literature that studies anomalous experiences with adults (see Cardeña & Alvarado, 2014; Pechey & Halligan, 2012; Roxburgh & Roe, 2014; Wahbeh et al., 2019), highlights anomalous experiences in childhood as a significantly under-researched area (see Thomas, 2021; 2022a; 2023). Children show to have experiences similar with anomalous experiences identified in adult populations. Examples of studies with adults outside closed clinical contexts include measuring anomalous experiences and beliefs (see Wahbeh et al., 2019), non-pathological self and experience alterations (see Cardeña & Alvarado, 2014), prevalence of anomalous experiences in non-clinical groups (see Pechey & Halligan, 2012) and voices and visions in mediumship (see Roxburgh & Roe, 2014). Recent pilot studies I have conducted *with* children *outside* clinical contexts, demonstrate a wide range of experiences in childhood that carry features of anomalous experiences, such as telepathy, precognition, mediumship, NDE's and OBE's (see Thomas 2021; 2022a). Other experiences were identified as peak or mystical (see Hoffman, 1998). Like adults (see Hastings, 1983), most children report potential healing or transformational potentials from their experiences, especially when supported by adults in authority (see Thomas, 2021).

A recent systematic review into children and anomalous or unexplained experiences (see Thomas, 2021), demonstrates how children's experiences are used as predictors for their well-being in adulthood and as markers of psychosis risk (see Rabeyron & Watt, 2010). Links have been made between children in crisis and anomalous experiences, with studies examining the role of childhood trauma. Scimeca et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between extrasensory perception and traumatic experiences in childhood, showing how dissociated states and emotional distress can mediate anomalous experiences (such as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition). Rabeyron and Watt studied the relationship between paranormal experiences, mental health, psi abilities and childhood trauma. Their results found a significant correlation between “mental boundaries associated with paranormal experiences and childlikeness” (Rabeyron & Watt, 2010: 487). The “empirical association between voice-hearing, measures of dissociation and trauma particularly (though not exclusively) childhood sexual abuse,” are highlighted by Longden et al. (2012: 28). These are important studies for showing correlations between trauma, anomalous experiences and states of consciousness (see Thomas, 2022a). Yet, most studies concerned with childhood trauma *do not involve children* and are retrospective accounts of traumatic histories reported by adults.

Recent psychosocial studies suggest a high prevalence of *psychotic-like experiences* in children aged between 9–12 years (see Kelleher & Cannon, 2020). These are experiences that carry features of anomalous phenomena but are not viewed as medically significant to meet

the diagnostic criteria for psychosis and schizophrenia. In my own studies with children, the data is starting to show a pattern with children aged 9–12 years who demonstrate a higher incidence and wider variety of types of anomalous experiences (see Thomas, 2022a). This can be a significant age for some children, as they experience puberty, raising questions around the relationship between transitional states in children and unexplained experiences (see Thomas, 2022a). In contemporary parapsychology research, children are glaringly absent. This may in part be a result of how children are perceived, in terms of their capabilities and the skills for conducting meaningful research with children (see Drewes, 2001; Thomas, 2021).

### ***Researching Unexplained Experiences with Children***

Involving children in research has a long history in disciplines such as childhood studies (see Dan et al., 2019; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Punch, 2002). There are debates and disagreements around how research with children should be approached. For example, research with children can be considered against two extremes, either children are just the same as adults or entirely different from adults (Punch, 2002). Each position entails different methods in research with children, and any research with children raises issues of power, protections and ethics (see Alderson, 1995; Dan et al., 2019). Ethics is viewed as the central difference between research with adults and children (Punch, 2002). With children, consent and involvement in research must go through adult gatekeepers who can limit children's involvement in research (see Pickles, 2018).

Researching unexplained experiences with children may be viewed as ethically problematic, due to the blurred boundaries between paranormal experiences and mental health (see Rabeyron & Watt, 2010). Paranormal experiences are often considered as predictors or symptoms of mental illness, where experiences often amount to hallucinations or delusions of the disordered child. Some psychologists consider paranormal experiences as normal psychological phenomena based on innocent cognitive errors (see Rivas, 2006). Research also suggests that there is no link between paranormal experiences and mental health disorders (see Goulding 2004), and anomalous experiences can catalyze or improve wellbeing for adults (see Kennedy & Kanthamani, 1992) and children (see Thomas, 2021). With these contradictions yet to be settled, researching unexplained experiences with children still gives rise to fears around protecting children. Protections in research with children is also controversial, raising tensions between children's rights to be involved in research and keeping children safe (see Dan et al., 2019; Pickles, 2018). What may be more dangerous is to continue to assume children's experiences as symptoms of illness before they are explored *with* children.

In my own studies, older children report instances of being diagnosed against their own understandings around their experiences – catalyzing suffering and mistrust in children (see

Thomas, 2021). Children are showing to be capable of engaging in research around their own unexplained experiences, often appreciating the research space in which they can comfortably and safely share their experiences with researchers and peers (see Thomas, 2021). Ethical practice in research with children and their unexplained experiences involves similar procedures with any participatory research undertaken with children. Participants will give informed consent following access to information about the research. Children can leave the study at any time, signposting and support is made available for any children requiring additional support following research (something that has not yet occurred). Children must have parental consent to take part. Unexplained experiences is an important research agenda, identified by children who resist mainstream adult-theorizing of their unexplained experiences.

The studies I conduct involve children in different ways. Some children co-design research studies, while some children are participants in studies. The participatory ethos extends to children who do not co-design studies or conduct research. Participants are invited to choose which methods they want to engage with or to co-interpret research data. Children's knowledges and the ways they communicate their living experiences are privileged in studies. Participatory research challenges the logical positivism inherent in traditional qualitative research (see St. Pierre, 2008), by shifting agendas, power and value towards research participants and their experiential authority.

Researching unexplained experiences with children gives rise to reports involving talking with deceased relatives, premonitions, senses of being stared at, visions, voices, out of body experiences, and peak or mystical experiences (see Thomas, 2021, 2022b). Example studies include: researching NDEs with cardiac arrest survivors (see Thomas, 2023), exploring subtle connections such as telepathy in children (see Thomas, 2022b, 2023) and identifying unusual experiences in children populations (see Thomas, 2022b). Some studies I undertake with children also use traditional methods such as questionnaires and focus groups (a traditional qualitative research method that facilitates a group of participants to focus on a research topic), trying to traverse some thematic and statistical ground to legitimize the commonality of these kinds of experiences for children (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). But this is the afterthought, not the soul of the research. The 'real' research starts with the children, from co-design through to co-interpretation and analysis. Agendas are co-identified between the adult and children researchers (see Thomas, 2022b), as in many participatory research processes between adult researchers and children (see Crook, 2020; Dan et al., 2019; Larkins et al., 2013).

Participatory research methods can depart from the traditional and involve art, play, drama and other modes of semiosis. When children share their unexplained experiences, often there are not many words. Methods such as art and play, for example, become integral for knowledge production. Circling back to masculine and feminine forces in language (see Lacan, 1981; Kristeva, 1980), children's language of the paranormal shares a resonance with the language of

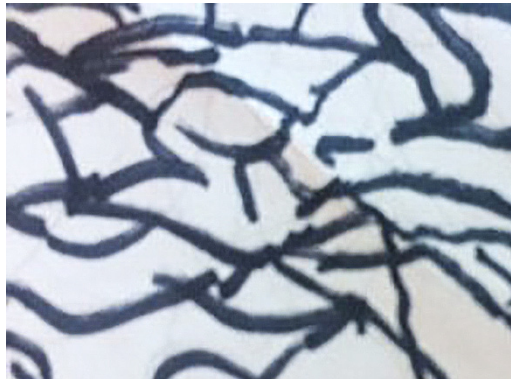
the feminine, the metaphor, the body, the symbol. As women are asked to “disrupt the norms that subjugate them and recreate their own means of representation in order to break away from that subjugation” (see Fotaki, 2019: 43), children are invited to represent their experiences through methods that challenge traditional research conventions. Art as research method can facilitate new lenses for seeing that can disrupt “norms of knowledge construction and representation...and the ontological and epistemological assumptions shaping research processes and representations” (Skukauskaite et al., 2021). For children, art becomes essential, not just for representing, but for reflection, discernment and meaning-making about their own experiences (see Figures 1–6).

Art as representation of unexplained experiences produces a kind of data that requires a disruption of the developmental and visual realism often assigned to children’s artwork. The mainstream aesthetic/deficit logic in children’s art education implies children’s drawings as realistic in intent, where children progress towards representation of what they see in the physical world (see Schulte, 2021). Adults can often distort and misconstrue what we do not understand about how and why children draw, as we force it into our adult perspectives (see *ibid.*). Adult researchers may often look for the observable in children’s drawings. There may be an emphasis on capturing truth and validity of the observable world (see *ibid.*). Children are trying to represent, through their images, experiences betwixt and between the physical and non-physical.

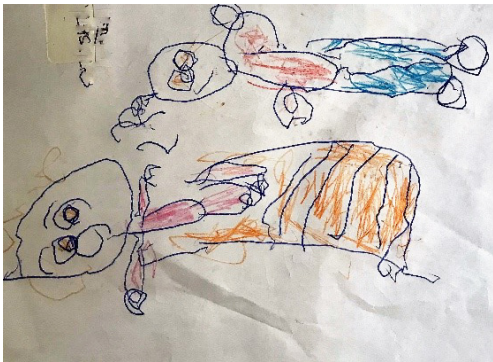
Taking the example ‘*portal to another world*’ (see Figure 6), drawn by Lily aged 5 years. A visual realism interpretation would categorize the image as ‘the scribbling stage’ (see Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). This would entail our observations of Lily’s image ‘are securely tethered to the graphic marks on the page’ (see Schulte, 2021: 56). An image that may not be recognizable to many adults and often construed as random and deficit (compared to artistic aesthetics). In the case of Lily’s image, time, observation, relation and talk around the process of mark-making (participatory approaches), reveal a portal that Lily travels through to reach other worlds. Lily also experiences seeing figures in her room (identified as her great grandmother, when Lily recognized the figure from a set of family photographs). The image depicts a sensation, a state of consciousness rather than a physical portal, a universal symbol similar with geometrical patterns found extensively across the art data (see also Figure 2). Some images are familiar, such as figures, hands and bridges, representing both physical and symbolic artefacts. Figure 1 was drawn by Jack aged 4 years. Sadly, Jack’s teacher had died unexpectedly a few months earlier. Jack’s picture represents a vivid dream he had, where he met his teacher on a rainbow bridge. The dream supported Jack in his grief. It is interesting that Jack experienced meeting his teacher on a rainbow bridge, if we consider its presence across different mythologies and cultural narratives. For example, the rainbow bridge is important to Hopi mysticism and heritage (see Hassell & Evans, 1999).



**Figure 1.** George, aged 4 years. Meeting deceased teacher in a dream.



**Figure 2.** Callum, aged 14 years. Peak experience in nature.



**Figure 3.** Ella, aged 14 years. OBE in hospital.



**Figure 4.** Yasmine, aged 14 years, layers of reality.



**Figure 5.** Loretta, aged 9 years. The Invisible Hand (left).

**Figure 6.** Lily, aged 5 years. Portal to another world (right)





The interplay between children's experiences, wider theory and eastern/modern western philosophy can be astounding (see Thomas, 2022). Some children<sup>4</sup>, for example, produce geometrical patterns and shapes through their art responses, similar with ancient cave-paintings and mark-making in natural artefacts such as red ochre (see Figure 2). Some scholars suggest patterns are linked to early visual cortex systems (see Hodgson, 2019). Others propose "that the non-figurative images are in fact universal representations ... once perceived by our shamanic ancestors during altered states of consciousness" (Luke, 2010: 8). Etzel Cardeña (2020) makes connections between self-representation, art and anomalous experiences. Cardeña (2020: 206) notes how the subjective can be represented in objective ways, were themes such as "hypergeometry were integrated by scientists and artists alike," to represent an underlying reality prior to space/time. Younger children can intuit the nature of reality as *like the sea and people are raindrops*, similar with, for example, new theories in cosmopsychisms (see Shani & Keppler, 2018). Children assign a reality to their experiences, often qualified as realer than real. As Roy Bhaskar (1979) mused, precision in meaning over accuracy in measurement (1979) is far more valuable in research with people. When children draw their unexplained experiences, a creative space unfolds where children can access wisdom, intuition and reflective meanings around what they have experienced (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a).

### ***Example Data: Experiences, Resistances and Convergences***

Inquiry as a push toward the intensive, barely intelligible variation in living that shocks us and asks us to be worthy of it. It asks us to trust that something unimaginable might come out that might change the world bit by bit.

St. Pierre, 2008: 608

Included here are examples of data from two separate studies, one carried out in 2019 and the other, a rapid review study conducted in 2022. The 'Who am I Study' (2019) explored the nature of self and anomalous experiences with 18 children aged 4–18 years (see Thomas, 2021). The rapid review (2022) was conducted with forty children aged 4–11 years in a school context, with the aim to identify children's unexplained experiences. Both studies were conducted in the UK. The rapid review invited children to experiment with and evaluate participatory research methods that could be used with other children in future research. Both studies are valuable for exemplifying how participatory research methods may be used with children in parapsychology research (see Thomas 2021, 2022b). The studies demonstrate examples of children's experiences while highlighting some convergences between women researchers and children's resistances to normative systems of thought and research practice.

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4 Children who have peak or mystical experiences often draw geometrical patterns to represent self and connections between others and the world.

### *Research and Resistance with Children*

If the child is wildish, she may, unfortunately, be subjected to her parent's attempts at psychic surgery over and over again, for they are trying to remake the child, and more so, trying to change what her soul requires of her. Though her soul requires seeing, the culture around her requires sightlessness. Though her soul wishes to speak, her culture requires silence.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés, 1992: 171

I've been engaged in fieldwork at the time of writing. A few days earlier, I ran a focus group with ten children aged 4–5 years, to explore with them their *unusual* experiences. In the UK, it's close to the summer holidays, the children are excited, and mischief is in the air. As I create a *research circle*, from pillows, blankets, the odd plastic chair, I have a sense this isn't going to go well today. My hope or assumption is that the children will sit still, focus on the research tools (toys, paints, crafts) and reveal many different kinds of experiences. My adult researcher's expectations and assumptions were swiftly shattered. It began with fist fights over blankets, two children attempting to hang upside down on the chairs, and one child disappearing to the toilet, requiring a search party (he was found!). OK, at least I have my camera running! Ah! At the end of the session, I notice some suspicious painty fingerprints on the lens and realize in horror, the record button was turned off. I left with a headache, with the feeling of failure and with the promise 'that's it, no more!' When I recovered, gathered my thoughts and a few crumpled written notes, I marveled on what I had learned from the session. I considered how children engaged with small world play items to act out their lucid dreams and premonitions (the topics we settled on after two children revealed '*I always know I am dreaming when I dream*' and '*I know things before they happen*'). I also stayed with their resistances, to being in the circle, being asked questions and choosing instead to be *wildish*. As Pinkola Estés (1992: 171) muses "pressure to be adequate, in whatever manner authority defines it, can chase the child away." It was a good exercise for the woman researcher to also sit with expectations and assumptions.

As women researchers are resisting patriarchal methodologies and paradigms, older children (teenagers) can resist adults' medical and scientific interpretations about their unexplained experiences:

I always have a strong feeling there's something more than what everyone else feels about the world, like it's not just science ... it's not black and white, sometimes people just feel things that no one else does which like I can't really explain it. Just because someone else doesn't feel it, doesn't mean it's not a real thing.

Chloe, aged 17 years

Chloe had experienced voice-hearing from the age of five years. The voices, for Chloe, have always been helpful, offering guidance. As Chloe has grown older, she recognizes the voices as

messages for others and from deceased family members. In some ways demonstrating mediumship capabilities that are often reported by adults as starting in childhood (see Roxburgh & Roe, 2014). For older children like Chloe, earlier and continuing experiences can inform a resistance to normative ideas of the world taught by close carers, and through formal education systems. I find that many teenagers are resisting dominant discourses and systems, such as science and mental health. Their increasing engagement in cyberspaces and virtual realities may also inform their intuitions and challenges towards a fixed physical reality (see Thomas, 2023). Often, children's experiences can be diagnosed very quickly by well-meaning adults, before experiences are explored *with* children:

So then my dad was like I think you're schizophrenic so then I was like oh my god then maybe these things that I'm seeing are not real. So then I was like I won't say anything because they won't take it seriously.

Emma, aged 16 years

Emma's story reveals how adults can catalyze tension and distress for children when they report unexplained experiences. Emma shared a range of experiences, such as visions, premonitions, voice-hearing, and sleep paralysis. Her Father's reaction has implications for how Emma understands and makes decisions about sharing/not sharing her experiences. Perhaps the father assumes the role of "the ambivalent mother" (Pinkola Estés, 1992), the parent who bends to the desires of the village rather than the child. In other parts of her story, Emma describes an inner struggle created by her parents' responses to her experiences. The struggle is between her own experiential understanding of her reality and what society is telling her it is (illness/disorder). Tensions between living experience and intuition with how adults theorize children's experiences is felt by many older children. Many children are left alone, without the mentorship of the elder or the comfort of the community.

When you've had mental health issues you don't bring up these types of things because people in society have just such a different view on it...I did have these things (experiences)... I didn't tell anyone cause I thought not many people would understand.

Ruth, aged 15 years

I don't feel like I could tell my mum if I said something like that, she'd be like ah you sound mental, I mean they're a bit more closed off to it do you know what I mean. I can see that so you know I just keep it to myself I just wouldn't get a good reaction.

Aaron, aged 17 years

The loneliness for many children who experience the unexplained, bleeds through Ruth's reflection on her premonitions, telepathic moments and mediumship capabilities. Her experiences have been subjected to the system, the clinical measuring of mental illness, that doesn't seem to

measure anything, when the process of diagnosis is uncovered (see Counter & Spillane, 2022). As a young person, Ruth has endured the mental health system, only to come through the other side and be more resolute in her own meanings around her experiences. For Aaron, he cannot tell his close adults about his experiences, nor many of his peers. The chance to be involved in research and share experiences of this nature, seems to be highly valued by older children. Younger children will share regardless of what adults think. Often, it's worried parents of younger children who will get in touch about their child's experiences.

### *Children as Young Researchers: Exploring Experience*

Children can demonstrate scepticism towards their own experiences, like the hard scientist, trying to establish logical answers or explanations concerned with cause and effect. The following dialogue was recorded in a research session in 2022. The participants are a group of children aged 9 years:

C = child

C1: I heard a zombie noise in my bathroom this morning it was like this blarghh

C2: hang on what if someone was on the toilet (children laughing)

C3: Maybe it was the water in the pipe outside

C2: Like blarghheee like that

C1: Yeah it was exactly like that

It was interesting to sit back and let the children take over the questions, probing C1's claim that he heard a zombie noise in his bathroom. Children can be very quick to call out what they consider to be untrue or exaggerated. See how children turn to logical explanations to counteract the reality of a zombie in the bathroom – a person in the toilet, noisy pipes and so on. Replication of the noise for testability, pursuing all possibilities. The initial claimant of the experience, conceding to these other possibilities. Then there are other instances when children (younger and older) will first examine other causes for the phenomena, as a means for legitimising their unexplained experiences:

I saw a spider, a giant one on the stairs. But my dad didn't see it. We checked the cameras (CCTV) to see if the spider was on there it wasn't. But when I went back to the wall where the spider was I saw tiny scratch marks.

Jess, aged 17 years

Jess is a young person who reports a wide range of unexplained experiences including telepathy, seeing and hearing beings in her home and exceptional dreams. Several children (younger and

older) have reported visions of spiders over the last two years (2020–2022) and Jess is no exception. In the example, Jess aims to validate her experience of seeing a strange large spider by checking the home's CCTV camera system and trying to obtain a witness (her father). Jess does find her evidence in the form of physical scratch marks in the wall, although the spider was described as non-physical. Hamed who is aged 9 years, also describes examining other external causes for his voice hearing experiences:

H= Hamed; R = Researcher

H: When I'm playing I hear a voice saying my name

R: Is that a friendly voice?

H: Yes

R: How does it make you feel?

H: It's unusual so I ignore it and I check outside to make sure. I just feel it's a bit weird hearing a call and hearing voices

Hamed's experience of voice-hearing is linked to the activity of play, a state of consciousness in children which may catalyse these kinds of experiences (see Tanous & Donnelly, 1974; Thomas, 2022a, 2023). Hamed describes his own processes for understanding his experience by ignoring it and examining conditions outside to ensure the voice isn't coming from a physical agent. Play and using toys as research method can evoke deep reflection in children. When I ask children to evaluate research methods such as art and play, they note how these methods offer affordances to remember aspects of their experience that may be lost in narration. Hussain and George, two boys aged 9, wanted to use play items to represent their experiences. They chose superhero figures:

R: Whose this guy? (pointing to venom figure)

C1: He's the guy I see in my room

R: What's he doing there?

C2: He's looking at us (points to batman and other figures)

R: Can everyone see that guy? (points to venom)

C1: No only batman can see him

R: Who does batman represent in your game?

C1: Me

I reflect on the scary figure of venom, on the hero batman who George has chosen as his representative in play. I hear George's fear around his experiences (George states he 'gets scared')

so suspect George may not embody Batman in moments when he sees the scary figure, that no one else can see. I tell George about all the other children who also see scary figures, explaining it could be a natural part of being human, sharing research findings, applying deep listening and offering reassurances informed through existing research data generated from studies with other children. George is surprised other children have these types of experiences and comforted by the knowledge that this could be a normal aspect of childhood.

Data produced from several recent studies is showing unexplained experiences in children to be a common phenomenon (see Thomas, 2022a, 2023). Children with and without medical conditions have similar types of experiences, with older children demonstrating peak or transcendent experiences (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). The aim here is not to set out research findings, rather it is to argue for the value for involving children in parapsychology research. Claims are often made about anomalous experiences in childhood from the perspective of adult research participants, rather than engaging children in research. The rationale for children's exclusion has been touched on already, in terms of children's assumed lack of competency and research methodologies which devalue the *other*. Participatory research offers potentials to involve children in safe and creative ways, handling potential trigger situations, affording vigilance in safeguarding issues and in some ways, inherently therapeutic for children who never have an opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences. Children take ownership in research moments, defining their experiences in accordance with their own theorising of self, others and the world. It involves courageously stepping into the unknown *with* children and trusting what will occur. It seems this participatory research process is fruitful, as children demonstrate experiences similar with those reported by adults, theorize material in line with academic science and philosophy and shed new insights into what it could mean to be human (see Thomas, 2022b).

### *Discussion*

The dark soft languages are being silenced: Mothertongue Mothertongue Mothertongue  
falling one by one back into the moon.

Margaret Atwood, 1995

It strikes me that women in parapsychology may carry the same load as other women, and men, across disciplines – in terms of navigating a male-orientated scientific culture (see Utts, 1994). Children reveal another dimension for parapsychology research that invites in different ways for doing research. Children demonstrate the transcendent, the space beyond masculine and feminine disagreements, the raw and intimate relating with a realm of experience from which adults are often exiled. Where Rubik speaks of the feminine archetype (1994), here enters the

child archetype with its messy, impulsive, spontaneity – revealing a semiosis which transcends and bring into focus the feminine and the masculine in scientific practice. Children’s involvement in participatory parapsychology research revives the issues so vehemently raised by women researchers, around the phallogocentric scientific paradigm (1991). Children force an examination of various forms of knowledge production in parapsychology that could potentially inform a wider understanding of the nature, form and function of paranormal experiences (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a, 2023). The presence of children in parapsychology pushes further enquiry into its nature as a discipline that, like children, also sits on the margins of the mainstream.

In its quest to be accepted as a legitimate science, parapsychology, as Watt (1996: 86) notes, “aspires to gain respectability for its controversial subject matter by aligning itself with the hard sciences.” Rubik (1991: 53) describes this as physics envy – “a reduction of the soft to the hard, with the hard regarded as fundamental ... [with] attempts to move towards greater hardness.” This may be a troublesome direction for parapsychology, when shifts in metaphysics and scientific models are challenging the hard sciences. To warrant legitimacy, scientists must appeal to an assumption that the world is physical and that subjective experiences are an epiphenomenon of complex brain activity. Rather than physics envy, contemporary philosophers and scientists are challenging material metaphysics, arguing for the inclusion and valuing of subjective experience, nature and myth (see Carr, 2013; Kastrup, 2017, 2018, 2019; Sheldrake, 2012). Detected in the philosophizing and writings of male scientists is a shift towards the green man, the sky father, the archetypal presence of the masculine in nature (see Smith, 2017). Parapsychology as a discipline requires all modes of enquiry, the soft and the hard, the child, the green man-sky father, the earth mother and all configurations of experience in between.

In her novel *Marsh Languages*, Margaret Atwood (1995) calls for a “return to that maternal life-giving aspect which is being silenced, and to question who is doing this silencing” (Zimmerman, 2021). In some ways, women and men researchers are appealing to an ‘ethics of the maternal’ (see *ibid.*), returning to the soft languages imbued with meaning that has been lost through the statements men made about their own existence (see Laslett, 1977). Men such as Aristotle and others, igniting a patriarchal tradition which assumes a hegemony over most mainstream disciplines. A metaphysics assumed and modeled through Galileo’s telescope, Newton’s calculus and Descartes dualism. These ideas by men scientists have been challenged for a while now, by women researchers, philosophers and scientists (see Barad, 2007; Bradoitti, 2013; St. Pierre, 2008). Statistically, more women researchers enter *soft sciences* such as social science, life science etc. (see Makarova et al., 2019), that appeal to the qualitative and participatory methodologies. These choices can be socially-constructed, where education systems can gender the sciences in ways which deter females from choosing scientific subjects (see *ibid.*). Yet, the patriarchal is embodied in hard subjects and sciences which repel the *lecricture feminine* and create the *schizoid* (see Irigaray, 1981). The tensions women researchers

feel in parapsychology research (see Schlitz, 1994) between the feminine and masculine betrays a conformity to hard science which excludes and marginalises children from parapsychology research. Women researchers already point to the troubles of methodology as they manifest their contradictions with soft toys and hard experimental science.

Wrangling *with* and writing about children, *l'écriture féminine* and *othered* methodologies embodies a simultaneous push into the past and the future, to gather that which has been lost and inform where we go from here. Parapsychology research can appeal to and utilise critical praxis between living experience, scientific experiment, theory and philosophy – areas of research that women researchers seem to be especially advanced in. As I consider the writing of men scientists, the green men, sky fathers, who hint at the unknowable, the indescribable, the feminine, I double-check the histories of the women researchers who have for decades written about the same troubles with the mainstream narrative. It's both an injustice and a relief. Where do children and paranormal research then, go from here. I'll let Rosy, aged 8 years, advise us:

Adults have more experience, so adults think children only have more imaginative than experience. They should try and feel that vibe and feel the children talking they should try and dig into it.

Rosy, aged 8 years

Apart from the temptation to correct the Rosy's word from 'imaginative' to imagination, I'm not sure what else I could add to that.

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## Methoden in der parapsychologischen Forschung mit Kindern neu überdenken

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung*<sup>5</sup>

Es gibt interessante Konvergenzen zwischen von der parapsychologischen Forschung vernachlässigten Kindern (siehe Thomas, 2021, 2022a) und Forscherinnen, die Probleme mit ihrer Positionierung in diesem Forschungsfeld haben. Wissenschaftlerinnen wie Nancy Zingrone (2019), Caroline Watt (1996), Beverly Rubik (1994) und Marilyn Schlitz (1994) haben die Vernachlässigung von Frauen in der Parapsychologie und einen Mangel an Aufmerksamkeit für die Beteiligung von Frauen auf diesem Gebiet aufgezeichnet (siehe Alvarado, 1988). Kinder werden ebenfalls in der parapsychologischen Forschung vernachlässigt, selten einbezogen und häufig objektiviert und zum Schweigen gebracht (vgl. Thomas, 2021, 2022a). Die Konvergenzen zwischen Frauen in der Parapsychologie und Kindern am Rande der Forschung sind überzeugend. Das Problem mag geschlechtsspezifisch sein, aber die Einbeziehung von Kindern kann zeigen, wie sich die Wurzel des Problems darauf erstrecken kann, wie Wissenschaft in der modernen Welt motiviert, umgesetzt und bewertet wird. Auf eine Weise, die alternative („othered“) Epistemologien, Methodologien und Philosophien ablehnt.

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5 Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

Mit diesem Artikel plädiere ich für die Einbeziehung von Kindern in die parapsychologische Forschung – allerdings mit einem Vorbehalt – auf partizipative Weise, als aktive Agenten und nicht als passive Objekte. Ich betrachte die Ungleichheit von Frauen und Kindern in der Parapsychologie als Ergebnis einer männlichen Wissenschaftsordnung und ihrer Vorherrschaft in der Forschungspraxis. Die den Kindern gewährte Einladung zu diesem Themenheft bietet das Potenzial, zufällige Konvergenzen zu erweitern und hoffentlich zu den laufenden Diskussionen über Frauen, Forschung und Paradigmen beizutragen, aber vielleicht mit einem Unterschied – da ich die Kinder in die Arbeit einbeziehen werde. Dass Kindern Raum in dem Themenheft *Women and Parapsychology* eingeräumt bekommen, bedeutet einen wichtigen Schritt hin zur Einbeziehung von Kindern in die parapsychologische Forschung. Gerade die Fülle an Literatur, die anomale Erfahrungen mit Erwachsenen untersucht, macht deutlich, dass anomale Erfahrungen in der Kindheit ein maßgeblich unerforschtes Gebiet darstellen. Es zeigt sich, dass Kinder Erfahrungen machen, die den von Erwachsenen gemachten außergewöhnlichen Erfahrungen vergleichbar sind. Kinder zeigen, dass sie in der Lage sind, ihre eigenen unerklärlichen Erfahrungen zu erforschen, und schätzen oft den Forschungsraum, in dem sie ihre Erfahrungen bequem und sicher mit Forschern und Gleichaltrigen teilen können. Partizipative Forschungsmethoden können von den traditionellen Methoden abweichen und Kunst, Spiel, Schauspiel und andere Formen der Semiose einbeziehen. Methoden wie zum Beispiel Kunst und Spiel werden zu einem integralen Bestandteil der Wissensproduktion. Die kindliche Semiose des Paranormalen teilt eine Resonanz mit der Sprache des Weiblichen, der Metapher, dem Körper, dem Symbol. So wie Frauen aufgefordert werden, die sie unterdrückenden Normen zu durchbrechen und ihre eigenen Darstellungsmittel zu schaffen, um sich von dieser Unterdrückung zu befreien, werden Kinder aufgefordert, ihre Erfahrungen mit Methoden darzustellen, die traditionelle Forschungskonventionen in Frage stellen.

Das akademische Schreiben selbst verkörpert die normativen Regime der phallogozentrischen symbolischen Ordnung oder des männlichen Diskurses. Wissenschaftliche Praxis und traditionelle Parapsychologie sind eine Form der Wissensproduktion, die von einer hegemonialen Gesetzmäßigkeit des Rationalen und des Geordneten durchdrungen ist. Es handelt sich um eine symbolische Ordnung, in der Frauen und Kinder in der Vergangenheit durch die männliche Theorie und Sprache aus der Geschichte herausgeschrieben worden sind. An Sprache und Psychologie interessierte feministische Wissenschaftlerinnen wie Helen Cixous (1977), Luce Irigaray (1981) und Julia Kristeva (1980) lenken die Aufmerksamkeit auf die phallogozentrische Ordnung der Wissenschaft. Diese feministischen Wissenschaftlerinnen beanspruchen den Standort einer anderen Art des weiblichen Diskurses, der von Irigaray als *parler femme*, von Cixous als *écriture féminine* und von Kristeva als *semiotisch* beschrieben wird (siehe Pinggong, 2018). Das Imaginäre der Frauen ist „unerschöpflich, wie die Musik, die Malerei, das Schreiben: ihr Strom von Phantasmen“ (Cixous, 1977: 877) – ähnlich wie das Spielen, Zeichnen

und die Kreativität von Kindern, wenn sie Erfahrungen und Bedeutungen teilen. Was bei der Forschung mit Kindern in den Vordergrund tritt, ist die Art und Form des kindlichen Wissens, ihre Logik und ihre komplexen kognitiven Prozesse – ihre Semiotik, ihr Archetyp von Spontaneität, Impulsivität und Kreativität –, was ein Überdenken der Forschungsmethoden in der Parapsychologie erfordert. Traditionelle Methoden, die die Regelmäßigkeit des Rationalen und Geordneten verkörpern, schließen unmittelbar jede erkenntnistheoretische Autorität von Kindern über ihre eigenen Erfahrungen aus. Ein zentraler Schwerpunkt der feministischen und partizipativen Forschung mit Kindern ist die Erkenntnistheorie. Diese Forschungsansätze eröffnen eine Debatte darüber, wer ein Wissender sein kann, was gewusst werden kann und was Wissen konstituiert und validiert.

Kinder eröffnen der parapsychologischen Forschung eine weitere Dimension, die zu neuen Forschungsansätzen einlädt. Kinder zeigen das Transzendente, den Raum jenseits männlicher und weiblicher Unstimmigkeiten, die rohe und intime Beziehung zu einem Erfahrungsbereich, aus dem Erwachsene oft verbannt sind. Wo Rubik vom weiblichen Archetyp spricht (1994), tritt hier der kindliche Archetyp mit seiner chaotischen, impulsiven Spontaneität ein – eine Semiose, die das Weibliche und das Männliche in der wissenschaftlichen Praxis transzendiert und in den Fokus rückt. Die Einbeziehung von Kindern in die partizipative parapsychologische Forschung belebt die von weiblichen Forschern so vehement aufgeworfenen Fragen rund um das phallogozentrische wissenschaftliche Paradigma (1991). Kinder erzwingen eine Auseinandersetzung mit verschiedenen Formen der Wissensproduktion in der Parapsychologie, die möglicherweise zu einem breiteren Verständnis der Natur, Form und Funktion paranormaler Erfahrungen beitragen könnten. Die Anwesenheit von Kindern in der Parapsychologie treibt weitere Untersuchungen ihrer Natur als eine Disziplin voran, die, wie Kinder, auch am Rande des Mainstreams steht.

## Feminism at the Forefront: A Critical Approach to Exceptional Experiences

JACOB W. GLAZIER<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – Feminist theory today is now more relevant than ever. Reactionary cultural and political shifts have taken away long held rights of women and those that remain are under threat. Far from being divorced from scientific practice, the implications of this trend have a bearing on research, communities, and institutions. By returning to some key insights from feminist thinkers in parapsychology, most important herein is Rhea White (1990, 1994a, 1994b, 2002) but also Carl Williams (1996) and Beverly Rubik (1994), we can more reflectively consider such cultural changes as necessarily implicated in parapsychological science. In this essay and opinion piece, I interface some of these insights gathered from the *Women in Parapsychology* conference (Coly & White, 1994) with selected feminist scholarship outside of parapsychology to argue for a revived feminist objectivity that counters the traditional androcentric view of science. In turn, I draw a connection between feminine embodiment and the paranormal that aids in disentangling both from political co-option. Finally, I suggest one critical strategy taken from the work of Félix Guattari (2015) called *transversality* that pushes interdisciplinary research further by demonstrating the political potential such collaboration entails. Critical approaches to exceptional experiences remain largely untapped by parapsychologists when their various concepts, interventive strategies, and reading tools could be put in the service of challenging unfair ideologies while also shifting psi studies toward a more transdisciplinary paradigm.

*Keywords:* critical theory – exceptional experiences – Félix Guattari – feminism – parapsychology – science studies – transversality

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## **Feminismus in den Vordergrund: Eine kritische Annäherung an außergewöhnliche Erlebnisse**

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – Feministische Theorie ist heute aktueller denn je. Reaktionäre kulturelle und politische Veränderungen haben den Frauen lange bestehende Rechte genommen, und die verbleibenden sind bedroht. Die Implikationen dieses Trends sind keineswegs von der wissenschaftlichen Praxis abgekoppelt, sondern haben wichtige Auswirkungen auf Forschung, Gemeinschaften und Institutionen. Wenn wir auf einige wichtige Erkenntnisse feministischer Denkerinnen in der Parapsychologie zurückgreifen, allen voran Rhea White (1990, 1994a, 1994b, 2002), aber auch Carl Williams (1996) und Beverly Rubik (1994), können wir solche kulturellen Veränderungen als notwendigerweise mit der parapsychologischen Wissenschaft verbunden betrachten. In diesem Essay verbinde ich einige dieser Erkenntnisse, die auf der Konferenz *Women in Parapsychology* (Coly & White, 1994) gewonnen wurden, mit ausgewählten feministischen Forschungsarbeiten außerhalb der Parapsychologie, um für eine wiederbelebte feministische Objektivität zu plädieren, die der traditionellen androzentrischen Sichtweise der Wissenschaft entgegenwirkt. Im Gegenzug stelle ich eine Verbindung zwischen dem weiblichen Embodiment und dem Paranormalen her, die dazu beiträgt, beides von der politischen Kooptation zu entkoppeln. Abschließend schlage ich eine kritische Strategie aus dem Werk von Félix Guattari (2015) vor, die als *Transversalität* bezeichnet wird und die interdisziplinäre Forschung weiter vorantreibt, indem sie das politische Potenzial aufzeigt, das eine solche Zusammenarbeit mit sich bringt. Kritische Herangehensweisen an außergewöhnliche Erfahrungen bleiben von Parapsychologen weitgehend ungenutzt, obwohl ihre verschiedenen Konzepte, Interventionsstrategien und Lesewerkzeuge genutzt werden könnten, ungerechte Ideologien in Frage zu stellen, während sie gleichzeitig die Psi-Studien in Richtung eines stärker transdisziplinären Paradigmas verschieben.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Kritische Theorie – außergewöhnliche Erfahrungen – Félix Guattari – Feminismus – Parapsychologie – Wissenschaftsforschung – Transversalität

### ***Feminism at the Forefront: A Critical Approach to Exceptional Experiences***

Odd boundary creatures – simians, cyborgs, and women – all of which have had a destabilizing place in the great Western evolutionary, technological, and biological narratives. These boundary creatures are, literally, *monsters*, a word that shares more than its root with the word, to *demonstrate*. Monsters signify. (Haraway, 1991: 2, emphasis in original)

In the introduction to her definitive book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, Donna Haraway (1991) calls our attention to the troublesome character outsiders possess, each for their own reasons, in being able to monstrously expose the forces at work used to render them as other. The ‘outsider’s view’ represents a powerful and untapped way of writing alternative realities, possible worlds, and divergent stories. As parapsychologists, we are outsiders.

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.

Yet, nowadays, some parapsychologists seem less concerned with the incisive critique against secular, materialist science that the paranormal composes and more attuned to piggybacking on the latest theories arriving from quantum physics (Radin, 2009), reproducing or analyzing old experiments (Bem, Tressoldi, Rabeyron & Duggan, 2015), and squabbling over the most scientific methodology (Williams, 2015). All the while, we continue to face mounting institutional hurdles, difficulty securing funding, and continued excommunication by the mainstream sciences *writ large*.

Thankfully, for us, we have feminist scholars, those like Haraway (1991), Harding (2001), White (1994a, 1994b), and many others, to bring us back to a more encompassing way of understanding and investigating exceptional experiences. Now more than ever, we need an invigorated and even militant approach to research that is particularly conscious and sophisticated in light of ongoing cultural and political trends. In the United States, for example, the Supreme Court very recently overturned the nearly five decade long precedent set by the case *Roe v. Wade* that secured the constitutional right to abortion (Tumin, 2022). More globally, the ongoing pandemic has disproportionately affected girls and women, the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban threatens hard-won gains in that country, and anti-abortion sentiment continues in many of NATO's eastern countries including Poland and Turkey (Islam, 2022). Traditional and longstanding assurances of protection, access to healthcare, and general gender equity have eroded.

Far from being a political and social digress, these changes and trends must necessarily impact the status of women in science and parapsychology – more precisely, to their detriment. My point is not to offer some broad assessment of the status of women today but, rather, to try and investigate and detail the way that culture and science are interwoven with each other, a central claim to my argument. In fact, as Phillips (2018) posits, the logic of modernity is such that no assurances can be made toward the eventual unfolding of equity and egalitarianism. Moreover, part of the challenge is to resist modern attempts to “corral us into two groups, to position us as either male or female, masculine or feminine, and define us through practices of gender” (Phillips, 2018: 842). Scholars and political thinkers alike should, instead, refuse the “inequalities that become attached to gendered difference” (Phillips, 2018: 842, emphasis in original) therein rejecting some presupposed notion that equality will one day arrive on the scene, which is perpetuating a dangerous deferral of the *status quo*.

As a science and institution, parapsychology is also intertwined with changing political and social tides both being influenced by them and, when taking up the mantle of the feminist parapsychology that White (1994a, 1994b) envisions, being the *influencer*, taking seriously the political character of science, welcoming women scientists, broadening opportunities, exploring alternative epistemologies, and so on. Outside of parapsychology, the influence of

culture on the production of scientific knowledge has long been detailed by feminist scholars (Mayberry, Subramaniam, & Weasel, 2001). The political and cultural nature of science has been sidelined in parapsychology in favor of potentially achieving objective evidence in favor of or against psi. Upon this view, culture is unimportant and, put into stronger terms, an oftentimes confounding variable that only strict controls and procedures can isolate and thereby mitigate. Indeed, what has this sort of mitigation, of being able to remove the subjective and cultural element from research, produced? Certainly, parapsychology is nowhere nearer to achieving so-called mainstream acceptance. While there have been some important milestones along the way surveyed by Drucker (2021) in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, these achievements, nonetheless, may leave some of us wanting. The pursuit for the ‘proof of psi’ has generally erased and foreclosed more fruitful paths that would have analyzed the paranormal and exceptional experiences necessarily in terms of the cultural and political entanglement – scientific proof being just one cultural artifact among others.

This blindness, and indeed a blindness that privileges an *androcentric bias* (White, 1994b), fails to consider the often intricate and labyrinthine ways that culture contributes, often extensively, to the creation of scientific knowledge. This is not to suggest that all epistemic claims are relative or that materiality is completely at the whims of cultural and social values, another dualistic trap that halts progress and thinking. Rather, a critique of androcentric bias in parapsychology is a necessary counterbalance insofar as this specific way of seeing has permeated our research methods; in parapsychology, this has been epitomized most wholly in experimentation. To be fair, the use of qualitative methods and alternative approaches has increased in parapsychological research over the last several decades (a non-systematic survey of the *Journal of Parapsychology* resulted in the following essays of note, see Beischel & Rock, 2009; Drinkwater, Dagnall & Bate, 2013; Heath, 2000; Woofitt, 2003). Notwithstanding, these gains of methodological plurality and the move toward, arguably, a more feminist science (Harding, 2001), are not assured as evidenced by the recent political and social trends striping women of long held guarantees. Let us not forget that science as we know it required a specific cultural-historical ground to come into being in the first place (paralleling the ascension of the machine and technology)!

By androcentric bias, I mean to denote a specific way of discovering and producing knowledge that is typical to the Eurocentric perspective, privileging values associated with masculinity, those that include impartiality, rationality, objectivity, progression, and even discovery, among others. I prefer to use the phrase the *production of knowledge* to circumvent the internal problems of ‘discovering’ knowledge, the idea that the world is some kind of foreign or exotic land that we, as explorers or colonists, must then go out and lay claim to (Phillips, 2018). To produce knowledge, by contrast, relates how subject and object, scientist and other, are in a process of co-developing facts, fictions, and figures about reality (Guattari, 2011). White echoes

this even expecting feminist methodologies to be discredited and repudiated precisely due to this conservatism: “it is likely that feminist research in parapsychology will be discounted within the field. I propose that this conservatism may reflect an androcentric bias: that of not extending acceptance – or even tolerance – to those regarded as the Other ...” (White, 1994a: 245). While this androcentric bias still, in the present day, finds its way into the praxis of parapsychology, the discipline has welcomed greater demographic and methodological diversity in its ranks; as a case in point, the student membership of the Parapsychological Association is “half female, includes transgender and non-binary individuals, is racially diverse and enjoys more representation of multiple countries outside of North American and Europe than other PA membership levels” (Ventola, Evrard, Koumartzis & Glazier, 2021: 5).

### *Triple Vision: Parapsychology as Other*

The Other, with a capital O as opposed to a lowercase o, as White (1994a) rightfully articulates, has an important place in feminist theorizing in parapsychology: “the Other is everything with which one is not identified, yet that with which one must deal ... females are the Other to males, and males are the Other to females, but the male view is privileged” (White, 1994a: 241). To develop this further, forty years before White’s comment, Simone de Beauvoir (1953) writes that “[man] thinks of his body as a direct and *normal* connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighted down by everything peculiar to it” (p. 15, emphasis added). Normal, natural, normative – all that signify maleness as *a priori*, that ideal that is to be sought after, a standard toward which culturally and historically the tradition has attempted to attain.

It is no coincidence that Beauvoir locates this stratification on the very material level of the body (as opposed to, as later feminist will argue, on the arguably more nebulous domain of social norms and values that create gender) since naturality, in this case, must take its form as a category that is operable by the mechanisms, methodologies, and manners of science<sup>3</sup>.

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3 The debate regarding the degree to which biological sex is a natural kind has long historical roots in feminist theory. Some feminists assert the importance of retaining the female sex as natural and essential, as a site of resistance. Such a position, it is argued, allows for stronger political activism such as securing rights and other forms of parity. By contrast, poststructuralist feminism interrogates the very notion of biological sex as a natural kind through examining the historical, linguistic, and social forces that have co-constructed our present-day idea of male and female (McCann & Kim, 2017). There are other positions on this issue that feminists have taken. However, I point the reader to the debate on biological sex as opposed to gender to show it as being *more controversial*, more philosophically unsettling than seeing gender as partially or fully socially constructed. More specifically, poststructuralist feminism throws into question naturality as such: Who gets to define what is natural? What counts as a natural kind? What kind of political boundaries does the natural secure? My suggestion is that this more radical approach could benefit parapsychology insofar as it allows us to more abstractly and contextually understand

The woman as Other is not just a metaphor; rather, she is quite literally the *problem of science*, of the traditional, androcentric historical heritage out of which Beauvoir is writing. The problem exists only in relation to her solution: “she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (Beauvoir, 1953: 16). Being a woman means to be the one that must carry the burden of being an outsider, of an Other, while simultaneously being excised, excluded, and embargoed at the very level of the body.

Yet, the position of Other that women find themselves in grants a unique ability, what White (1994a) refers to, citing the feminist work of Annas (1978), as double vision. Double vision means being both attuned to the dominant, androcentric view while also aware of the subjugated perspective of those that are Other. White (1994a) even goes on to argue that due to the fringe nature of parapsychology, the fact that it too is ostracized from the mainstream, women and other Others in parapsychology have a triple vision! Parapsychologists, in other words, are in the best position as scientists to understand the world in unique and novel ways while revising the rules of knowledge production. Following White’s lead on this, I have argued such a position elsewhere (Glazier, 2021a) suggesting that critical theory can be a strong ally for parapsychology in terms of challenging the dominance of mainstream science while also infusing a dimension of analysis that would be cutting-edge with regard to thinking about inclusivity, indigeneity, and alternative epistemologies.

Indeed, the triple vision of parapsychology makes it the *best science* by which to challenge rigid epistemologies and methodologies and offer innovative approaches to old problems. Part of this project is to join with feminists in science studies to recognize the import that culture and social values have for scientific research – the ideal that Sandra Harding (2001) calls absolute neutrality and Donna Haraway (1988) refers to as the god-trick of science. Not only does ascribing to a culture-free view of objectivity bulldoze particular values safeguarded within certain groups in favor of a largely androcentric view, but it simply reproduces a bad form of science. As Harding (2001) writes, “complete cultural neutrality is not only impossible in principle, it is also undesirable for scientific and epistemological (as well as political) reasons” (Harding, 2001: 295). The production of knowledge is intimately bound up with the often geographically and locally situated research project that is being undertaken whereby the methodology of the researcher does and should take into account the nuanced influence the context has on the object of study, necessarily shading and molding the models used by the researcher. Or, as Jessica Utts (1994) says, in a feminist parapsychology “the system as a complex whole would be studied” (p. 29).

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how certain givens, the *a priori*s of science, come to be taken as such in the first place.

Williams (1996) relays this fact on the level of metaphor in parapsychology such that researchers have described psi through the general tropes of intrusion, transmission or force, and connection. The importance of these metaphors is the structure they provide for communicating about the paranormal; indeed, often deriving from the most available and relevant scientific models that, precedingly, arise from “the experience of embodiment” (Williams, 1996: 194). This latter point, locating the origin of metaphor in embodiment,<sup>4</sup> is echoed by Haraway (1988) when she argues that grounding knowledge production around perceptual systems and “specific ways of seeing” (p. 583, emphasis in original) or *situated knowledges* may offer the possibility of a feminist version of objectivity. The dissonance created by the phrase *feminist objectivity* is intentionally troubling urging us to receive what we mean by the traditional notion of objectivity. Rather, feminist objectivity in parapsychology would likewise be “grounded in the objectivity which derives from the common experience of human embodiment” (Williams, 1996: 194) insofar as this objectivity incorporates highly specific ways of seeing reality that require the use of narrative, discourse, and metaphor to communicate knowledge and findings. To echo this, White (2002) continually stressed the centrality of narrative in parapsychological research as being even integral to the experiments she saw and co-implemented in J. B. Rhine’s research lab. After all, experiments are also culturally specific ways of sense-making themselves and, therefore, are not devoid of narrative and communal context.

To pursue a feminist objectivity in parapsychology means to examine the multiplicitous ways of seeing in their very specificity by not trying to synthesize or proffer a universal theory of psi. Instead, the paranormal needs to be understood contingently and locally within the purview of the research study or community where it occurred. As a result, the vehicles of communication or metaphors that are used to talk about psi will necessarily change. Such cultural

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4 A lot more needs to be said with regard to embodiment and parapsychology. The questions of what counts as a body, who has a body, and where the body begins and ends are not clear and become even more complex when studying exceptional and paranormal experiences. In addition, the perceptual system of the body seems contestable given its normative model in physiology or biology when taking into account the ‘extra senses’ that many paranormal experiencers suggest exist. The notion of the *long body* conveyed in the Iroquois culture, no doubt, speaks to the problem of embodiment (Aanstoos, 1986; Roll, 1987). According to Aanstoos, in Iroquois tradition, “the body extended beyond the skin. Indeed, it extended specifically to the other members of the tribe. They did not mean merely symbolic contact with each other. Rather, they actually experienced each other in and through their bodies” (p. 49). Roll (1987) goes on to define the long body in terms of memory such that it is another sense organ we have as beings in the world when he writes that “if you cannot remember someone or something that person or thing is not part of your long body” (p. 26). Memory, on this account, extends both retrospectively and prospectively. Again, my point is that not enough theoretical attention is paid to the understanding of embodiment by parapsychologists. The concept of the long body simultaneously represents a critical approach to exceptional experiences insofar as it is an indigenous model of embodiment therein challenging the normative way we understand senses, empiricism, and epistemology.

specificity is an “integral part of scientific inquiry, directing scientists to examine certain kinds of phenomena instead of others, and guiding how science will expand or correct its hypothesis in the course of research” (Harding, 2001: 295). If we are to believe, as Rhea White (1994a) did, that those Others in parapsychology have a very unique way of seeing, a triple vision, then those that investigate the paranormal should pursue as much cultural specificity in their research as possible – androcentric objectivity transforms into the political questions “of which social values, interests, discourse, and ways of organizing the production of knowledge can and should flourish, and which should be eliminated or carefully controlled” (Harding, 2001: 302). A kind of politics that parapsychology, due to the alternative nature of its investigation and subjugated status within the scientific community, is most competent to develop.

### ***Being Honestly Political: The Feminine as a Site of Parapsychological Resistance***

Harding (2001) brings us to not just questions of culture and sociality, as discussed previously, but calls attention to the function of power in ideology; namely, the political question. The well-known feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’ (Hanisch, 1969) makes explicit how even so-called womanly tasks such as doing housework, having children, or even wearing makeup have a broader function. For example, Sandra Bartky (2017) analyzes this through the way that the feminine body becomes unequally disciplined. That is to say that women must account for their embodiment in many additional, laborious ways that men often do not. Moreover, this kind of discipline or self-surveillance necessarily has an ideological function restricting freedom, denying possibilities, and reinforcing the *status quo* by reproducing,

the need for women’s wage labor, the cult of youth and fitness, and the need of advanced capitalism to maintain high levels of consumption. Further, it represents a saving in the economy of enforcement: since it is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies, men get off scot-free. (Bartky, 2017: 479)

Taken together, the disciplining of femininity and women’s bodies cannot be unlinked from broader political forces that have both a historical tradition and trajectory. Not until “we read the cultural messages” (Bartky, 2017: 479) will women be able to develop resistance to these forces.

Might we also be able to offer a similar analysis of parapsychology as a field of study? – that is, as that disciplined science that has had to learn to auto-regulate its research practices to be in line with the most ‘rigorous’ and ‘empirical’ methodologies, those methods like experimentation that are germane to the natural sciences. Perhaps it is the case that, as parapsychologists, we have lost sight of the subject we study and, instead, have tried to fit the paranormal into a mold that would make it sexy and appealing to the ‘real’ scientists. We have, in other words, become subjected to a regime of science that continues to perpetuate our marginaliza-

tion while also, most importantly, leading us methodologically astray. As White (1994b) says very bluntly, “since 1882 we have unconsciously followed a methodology devised by males” (p. 16). However, these unconscious investments are not merely androcentric but, I would argue, are also perhaps conspiratorial in taking us away from what a proper investigation of the paranormal could be.

Certainly, women and those Others of science and parapsychology can resist these macro and micro political forces through organization, solidarity, refusal, and other means. Yet, I think women who have exceptional experiences might be an important starting place. For instance, the sort of male-centered rationality so endemic to legendary science and, by extension, the ideologically informed skepticism that we find exemplified in those researchers like Reber and Alcock (2019) can be challenged by looking at exceptional experiences through the lens of gender. As Susan Blackmore (1994) reminds us, women “are more often the mediums, psychics, and fortune-tellers; they more often consult these people; and they more often report spontaneous psychic experiences” (p. 236). *Exceptional experiences are gendered*, to put it differently, and taking into account this difference in our theories and approaches is requisite of ethical scientific practice. Put into even stronger terms, Blackmore (1994), Rubik (1994), Schlitz (1994), and Zingrone (1994) in their own words, to a greater or lesser degree, have all suggested *the feminine as a site of parapsychological resistance*<sup>5</sup> insofar as exceptional experiences are more acquiescent to feminine ways of being or, polemically, as tradition having obfuscated or overlooked this very connection.

The relationship and distinction between the scientist and practitioner can and has informed parapsychological research. Apart from the rare cases where these two categories overlap, such as with Ingo Swann or Eileen Garrett, at times scientists and practitioners can have a distrustful or even an antagonistic relationship. White (1994a) relates that “for years I have wondered why

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5 I want to be clear that the thesis ‘the feminine as a site of parapsychological resistance’ should not be taken to essentialize or to romanticize women. In fact, I choose the signifier *feminine* intentionally to be more in line with gender and not biological sex thereby calling attention to the way that feminine gender rituals, characteristics, enactments, and so on are socially and historically arbitrated. While in parapsychology this has been documented, as Blackmore (1994) relates, in (presumably) biological women most frequently, such does not have to be the case. The problematic masculine and feminine dualities that Rubik (1994) analyzes help us see how being passive, being receptive, or acting as a vessel in cases of mediumship, for instance, while from a Eurocentric perspective seem more feminine stances, are such only within this very paradigm. One could imagine other anthropological models whereby ‘men’ (again another culturally arbitrated category) likewise might have an affinity for these enactments. The second point I want to make here is also to understand ‘the feminine as a site of parapsychological resistance’ through what Gayatri Spivak (1996) calls *strategic essentialism*. That is, feminists in parapsychology will need at certain strategic times to adopt an essentialist position in order to achieve political action and change.



there seems to be such an unbridgeable gap between psychics and scientists” (p. 242, emphasis in original), and she goes on to place the responsibility on the scientist to garner a better understanding of the other’s point of view. Parapsychologists have made great strides in developing this dialogue in the years since the original conference; as two cases in point, Beischel and Rock (2009) exemplify a more process-oriented form of research and McMoneagle (1997), being both a practitioner and researcher, bridges these two roles. The concept of *reflexivity* found in qualitative research methods (Finlay, 1998) would additionally allow researchers to account for their own subjective values, beliefs, and ideas in the research process – being perhaps an even more important methodological and ethical mandate for us given the impact of the experimenter effect on our research studies. Similarly, White (1990) stressed the need to include what she called the transpersonal dimension to research, how synchronicities or flow-states aided in the development of a research question in the first place.

The fact that both studying the anomalous along with exceptional experiences themselves are shaped, in part, by political and ideological forces might not be all that insightful. Yet, what is revolutionary would be for parapsychologists honestly and proactively to be political in their pursuits. Following the lead of feminist scholars in parapsychology and elsewhere, this would entail a careful deconstruction of androcentric scientific practices, a more complete admission of the researchers’ intentions when undertaking and publishing a study, and, over and above, the use of our small, but agile institutions and community to unapologetically push the agenda that *exceptional experiences are real*.<sup>6</sup> People have experiences that cannot be explained through ‘normal’ scientific means.

What is more, we are doing a disservice to those claimants and participants that come to us for help or to further knowledge of the paranormal when we engage in ideological skepticism. Contrast this with what Blackmore (1994) maintains as, at the time of the conference, *progressive skepticism* wherein a researcher “has personal access to the experiences, who knows that they occur, who is aware they can have a profound influence on people’s lives, and who can

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6 Such a claim is meant, intentionally, to be both provocative and thought-provoking. I am inspired by Haraway’s (1991) textual stylistics and evocative prose, on this point, insofar as she demands a new way of producing research and thinking – a way that, in a real sense, sees the world as a wily agent and trickster with whom we must learn to converse. I have attempted to bring this framework, more schematically, into dialogue with parapsychology elsewhere (Glazier, 2021b). The traditional philosophical concepts of ontology, epistemology, and so on begin to lose their semantic consistency, on this reading, in that these tidy and neat demarcations serve necessarily the interests of certain ideologies and even specific groups of people, what Rhea White (1994a) would call the androcentric bias. To put the point bluntly, this is a new way of conceptualizing research and writing in order to think through and around what Jacques Derrida (see 1982) referred to as the *metaphysics of presence*: the ontological question of exceptional experiences is a moot point when science is taken in the fullness of its polity.

simultaneously apply the best of scientific analysis and inquiry to them” (p. 236). To add to Blackmore’s notion, I would suggest that progressive skepticism also entails an openness to new experiences and alternative ways of knowing that lie outside of androcentric science; the willingness, in other words, of parapsychologists to consider other epistemologies (indigenous, feminist, queer, and so on) just as potentially truthful and valid as experimental, positivist science – and even further, more valid insofar as these ways of knowing and seeing are situated, to return to Haraway (1988), and do not claim some kind of god-trick, an objective view from everywhere and nowhere at once.

### ***Critical Strategies: Transversality***

With feminism arguably catalyzing the condensation of the other critical approaches, those like discourse analysis, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, we need not worry about losing the incisive critiques against patriarchy and androcentrism if we venture beyond the disciplinary threshold. In fact, various strategies found in adjacent fields can aid us as parapsychologists when attempting to either disentangle the paranormal element from other hegemonic structures, such as psychiatric power (Hooks, 2007) or media and technology (Guattari, 2009), or when working to combat ideological agendas that are being used to discredit our research or institutionally blackball our discipline. I want to make the case that one of the most important tactics comes from the Marxist revolutionary and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari. During his work with the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and individually as an analyst at La Borde psychiatric clinic, Guattari (see 1996, 2011, 2013, especially 2015) articulated the concept of *transversality* as a way to disassemble hierarchies and produce spaces of freedom and agency.

One way to think about transversality may be through the feminist call for interdisciplinary scholarship as exemplified in the recent, special issue of *The Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* (Morrissey & Slaney, 2020) where leading psychologists present their ideas on how to engender discussion and better diversify roles for women in the field. Bringing one’s own expertise to bear in relation to others’ sometimes philosophically or methodologically divergent competencies is not without its hurdles. Lisa Osbeck (2020), however, suggests that the tensions and challenges that may arise actually further “personal development in ways that can in turn enhance interdisciplinary exchange” (ibid.: 33). Osbeck goes on to point-out the increasing trend of interdisciplinary research in the social sciences and related fields has led many to celebrate this multimodal approach as ushering in divergent and inventive problem-solving skills – in part, precisely through this interpersonal adversity and growth.

While this special issue is certainly indicative of the movement in the academy and elsewhere to champion interdisciplinary collaboration, a critical strategy in and of itself, transver-

sality as developed by Guattari takes interdisciplinary collaboration a step further. In terms of group and organizational structure, transversality,

is opposed to: (a) verticality, as described in the organogramme of a pyramidal structure (leaders, assistants, etc.); (b) horizontality, as it exists in the disturbed wards of a hospital, or, even more, in the senile wards; in other words a state of affairs in which things and people fit in as best they can with the situation in which they find themselves. (Guattari, 2015: 112)

Clearly, this is a more dispersed, rhizomatic, and diagonal way of teamwork that is less demarcated and more open than the interdisciplinary meeting of experts from various fields. No doubt, parapsychology has generally been welcoming of interdisciplinary work exemplified by the collaborative nature of annual conventions, the virtual symposia and psi agoras sponsored by the PA (Events, n. d.), and research that brings together teams with diverse beliefs and perspectives (Laythe, Houran & Dagnall, 2022). Transversality would supercharge this already collaborative work – a more advanced form of interdisciplinary research being a procedure of organizing, cutting normative sense, and creating new concepts by working in a diverse and multiplicitous team. Guattari sometimes refers to this as transdisciplinary research (Goffey, 2015). Transdisciplinary research calls for the incorporation of a diverse range of methodologies not such that all are judged equally with regard to their epistemic truth-value or scientific prestige. Rather, the veracity or appropriateness of a research method should be judged *pragmatically* in concert with the context where we find the phenomenon. No doubt, on this account, investigating exceptional experiences primarily through experimentation is trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. The method is, on principle, misplaced since psi happens naturalistically, communally, and out in the world. This critique is to undermine the *primacy* of experimentation, not to discount or discontinue the methodology wholesale. The rhizomatic approach articulated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) does, indeed, circumvent convenient dualisms indicative of the androcentric bias itself and, not to mention, lazy thinking more generally.

To use perhaps a better analogy, one that Guattari employs, the degree of transversality can be likened to the adjustment of blinkers on a horse. He suggests that we,

think of a field with a fence around it in which there are horses with adjustable blinkers: the adjustment of their blinkers is the “coefficient of transversality.” If they are so adjusted as to make the horses totally blind, then presumably a certain traumatic form of encounter will take place. Gradually, as the flaps are opened, one can envisage them moving about more easily. Let us try to imagine how people relate to one another in terms of affectivity. (Guattari, 2015: 112)

There are two points worth unpacking in this analogy. First, if we have our blinkers only slightly open or shut completely, staying in our disciplinary lane, to put it differently, then we are undoubtedly going to step-on, kick, hurt, or collide with other researchers – not being able to see the others' scholarship or benefit of their research. This would represent more of a hierarchical organization or even interdisciplinary work that does not embrace the full potential of transversality. Second, Guattari calls on us to join together in research *affectively*, not based on that long-held androcentric principle of rationality or reason but through emotion, mood, and attunement. A very feminist-inspired form of collegiality, indeed!

When the transdisciplinary research team works toward solving a problem, they are engaged, at the same time, in reorganizing and restructuring larger institutions. Such is the political potential of transversality: *ipso facto*, it changes what it means to do research and, by extension, undoes ideological agendas inviting us to see reality from different paradigms and models. We know transversality is achieved “when there is maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings” (Guattari, 2015: 113). Requisite, here, is the need for diverse peoples, perspectives, and approaches to be included in the conversation and scholastic field; an inclusivity that we (Ventola, Evrard, Koumartzis & Glazier, 2021), the team at *Mindfield: The Bulletin of the Parapsychological Association*, have and continue to try and encourage. When this diversity is working synergistically and not antagonistically, Guattari (2015) argues that “a new kind of dialogue can begin in the group: the delusions and all the other unconscious manifestations which have hitherto kept the patient in a kind of solitary confinement can achieve a collective mode of expression” (ibid.: 116). Parapsychology should seek this radical collective mode of expression: pushing back politically against physicalism, eradicating sexism, racism, colonialism, and other forms of discrimination from its methods and institutions, leading the way in transdisciplinary research teams, and capitalizing on its triple vision by demanding a better version of reality in our scientific models.

### ***Critically Concluding***

I have attempted to marshal some of the key insights from feminist scholarship in parapsychology and elsewhere relying heavily on the *Women in Parapsychology* conference of the Parapsychology Foundation that took place in 1991 (Coly & White, 1994) with several ambitions in mind. Below, I have enumerated these as concisely as possible. However, my aims and other research paths that pertain to a critical approach to exceptional experiences, or what we might call *critical parapsychology* (Glazier, 2021a), require more extensive scholarship in and, more importantly, outside feminist theory since feminism in parapsychology has largely carried the critical banner.

1. My desire has been to reignite interest in feminist thinking and research, especially in parapsychology, by synthesizing and developing some of the important insights already put forward by feminist parapsychologists. Crucially, the naïve and dangerous notion that science should pursue a form of unbiased and impartial objectivity must be done away with, an archaic relic that parapsychology seems, at times, still to covet – a paradoxical aspiration given the extant influence of the experimenter effect on research studies. Feminist scholarship, perhaps most explicitly, reminds us of the political nature of science and research. This is an important reminder, especially given the current and reactionary cultural changes that are happening in our institutions. Now may be a time like no other for parapsychology to seize upon, to make the case that studying exceptional experiences is a timely, culturally sensitive pursuit that deserves as much academic and public respect as the other sciences.
2. At the level of embodiment, the paranormal has an affinity for those qualities and characteristics typically associated with the feminine – not in terms of biological sex or even gender identity but, rather, on the level of comportment and expression. Such an understanding sidesteps the problematic sexual dichotomy of male versus female in favor of understanding the femininity of exceptional experience in relation to perceptual systems, as Haraway (1988) posits, thereby being more holistic, encompassing, and inclusive. As such, Rubik (1994) urges us “to create a paradigm that appropriately addresses the fullness of the phenomena and is gender balanced and holistic in scope” (ibid.: 57) going on to chide conventional scientific models as overly masculine impeding progress in psi studies. What would a fresh and more harmonizing approach look like? Feminist theory in parapsychology and elsewhere welcomes us to consider the possibilities, experiment with innovative ideas, and reconceive the very foundation of the science behind exceptional experiences.
3. I have suggested only one critical strategy, namely transversality, that parapsychologists can employ toward becoming a more progressive discipline in the sense of enhancing diversity, expanding research possibilities, and creating new concepts and ideas. However, there are many more such strategies that, I argue, parapsychologists could take advantage of if we so desire. To outline just a few: (1) reappropriation or reclaiming is a tactic that has been used in subjugated groups to take back insults or derogatory terms and make them their own (see in queer theory Rand, 2014). What would it be like for parapsychologists to reclaim the word paranormal? (2) The post-situationists in France have suggested the strategy of *détournement* (see Debord, 1970), which is a kind of hijacking or turning-back of signs and symbols. (3) Finally, perhaps most famously, Jacques Derrida (see 1976) established the critical literary and post-structuralist reading of deconstruction that interprets a text or discourse antagonistically by demonstrating

how it necessarily undermines its central claims. There are other critical and interventive strategies that psi scholars can harness to expose latent political agendas, analyze subjugating or privileging power effects, and enrich disciplinary diversity. Critical theory with its methods, concepts, and activism remains largely untapped in parapsychology and related paranormal fields.

We are at a cultural and institutional turning point. As parapsychologists, we know what it is like to be excluded from the majority, to be denied certain privileges given to the sanctioned sciences. Why not heed Haraway's (1991) call to become more daring in our research approach – to, in fact, inhabit that boundary space, along with the other figures we find there, and advance the critical tools and strategies that only an outsider's position can apply?

Indeed, this path not only beckons us to become more courageous conceptually and methodologically, but also to inspire others along the way – *at the margin we are created, not birthed*. Such is a crucial distinction given the complex biopolitics involved with reproduction, heterosexuality, and birthing (Cohen, 2017). The use of critical strategies goes toward this end, toward as Deleuze (2015) puts it, “introducing a militant political function into the institution, constituting a kind of ‘monster’ ... to produce and give voice to desire” (ibid.: 19). To set free our desire as feminists and parapsychologists would mean to radically transform the landscape of paranormal studies.

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### **Feminismus in den Vordergrund: Eine kritische Annäherung an außergewöhnliche Erlebnisse**

#### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung*<sup>7</sup>

Feministische Theorie ist heute aktueller denn je. Reaktionäre kulturelle und politische Veränderungen haben den Frauen lange bestehende Rechte genommen, und die verbleibenden sind bedroht. Weit davon entfernt, von der wissenschaftlichen Praxis losgelöst zu sein, wirken sich die Auswirkungen dieses Trends erheblich auf Forschung, Gemeinschaften und Institutionen aus. Wenn wir auf einige wichtige Erkenntnisse feministischer Denkerinnen und Denker in der Parapsychologie zurückgreifen, allen voran Rhea White (1990, 1994a, 1994b, 2002), aber auch Carl Williams (1996) und Beverly Rubik (1994), können wir solche kulturellen Veränderungen reflektierter als notwendigerweise mit der parapsychologischen Wissenschaft verbunden betrachten. In diesem Positionspapier verbinde ich einige dieser Erkenntnisse, die auf der Konferenz *Women and Parapsychology* (Coly & White, 1994) gewonnen wurden, mit ausgewählter feministischer Wissenschaft außerhalb der Parapsychologie, wobei ich mich vor allem auf Donna Haraway (1991) und Sandra Harding (2001) stütze, um für eine wiederbelebte feministische Objektivität zu plädieren, die der traditionellen androzentrischen Sichtweise der Wissenschaft entgegentsteht. Feministische Objektivität beinhaltet eine Form von situiertem Wissen (Haraway, 1988), das seine kulturelle und politische Natur explizit beschreibt – mit anderen Worten, wie Wissen durch verschiedene und vielschichtige Faktoren wie Geschlecht, Politik, Sexualität usw. miterzeugt wird. Im Gegenzug stelle ich eine Verbindung zwischen der weiblichen Verkörperung und dem Paranormalen her, die dazu beiträgt, beide von politischer Vereinnahmung zu lösen, insofern als Weiblichkeit nicht durch biologisches Geschlecht oder Essentialismus bestimmt ist. Eine solche Verbindung offenbart das Weibliche als einen Ort des parapsychologischen Widerstands, einen Raum, in dem die „doppelte Sichtweise“ (double vision) der Parapsychologie, wie White (1994a) sie nennt, ideologische Aufladung findet, die sich gegen Kräfte wehrt, die sie von vornherein als das Andere (Other) darstellen würden.

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<sup>7</sup> Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

Infolgedessen fordere ich die Parapsychologen auf, die Fallstricke der physikalistischen Wissenschaft zu vermeiden – mein Hauptargument ist hier zumindest ihr androzentrisches Erbe – und für die Realität außergewöhnlicher Erfahrungen einzutreten, indem sie die problematische Frage der Ontologie zugunsten einer eher feministischen, naturalistischen Vorstellung von Wahrheit umgehen. Abschließend schlage ich eine kritische Strategie aus dem Werk von Félix Guattari (2015) vor, die als Transversalität bezeichnet wird und die interdisziplinäre Forschung weiter vorantreibt, indem sie das politische Potenzial aufzeigt, das eine solche Zusammenarbeit mit sich bringt. Transversalität ist eine Form der interdisziplinären Arbeit, die so aufgeladen ist, dass sie das Zerschneiden normativer Semiologien und die Neuordnung semantischer Referenzen erfordert, um die theoretische Kraft neuer Konzepte, Ideen und Strategien zu stärken.

Transversal arbeitende Forschungsteams würden im Gegensatz zum androzentrischen Ansatz, der eher auf Rationalität, Problemlösung und begrifflicher Klärung beruht, affektiv miteinander in Beziehung treten. Meine Hoffnung besteht darin, auf dem aufzubauen, was ich an anderer Stelle als kritische Parapsychologie bezeichnet habe (Glazier, 2021a), einem Ansatz für das Paranormale und die Anomalistik, der auf die Machtdynamik des Diskurses abgestimmt, methodisch pluralistisch und in Bezug auf die akademische Ernsthaftigkeit von außergewöhnlichen Erfahrungen politisch lautstark ist. Abschließend schlage ich zusätzliche kritische Taktiken vor, wie z.B. Rückforderung, Détournement und Dekonstruktion, die Parapsychologen dabei helfen könnten, die Andersartigkeit des Feldes neu zu ‚verdrahten‘. Kritische Herangehensweisen an außergewöhnliche Erfahrungen bleiben von Parapsychologen weitgehend ungenutzt, obwohl ihre verschiedenen Konzepte, Interventionsstrategien und Lesewerkzeuge in den Dienst gestellt werden könnten, ungerechte Ideologien infrage zu stellen, während sie gleichzeitig die Psi-Untersuchungen in Richtung eines stärker transdisziplinären Paradigmas verschieben.

## General and Personal Reflections on Succeeding as a Woman Science Researcher

JESSICA UTTS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – In 1991 the Parapsychology Foundation sponsored a conference on *Women in Parapsychology*. In my paper for that conference (Utts, 1994) I discussed research identifying multiple factors that contributed to gender inequity in research careers in science, with a focus on academia. These factors included cultural norms, institutional barriers to success for women, implicit biases, and social pressures that deterred women from entering and succeeding in careers in science. In the past three decades, progress has been made on some of these factors, but not all of them. The first part of this paper discusses the extent to which the situation has improved (or not) for seven of the factors identified in the earlier paper, citing a combination of research and personal observation. The second part of this paper discusses multiple avenues of research showing the impact of subtle influences throughout childhood and early adulthood on career success. For example, cultural norms depicting scientists as men have gradually improved over the years, but children are still more likely to draw a man than a woman if asked to draw a scientist. Role models, as well as encouraging mentors, are important factors in determining whether a woman will pursue a career in science. Many successful women in science can identify a single mentor whose encouragement was a major contributing factor to her success. A sense of meaning in ones' work, and a supportive community are additional factors contributing to success. The final part of the paper is autobiographical, illustrating how the factors documented by this body of research played a role in my life. In a narrative starting from childhood and continuing through my career, I identify individuals and circumstances that contributed to my success. One significant factor was the welcoming parapsychological community, and details of how I was led to work with that community are discussed. The paper provides suggestions for specific actions that individuals and communities can take to encourage more women to succeed in careers in science, including in parapsychology.

*Keywords:* women in science – parapsychology – salary equity in academia – gender bias in academia – women's career success

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## Allgemeine und persönliche Überlegungen zum Erfolg als Wissenschaftlerin

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – Im Jahr 1991 veranstaltete die Parapsychology Foundation eine Konferenz zum Thema *Women and Parapsychology* [Frauen in der Parapsychologie]. In meinem Vortrag für diese Konferenz (Utts, 1994) erörterte ich Forschungsergebnisse, die mehrere Faktoren aufzeigten, die zu einer ungleichen Behandlung von Frauen und Männern in wissenschaftlichen Laufbahnen beitragen, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf dem akademischen Bereich lag. Zu diesen Faktoren gehörten kulturelle Normen, institutionelle Erfolgsbarrieren für Frauen, implizite Vorurteile und sozialer Druck, der Frauen davon abhielt, eine wissenschaftliche Laufbahn einzuschlagen und dort erfolgreich zu sein. In den letzten drei Jahrzehnten wurden bei einigen dieser Faktoren Fortschritte erzielt, aber nicht bei allen. Im ersten Teil dieses Aufsatzes wird erörtert, inwieweit sich die Situation bei sieben der in dem früheren Papier genannten Faktoren verbessert hat (oder nicht), wobei eine Kombination aus Forschungsergebnissen und persönlichen Beobachtungen angeführt wird. Im zweiten Teil werden mehrere Forschungsansätze erörtert, die zeigen, wie sich subtile Einflüsse in der Kindheit und im frühen Erwachsenenalter auf den beruflichen Erfolg auswirken. So haben sich beispielsweise die kulturellen Normen, die Wissenschaftler als Männer darstellen, im Laufe der Jahre allmählich verbessert, aber Kinder zeichnen immer noch eher einen Mann als eine Frau, wenn sie gebeten werden, einen Wissenschaftler oder eine Wissenschaftlerin zu zeichnen. Vorbilder und ermutigende Mentoren sind wichtige Faktoren, die darüber entscheiden, ob eine Frau eine wissenschaftliche Laufbahn einschlagen wird. Viele erfolgreiche Frauen in der Wissenschaft können einen einzigen Mentor oder eine Mentorin nennen, dessen bzw. deren Ermutigung wesentlich zu ihrem Erfolg beigetragen hat. Das Gefühl, dass die eigene Arbeit einen Sinn hat, sowie eine unterstützende Gemeinschaft sind weitere Faktoren, die zum Erfolg beitragen. Der letzte Teil des Papiers ist autobiografisch und zeigt, wie die in diesem Forschungsbericht dokumentierten Faktoren in meinem Leben eine Rolle gespielt haben. In einer Erzählung, die mit meiner Kindheit beginnt und sich über meine gesamte Laufbahn erstreckt, zeige ich Personen und Umstände auf, die zu meinem Erfolg beigetragen haben. Ein wichtiger Faktor war die einladend-offene parapsychologische Gemeinschaft; ich werde einige Details berichten, wie es dazu kam, mit dieser Gemeinschaft zu arbeiten. Der Beitrag enthält Vorschläge für spezifische Maßnahmen, die Einzelpersonen und Gemeinschaften ergreifen können, um mehr Frauen zu ermutigen, eine wissenschaftliche Laufbahn einzuschlagen, auch in der Parapsychologie.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Frauen in der Wissenschaft – Parapsychologie – Lohngerechtigkeit in der Wissenschaft – Gender Bias in der Wissenschaft – Karriereerfolg von Frauen

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.

### *Introduction*

In 1991 I wrote a paper titled “Social, Institutional and Cultural Influences of Gender on Science” for the *Women and Parapsychology* conference sponsored by the Parapsychology Foundation (Utts, 1994). In that paper, I identified over a dozen problems that hindered the careers of women research scientists. In the decades since then, progress has been made to ameliorate some of those problems, but others persist. Why women still lag behind men in most of the traditional measures of success in research careers is not entirely clear. Some reasons are easier to document and address than others, such as the fact that there are fewer women than men available to serve as role models for aspiring young women scientists. But some reasons seem to be elusive, such as why women tend to lose self-esteem in their college years, while men seem to gain it (Widnall, 1988).

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part I enumerate and provide commentary on seven problems that were identified in Utts (1994). Examples of more recent research on those topics are provided as part of the discussion.

The second part of this paper discusses factors that lead to career success for women, and then provides an autobiographical account of the individuals and circumstances that led me to have a successful career as a woman research scientist. By providing that account I hope to illustrate how even small actions by influential individuals and groups can make an enormous difference in someone’s career. Many of the issues identified in the first part of the paper could have hindered my career had it not been for the benefit I received from the actions of others.

## **PART I**

### **Revisiting the Social, Institutional, and Cultural Influences of Gender on Science**

Although conditions for women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) have improved since 1991, there remain significant disparities between men and women. According to a 1991 report (National Research Council, 1991) in 1989 in the United States, only 17.5% of STEM faculty were women, while only 12% of associate and full professors (a proxy for those with tenure) were women. Singh (2020) reports that in 2019 women represented 34.5% of STEM faculty in the United States, and they represented 28.2% of tenured STEM faculty. The percentages for 2019 are roughly double what they were in 1989. However, both casual observation and ongoing research indicate that much more progress could be made and that those numbers do not convey the full story.

In what follows, I list 7 problems that were discussed in Utts (1994) and provide my opinion on their current status. In each case, I provide references to the original sources of the 1991 discussion. Much of the commentary on whether things have changed since then is based on my informal observations, but in some cases, I cite more recent research to support my remarks.

**Original observation #1:** Science is a cumulative enterprise and often moves forward because of informal networks in which ideas are shared and discussed. Women are less likely to be part of those networks because men are uncomfortable including them (Angier, 1991; Sandler, 1986).

**Current status of observation #1:** It is my observation that these informal networks are now much more inclusive of women. As more women participate in scientific research, men seem to be more comfortable working with them and serving as mentors. Additionally, there are networks of women supporting each other as more women are available to do so. In 1991 many academic science departments had at most one woman on the faculty. That situation would be rare now. And in 1991, e-mail and the Internet were in their infancy. Now, with the abundance of blogs, e-mail distribution lists, and online discussions, it is easier for everyone to receive information, even if they are shy about or do not feel comfortable contributing to the discussions.

**Original observation #2:** Men and women act and are treated differently when they speak. As noted by Utts (1994: 30), "...people are more attentive when men speak than when women speak, women are more likely to be interrupted than men, and people are more likely to respond extensively to men's comments than to those made by women." Sandler (1986: 2) used this as one example of what she referred to as "the chilly climate for women on campus."

**Current status of observation #2:** These trends persist, and I have observed them numerous times in meetings and seminars. In a recent study, researchers examined whether the chilly climate still exists in classrooms (Lee & McCabe, 2021). They summarized their findings as follows:

Almost 40 years ago, scholars identified a 'chilly climate' for women in college classrooms. To examine whether contemporary college classrooms remain 'chilly,' we conducted quantitative and qualitative observations in nine classrooms across multiple disciplines at one elite institution. Based on these 95 hours of observation, we discuss three gendered classroom participation patterns. First, on average, men students occupy classroom sonic space 1.6 times as often as women. Men also speak out without raising hands, interrupt, and engage in prolonged conversations during class more than women students. Second, style and tone also differ. Men's language is assertive, whereas women's is hesitant and apologetic. Third, professors' interventions and different structures of classrooms can alter existing gender status hierarchies. (p. 32)

In another study, Heffron et al. (2021) examined whether men and women enrolled in a joint MD/Ph.D. program had differing experiences. They reported the following findings.

Male and female students were equally likely to present at the annual program symposium, but faculty ( $p = 0.001$ ) and keynote ( $p = 0.012$ ) presenters were more likely to be male. Compared with their male counterparts, female students asked fewer seminar questions ( $p < 0.005$ ), and female speakers received more questions ( $p = 0.03$ ). Female students perceived less support and differed from men in reasons for asking or not asking seminar questions. Free text responses described repeated small acts of discrimination toward women with cumulative impact. (p. 90)

Given my observations and the above research, the problem clearly persists and probably always will. The best remedy is to educate both men and women about these behaviors.

**Original observation #3:** Women publish less than men, their publications are not taken as seriously, and they are less frequently cited (Utts, 1994: 30).

**Current status of observation #3:** Obviously, publication rates and reactions to publications cannot be observed casually; they require data. And in this case, it turns out that the situation is complicated. The number of overall publications is a poor measure of productivity because some fields include authors even when they have little input on the publication, such as when they are involved in a multi-center grant. Some counts of publications give a 1 to each publication regardless of the number of authors, while others assign  $1/n$  to a publication with  $n$  authors. In some disciplines, the primary author is listed first, while in other disciplines, it is understood that the last author listed is the primary one.

However, a few studies, while imperfect, seem to tell the same story. While actively publishing, women and men seem to be almost equally productive. But women tend to drop out more readily and earlier in their careers. One study found that “women seem to be somewhat less likely to continue their career as publishing researcher than men, but the difference is small. We also observe that men produce on average between 15% and 20% more publications than women.” (Boekhout et al., 2021, preprint) Another study found that overall productivity is less for women than for men, but “men and women publish a comparable number of papers per year and have equivalent career-wise impact for the same total number of publications. This suggests the productivity and impact of gender differences are explained by different publishing career lengths and dropout rates.” (Huang et al., 2020: 4609)

**Original observation #4:** When identical credentials are presented but the name given on them is clearly male or female, reviewers give lower ratings to the work with the female name. In Utts (1994) the example presented was for ratings of an article allegedly authored by John T. McKay, Joan T. McKay, or J. T. McKay. Both men and women rated the work alleged to be by Joan much lower than that alleged to be by John, with that of J. T. in the middle.



**Current status of observation #4:** The problem persists. In a 2012 study (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), a sample of college professors was asked to evaluate a candidate for a lab manager position. Unbeknownst to them, half of them (randomly assigned) received materials with the name Jennifer, and the other half received the same materials, except with the name John. Moss-Racusin et al. reported the following disturbing results.

Faculty participants rated the male applicant as significantly more competent and hireable than the (identical) female applicant. These participants also selected a higher starting salary and offered more career mentoring to the male applicant. The gender of the faculty participants did not affect responses, such that female and male faculty were equally likely to exhibit bias against the female student. Mediation analyses indicated that the female student was less likely to be hired because she was viewed as less competent. (p. 16474)

Apparently, the only trait for which “Jennifer” was rated more highly than “John” was likeability.

**Original Observation #5:** In academia, women receive lower salaries than men and are less likely to be promoted. Various sources in Utts (1994) provide data to support this.

**Current status of observation #5:** I have learned through personal experience that it is very difficult to analyze salary data for gender differences because there are so many variables that contribute to salaries. In 1994, at the request of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel, I conducted a statistical gender-equity study for my campus, the University of California, Davis. I found that women were systematically paid less than men with similar records, but part of that discrepancy was due to the lower starting salaries they received. After a two-year controversial battle in the faculty senate (described in detail by West, 2000), a resolution was reached about what to do with my findings. Every faculty member, male or female, could request an equity review or be nominated for one by their department or dean. As a result, 70 women were nominated for a review, and 38 (54%) were given a salary increase. Only 61 men were nominated, and 13 (21%) of them were given a salary increase. However, because a much higher proportion of women than men were nominated for a review, overall, about 1% (13 out of 1158) of the male faculty and 11% (38 out of 334) of the women faculty received salary increases.

Since that time, gender equity reviews have become commonplace on university campuses. I have participated (as a statistical expert) in a review at my most recent campus (University of California, Irvine) for multiple years. Every year a list of faculty members who appear to be underpaid is sent to each dean, who then discusses the individual cases with the department chair. A pool of funds is made available for equity adjustments. Therefore, one would hope that salaries have become more equitable, although I have no data to show that this is the case.

**Original observation #6:** Both men and women are unaware of their implicit biases and how they affect their attitudes and behavior. For instance, Utts (1994) reported on a survey of

members of the American Astronomical Association that found nearly 33% of the women who responded felt they had been discriminated against in promotions, while only 7.6% of the men who responded said they had witnessed such discrimination against their female colleagues.

**Current status of observation #6:** In the study quoted above, in which faculty rated the application of “John” more highly than that of “Jennifer,” both male and female faculty raters exhibited implicit bias against Jennifer. That study was done 10 years ago, so perhaps things have changed since then. Many universities require faculty members to take training courses in topics such as sexual harassment and implicit bias.

One interesting measure of implicit bias and stereotyping reported by Tenada (2019) is what happens when children are asked to “draw a scientist.” In the first such studies from 1966 to 1977, fewer than 1% of children drew a woman. But among young girls, that rose to 33% in 1985, and 58% in 2016. The overall average in studies from 1985 to 2016 was 28%, but that included both sexes and all age groups. Unfortunately, the studies have found that these numbers decrease with age. According to Tenada (2019: n.p.):

In kindergarten, children draw roughly the same number of male and female scientists – girls tend to draw more female scientists while boys tend to draw more male ones. But by the time they’re in high school, students – males and females combined – draw four times as many male scientists as female ones. The shift is more pronounced for girls: When asked to draw a scientist, 70 percent of 6-year-old girls draw a woman, while only 25 percent of 16-year-old girls do.

**Original observation #7:** Women are more likely than men to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary research, but such research is not as highly valued as sole-authored research. In 1991 when I wrote my paper (Utts, 1994), I quoted a task force convened by the University of California system (consisting of 9 campuses at that time) to address issues related to affirmative action. One of the findings of the task force was that “Research has been too narrowly defined as ‘discovery research’ with little credit being given for integrating research areas across disciplinary lines.”

**Current status of observation #7:** In my opinion, this observation is the one for which the most progress has been made in the past 30 years. In my own discipline of statistics, collaborative research is now seen as more important than research leading to sole-authored publications, which is a complete reversal from when I wrote my paper in 1991. Perhaps the discipline of statistics is ahead of other disciplines in this regard, because the whole point of our profession is to use our methodology to advance knowledge in other disciplines. But I think this trend is very broad. Most research questions now require expertise from multiple disciplines, and it is a welcome change that research integrating cross-disciplinary knowledge is valued.

## PART 2

### My Journey as a Woman in Science

As noted in Part 1 of this paper, there are many societal influences that are detrimental to the success of women in science research careers. In this part of the paper, I review some literature addressing what factors might contribute to successful careers for women in science. I then describe how I benefited from small influences throughout my own career.

#### *Factors that Influence Women's Career Success*

Life is complex. Trying to design a study that uncovered what makes some people successful and others not would be almost impossible. Additionally, women who could easily succeed in a career in academia often choose not to pursue one. Qualitative research and interviews with women have uncovered some common themes related to why some women succeed in research science careers and others do not, including why some women decide not to even try to do so. Making no attempt to be thorough in my search, I uncovered three sources that include enlightening information on why some women successfully pursue research careers and others do not.

**Source 1:** In a commentary in *Nature*, a small collection of scientists from around the world with expertise in gender issues were invited to give one idea related to what could be done to achieve gender equality (Al Gazali et al., 2013). One of them, Eva Y. Andrei, gave as her idea “Inspire our daughters.” She wrote “When I polled my women colleagues, almost all agreed that a dearth of guidance and mentorship early on was the main reason for lack of female physicists.” (p. 37)

Another, Liisa Husu from Sweden, gave her idea as “Recognize hidden roadblocks.” She observed

It is not only the things that happen... it is also the things that do not happen: what I call 'non-events.' Non-events are about not being seen, heard, supported, encouraged, taken into account, validated, invited, included, welcomed, greeted or simply asked along. They are a powerful way to subtly discourage, sideline or exclude women from science. (p. 38)

**Source 2:** Another source of insight into why some women succeed and others do not, or do not try, is a 2013 *New York Times* article titled “Why Are There Still So Few Women in Science?” (Pollack, 2013). The author excelled in her undergraduate program in physics at Yale, but decided not to pursue a career in physics when she graduated in 1978. Her article is

an in-depth investigation of reasons that many women do not pursue careers in science (and she gives her own reasons), including interviews with many of her former professors and with current women faculty and students in physics at Yale. She summarizes her own decision not to pursue a physics career as follows.

At the end of four years [in 1978], I was exhausted by all the lonely hours I spent catching up to my classmates, hiding my insecurities, struggling to do my problem sets while the boys worked in teams to finish theirs. I was tired of dressing one way to be taken seriously as a scientist while dressing another to feel feminine... Mostly, though, I didn't go on in physics because not a single professor – not even the adviser who supervised my senior thesis – encouraged me to go to graduate school. Certain this meant I wasn't talented enough to succeed in physics, I left the rough draft of my senior thesis outside my adviser's door and slunk away in shame. Pained by the dream I had failed to achieve, I locked my textbooks, lab reports and problem sets in my father's army foot locker and turned my back on physics and math forever. (Pollack, 2013: n.p.)

As part of the research for her article (in 2013), she interviewed the professor who had supervised her senior thesis in 1978, and discovered that the very fact that she did an independent thesis was a major accomplishment. He had only supervised one or two other undergraduate research students throughout his career. The implication that it never occurred to him to recommend that she pursue graduate school was eye-opening for both of them.

Summarizing her lengthy investigation, Pollack concluded “The most powerful determinant of whether a woman goes on in science might be whether anyone encourages her to go on.” (ibid.) That statement is echoed by many of the successful women scientists I have talked with over the years. Almost all of them can identify one person who made a difference by encouraging them to continue.

**Source 3:** In 2015 the American Association of University Women (AAUW) published a lengthy (159 pages) report titled “Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing” (Corbett & Hill, 2015). The introduction to the report describes it as follows.

[This report] focuses on the underrepresentation of women in engineering and computing and provides practical ideas for educators and employers seeking to foster gender diversity. From new ways of conceptualizing the fields for beginning students to good management practices, the report recommends large and small actions that can add up to real change. (p. ix)

My purpose in reading the report was to determine what the authors thought were strategies for encouraging greater numbers of women to pursue careers as research scientists. Ideas are scattered throughout the report. Here are some of them:

Gender biases affect not only how we view and treat others but also how we view ourselves and the choices we make about our own futures. From early childhood, cultural stereotypes guide our choices and behavior, steering us toward certain careers that seem to be the best fit for our interests and abilities and away from others. (p. 43)

Evidence suggests that highlighting the communal aspects of STEM careers increases girls' interest in these careers. (p. 101)

One additional way to attract more women to engineering and computing programs is to couple degrees in these majors with degrees in other fields that allow individuals to pursue multiple interests. (p. 102)

A sense of belonging has measurable effects on an individual's physical and mental states. Even minimal indications of social connectedness can increase feelings of belonging ... For women in engineering and computing, having a strong sense of belonging has been found to help alleviate the stress that arises from stereotype threat. (p. 102)

Survey data and interviews with tenured professors identify a sense of community and the presence of a support network as some of the most important factors in job satisfaction and retention of female STEM faculty. (p. 103)

### *My Personal Journey*

In this section I provide a personal perspective on the individuals, communities, and life events that helped me overcome the hurdles many women face that keep them from successful academic careers. I hope my examples will illustrate the importance of one small act of encouragement or mentoring. I feel very fortunate that the right circumstances and individuals guided my path from childhood through a successful career. I have organized these comments by outlining some common themes that either encourage or discourage women from successful careers in science.

*Cultural stereotypes.* As quoted above, the report by the AAUW noted that "From early childhood, cultural stereotypes guide our choices and behavior, steering us toward certain careers that seem to be the best fit for our interests and abilities and away from others." (Corbett & Hill, 2015: 3) I was fortunate to have a mother who encouraged me to pursue a degree in mathematics, and who emphasized the importance of a career. She was one of the smartest people I knew, as evidenced by the fact that she briefly joined the "high IQ" organization Mensa, which accepts only people who test in the top 2% of IQs. (She dropped out soon after joining, claiming that they were too snobbish for her.) I think she did everything she could to give me the life, and successful career, that she wished she could have had, and would have had if circumstances were not so difficult for women of her generation. When it was time for me to apply for colleges, she learned which undergraduate schools had strong math programs, and then visited those

schools with me, asking the right questions of the tour guides and finding the information I needed to make a good choice.

*Recognition of abilities and encouragement from influential individuals.* As has been noted multiple times in this paper and elsewhere, encouragement from just one influential individual can make a big difference in whether a young woman decides to pursue a STEM career. In my case, the first of those individuals was my 9th grade algebra teacher, Richard Bessel. Early in the year, he asked the students in the class to raise their hands if they had received an A in math the previous year. When I did not raise my hand (for reasons I can't remember – perhaps I did not get an A!) he called on me. He said something like, “Jessica, why didn't you raise your hand? You're a natural at math!” I was startled, honored, and at the same time felt the imposter syndrome kick in. But he planted a seed that perhaps I could “do math” and from then on I excelled in my math courses.

The next influential individual was my college calculus teacher, Professor Prabir Roy. The summer before I started college, Professor Roy sent a letter to all students who had expressed interest in a math major, inviting us to apply to take his two-year honors calculus sequence. I do not know if he accepted all of those who applied, but in the first semester there were two classes of 30 students each. By the second semester, there were 30 of us left. The following fall there were six of us who had stuck it out, and by spring semester there were only four of us left. The attrition was not due to lack of success in the class; students chose to leave or stay. I do not know why I did not drop out like most of the others, but it turned out to be a wise decision. In year two, Professor Roy decided that the 6 of us remaining should each do a research project, and rather than lecturing us, each class period was spent with one or more of us presenting a progress report. Not only did this experience boost my self-esteem about doing research, but it turned out that Professor Roy was an excellent resource for information about graduate school. More on that later.

The third influential individual in encouraging me to continue on a successful path was the department head in my PhD program at Penn State University, Professor William Harkness. He encouraged me every step of the way throughout my career in graduate school. At one point when a book publisher came and asked Professor Harkness which of his faculty members would be good candidates to write a textbook, he told the publisher that none of the faculty would be, but that I would be. He sent the publisher to my graduate student office to talk with me about it, and that publisher kept after me for 10 years until I finally wrote the book.

*Opportunity to integrate dry formulaic material with interesting applications.* Some research has shown that women are more likely to pursue careers in STEM if they can see useful applications. In my case, this was true. I started college as a math major but I found it dry and boring. Many of my friends were psychology majors, and what they were learning sounded much more

interesting. So I started taking psychology courses, and eventually added psychology as a second major. That's where I discovered statistics. The math department at my university (State University of New York at Binghamton) did not offer any statistics courses, but statistics was a required course in the psychology department. By taking that course I realized that my math major could be put to good use in doing something more interesting than theoretical mathematics.

*Encouragement to continue to graduate school and then to academia.* Although it's hard to fathom now, when I was in college I had no idea what was meant by "graduate school." I thought all schools led to graduation! I had no idea about the difference between a master's degree and a PhD. Fortunately, I had friends who knew about such things. One in particular said something that was life-altering. He told me that if I did not get a PhD I would always have a boss who was not as smart as I was, but who had a PhD. That convinced me of the wisdom of getting a PhD. So I went to see Professor Roy, my honors calculus professor, to ask his advice about going to graduate school in statistics. As luck would have it, unbeknownst to me at the time, he was the son of a famous statistician! So he knew all about how to find out which graduate programs were a good fit for me, and he connected me with the executive director of the American Statistical Association to get advice.

*A sense of control over one's workplace environment.* For all workers, it is of course important to have a sense of control over working conditions. But sometimes that control is less attainable for women than for men. This can be especially true for assistant professors, who are often assigned the courses no one else wants to teach, or given other tasks that the more senior faculty prefer to avoid. When I graduated with my PhD in 1978 I received multiple job offers, including from prestigious universities – Harvard, Cornell, Carnegie Mellon and Rutgers. But I turned all of them down for a job at the University of California, Davis (UCD), a school which I had never heard of until I started applying for jobs. I did so because UCD was forming a new statistics department, and I was offered the opportunity to be a founding member. Most of the other founding faculty members were also relatively early in their careers. Together we needed to create many new courses, hire senior faculty, and establish the rules of the undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition to giving me a strong sense of control over my work environment, this experience also provided a strong sense of community with the other faculty and with the graduate students who had left the math department and joined our new department. This leads to the next topic.

*A strong sense of community in the workplace.* As noted in the AAUW report, "Survey data and interviews with tenured professors identify a sense of community and the presence of a support network as some of the most important factors in job satisfaction and retention of female STEM faculty." (Corbett & Hill, 2015: 103) In this area, I was very fortunate throughout my entire career. A few examples will illustrate this.

In her *New York Times* article explaining why she did not pursue a career in physics, Eileen Pollack (2013) describes how she struggled alone to work on her assignments while the boys in her class worked together in teams. When I was in graduate school I was the only woman in my PhD cohort. But rather than shun me, the men in my program encouraged me to study with them. The fact that I was a woman did not seem at all relevant, and in fact it was not until I was in the middle of the first semester of PhD coursework that I looked around and realized that I was the only woman in class! The other women who started graduate school with me had all graduated with master's degrees and left. (I was the first woman to get a PhD in the Penn State Statistics Department, and it was at least another five years before there was another one.)

I have described how the founding of a new department helped create a sense of community, but I still suffered from some of the same discrimination felt by other women at UCD. For instance, in those days we wrote manuscripts by hand, and gave them to the department's technical typist to type before we could submit them to a journal. I discovered that my manuscripts were taking months longer to be typed than those of the men. I brought this to the attention of the department manager, who discussed it with the typist, who admitted that this was indeed true. She had been raised to please men, not women. That is just one example of the systemic discrimination encountered by women faculty. But as a result, the women faculty at UCD decided to form a community group, called the Faculty Women's Research Support Group. The group met monthly in someone's home – there were so few of us that we could fit! There was some social time, some time to share stories and advice, and then one of the women gave a presentation of her research in terms that the rest of us could understand. When a new high-level administrator was hired, we would invite him or her to one of our meetings, and they usually accepted. This community was one of the most important factors in my career success. Even now, over 40 years later, I remain in contact with many of those women.

There is one more community that was extremely influential in my career – the parapsychology community. In the next section I describe the circumstances that led me to find it.

*The importance of finding communal meaning in one's work.* Various research studies have shown that working with and for the benefit of others is, on average, more important to women than to men. That has been true for me, and in the early years of my career I suffered from the hierarchy in statistics that placed sole-authored theoretical work above collaborative, applications-oriented work. However, once I had tenure I was free to pursue the interests that had led me to statistics, which originated with the applications I saw in my undergraduate psychology major.

Immediately after receiving tenure, I spent a year on sabbatical at Stanford University (1984–1985). With my newfound freedom to pursue interesting applications, I was looking for a new research area in which I could apply my statistical expertise. Within a month of arriving at Stanford, someone told me about the newly formed Society for Scientific Exploration,



started by a small group of Stanford professors. I was intrigued and went to visit the founding president, Peter Sturrock. From that visit, everything fell into place quickly.

In late October (1984) I attended the 3rd annual SSE conference in Princeton, New Jersey. At that meeting I met Hal Puthoff and Charles Honorton, both of whom were instrumental in my subsequent involvement in psi research. After returning from the Princeton meeting I started attending local Stanford area SSE dinners. It was at one of those dinners that Hal Puthoff and I had a chance to discuss statistical issues associated with the government-funded psi research he was conducting at SRI International, and he invited me to be a consultant. In particular, he was interested in learning more about using sequential sampling methods as a way of reducing the sample sizes needed to reach statistical significance. During the remainder of my sabbatical year I worked on various statistical issues as a consultant to the SRI program.

In August 1985, Dr. Puthoff left SRI and Dr. Edwin May became the project director. By then, I had a working relationship with Dr. May, and our first two publications together were presented at the August 1985 Parapsychological Association (PA) convention at Tufts University (May et al., 1985; Utts & May, 1985).

It was at that 1985 PA convention that I found the most important community of my career – parapsychologists. In addition to Drs. May and Puthoff, of particular note were Charles Honorton, Robert Morris, and Deborah Delanoy. Honorton invited me to visit his lab in Princeton and participate in a ganzfeld experiment. My parents lived a few hours away, and my father was intrigued, so he and I visited the lab together. He subsequently visited multiple times to participate in a 4-trial ganzfeld experiment. He was successful in choosing the correct target all four times, and as the sender in two of those experiments, I was astounded at the accuracy of his descriptions. That experience convinced me that the psi experimental results I saw reported were most likely not due to trickery or fraud.

Ed May and I continued to work together, and in 1987–1988 I took a leave of absence from UC Davis to work as a visiting scientist at SRI. I continued that role part-time the following academic year, and then continued as a consultant to the program. I remained as a consultant when the program relocated to SAIC, until the program was terminated in 1995.

In December of 1985 Robert Morris, who I had met at the Tufts PA convention the previous summer, was awarded the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh. I was interested in learning more about the various laboratories conducting psi research, and at Morris's invitation, I visited the laboratory there on a few occasions. As had been the case at SRI and at Honorton's lab, I was impressed by the quality of the experimental setup and the associated research. In 1994 I spent a sabbatical leave as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Deborah Delanoy, who was a researcher

in the program, invited me to live in her home during my stay, thus providing even more of a community connection.

As I got to know the researchers and saw the quality of the research, I decided that investigating the interface of statistics and parapsychology was the perfect career path for me. It fits with the enthusiasm I had in my undergraduate program for combining math and psychology, and it provided a community of devoted scientists who were welcoming and who were investigating what I consider to be one the most important issues of our time.

### *Summary*

In the three decades since the Parapsychology Foundation sponsored the 1991 *Women and Parapsychology* conference, there have been major quantitative and qualitative improvements in the status of women in scientific research. Inequities still exist and probably always will. But there are now a myriad of programs that are trying to address these inequities. For example, in the United States the National Science Foundation ADVANCE program has invested over \$270 million at over 100 institutions since its inception in 2001. The stated goal of the program is “to increase the representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers, thereby contributing to the development of a more diverse science and engineering workforce.” (<https://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/advance/>) I am optimistic that the situation will continue to improve.

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## Allgemeine und persönliche Überlegungen zum Erfolg als Wissenschaftlerin

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung<sup>3</sup>*

Im Jahr 1991 veranstaltete die Parapsychology Foundation eine Konferenz zum Thema *Women and Parapsychology* [Frauen in der Parapsychologie]. In meinem Vortrag für diese Konferenz (Utts, 1994) erörterte ich Forschungsergebnisse, die mehrere Faktoren aufzeigten, die zu einer ungleichen Behandlung von Frauen und Männern in wissenschaftlichen Laufbahnen beitragen, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf dem akademischen Bereich lag. Zu diesen Faktoren gehörten kulturelle Normen, institutionelle Erfolgsbarrieren für Frauen, implizite Vorurteile und sozialer Druck, der Frauen davon abhielt, eine wissenschaftliche Laufbahn einzuschlagen und dort erfolgreich zu sein. In den letzten drei Jahrzehnten wurden bei einigen dieser Faktoren Fortschritte erzielt, aber nicht bei allen. Im ersten Teil dieses Aufsatzes wird erörtert, inwieweit sich die Situation bei sieben der in dem früheren Papier genannten Faktoren verbessert hat (oder nicht), wobei eine Kombination aus Forschungsergebnissen und persönlichen Beobachtungen angeführt wird.

Die sieben Faktoren, die ich 1991 angeführt hatte, lauteten wie folgt, wobei Entwicklungen in den letzten drei Jahrzehnten berücksichtigt werden:

Erstens waren Frauen seltener Teil der informellen Netzwerke, die die Wissenschaft voranbringen. Diese Situation hat sich in den letzten drei Jahrzehnten stark verbessert, vor allem durch das Internet und E-Mail. Diskussionslisten, Blogs usw. stehen jedem offen, der daran teilnehmen möchte. Zweitens haben Studien gezeigt, dass Männer und Frauen unterschiedlich wahrgenommen werden, wenn sie sprechen und Ideen präsentieren, wobei Männer ernster genommen werden. Dieser Trend scheint bis heute anzuhalten. Drittens neigten Frauen dazu, weniger zu veröffentlichen, und ihre Veröffentlichungen wurden nicht mit demselben Respekt behandelt. Neuere Untersuchungen zeigen, dass Frauen und Männer fast gleich viel publizieren, wenn sie aktiv publizieren, dass aber Frauen dazu neigen, häufiger und früher in ihrer Karriere mit dem Publizieren aufzuhören. Viertens haben Studien sowohl 1991 als auch in jüngerer Zeit gezeigt, dass bei identischen Referenzen, aber einem männlichen Namen, die Person größere Vorteile erhält, als wenn die Unterlagen mit einem weiblichen Namen verknüpft sind. Sowohl männliche als auch weibliche Prüfer tendierten dazu, die mit einem weiblichen Namen verknüpfte Referenz weniger gut zu bewerten. Fünftens erhielten Frauen im akademischen Bereich 1991 niedrigere Gehälter als Männer und wurden seltener befördert. Die Situation hat sich verbessert, da viele Universitäten inzwischen Studien zur Gehaltsgleichheit durchführen und die Gehälter entsprechend anpassen. Sechstens zeigten sowohl 1991 als auch

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3 Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

in jüngerer Zeit Männer und Frauen implizite Vorurteile gegenüber der Arbeit von Frauen. Und siebtens bevorzugen Frauen häufiger als Männer kooperative Forschung. Im Jahr 1991 wurde eine solche Forschung nicht geschätzt, aber die Situation hat sich erheblich verbessert. Da die Forschung komplexer geworden ist, ist die interdisziplinäre Teamforschung eher die Regel als die Ausnahme.

Im zweiten Teil werden mehrere Forschungsansätze erörtert, die zeigen, wie sich subtile Einflüsse in der Kindheit und im frühen Erwachsenenalter auf den beruflichen Erfolg auswirken. So haben sich beispielsweise die kulturellen Normen, die Wissenschaftler als Männer darstellen, im Laufe der Jahre allmählich verbessert, aber Kinder zeichnen immer noch eher einen Mann als eine Frau, wenn sie gebeten werden, einen Wissenschaftler oder eine Wissenschaftlerin zu zeichnen. Vorbilder und ermutigende Mentoren sind wichtige Faktoren, die darüber entscheiden, ob eine Frau eine wissenschaftliche Laufbahn einschlagen wird. Viele erfolgreiche Frauen in der Wissenschaft können einen einzigen Mentor oder eine Mentorin nennen, dessen bzw. deren Ermutigung wesentlich zu ihrem Erfolg beigetragen hat. Das Gefühl, dass die eigene Arbeit einen Sinn hat, sowie eine unterstützende Gemeinschaft sind weitere Faktoren, die zum Erfolg beitragen. Der letzte Teil des Papiers ist autobiografisch und zeigt, wie die in diesem Forschungsbericht dokumentierten Faktoren in meinem Leben eine Rolle gespielt haben. In einer Erzählung, die mit meiner Kindheit beginnt und sich über meine gesamte Laufbahn erstreckt, zeige ich Personen und Umstände auf, die zu meinem Erfolg beigetragen haben. Ein wichtiger Faktor war die einladend-offene parapsychologische Gemeinschaft; ich werde einige Details berichten, wie es dazu kam, mit dieser Gemeinschaft zu arbeiten. Der Beitrag enthält Vorschläge für spezifische Maßnahmen, die Einzelpersonen und Gemeinschaften ergreifen können, um mehr Frauen zu ermutigen, eine wissenschaftliche Laufbahn einzuschlagen, auch in der Parapsychologie.

## Women and Parapsychology 2022 An Online Survey

GERHARD MAYER, CEDAR S. LEVERETT, NANCY L. ZINGRONE<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – In 1991, the Parapsychology Foundation organized an international conference on the topic “Women and Parapsychology,” held in Dublin, Ireland. The survey aimed for an assessment of the situation in parapsychology 30 years after this conference. Our team asked women active in the research field of parapsychology and related areas about their scientific careers, authoring articles, contributions to the field and gender-specific experiences. We distributed the link to the extensive online questionnaire on several e-mail lists and websites and also sent the link specifically to individuals. 30 women completed the questionnaire. We got a selective, non-representative sample, with a high average age and level of education. Due to these limitations, the survey did not provide complete clarity as to whether parapsychology differed from other disciplines with regard to the status and situation of women. Several aspects are comparable to the situation of women in other research fields. As is generally the case in academia, women tend to be paid less. They have to make greater efforts to be taken seriously by male colleagues, which can slow down their careers, in addition to career interruptions due to raising children, greater difficulties balancing work and family life, and the like. We found a relatively low proportion (10%) of women who reported sexual intimidation or harassment in the field of parapsychology. General funding problems in parapsychology are even greater for women because of the additional childrearing responsibilities and less institutionalized research. Some findings lead us to the thesis that it is not necessarily the gender aspect that is respon-

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sible for rude and inappropriate behavior on the part of male colleagues, but rather a tendentially greater openness on the part of female researchers for worldviews and heterodox research subjects outside of the scientific mainstream. This thesis must be validated in further studies.

*Keywords:* feminism in parapsychology – gender equity – women and methodological standards – women in science – authorship – obstacles in research – funding – barriers to contribution

### **Frauen und Parapsychologie 2022 – Eine Online-Umfrage**

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – 1991 organisierte die Parapsychology Foundation eine internationale Konferenz zum Thema „Frauen und Parapsychologie“ [Women and Parapsychology] in Dublin/Irland. Die Umfrage zielte auf eine Einschätzung der Situation in der Parapsychologie 30 Jahre nach dieser Konferenz ab. Unser Team befragte Frauen, die im Forschungsfeld der Parapsychologie und verwandten Bereichen tätig sind, zu ihrem wissenschaftlichen Werdegang, zum Verfassen von Artikeln, zu Beiträgen auf dem Gebiet und zu geschlechtsspezifischen Erfahrungen. Wir verbreiteten den Link zu dem umfangreichen Online-Fragebogen über mehrere E-Mail-Listen und Websites und schickten den Link auch gezielt an Einzelpersonen. 30 Frauen füllten den Fragebogen aus. Es handelte sich um eine selektive, nicht repräsentative Stichprobe mit einem hohen Durchschnittsalter und Bildungsniveau. Aufgrund dieser Einschränkungen lieferte die Umfrage keine vollständige Klarheit darüber, ob sich die Parapsychologie im Hinblick auf den Status und die Situation von Frauen von anderen Disziplinen unterscheidet. Einige Aspekte sind mit der Situation von Frauen in anderen Forschungsbereichen vergleichbar. Wie allgemein in der Wissenschaft werden Frauen tendenziell schlechter bezahlt, sie müssen sich mehr anstrengen, um von ihren männlichen Kollegen ernst genommen zu werden, was ihre Karriere verlangsamen kann, dazu kommen Unterbrechungen der Karriere durch Kindererziehung, größere Schwierigkeiten, Beruf und Familie unter einen Hut zu bringen und ähnliches. Wir fanden einen relativ geringen Anteil (10 %) von Frauen, die über sexuelle Einschüchterung oder Belästigung im Bereich der Parapsychologie berichteten. Die allgemeinen Finanzierungsprobleme in der Parapsychologie sind für Frauen aufgrund der zusätzlichen Kindererziehungspflichten und der weniger institutionalisierten Forschung vermutlich noch größer. Einige Befunde führen zu der These, dass nicht unbedingt der Gender-Aspekt für unhöfliches und unangemessenes Verhalten männlicher Kollegen verantwortlich ist, sondern vielmehr eine tendenziell größere Offenheit der Forscherinnen für Weltanschauungen und heterodoxe Forschungsgegenstände außerhalb des wissenschaftlichen Mainstreams. Diese These muss in weiteren Studien validiert werden.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Autorenschaft – Feminismus in der Parapsychologie – Frauen und methodologische Standards – Frauen als Wissenschaftlerinnen – Funding – Gender-Gleichheit – Hindernisse in der Forschung – wissenschaftliche Publikationen

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.

I think parapsychology is biased with regards to mediums [...] being taken seriously [...] or being trained as clinical parapsychologists or researchers —almost as though ‘they’ would decrease the credibility of those in the field (survey participant)

As far as women and parapsychology are concerned, feminist research methodology or scientific ideology may give momentum for a hidden conflict. The whole thing begs the question, is parapsychology friendly to women?

### ***Preliminary Remark by Gerhard Mayer***

The idea of Conducting an online survey among female parapsychologists came to me while realizing the special issue of the *Journal of Anomalistics*. Guest editor Cedar S. Leverett noted imbalance between male and female scientists presenting at the 2019 Parapsychological Association Annual Meeting in Paris (cf. Leverett, 2022, this issue). In addition to the presentations on the various aspects of the topic that we hoped to get through a call for papers and invited papers, I wanted to get the opinions of a larger number of active female researchers rather than relying solely on guesswork. At first, I had a short questionnaire in mind. It made sense to include in the design of the questionnaire two guest editors, the other being Nancy L. Zingrone since she was part of the 1991 Parapsychology Foundation conference “Women and Parapsychology.” During the discussion of the questionnaire, complex and subtle topics and questions arose. This brought with it a challenge, because it was no longer a questionnaire that could be filled out conveniently. The length of the questionnaire increases the intensity and depth of the individual’s reflection, which can affect the answering of questions such as whether something has changed for the better or for the worse. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the women who have supported our project with their participation.

### ***Introduction***

In 1991, a conference of the Parapsychology Foundation took place with the title *Women and Parapsychology* in respect to viewpoints of women in science and in the research area of parapsychology. It addressed scientific careers, the publication of articles, cultural and religious contributions to the field and other advancements made by women. Only a few males attended the conference; it was considered a “woman-thing” by some of them (Zingrone, 2022, this issue). It coincides with the onset of third-wave feminism, which has focused more on issues of diversity, and societal and cultural sub-areas based in advances of civil rights for under-represented groups (Evans, 2015). “Gender and science” was one such sub-area for feminist approaches. Questions about gender-specific research objects and methods, but of course also



gender-specific disadvantages and disabilities in the scientific career, became the subject of scientific investigations (cf., e.g., Schiebinger, 1999). The first contributions from the field of parapsychology on this topic came from Hess (1988) and Zingrone (1988).

### *Designing a Survey*

Without knowing in detail what changed over the past 30 years for women active in parapsychology and related fields of heterodox research, it was at least clear that references to societal sensitivity surrounding issues of diversity and sexual harassment in the workplace had a starting point for discussion and became significantly larger. For this reason, we anticipated the survey's results to reflect scientists' interests in gender-related issues in the field of parapsychology and to still be as high as it was 30 years ago.

Our survey asked women about their experiences and assessment of the situation today. It is difficult to assess the changes that have occurred if no longitudinal studies are available. Unfortunately, this is the case for parapsychology, we do not have comparable quantitative data from the 1990s. However, we have at least the conference proceedings *Women and Parapsychology* (Coly & White, 1994) which contains excellent qualitative material. We have the memories of researchers who were there at the time.

A second layered problem we encountered in our survey is limited knowledge of the ratio of female to male researchers and the specific population of women active in parapsychology and related research fields; professional associations such as the Parapsychological Association (PA) often do not record the gender of their members in their membership lists. However, reasonably reliable estimates can be made by using existing lists of names, e.g. quantifying the salutations or separating the first names according to gender, which is not always possible. Roughly estimated, three-quarters of the members in associations dedicated to parapsychology in a narrower sense are male. We counted 73% male forenames on the PA member list with no significant difference between professional members and associates. This is mirrored in the numbers of a survey among PA members (Irwin, 2014), with 73% male and 27% female respondents. The German association Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Parapsychologie (WGFP) [Scientific Society for the Advancement of Parapsychology] counts 75% male members and 25% female members. The German Gesellschaft für Anomalistik (GfA) [Society of Anomalistics] currently has 77% male and 21% female members, with the gender of 2% of the members not being derivable from the available data. With the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), the ratio of male and female members could be slightly more balanced. The proportion of male titles (Mr.) in an e-mail to the SPR members was 43%, the proportion of

female titles (Mrs/Ms/Miss) was 24%, and the remaining 33% could not be assigned.<sup>3</sup> All data are as of August 2022, if not otherwise indicated. Interestingly, a comparable gender ratio was also found by Zingrone (1988) in her analysis of gender in the authorship of scientific articles in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (JP) and the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (JASPR), with 73% of the JP authors and 80% of the JASPR authors of the modern period (1977–1986) being male.

If the proportion of female members of the SPR is actually higher than in the other mentioned associations, this could be an indication of a shift in the focus of interest. Is there perhaps a larger percentage of SPR members with spiritualist interests than in the PA, the WGFP or the GfA? The degree of professionalism of the PA and SPR members differs solely due to the different admission requirements (Mayer, 2017). There are other associations that deal with sub-areas of parapsychology and related areas such as the International Remote Viewing Association (IRVA) or the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), which each represent different substantive and ideological focuses with their membership and embody different degrees of scientific professionalization. Does it influence the number of women members?

A third problem is the definition of parapsychology and related fields (Evrard & Tremmel, 2015; Tremmel, 2014). In a narrow sense, parapsychological research deals with the investigation of psi phenomena (extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, precognition). The survival hypothesis also traditionally belongs to this research area. Near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, reincarnation experiences, and the like are associated with parapsychological research (Irwin & Watt, 2007), but also are the subject of research in other academic disciplines such as religious, neuropsychological and anthropological studies. Parapsychology can be understood as a branch of anomalistics, which also includes astrology, cryptozoology, ufology, among others. For instance, the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE) is an association dedicated to this broad spectrum of anomalistic phenomena. This means that researchers in the field of parapsychology and anomalistics form a heterogeneous group in terms of research interests and ideological orientation.

A fourth problem undetected during the inception of the design, but evaded the survey's organization while attempting to manage its length and style, had to do with lacking information about current trends in parapsychology. It was not until after its publication that certain points on the survey were externally noticed. For example, Association for the Women in Science, AWIS, published an article about authorship in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, STEM (Langin, 2022), an article that reflected items in the survey, but author-

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3 We thank the secretary of the SPR, Peter Johnson, for this information.

ship was not discussed among us as a trend for parapsychology. Additionally, neither a spontaneous search for new books in parapsychology written by women nor approaching members of associations in parapsychology produced relevant information. So, any attempt to have a book review in the special issue escaped the opportunity to reveal what is up and coming insofar as reading material is concerned.

In contrast to the great interest in psi phenomena among the general population, even in modern Western-style societies, as reflected in cultural products such as films, TV programs and fiction books, the interest in their scientific study is astonishingly small. At least that is what the precarious funding situation in parapsychology suggests (Mayer, 2021). To what extent the lack of interest in researching psi phenomena is primarily due to fellow researchers in mainstream science or whether this is a phenomenon affecting society as a whole cannot be clearly determined. One reason for this is the influence this research can have on worldviews; to give an example, many practicing mediums may have no interest in scientific study of mediumship. On the one hand, they are of the opinion that mediumship works, but cannot investigate it scientifically, as is generally the case with esoteric teachings and forms of knowledge. On the other hand, they are afraid that what they consider negative scientific findings will have a disillusioning unfriendly and business-damaging effect. Depending on the implicit theoretical model for psi phenomena, mediumship practices may be viewed as expressions of the “supernatural,” perhaps religious signs, and scientific investigation is viewed as inadequate and, at worst, sacrilegious.

The ideological aspects associated with parapsychology distinguish its research discipline from other scientific disciplines. For this reason, researchers working in these fields form a kind of elite group as specialists who have left the framework of the usual scientific establishment because they deal with heterodox research subjects and are therefore exclusive. This deviation from the mainstream can weld the group together to a distinctiveness. The present study examines whether and in what way this special situation also affects the experiences as female scientists. Due to the restrictive conditions mentioned above, i.e. the lack of comparative figures, we can only rely on the statements of the participants and let them speak for themselves.

### *Conducting the Survey*

The survey was directed to women active in the research field of parapsychology and closely related areas. By women active in these fields of research we meant those who are contributing to the field, as opposed to only participating as a subject, as full-time, part-time, independent or informal researchers, teachers, students, clinicians, or who are actively involved in the work of associations, societies, research, virtual or traditional educational institutions (e.g. PA, SPR,

SSE). We characterized, in the introductory explanation, that we are using the term parapsychology in a broad sense including the study of psi phenomena of different kinds (extrasensory perceptions, telepathy, precognition etc.) in different settings (laboratory, field studies) as well as research into other paranormal claims such as near-death experiences, reincarnation, mediumship, survival research etc. Asking for “women active in parapsychology and closely related areas” does not very accurately describe the persons to whom the survey was directed. We did not want to restrict the sample too much from the outset.

The data for this study was collected anonymously, using the survey software LimeSurvey, which stores data in encrypted form on a German server.<sup>4</sup> Only the IPs were recorded in order to be able to weed out duplicate data records if necessary. After checking the raw data sets, the IPs were deleted. For acknowledgment of anonymity, we wrote a disclaimer and had an ethics review committee ensure confidentiality of identity.

We distributed the link to the online survey via e-mail lists of the Parapsychological Association, the Society for Scientific Exploration, the Gesellschaft für Anomalistik [Society of Anomalistics], the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Parapsychologie [Scientific Society for the Promotion of Parapsychology], the “Parapsychology Discussion List,” and the “Survival Net List.” In addition, a link to the online survey was provided in the news section of the Society for Psychical Research website. We also sent the link specifically to individuals. We did not post it on open social networks like Facebook or Twitter to avoid troll involvement. The survey was conducted in English only. The data were obtained between January 18, 2022 and April 26, 2022.

The survey study was approved by the local Ethics Committee of the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP\_2021\_06).

### *The Questionnaire*

The questionnaire consisted of 51 items. Estimated time was 30 to 40 minutes. It started with an introductory text describing the purpose of the study, a brief explanation of how we use the term “parapsychology” as well as a brief description of the questionnaire, followed by an informed consent agreement part and a check item to ensure that the participants belong to the target group. The items were grouped as follows: (1) sociodemographic data (seven items), (2) involvement in parapsychology as science (26 items), (3) specifics of female researchers in parapsychology (11 items), and (4) various (seven items). Some items were conditional follow-up items to a “yes” or “not sure” answer. These often related to

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4 <https://www.limesurvey.org/>

descriptions or specifications of the preceding item, which should be entered in free-text boxes without predefined categories.

### *Response*

With such a specific topic, it was difficult to estimate the possible return because we did not know the number of women working in this research area. In addition, it was difficult to estimate how many of the possible participants would be willing to invest a considerable amount of time in completing the extensive questionnaire; however, since we restricted ourselves to a descriptive evaluation, it did not play such a large role. We received 30 completed questionnaires, which is a satisfactory result considering the comparatively small total number of active researchers (see introduction).

### *Evaluation*

We limited ourselves largely to a descriptive analysis because the survey was purely exploratory and we were unable to formulate any well-founded hypotheses in advance due to a lack of current research on the investigated topic. In addition, due to the small  $N$ , the use of inferential statistical methods only makes sense in a few points and for purely exploratory purposes. We used SPSS (version 28; IBM Corporation, USA) for the statistical calculations. Where possible, we grouped the information from the free-text boxes into categories to provide a clearer picture.

### *Results*

The following are the grouped items of the survey sections.

#### *Sociodemographic Data*

The mean age of our participants is 58.5 years, with a standard deviation of 15.5 and a range from 25 to 89 years.<sup>5</sup> The majority of participants live in the United States ( $n=19$ , 63.3%); five participants (16.7%) live in Germany; the country of residence of another two participants (6.7%) is Canada, and, by one person each (3.3%), Greece, India, Scotland and Spain. All participants have one or more university degrees. The highest university degree of four participants (13.3%) is “bachelor”, and of another four “master”. Twenty-two participants (73.3%) have a PhD. The high average age and the high percentage of people with a doctorate clearly

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<sup>5</sup>  $n=29$ ; one value missing.

show that the sample is selected; it is not possible to generalize all female researchers in parapsychology. The most frequently chosen academic discipline is psychology, which includes various specializations such as applied, community, clinical, transpersonal, experimental, and social psychology, as well as consciousness, and parapsychology. See Table I in the appendix for more details. The occupation at the time of the survey or before retirement includes a variety of professions or activities and is provided in the appendix.

### *Involvement in Parapsychology*

The largest block of items concerned involvement in parapsychology and related scientific research fields. Only four participants (13.3%) have no active membership in one or more societies or associations related to the field. There were nine women (30%) who are active member in one association, and 17 participants (56.7%) have active memberships in more than one parapsychology affiliation. So, there is a high level of organized participation and involvement in this area.

Since parapsychology is hardly offered as a subject of study at universities, education and training is mainly done in self-study and in non-university courses, more formalized possibility for social interest, personal avocation development as well as continuing educational benefits increased significantly with the wide range of online offers in recent years. We asked about attended courses, training or workshops in the field of parapsychology. There were 19 participants (63.3%), who answered in the affirmative. The descriptions include courses in parapsychology: remote viewing, consciousness studies, near-death experiences, reincarnation, survival, alternative medicine and healing methods, and anthropological courses in witchcraft (see Table II in the appendix).

Only five participants have been involved in parapsychological, psychical, or psi research for less than five years. There were six participants, who each fall into the categories 5–10 Years, 10–20 years, and 20–30 years. There are seven women who indicated more than 30 years in this research area (see Table 1). These astonishing numbers show once again that we have a very select sample of experienced researchers. With regard to teaching, we found a significantly lower level of involvement. A percentage of 63.3% had never taught in the field of parapsychology, and two-thirds never in related fields. Only five participants taught parapsychology for at least 10 years, and only four in related fields for at least 10 years (see Table 3). Teaching in these areas appears to be inconsistent, which is understandable given the lack of representation in higher education of these research fields by mainstream academic institutions.

<b>Involvement in Research and Teaching</b>			
	<i>Involvement in parapsychological, psychical, or psi research</i>	<i>Involved in teaching in the field of parapsychological, psychical, or psi research</i>	<i>Involved in teaching in related fields such as Reiki healing, psychic development or mediumship</i>
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
No involvement	0 (0.0)	19 (63.3)	20 (66.7)
< 2 years	1 (3.3)	4 (13.3)	3 (10.0)
> 2 and < 5 years	4 (13.3)	1 (3.3)	2 (6.7)
5-10 years	6 (20.0)	1 (3.3)	1 (3.3)
10-20 years	6 (20.0)	2 (6.7)	0 (0.0)
20-30 years	6 (20.0)	1 (3.3)	3 (10.0)
> 30 years	7 (23.3)	2 (6.7)	1 (3.3)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)

**Table 1.** Involved in psi research and teaching in parapsychology and related fields such as Reiki healing, psychic development or mediumship.

We asked about the position in which the research or teaching is or was carried out, multiple answers being possible. Almost two-thirds said they have worked or work *independently*. There were 10 participants, who stated that they held or had held the position of *project head*. Just as many have held or are holding the position of *assistant*. When asked whether they held or are holding the position of *teacher* or *professor*, seven participants answered in the affirmative. The same number stated that they were *employed*. Three participants have or had the position of a *significant other* (see Table 2).

<b>Position of research or teaching</b>					
<i>independently</i>	<i>employed</i>	<i>assistant</i>	<i>project head</i>	<i>teacher/professor</i>	<i>As significant other</i>
19 (63.3)	7 (23.3)	10 (33.3)	10 (33.3)	7 (23.3)	3 (10)

**Table 2.** Position of research or teaching; percentages in brackets.

A percentage of 73.3% participants indicated that their research was related to their role in an academic institution or non-profit research organization.

The information given by the participants on their *areas of special interest* varied widely, as we did not specify any categories. If the information is summarized under the categories commonly used in the field, the following picture emerges. The most frequently mentioned category

is, not very surprisingly, parapsychological phenomena in a broad sense (23 mentions), with an emphasis on extrasensory perceptions and remote viewing (nine mentions). The second most frequently mentioned category relates to the topic of survival with 17 mentions, including also near-death experiences (five mentions) and reincarnation (CORT cases – three mentions). Exceptional experiences in a broad sense, not falling under the categories already mentioned, were mentioned 13 times. These include out-of-body experiences, dreams, altered states of consciousness, and synchronicity, among others. Another category with seven mentions relates to forms of unorthodox, alternative or spiritual healing. Five persons emphasized an interest in mediumship. Several other areas of special interest are mentioned only three times or less, such as meditation, mind-matter-interaction, astrology, psychology of paranormal beliefs, and many others. These categories are obviously not distinct and have many overlaps. Therefore, only a rough picture can be obtained with these mentions. However, even this rough picture shows a wide variety of specific interests, indicating a corresponding variety of personalities among participants.

### *Inspirations and Mentors*

We asked about different influential circumstances that inspired introduction to parapsychology or fostered a career as a parapsychologist. Prominent parapsychological researchers and teachers played an important role as role models for many (18 mentions) and gave important impetus to start a career in this field. Innate interest or a corresponding interest in the family are also mentioned relatively frequently (nine mentions). Books or paranormal TV shows were the inspiration for eight participants to enter the field. Personal experiences of psi phenomena are mentioned 14 times as a significant factor as well as psi phenomena reported by others (eight mentions). Philosophical or religious thoughts can also play a crucial role (six mentions). Table 3 provides an overview of the most often mentioned inspirations. Others are spiritual experiences, healing experiences, past-life memories, mediumship séance, etc.

<b>Influential circumstances and people</b>	
<i>n</i>	
18	Prominent researchers and teachers in parapsychology
14	Personal experience of psi phenomena
9	Early childhood and life-long curiosity or family interest
8	Psi phenomena reported by others (e.g. in books)
8	Books or TV shows
6	Philosophical or religious thoughts

**Table 3.** Influential circumstances and people. Multiple entries were possible.



We asked the participants how they did get where they are such as mentors, career changes, personal resources, or something else. One woman wrote: "In summary, my progress was only possible through perseverance, multiple employment, hard work and sacrifices of time and money." However, the most frequently mentioned factors were mentors/mentorship (14 mentions), followed by scholarships/grants (five mentions). Four people mentioned hard work/perseverance and fortunate circumstances/synchronicity. Others were: family support and encouragement, self-funded research, encouragement by professionals, and lectures/conferences/courses (three mentions each), and several more. In any case, role models and mentors in the field of parapsychological research are very important both at the beginning and during the career.

### *Parapsychology and Professional Life*

Paid research positions in parapsychology at universities and private institutes are scarce; subsequently, many conduct this research in their spare time. We asked what percent of the professional life involves parapsychology. We used a sliding scale. The mean is 45.8% (median = 50%) involvement. Table 4 shows the results in detail. For reasons of clarity, we have clustered the data provided in 5-percent increments into six categories.

	0%	5-25%	30-50%	55-70%	75-95%	100%
<b><i>n</i></b>	5	7	5	3	6	4

**Table 4.** Percent of professional life involving parapsychology.

These figures indicate again that we have a very selective sample. One-third of the participants show involvement of parapsychology of at least 75% of parapsychology in professional life. This also applies to paid work in parapsychology, as we can see from Table 5. The mean is 42.7% (median = 35%). For many, it is true that only a small part of the work in the field of parapsychology is or has been paid for.

	0%	5-25%	30-50%	55-70%	75-95%	100%
<b><i>n</i></b>	3	10	4	3	3	7

**Table 5.** Percent of paid work in parapsychology.

Table 6 shows which roles the participants had throughout their careers in parapsychology, broken down into paid and unpaid jobs. The role of a teacher is more often paid. The roles of researchers and research assistants are more or less balanced in terms of the ratio of paid and unpaid work. It is the typical service jobs that often go unpaid.

<i>n</i> =29 (one missing)	Support staff	Adminis- trator	Research assistant	Researcher	Teacher	Editorial	IT	other
Paid	2 (6.9)	2 (6.9)	5 (17.2)	12 (41.4)	6 (20.7)	4 (13.8)	1 (3.4)	2 (6.9)
Unpaid	5 (17.2)	4 (13.8)	6 (20.7)	12 (41.4)	3 (10.3)	8 (27.6)	4 (13.8)	5 (17.2)

**Table 6.** Roles in the course of the career in parapsychology; percentages in brackets.

### *Publications and Media*

Importantly, scientific publications represent socially recognized criterion for success as a scientist. This is especially true for peer-reviewed articles. Publications in more informal, non-peer-reviewed venues such as newsletters and magazines have a lower priority in this respect. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for some scientists to publish in such media as well. We asked about the number of publications of both types. Only five participants have no academic publications whereas two-thirds of participants have not published in more informal venues. The median of peer-reviewed publications is 3–5 articles (see Table 7).

	<i>Articles in peer-reviewed academic journals or scholarly books</i>	<i>Articles in more informal, non-peer-reviewed venues</i>
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
no publications	5 (16.7)	20 (66.7)
1-2 articles	7 (23.3)	0 (0.0)
3-5 articles	6 (20.0)	4 (13.3)
6-10 articles	5 (16.7)	2 (6.7)
11-20 articles	2 (6.7)	0 (0.0)
>20 articles	5 (16.7)	4 (13.3)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)

**Table 7.** The number of publications in academic journals or scholarly books and non-peer-reviewed publications; percentages in brackets.

The most mentioned reason for publishing papers in more informal or popular venues among the 10 authors of such texts is to reach a broader audience. For half of them, this is always or almost always the case. Other reasons are to add additional publications to the formal ones, and due to obstacles being published in formal journals because of content reasons.

Newsletters, blogs, radio, and television programs are other ways of making research known to a wider audience outside of the scientific community. Eight participants (26.7%) write their own blog or newsletter. A far larger proportion, 73.3 percent, take the opportunity to discuss their research in audio or visual media broadcasts, ranging from appearances in movies and documentaries to TV shows, radio interviews, podcasts, YouTube talks and more. But only two (6.7%) had established an own broadcast for this purpose.

If an article is written by more than one contributor, the authors' classification represents an important quality criterion. The author who did most of the work on a study is usually credited as first author. However, this rule is not always observed by the authors involved (Ross et al., 2022). We asked for an estimation of the percent of time when the participants were the first author of a published article; academic and more popular texts were not distinguished. For reasons of clarity, we have clustered the data provided in 5-percent increments of the slider scale into six categories. These figures can give a rough picture, as percentages based on small numbers produce a bias. Hypothetically, an author, who published a single paper and is the first author, falls into the 100% class. Anyway, we can see that about two-thirds of the participants are in 75% to 100% of their publications first authors (see Table 8). A further question on the issue of authorship in texts was: Have you contributed an amount of work to a paper that was more than your authorship level? For example, you were listed as the second or third author instead of the first. Please estimate the percent of time. Half of the 22 participants who answered this question indicated that their amount of work is not adequately reflected in the authorship level in 5 to 50% of the publications (see Table 9).

<b>How often first author (percent of time)</b>	<b>0% (never)</b>	<b>5-25%</b>	<b>30-50%</b>	<b>55-70%</b>	<b>75-95%</b>	<b>100% (always)</b>
<i>n</i> (total = 26; 4 missing)	4 (15.4)	2 (7.7)	3 (11.5)	0 (0)	12 (46.2)	5 (19.2)

<b>How often not the correct authorship level</b>	<b>0% (never)</b>	<b>5-25%</b>	<b>30-50%</b>	<b>55-70%</b>	<b>75-95%</b>	<b>100% (always)</b>
<i>n</i> (total = 22; 8 missing)	9 (40.9)	6 (27.3)	5 (22.7)	0 (0)	1 (4.5)	1 (4.5)

**Table 8** and **Table 9.** Percent of time as first author in publications and incongruous authorship levels related to the amount of work done for a paper; percentages in brackets.

### *Female Researchers in Parapsychology*

#### *Disadvantages and Advantages in Professional Life*

It is well known that female scientists often experience *disadvantages* in careers because of their gender (Schiebinger, 1999; The Lancet, 2019).<sup>6</sup> The survey asked whether the participants experienced situational disadvantage in their professional life associated with being a woman. Yes answers reflected 43.3% and 46.7% answered no. 10% said they were not sure if they experienced such situational disadvantage. In the following list we have summarized the descriptions by topic. Occasionally, some participants were not sure whether the disadvantage they experienced was actually related to being a woman.

<b>Disadvantages in professional life</b>	
<i>n</i>	
6	Structural disadvantages (being ignored, being told what is right, being pushed away, withheld information)
4	Differences in pay in academia
4	Differences in offered opportunities in academia
3	Situational disadvantages
3	Being treated as inferior
3	Editorial rejections
2	Less or no mentoring
2	Less or no recognition for the work
1	Necessity to stroke the ego of male fellow researchers/colleagues
1	Critique and animosity by males for the style of running a department
1	Less encouragement by parents
1	Maternity leave / domestic chores / work-life balance

**Table 10.** Experience of situational disadvantage in professional life connected with being a woman. Multiple entries were possible.

In a similar vein was the question of whether they encountered *obstacles* that they believe male researchers do not have. More than half of the participants (53.3%) answered no, while 23.3% answered yes and 23.3% were not sure. The statement most frequently mentioned

<sup>6</sup> See the theme issue of *The Lancet* (2019, Vol. 393, No. 10171) with several contributions on this topic. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/issue/vol393no10171/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)X0006-9](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/issue/vol393no10171/PIIS0140-6736(19)X0006-9)

(four mentions) was that the male colleagues initially lacked trust and that female researchers were taken less seriously. Three times the feeling of being shunned or ignored or experiencing rude behavior when working with male colleagues was mentioned as an obstacle. They also mentioned that interruptions due to child rearing and the problem of balancing family and work are also obstacles that apply to women's scientific careers in general, not just in parapsychology.<sup>7</sup>

Seventy percent of the participants said no to the question whether they encountered *advantages* that they thought male researchers may not have. Possible advantages mentioned included that the social networking might be easier because there is less need to initiate conversations, or that there might be better support from men who are attracted to a female researcher. It was also mentioned that there might be better access to female research participants and generally better relating to women. Being underestimated is also mentioned as a possible advantage; this example in particular represents a double-edged sword. Accordingly, such advantages are rarely mentioned. One gets the impression that an attempt is made in a flexible way to gain positive aspects from the negative situation (Zingrone, 2002).

The majority (56.7%) of the participants is of the opinion that there are *no areas* or *subjects* in parapsychology for which women are better suited than men. Six (20%) agree and seven (23.3%) are not sure about this issue. They mentioned working with research participants due to better communication skills, also in terms of conducting interviews, and caring (four mentions),<sup>8</sup> and particularly with female practitioners or participants, or male subjects who are shy, frightened or reserved with other men (three mentions). Furthermore, it is mentioned that women are usually more suitable in areas which have to do with feelings, intuition, and groups; that they are more intuitive, which helps to achieve more first-person experience of the phenomena; and that they have more often abilities in fields such as ESP, PK or mediumship – “women are demonstrably more psychic than men,” as a participant stated (two mentions each). Finally, one person wrote that women have easier access to children as study participants or subjects.

The question of whether there were specific *research methods* in parapsychology for which women are better suited than men went in a similar direction, which is why the answers partially

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7 Londa Schiebinger wrote on this issue, “(p)erhaps the worst thing a professional woman can do is to marry a professional man. For many men, marriage is a distinct advantage: married men with families on average earn more money, live longer, and progress faster in their careers than do single men. For a working woman, a family is a liability, extra baggage threatening to drag down her career” (Schiebinger, 1999: 92).

8 The well-known experiment in remote staring research conducted by Marilyn Schlitz and Richard Wiseman would be a telling example for this (Watt et al., 2002).

overlap with those of the previous question. However, only two participants (6.7%) answered yes and another six (20%) were not sure. Again, directly working with participants in experiments, e. g. by setting up a friendly environment, is mentioned twice as well as interviewing and animal studies (one mention each, both with the qualification “possibly”).

There are two statements that we would like to highlight as they may address a core issue of parapsychological research;

- The first is, “I think when dealing with the ‘other side’ women are probably more willing to listen to experiencers.”
- The second is, “I think parapsychology is biased with regards to mediums (among others – like people who have UFO experiences for example) being taken seriously, and or being trained as clinical parapsychologists or researchers — almost as though ‘they’ would decrease the credibility of those in the field.”

These two statements suggest that female researchers may tend to be more open to alternative world models and epistemologies than their male counterparts. What can be seen as an advantage in an ontologically difficult field of research raises problems with conventional parapsychological methodology and epistemology oriented to orthodox mainstream science. The awareness of this conflict is also expressed in the following statement, with which the participant directly supplemented the first quote: “But as for actual research methods, they must be scientifically based and reproducible or they lose scientific validity.”

### *Sexual Intimidation*

Fortunately, the majority of our participants, 90%, did not report that they had to experience anything of this nature. However, one must take into account that the question of what exactly is understood by sexual intimidation may be answered quite differently among women. Sexual intimidation inevitably comes up when addressing gender issues related to work and careers. Age and cultural, and even political, background can play a decisive role, among others; with 58.5 years, the average age in our sample is high. Lifetime prevalence varies considerably between 11% and 72%, depending on the study design, population, work sector etc. (Jonsdottir et al., 2022). An Australian study reported a prevalence of 46% of sexual harassment among women working in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) sector (Science and Technology Australia, 2019). Considering our unique survey sample, during the time when the older participants started their careers, some things were perhaps tolerated that would nowadays be clearly understood as sexual intimidation or harassment. The following two statements show the ambiguity of what exactly falls under sexual intimidation.

I am not sure if it was sexual – but I was told by my dept. head when I wanted to teach a course in [...] to our premed majors that no one would sign up – and I should make it for nonmajors. When I insisted, it was a packed course.

This participant did not answer yes to the question about experienced sexual intimidation. The woman, who made the following description, answered yes: “I don’t know if this counts, but a few male colleagues hug me longer than I am comfortable with and generally invade my personal space at conferences.” However, there was also this statement, “Sexually harassed by a fairly big presenter at SSE/IRVA in 2016. No other incidents,” which needs no comment. One of the three women who reported being sexually intimidated talked about several incidents of ugly and rude male behavior, the contents of which included an angry e-mail post from a man complaining that “there are too many people on the board who are now women and someone needed to get these ‘witches’ off.” This was not the worst incident. One can only hope that these are now major exceptions caused by unreceptive men.

### *Differences and Changes*

We asked for an assessment if the situation in parapsychology is different from the position women have in science in general. The difficulties, obstacles and intimidations mentioned above are reported from basically all kinds of workplace situations. Seven participants (23.3%) agreed and eight (26.7%) were not sure. Half the women of the sample do not think that there is a difference. Working in a field that many do not take seriously multiplies already existing problems that women in science face, was the most mentioned statement about differences (five mentions). Funding problems of parapsychology, for instance, are even worse for women due to the additional childbearing and childrearing responsibilities. One woman wrote, “I believe there is such an aversion to being seen as a stereotypical psychic, that men are very concerned [about] women who do psychic work in addition to parapsychology are going to make them look foolish or hurt the field.” There were two mentions that the proportion of males and females is worse in parapsychology than in science in general. A statement: “There are only few women in parapsychological research, although 80% women study psychology.” However, another person of parapsychology and related fields wrote,

I think science is a more male-oriented field and parapsychology isn’t, as far as I can tell. There are plenty of female astrologers who are leading in their field as well as female NDE researchers and spiritual teachers. I find women are already prominent in the fields I study.

This quote may identify a problem with defining parapsychology. For this participant, astrologers and spiritual teachers seem to correspond to parapsychology, which of course results in a differ-

ent picture than if only investigators of the core topics of parapsychology, i. e. of psi phenomena like precognition, clairvoyance and psychokinesis, are included.

During the 1991 conference, Rhea White spoke of a “feminist approach to parapsychology” (White, 1994). We asked in our survey if the term “feminist parapsychology” from the 1990s means anything for the participants. Only two women (6.7%) answered yes, three (10%) were not sure. But two stated that they were curious or intrigued what it could mean. One woman commented, “I haven’t heard that term but my objectivity has been called into question by critics of my work because they label me as a feminist.”

Half the survey participants saw no changes for women in the field of parapsychology in recent years. Nine (30%) were not sure. Six (20%) noticed changes; the most often mentioned was that there are more women in this field; additionally, the number of publications by qualified women authors has increased. The assumption of leadership and responsibility in important international parapsychological associations was also seen as a positive development. One participant stated, “I feel more supported with more women around.” Another relayed,

I see the field is still predominately male, but I see many successful women psi researchers as well who are also inspiring. I would like to see more women in the field, but ultimately we need more talented, smart, skilled, dedicated people from all/any genders and sociodemographic characteristics.

Most of the noticed changes were classified as positive or neutral. Only one woman mentioned a negative change. She also classified the same change as positive. She wrote as a comment to noticed positive changes, “more awareness to our field as it’s gotten some mainstream attention (which is also negative).” There seems to be an interesting thought behind this, namely that greater visibility, such as that which comes automatically with significant growth, has disadvantages alongside the obvious advantages.

### ***Some Exploratory Inferential Statistical Data***

Due to the lack of hypotheses and a small sample, we largely dispensed with inferential statistics and limited ourselves to descriptive statistics. For exploratory purposes, we calculated a few correlations and sub-group comparisons as well, which, however, only can provide hints for further research. We calculated Spearman rank order correlations between the variables “age,” “years of involvement in parapsychology” (ordinal scale), “percent of professional life involving parapsychology,” and “number of articles in peer-reviewed academic journals or scholarly books” (ordinal scale). Table 11 shows the results.



<i>Spearman's rho</i>	Age ( <i>n</i> = 29)	Years of Involvement ( <i>n</i> = 30)	Percent of Professional Life ( <i>n</i> = 30)
Years of Involvement	$r = 0.47; p = 0.01^{**}$		
Percent of Professional life	$r = -0.29; p = 0.12$	$r = -0.02; p = 0.91$	
Publications Academic/Scholarly	$r = 0.09; p = 0.65$	$r = 0.29; p = 0.12$	$r = 0.30; p = 0.10$

**Table 11.** Correlations between age, years of involvement in parapsychological research, percent of professional life involving parapsychology, and number of academic or scholarly publications.

The highly significant correlation between age and years of “involvement in parapsychology” was to be expected. There is no significant correlation between age and “number of academic publications,” and none between “years of involvement” and “percent of professional life.” Thus, older women in the sample who are long involved have little published. However, “involvement” and “professional life” correlate moderately with the “number of academic publications,” although not significantly due to the small *n*. This is not surprising either. The more interesting result is the lack of an association between years of involvement in parapsychology and the percentage of professional life involving parapsychology. One can be involved in parapsychological research for many years without it being reflected as a significant part of professional life. We think this is not unique to women in parapsychology, but is a general feature of this field of research that hinges on the lack of jobs and funding in the field. Many once-active researchers will lower their percentage of time or stop working in the field during their “career” years but come back in retirement as full-time workers.

Subgroups with “yes” and “no” answers for each of four variables were formed. The four items were, (1) “Have you experienced situational *disadvantage* in your professional life that you connect with being a woman?” (2) “Have you encountered *obstacles* that you think male researchers may not have?” (3) “Have you encountered *advantages* that you think male researchers may not have?” and (4) “[Do] you believe there are [positive] changes [for women in the field of parapsychology in recent years]?”

It was calculated if the subgroups differ significantly in terms of mean age (interval scale), length of involvement in parapsychological research (ordinal scale), percent of professional life involving parapsychology (interval scale), and number of published articles in peer-reviewed academic journals or scholarly books on this research (ordinal scale). T-tests were used for the two interval-scaled variables, and Mann–Whitney U tests for the ordinate-scaled variables. Tables 12–15 show the results.

<b>Disadvantages</b>	<i>n</i> (yes/no)	mean <sup>a</sup> / mean of scale <sup>b</sup> (yes/no)	<i>T</i> (df) <sup>a</sup> / <i>Z</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>p</i>
Age	12/14	<sup>a</sup> 54.75/59.00	<sup>a</sup> -0.710 (24)	0.485
Involvement	13/14	<sup>b</sup> 4.31/3.86	<sup>b</sup> -0.644	0.520
Percent Professional Life	13/14	<sup>a</sup> 50.38/39.29	<sup>a</sup> 0.745 (25)	0.463
Publications	13/14	<sup>b</sup> 4.08/2.57	<sup>b</sup> -2.175	0.030*
<b>Obstacles</b>				
Age	6/16	<sup>a</sup> 61.00/57.25	<sup>a</sup> 0.500 (20)	0.622
Involvement	7/16	<sup>b</sup> 4.71/3.69	<sup>b</sup> -1.431	0.152
Percent Professional Life	7/16	<sup>a</sup> 48.57/35.00	<sup>a</sup> 0.791 (21)	0.438
Publications	7/16	<sup>b</sup> 5.14/2.50	<sup>b</sup> -3.063	0.002**
<b>Advantages</b>				
Age	5/20	<sup>a</sup> 52.40/62.00	<sup>a</sup> -1.308 (23)	0.204
Involvement	5/21	<sup>b</sup> 3.40/4.38	<sup>b</sup> -1.561	0.119
Percent Professional Life	5/21	<sup>a</sup> 61.00/36.67	<sup>a</sup> 1.429 (24)	0.166
Publications	5/21	<sup>b</sup> 3.40/3.19	<sup>b</sup> -0.264	0.791
<b>Changes for women in parapsychology (positive)</b>				
Age	12/17	<sup>a</sup> 53.25/62.12	<sup>a</sup> -1.560 (27)	0.130
Involvement	13/17	<sup>b</sup> 3.77/4.35	<sup>b</sup> -1.152	0.249
Percent Professional Life	13/17	<sup>a</sup> 37.31/52.35	<sup>a</sup> -1.077 (28)	0.291
Publications	13/17	<sup>b</sup> 3.31/3.18	<sup>b</sup> -0.426	0.670

**Tables 12–15.** Disadvantages, obstacles, advantages, and positive changes related to age, length of involvement into parapsychological research, percent of professional life involving parapsychology and number of published articles in peer-reviewed academic journals or scholarly books.

Due to the low *n*, only two values reach the level of significance, despite the occasional considerable differences in mean values or mean of scale values. And even these two should be viewed with caution, since no Bonferroni correction was applied. In this respect, a look at Tables 12–15 can only serve to form hypotheses. With all due caution, however, it appears that above all the number of scientific publications is a predictor for the experience of disadvantages and obstacles due to being a woman. Experiencing benefits as a woman or observing positive developments for women in parapsychology, on the other hand, does not seem to be related to this variable at all. Considering the demand of authoring publications for a scientific career, the

connection of experiencing disadvantages and obstacles due to being a woman makes sense. Career breaks to raise children, domestic chores, and more difficult work-life balance are only the most obvious disadvantages and obstacles that have a particularly strong impact on the necessity to write publications (Zingrone, 1988).

### *Additional Comments*

Participants had the option to write thoughts or comments on the subject of “women and parapsychology” that were not addressed in the survey in a comment box at the very end of the questionnaire. A number of participants used this opportunity. It is not easy to cluster them thematically.

A theme mentioned several times is the question of funding and the more difficult economic situation for women. A woman wrote, “as a childless researcher, it is currently still possible for me to have several jobs to finance my research. Once I have children, this will no longer be possible. Then I can only try to predict the lottery numbers.” Another one stated, “finally, most of my obstacles have stemmed more from my economic situation than my gender. It may be worthwhile to think about where women’s issues and economic issues converge.” And a last quote, “it might also be worth examining general funding patterns.”

Three participants addressed transgender issues. One person considered, “I think it is important to ask men in the field to put some time into this level of reflection, and also to consider the viewpoints of trans and non-binary identifying people,” while another woman wrote,

I have had a lot of struggles in the field, many of which were entirely unexpected. They include intellectual property theft, gaslighting, and abuse of power. However, it is difficult to specifically attribute these situations to being a woman vs. general toxicity in academic culture.

The last point of the quote shows that it is sometimes not clear if obstacles and difficulties women researchers experienced are actually (only) based on gender. A further statement supports the idea that there could be structural problems or a “general toxicity” in academia:

I would say a disadvantage I’ve experienced has to do with an attempt at exploitation from someone in a senior position (who happens to be a woman) – not because I’m a woman but because of my position. That has caused me a lot more stress compared to being a woman researcher in parapsychology (which I would say has been neutral so far).

Another researcher stated that “cultural differences – the east-west factors – rather than gender issues sometimes play a greater role.” A further comment highlighted, “if you know what you are talking about, it gets recognized, although you occasionally see the same issues of jealousy

(whether with colleagues or ghost hunter groups) that are part of human nature and unrelated to gender.” These quotes show a differentiated understanding of the problem instead of a simplifying explanatory model focused on blame. They display a reflexive and humanistic approach to gender issues.

The still unresolved problem of a clear and unambiguous definition of parapsychology has also been the subject of comment. One participant would have liked more examples of what parapsychology includes, and another mentioned that she knows women who were not academics but running informal remote viewing experiments. She was “not at all sure if they would even feel qualified to take this survey as the term ‘parapsychologist’ is rather narrowly defined and exclusive.” This quote shows that we have to deal not only with a problem of definition in terms of different areas or aspects of the research field, but also with a problem of status in terms of professionalism, credentialing, and academic localization.

Another interesting comment by a participant: “I saw less bias in parapsychology than in the medical world, where I started my career.” This statement suggests that the situation for women in parapsychology appears to be better than in other areas of science, at least than in medicine. For example, when it comes to sexual intimidation, data recently published in medical journals support this statement (Grant-Kels, 2021). A survey among 2458 physicians in Great Britain “found that 91% of women doctors had experienced sexism at work” (Bagenal & Baxter, 2022: 1030) – an alarming number. Ten percent of the participants of our survey reported the experience of sexual intimidation at work in the field of parapsychology. Of course, that is still 10% too much.

In a final comment to be cited here, one participant wrote, “If the male/female proportion of parapsychologists matched the male/female proportion of the general public interested in things paranormal, women would dominate the field.” This remark raises the question of the implications of gender disproportionality between publicly expressed interest and involvement in the paranormal and research in the field. Considering that there are significantly more women than men studying psychology in the U.S. (Fowler et al., 2018), this finding cannot be reduced to a generally lower willingness of women to engage with subjects of their interest in an academic setting. A closer look at the psychology data reveals that the largest imbalances in favor of female students are in the health service subfields (school, clinical, counseling) and in the research subfield of developmental psychology. This suggests that an important purpose for studying psychology could be its non-scientific application.<sup>9</sup> With a strong interest in the paranormal, it is not easy to combine academic study, research and practice, e.g. working as a medium. The psi phenomena themselves are critically examined

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9 See, for example, Pastwa-Wojciechowska and Chybicka (2022) on factors influencing careers of female psychologists.

from a scientific perspective and so is the practice itself. In this respect, one can even assume that some individuals see scientific parapsychological research as a threat to their interest in the paranormal, including its integration into practice or everyday life – a conflict that, however, does not only affect women.

### *Discussion*

A quote from a survey participant highlights complications that seem to occur if parapsychology researchers also work as mediums, “almost as though ‘they’ would decrease the credibility of those in the field.” This quote hints at a point that partially shifts the focus on the gender issue. We can see that the androcentric approach to parapsychology (White, 1994), as made strong by J.B. Rhine in his attempt to normalize parapsychology (Mayer & Schetsche, 2016), led to a devaluation of personal experience for research. Moreover, the inclusion of particularly gifted experimental participants – so-called psychic virtuosi – was perceived as a methodological risk due to the problem of fraud (Braude, 1986: 9f.). Many theories in parapsychology use concepts or at least terminology (since the middle of the last century) that developed compatibility with models of physics including quantum mechanics (Stokes, 1987). Even if terms such as “information,” “meaning,” and “spirit” are used, the trains of thought and metaphors remain largely oriented towards physical processes and dimensions such as the “space-time structure.”<sup>10</sup> Douglas Stokes, who reviewed such models of psi phenomena, devoted less than nine pages of his extensive 112-page book chapter to theories of survival (ibid.: 181–189). This clearly shows that the survival hypothesis in parapsychological research was minor during this time and previously. If we look at the techniques used by gifted individuals to obtain information through paranormal means, we find a more or less accepted variant: Remote Viewing, developed in a male military context, worked with a fixed protocol and using coordinates. Here, too, we have a strong formal approximation to exact methods of natural sciences, even if the mechanisms underlying Remote Viewing do not become clearer because of that and are still not understood.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, psychics or mediums who seek to obtain information in paranormal ways or to contact the deceased tend to be shunned or disregarded by the parapsychological mainstream. This different assessment is fundamentally based on ideological arguments or preferences, rather than on scientific facts. The statement “... almost as though ‘they’

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10 This problem was pointed out by the French astronomer and computer scientist Jacques Vallée in his J.B. Rhine address “The Software of Consciousness” at the 2018 Convention of the Parapsychological Association in Petaluma. He considers it a mistake, “a trap,” for parapsychology to turn exclusively to physicists to explain how psi works. “Psi research should lead, not follow physics,” he said.

11 Michael Nahm is a German biologist, parapsychologist and colleague at the IGPP, who brought this point to our attention. We thank him.

would decrease the credibility of those in the field” addresses precisely this point of implied and unjustified ideological rejection, on the one hand. On the other hand, there are many mediums and clairvoyants who have no interest in a critical scientific investigation of mediumship or other psi-related phenomena and their underlying mechanisms. They see their faith as the foundation and necessary condition for the functioning of their practice (Leverett, 2020), which can lead to a great deal of gullibility from a scientific point of view.

A prior mentioned quote points to this problem for women researchers in parapsychology: “I think when dealing with the ‘other side’ women are probably more willing to listen to experiencers. But as for actual research methods, they must be scientifically based and reproducible or they lose scientific validity.” This statement suggests that women researchers more than male counterparts tend to be more open to models of the world that deviate from physicalist-materialistic models of mainstream science. In addition, they seem less apprehensive when writing openly about their own extraordinary experiences in the field of science, as the example of Fanny Moser shows (Schmied-Knittel, 2022, this issue).<sup>12</sup> All this leads us to the thesis that it is not the gender piece directly responsible for disapproving attitudes and inappropriate behavior of male colleagues, but rather a greater openness to worldviews and heterodox research topics outside the scientific mainstream, openly advocated by some female researchers.<sup>13</sup> The fear of not being recognized as equal by the scientific mainstream leads to strong demarcation efforts against deviating positions, to boundary work (Gieryn, 1999) that excludes the more open and alternative positions, seemingly more often held by women. We are aware that in doing so we run the risk of reintroducing gender stereotypes, which can also be found in the comments of the participants.<sup>14</sup> However, research shows that there is a gender difference in paranormal beliefs (Irwin, 2009) and esoteric practice (Höllinger & Smith, 2002; Sinabell & Wohlfahrt, 2005).

It is important to consider the limitations of this study. We have a highly selective group of scientists, non-representative of all women in parapsychology. We do not have comparison data from men in parapsychology. For this reason, our data do not allow us to draw conclusions about gender differences. In addition, the qualitative data are assessments based on personal, perhaps not very recent, experiences and are thus also easily susceptible to bias. For example,

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12 This goes in line with Louisa Rhine’s conclusion “that at least women report their psychic experiences more frequently than men” (Hess, 1988: 344; cf. Rhine, 1961: 121).

13 Even a statement such as “there are too many people on the board who are now women and someone needed to get these ‘witches’ off” can be seen in this light, in addition to the misogynist connotation. Targeted as a witch means one is said to have a connection to “the other side” or to forces outside of science (e.g., Favred-Saada, 1980). See also Zingrone (1994) for a historical perspective on males’ view on the role of women in society and “images of woman as medium.”

14 cf. Johnston, 2015, on gender stereotypes linked to “occult” or esoteric practices.

a statement that the proportion of women in parapsychology is larger today, may be based on a misjudgment, since there is no reliable data on the actual gender distribution. Moreover, according to a male scientist's feedback who learned about the results, if we had asked men about career disadvantages they associate with being a man, we might have gotten very similar answers on some points. In this respect, such data primarily provide a picture of the state of mind of the participants, which, however, has its value in itself and can be used to form hypotheses.

The average age and level of education is very high in our sample, as is the degree of professionalization. This is not surprising given our survey recruitment through the appropriate professional association e-mail lists and websites. Although associations such as the PA with high entry requirements now offer supporting memberships for non-academics, the questionnaire was aimed at active researchers and teachers, which is reflected in the data. The annual membership fees that have to be paid to the associations assume a specific interest in this research. It makes membership for those who are not wholeheartedly interested in scientific research on these topics and phenomena less likely.

The problem of defining parapsychology and thus the related fields challenged us with questioning who felt addressed, to which group distribution lists the survey invitation was sent, and where the response was particularly high, e. g. on the field of survival or of remote viewing. Due to these limitations, among other things, the survey did not provide complete clarity as to whether parapsychology differed from other disciplines with regard to the status and situation of women. Comparable to the situation of women in other research fields is that women in parapsychology have to make greater efforts to be taken seriously by male colleagues, this can slow down their careers in addition to career interruptions due to raising children. Often greater difficulties balancing work and family life are embedded in these situations for women. And let's not forget the differences in pay in academia. According to some participants, working in a field that many do not take seriously multiplies the problems that women in science already face. Funding complications and perhaps, stereotyping and stigmatizing through general ideological suspicion of women being naïve and unsophisticated as scientists are damaging roadblocks that women encounter.<sup>15</sup>

A positive for the field of parapsychology is the relatively low proportion (10%) of women who reported sexual intimidation or harassment. This proportion is far below the numbers found in studies of other professional situations. However, this result has to be qualified with a caveat: we mentioned the problem of the contingency of age, cultural and political background already in the respective section. Although we asked about lifetime prevalence, one cannot easily com-

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15 See Zingrone (1994) for a historical perspective on males' view on the role of women in society and the relationship to mediumship.

pare the experiences of today's older women in their younger years and how they remember and report them with those of today's young women because of the different cultural situations. Another important point to consider is that we have a large proportion of independently working participants (63.3%). This shows that the figures are not comparable with those from studies that collected data from workplace situations. Therefore a lower number is to be expected.

Another positive aspect could be that the percentage of women who are not properly credited as authors is probably lower in parapsychology than in science in general. This means that the amount of work to a paper was more than the indicated authorship level on the article. Nine (40.9%) of the respondents ( $n=22$ ) to this question experienced this never, another three (13.6%) only in 5% of the publications. In only two cases (9%) this happened basically with all publications. Unfortunately, no suitable comparative values were available to us and we can only derive this assumption from approximate indications from other studies. Ross et al. (2022), for example, report that 43% of female respondents in their survey have experienced disqualification from authorship of work they directly collaborated on.<sup>16</sup>

The question about the inspirations that led to entering the field is interesting because we have a selective sample with many long-time female researchers. Prominent researchers and teachers in parapsychology were mentioned most frequently, followed by personal experiences with psi phenomena. Experiencing good models and one's own experience of extraordinary phenomena seems to be of central importance in this research field, which is strongly driven by an idealistic motivation. This strong idealism is reflected in the amount of unpaid work done by our participants. It can be assumed that the proportion of unpaid work among male colleagues is also high, since parapsychological research as a whole is chronically underfunded, but it may be higher among women. However, there are no comparative figures.

Whether the experiential aspect is more important to female parapsychologists than to male parapsychologists also cannot be determined based on the survey data. But it would be an interesting future research question, as one would like to see a similar survey for men and an expanded sample in general. It would also be interesting to investigate what influence the changed media situation with the almost unmanageable range of online presentations and courses will have on the inspiration for entering the field and provoking enduring interest in this kind of research. This would be a research question for the future too.

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16 This was also the case with 38% male researchers – significantly less than with female researchers (Ross et al., 2022) but nevertheless an indication for the “general toxicity in academia” as one of our respondents took it.



### **Conclusion**

This exploratory survey primarily provides data that can be used to generate hypotheses. Despite the selective sample and limited generalizability, the items asked in the survey may be stimulating for the reader. The results of the survey revealed not a very dynamic direction for women in parapsychology. Many things seem to be the same or similar, some perhaps worse, hardly anything better. In parapsychology and related fields of research, women also suffer from the usual structural disadvantages that are well known from other areas. So far so bad. Some things can hardly be solved in parapsychology as a discipline, since general social problems are involved. However, where parapsychologists, male or female, do not escape their responsibility is the demand for more ideological openness and flexibility, the lack of which too often leads to disadvantageous treatment of female scientists in this field of research. This should by no means be seen as merely a necessary concession. It could well turn out to be a helpful or even imperative broadening of the ideological horizon for parapsychology, offering a way out of methodological and theoretical dead ends.

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### *Appendix*

<b>Bachelor</b>	<b>Master</b>	<b>Doctoral</b>
Psychology (6)	Psychology (6)	Psychology (9)
Anthropology (4)	Education (2)	Philosophy (2)
Music (3)	Sociology (2)	Anthropology (1)
Journalism (2)	Anthropology (1)	Atmospheric Science (1)
Accounting (1)	Asian studies (1)	Cell and Molecular Biology (1)
Atmospheric & Oceanic Science (1)	Biology (1)	Laser Raman Spectroscopy and Polymers (1)
Biology (1)	Clinical research (1)	Human Science (1)
Cartography/Geography (1)	Consciousness Studies (1)	Literature (1)
Child Development (1)	Literature (1)	Naturopathic Physician (ND) (1)
Elementary education (1)	Mathematics (1)	Neuroanatomy (1)
English (1)	Physics (1)	Pharmacology and Toxicology (1)
Environmental Sciences (1)	Social Work (1)	
Literature (1)		
Philosophy (1)		
Physics and Mathematics (1)		
Religious studies (1)		
Statistics (1)		

**Table I (appendix).** Discipline or fields of study where the university degrees were achieved. Multiple entries were possible, major and minor not distinguished. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of participants in each research field.

The occupation at the time of the survey or before retirement includes a variety of *professions* or *activities* and is displayed in the following list. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of participants in the positions. Multiple entries were possible.

- Researcher/Research Associate/scholar (11)
- Professor (7)
- Author / Writer (6)
- Editor (3)
- Educator / Teacher (3)
- Entrepreneur (3)

- Administrator (3)
- Counseling/Consultant (2)
- Public affairs/communication manager/ social media management (2)
- Attorney (1)
- Board director
- Government work (1)
- Librarian (1)
- Pastor (1)
- Project assistant (1)
- Psychologist (1)
- Webmaster (1)

The following *job titles* or *specializations* as academic scholars or researchers were mentioned:

- Research associate (4)
- College professor (3)
- Department chair (2)
- Director of research (2)
- Co-director of research (1)
- Senior research specialist (1)
- Intermediate research specialist (1)
- Chief data scientist (1)
- Associate professor (1)
- Highschool professor (1)
- Head of library (1)
- Field researcher (1)
- Guest lecturer (1)

<b>Courses, trainings or workshops in the field of parapsychology</b>		
<i>n</i>	<i>Field/area</i>	<i>Institutions / Associations</i>
14	parapsychology	Rhine, IONS, IGPP, and others
4	remote viewing	
3	consciousness studies	Monroe Institute, JF Kennedy Univ.
3	NDE/reincarnation/survival	IANDS
5	alternative healing methods	
1	witchcraft/magic (anthropological course)	

**Table II (appendix).** Courses, trainings or workshops in the field of parapsychology and related areas. Multiple entries were possible.

## Frauen und Parapsychologie 2022 – Eine Online-Umfrage

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung*

1991 organisierte die Parapsychology Foundation eine internationale Konferenz zum Thema “Frauen und Parapsychologie” [Women and Parapsychology] in Dublin/Irland. 30 Jahre nach dieser Konferenz wollten wir Forscherinnen nach ihren gegenwärtigen Erfahrungen als Frauen im Forschungsfeld der Parapsychologie und der Anomalistik befragen und eine Einschätzung der Situation erlangen. Dazu gestalteten wir eine Online-Umfrage, die Daten zum wissenschaftlichen Werdegang, zur Veröffentlichung von Artikeln, zu Beiträgen auf dem Gebiet der Parapsychologie bzw. Anomalistik und zu spezifischen geschlechtsspezifischen Erfahrungen erhob. Wir haben den Link zu dem umfangreichen Online-Fragebogen über mehrere E-Mail-Listen und Websites verbreitet und auch gezielt an Einzelpersonen verschickt. 30 Frauen füllten den Fragebogen aus. Die Aussagekraft der Daten ist insofern begrenzt, als keine Vergleichswerte aus zurückliegenden Jahren sowie von männlichen Forschern vorliegen und auch die Anzahl der im Feld aktiven Forscherinnen unbekannt ist. Da wir neben quantitativen auch qualitative Daten erhoben haben, konnte dennoch ein informatives Bild gewonnen werden.

Unsere selektive, nicht repräsentative Stichprobe hatte ein hohes Durchschnittsalter (58,5 Jahre) und Bildungsniveau (alle Teilnehmerinnen mit akademischem Abschluss, 73,3% mit Dokortitel). 63,3% beschäftigten sich mindestens seit 10 Jahren mit parapsychologischer Forschung. 33,3% bekamen Dreiviertel oder mehr ihrer Arbeit in diesem Feld bezahlt, während 43,3% für nur Einviertel oder weniger eine Bezahlung erhielten. Ungefähr gleich viele Teilnehmerinnen bejahten (43,3%) bzw. verneinten (46,7%) die Frage, ob sie *Nachteile* in ihrer Tätigkeit erfahren hätten, die sie mit ihrem Geschlecht in Verbindung bringen. Größer hingegen ist der Prozentsatz der Frauen, die *Hindernisse* auf Grund ihres Geschlechts bejahten (53,3%),

während nur 23,3% dies verneinen. Nur 16,7% geben an, Vorteile als Frau erfahren zu haben. Wir führten exploratorische statistische Berechnungen durch, um zu sehen, inwiefern die Variablen Alter, Jahre der Involviertheit, der Anteil dieser Forschung am Berufsleben und die Anzahl der Publikationen mit dem Erleben von Nachteilen, Hindernissen und Vorteilen zusammenhängen. Zwar ließen sich deutliche Mittelwertsunterschiede feststellen, die jedoch aufgrund der geringen Größe des Samples nicht signifikant waren. Der einzige signifikante Prädiktor für das Erfahren von Hindernissen und Nachteilen, die mit dem Geschlecht in Zusammenhang gebracht wurden, war die Anzahl wissenschaftlicher Publikationen: Je mehr Publikationen eine Forscherin hatte, desto größer war die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass sie Nachteile und Hindernisse berichtete.

Die Hälfte der Teilnehmerinnen verneinte die Frage, ob sich die Position der Frauen in der Parapsychologie von derjenigen in der Wissenschaft allgemein unterscheidet, während 23,3% dies bejahten. Die restlichen 26,7% waren sich darüber unsicher. Ein Punkt, der genannt wurde, war, dass sich die Probleme, denen die Parapsychologie an sich schon ausgesetzt ist, für Frauen noch multiplizieren.

Aufgrund der oben genannten Einschränkungen lieferte die Umfrage keine vollständige Klarheit darüber, ob sich die Parapsychologie im Hinblick auf den Status und die Situation von Frauen von anderen Disziplinen unterscheidet. Einige Aspekte sind mit der Situation von Frauen in anderen Forschungsbereichen vergleichbar. Wie im Allgemeinen in der Wissenschaft üblich, werden Frauen tendenziell schlechter bezahlt, sie müssen sich mehr anstrengen, um von männlichen Kollegen ernst genommen zu werden, was ihre Karriere verlangsamen kann, dazu kommen Karriereunterbrechungen aufgrund von Kindererziehung, größere Schwierigkeiten, Beruf und Familie unter einen Hut zu bringen, usw. Wir fanden einen relativ geringen Anteil (10 %) von Frauen, die über sexuelle Einschüchterung oder Belästigung im Bereich der Parapsychologie berichteten. Ebenfalls scheint der Anteil der Frauen, deren Autorschaft bei Publikationen nicht rechtmäßig gewürdigt wird, in der Parapsychologie geringer als in anderen Forschungsbereichen zu sein. Hingegen sind die allgemeinen Finanzierungsprobleme in der Parapsychologie für Frauen aufgrund der zusätzlichen Kindererziehungspflichten und der weniger institutionalisierten Forschung noch größer.

Einige Befunde führen zu der These, dass nicht unbedingt der Geschlechteraspekt an sich für unangemessenes Verhalten männlicher Kollegen verantwortlich sein könnte. Vielmehr könnte eine größere Offenheit für Weltanschauungen und heterodoxe Forschungsgegenstände außerhalb des wissenschaftlichen Mainstreams eine entscheidende Rolle spielen. Eine solche Offenheit, die tendenziell eher bei Frauen zu finden sein könnte, löst Ängste und Abgrenzungsbemühungen bei denjenigen Wissenschaftlern und Wissenschaftlerinnen aus, die die parapsychologische Forschung möglichst am Ideal einer objektiven und am Mainstream experimenteller Laborforschung orientierten Wissenschaft ausrichten wollen. Diese These muss in weiteren Studien validiert werden.

# Feminizing the Paranormal

CHRISTINE SIMMONDS-MOORE<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – This paper discusses how the discipline of parapsychology should acknowledge and integrate attributes from its shadow in order to grow. More women and feminine scholars should be encouraged into the field, and feminine approaches should be integrated with traditional masculine approaches in a *both/and* approach which draws from transpersonal psychology. This perspective is informed by the observation that psi phenomena are relational, embodied, meaningful, and participatory and rest on healthy connections that can be nurtured by integrating multiple perspectives, methodologies, and ways of knowing.

*Keywords:* shadow – integration – both/and approach – psi phenomena – connections – interdisciplinary – mixed methods

## Feminisierung des Paranormalen

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – In diesem Beitrag wird erörtert, wie die Parapsychologie Attribute aus ihrem Schatten anerkennen und integrieren sollte, um zu wachsen. Es sollten mehr Frauen und weibliche Wissenschaftler in diesem Bereich gefördert werden, und weibliche Ansätze sollten mit traditionellen männlichen Ansätzen in einem *Sowohl-als-auch*-Ansatz integriert werden, der sich auf die transpersonale Psychologie stützt. Diese Perspektive beruht auf der Beobachtung, dass Psi-Phänomene relational, verkörpert, bedeutungsvoll und partizipatorisch sind und auf gesunden Verbindungen beruhen, die durch die Integration verschiedener Perspektiven, Methoden und Wissensformen gefördert werden können.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Schatten – Integration – Sowohl-als-auch-Ansatz – Psi-Phänomene – Verbindungen – Interdisziplinarität – “mixed methods”-Design

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2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung befindet sich am Ende des Artikels.



### *Feminizing the Paranormal – Introduction*

There are several significant, enduring and often innovative contributions associated with what might be designated as *feminine* approaches in parapsychology (intuitive thinking, somatic knowing, connections, relationships, subjectivity, and qualitative approaches) and from women doing traditional parapsychological (quantitative) research. In this paper, I will note that these feminine approaches should be integrated with masculine approaches in a manner that can essentially be defined as *both/and*. This is a concept borrowed from transpersonal psychology that retains and honors critical thinking, methodological tightness and values knowledge from experiments and other quantitative approaches whilst also honoring first person experiences, meaning-making and non-verbal ways of knowing, among others. This is not to disparage traditional approaches, but rather acknowledges many ways of knowing and that different methodologies can lend different and potentially new insights into exceptional experiences. New insights can be made by applying a range of quantitative, qualitative, mixed and innovative methodologies. Feminine approaches also encourage participatory-extended (e.g., Ferrer, 2011), and systems approaches toward understanding psi phenomena, which are inherently about relationships and different forms of connection. These approaches can also move research outside of the laboratory and seek to understand, empower, destigmatize and heal (people and the environment). As a discipline, parapsychology will also benefit from engaging in more interdisciplinary conversations and moving beyond binary ways of thinking.

Despite its methodological integrity, dexterity, and innovation compared to other disciplines exploring consciousness, parapsychology still holds a liminal status, which may be harder for women to occupy. This could become easier when more boundaries are crossed, more connections are made to the mainstream and society, and more support and space are given to emerging and current voices. Parapsychology will benefit from actively encouraging more women from diverse backgrounds into the field and helping them to remain there.

Although there are historically and currently several prominent female figures in parapsychology, there are some important voices who have not remained in the field. I will discuss some of the reasons why (many) women are less likely to stay in parapsychology or remain at its edges.

The paper begins by articulating the need for parapsychology to integrate its shadow, then discusses the role of women in parapsychology, the liminal and paradoxical status of parapsychology and the complexities and contradictions of masculine and feminine attributes associated with paranormal cognitions and psi phenomena. It is noted that psi phenomena are inherently liminal and should be studied from multiple perspectives to explore them more

fully. I then discuss connectivity as being at the heart of feminine approaches to the paranormal and that connectedness should be encouraged in a balanced or *both/and* manner alongside rationality and metacognition (akin to expressing greater tolerance of ambiguity). Suggestions are made for methodological developments in the field, which draw from feminine ways of knowing and the encouragement of healthy connectivity.

### *Integrating the Shadow*

The idea of the Jungian shadow is important for parapsychology. There is a need to better integrate women, feminine ways of thinking, methodological approaches and attributes with the dominant masculine characteristics of parapsychology. Within an individual, Jung has noted that the conscious and visible persona that is overtly exhibited has a corresponding shadow side that is its unconscious complement. While light is visible and dominates, darkness lacks illumination or acknowledgement and may be hidden or repressed; rendering what exists there as silent (cf. Daniels, 2021). Sometimes such *shadow* components might also be projected outward as negative attributes (onto others). In short, there is a kind of dissociation or lack of integration of [usually integrated] aspects of the self (Spiegel et al., 2011: E19).

The shadow can include negative or unacceptable phenomena as well as the attributes that are associated with human *potential* (the “positive shadow”). The integration of shadow attributes with the visible attributes of the person (Jung’s persona) is important for an individual to flourish. In addition, Jung noted that there is a feminine component within each man (the anima) and a masculine component (the animus) within each woman which should be integrated for “creative achievement.” This integration of opposites suggests the potential for alchemy and innovation; a third way of seeing. The idea of integrating the neglected positive shadow can also be applied to the discipline of parapsychology.

In the context of transpersonal psychology, Daniels (2021) observed several approaches and ways of being that have been neglected. These include depth psychology (access to the unconscious), *extending* approaches (connection with social and environmental others), immanence rather than transcendence, ‘female spirituality,’ indigenous religion, contextualism, fully embodied spirituality, the body, magic, western philosophy, collectivism, spiritual co-creation, integral participation, psychic experiences, pluralism, egalitarianism and suffering, among others. Many of these attributes reflect traditionally feminine qualities (in the West). A similar analysis might be applied to parapsychology and its own shadow. Alvarado (2012) has previously noted the need to explore what has been left out, ignored or unseen in parapsychology. His discussion included women, minorities, non-English language publications and biased

lenses in terms of *presentism*. This has ultimately left certain ideas, voices and perspectives in the metaphorical shadow. It seems that women, indigenous people, knowledge from the past, non-Western research and feminine ways of perceiving and knowing have been pushed (at least to an extent) into the shadow of the discipline. Much research in parapsychology has certainly tended to be WEIRD (Western, educated, and from industrialized, rich, and democratic countries) (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). This pattern is changing, thanks in part to the work of Carlos S. Alvarado who has brought several examples of non-English speaking scholarship to the English-speaking world. Although other changes are happening in the field, parapsychology has tended to honor post-positivism over pluralism; objectivity over subjective experiences; separation from experiences rather than *participation* in experiences; critical thinking, logic and rationality above intuitive processes, and thinking over emotion. Although parapsychology has found that psi phenomena are better measured implicitly and as physiological correlations, more body-based *experiences* could also be studied in relation to psi. This should include illness, pain, and sexual experiences, in addition to body-based experiences that are unique to women including pregnancy, birth, the menstrual cycle, and menopause. It could also be said that psi experiences are relational, occurring in the context of meaningful social connections, rather than existing within a given individual. This is apparent in the “continuing bonds hypothesis” in the context of after death communications (cf. Beischel, 2019), but seems to be at the heart of many psi experiences (see later discussions of the role of social connections and psi as a system). Research methods that can better access the unconscious and somatic knowledge (e.g., methods proposed within transpersonal psychology, see Anderson, 2019), might also be brought into the field. The value of social and political factors and application of findings to environmental issues have also been understudied.

Feminizing the paranormal should embrace ways of thinking and approaches to research that reflect a more participatory and immanent stance. This will involve working *with*, participating *in*, and acknowledging that psi phenomena are fundamentally relational, embodied and outside of rationality. Feminizing the paranormal will ultimately seek to encourage more connections; intrapersonally (including connections to the body) and interpersonally (cultivating relationships and empathy including connections to the environment). These types of connections may lead to enhanced extrapersonal connection, including access to non-local information. This should be done *alongside* existing approaches that value critical thinking and the scientific method in a both/and approach. As a result, parapsychology can become more green, embodied and compassionate. It will draw from multiple ways of knowing and diverse methodologies to understand psi, psi experiences and related phenomena and integrate attributes and approaches that are too easily positioned as opposites.

### *Women in Parapsychology*

Those who identify as female have historically and consistently played a key role in parapsychology, although their work has not always been documented in historical records (cf. Alvarado, 1989). Alvarado's article consciously and mindfully names several key figures in the history of parapsychology including Eleanor Sidgwick, Alice Johnson, Margaret Verrall, Ina Jephson, Eileen Garrett, Louisa Rhine, Gertrude Schmeidler, Betty Humphrey, among others.

Cardeña's (2015) list of eminent figures from history with academic interests in parapsychology also includes a significant minority of women, including Marie Curie, Winifred Coombe Tennant, Dame Edith Louisa Sitwell, Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall, Dame Edith Sophy Lyttelton, Anne Francis, Adila Fachiri, George Eliot, Jelly d'Arányi, Mabel St Clair Stobart, Candace Pert, Margaret Mead, Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, Aniela Jaffé, and Dorothy Tiffany Burlingham. Catherine Crowe is also a noteworthy figure in parapsychology's history, writing about the *Night Side of Nature* in 1848, prior to the establishment of societies that were formally studying parapsychology and psychical phenomena (cf. Alvarado, 2003).

In 1988, Nancy L. Zingrone did a survey of publications in parapsychology by males and females and found that only 18–24% of all publications in parapsychology journals were authored by women. She noted that this pattern echoed that outside of parapsychology. A later publication on the topic of women in parapsychology (Zingrone & Alvarado, 2019) observes that this pattern continues into 21st century parapsychology. They note: "The past is gendered. It is as gendered as the present, with men and women often having clearly different experiences in access to education, job opportunities, social hierarchies in research teams, and recognition of contributions, not to mention expectations of work/life balance or a lack thereof as a measure of success" (p. 287). They recognize that this is not limited to parapsychology but reflects an issue that continues to exist in the postmodern world. A cursory literature search in the summer of 2022 indicates that there is strong and innovative female authorship, but that these authors may not demonstrate consistency in their (parapsychological) outputs over time. Some scholars have left the field for various reasons, including motherhood. It is a hard fact that academic life often involves a choice regarding children and academic life; it is challenging to do both and to do both well. Many women who are active in parapsychology might [choose not to] have children or engage in research around their other commitments or when their children have grown up. Research has to take place around other commitments and academic jobs can often prioritize teaching and administration above research. In his 1989 article, Alvarado also named several specifically female issues, including pregnancy, childcare, etc. that play out within parapsychology and academic life which can cause conflicts with academic roles and duties. It is evidently possible to navigate these conflicts, albeit with sacrifices. Intriguingly, however, I was once asked, "*are you an academic or just a mother*"? I wish I could go back in

time to re-answer that question. It is far too easy to think in terms of defined categories, when we all occupy multiple identities (we are *both/and*). These time conflicts and the liminal status of parapsychology (discussed in the next section) may influence some women to move away from [parapsychological] research or into more consistent and reliable employment that may be more mainstream in its orientation.

At the current juncture there are several female-led research labs. These include that of Dr. Julie Beischel in the USA who is a leading figure in mediumship research (see Duggan, 2020a) and Professor Caroline Watt in Scotland, UK who is the second Koestler Chair of Parapsychology (Duggan, 2020b). Other prominent women in parapsychology include the current president of the Parapsychological Association (Dr. Helané Wahbeh), Lisette Coly (the president of the Parapsychology Foundation), Dr. Sally Rhine Feather (of the Rhine Research Center), Annalisa Ventola (the current Executive Director of both the Parapsychological Association and the Society for Scientific Exploration, who also runs Public Parapsychology); Dr. Nancy L. Zingrone who is a past president of the PA and has worked in close collaboration with her late husband Dr. Alvarado to promote parapsychology via free online education of the public; Dr. Emily Williams Kelly is a long time scholar with significant contributions to issues pertinent to consciousness and the survival of human consciousness; Dr. Julia Mossbridge is past president of the Society for Scientific Exploration and is an expert in both neuroscientific and parapsychological research; Dr. Margaret Moga is the current president of the SSE and a key player in research on energy healing. In addition, Dr. Sonali Bhatt Marwaha is a clinical psychologist who has worked closely with Dr. Edwin May in the dissemination of research in parapsychology and their Multiphasic Model of Precognition (2015) that draws from both neuroscience and physics. As noted earlier, there have been several innovative research approaches brought to the table by female scholars. This is not an exhaustive list, but Dr. Gertrude Schmeidler was at the forefront of fusing psychology with parapsychology and was the first to note the existence of the “sheep-goat” effect (that believers tend to do better at psi, while disbelievers tend to do poorly at psi; see Storm, 2016). Rhea White explored the boundaries between paranormal experiences and other exceptional human experience (EHes) and carved the way for bridges to be built between disciplines. Dr. Jessica Utts is an expert in statistics which she has applied to the outcomes of several key paradigms in the field. Dr. Barbara Lovitts engaged in some innovative research which sought to unpack the sheep-goat effect by telling one group that a psi task was a suboptimal perception task and another that it was a psi task which resulted in a reversed sheep-goat effect (Storm, 2016). Dr. Marilyn Schlitz has also sought to further understand the experimenter effect in collaboration with skeptic, Dr. Richard Wiseman, in addition to many other innovative contributions. More recently, Dr. Nicola Holt has engaged in research that has fused the traditional laboratory experiment with everyday experiences amongst those who are creative practitioners by means of experience sampling methodology (ESM; Holt, 2013).

Parapsychology will only benefit from actively encouraging more women from diverse backgrounds into the field, and in helping them to remain there. It is the responsibility of the field to actively encourage and solicit authorship and participation of female and feminine scholars. For example, a session at a recent pre-conference event on theory in parapsychology included no female voices and no scholars of color. Participation might be encouraged via small grants to support research following childbirth or during summer months when children are off school, and grants to support the writing of proposals for larger grants. There might also be incentives to attend and participate in conferences and other active attempts at inclusion. This field can do better in encouraging diverse voices. The very existence of this special issue draws attention to this ongoing conversation, and sheds light on the shadow. In this post COVID era, greater attendance and participation in global events may be possible due to technology (such as Zoom) that is freely available and allows for pre-recording. Hybrid events fruitfully allow for the unique interactions that are encouraged at conferences and for those with other commitments to catch up at a later time or join a virtual discussion. The pandemic has led to some growth for the outreach of parapsychology, where the PA is successfully running specialized weekend workshops, psi agoras and conferences that are affordable, can be reviewed at convenient times and transcend time zones, as well as financial limitations.

### *Parapsychology and Science*

In this section, I discuss the position of parapsychology as a science, its paradoxical attributes and its liminal acceptability by the mainstream, which may render it more challenging for women to work in the field. Parapsychology is exemplary as a scientific discipline and is a member of the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS). Research includes systematic experiments, correlational research, field research, surveys and interviews and therefore spans from the exploration of subjective experiences to the testing and evaluation of ostensible psi phenomena. To date, parapsychology has found consistent and robust evidence for a range of psi phenomena with effect sizes that are consistent with findings in psychology and other academic disciplines (cf. Cardeña, 2018).

Parapsychology is at the forefront of methodology and self-examination as indicated by quintuple blinding and the use of screening of psychic claimants<sup>3</sup> in experiments (Beischel, Boccuzzi, Biuso & Rock, 2015); the value of pre-registration for parapsychological experiments (Wiseman, Watt & Kornbrot, 2019); the use of meta-analysis (cf. Baptista et al., 2015), and critical self-examination and planning future investigations vis a vis the replication crisis and question-

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3 Research mediums are those whose claims as mediums are substantiated via rigorous pre-testing, rather than including all those who claim to be mediums in mediumship studies.

able research practices (QRPs; cf. Rabeyron, 2020). It is noteworthy that several women are at the forefront in these endeavors. In addition, research in parapsychology has significantly influenced many concepts and ideas in mainstream psychology, including the development of statistical probability, ideas about the unconscious, dissociation, etc. (cf. Alvarado, 2017).

However, despite its methodological excellence and equivalence to other disciplines, parapsychology continues to hold a liminal position in terms of its acceptability by the mainstream. In many ways, parapsychology is itself a *shadow* discipline to its cousin in psychology [among others]. Its shadow status is partially due to its definition as the study of phenomena that currently fall outside of the mainstream scientific ways of understanding reality and that psi phenomena reflect the x factor that is observable when we rule out all normal explanations. It is what is left over when we apply the standard scientific methods. This can both create dissonance regarding scientific methods and leads some to conclude that experimentally demonstrated extrasensory perception is in fact *Error Some Place*, including experimenter fraud (cf. Stokes, 2015). The existence of parapsychology causes unrest in some areas of the mainstream, as when science finds evidence for anomalous phenomena, this challenges science and its findings. It is easier for some to categorize parapsychology as a pseudo-science that can and should be negated, despite its strengths in empirical methodology. Following the publication of Daryl Bem's *Feeling the Future studies* (2011, 2015), this type of unrest was at the heart of the resulting discourse. At the suggestion that the standard methods employed within psychology could find evidence supportive of psi, there was both resistance and upset and a realization that psychology's methods might well be flawed (e.g., Wagenmakers et al., 2011). In response, there has been a movement toward the use of Bayesian methods in science.

It is also true that psi phenomena [by their definition] break the rules of the mainstream. Parapsychologists are very aware of the critical eyes of other, more accepted, disciplines. Perhaps because of this, the discipline has [traditionally] firmly positioned itself as a rational, logical, scientific [masculine] discipline that often separates itself from first person experiences and beliefs that are actually an integral part of the discipline and can be considered to be more feminine attributes.

### *Psi is Liminal*

Psi phenomena do not behave in the same ways as other attributes of the world. Some have discussed the notion that psi is by its nature inherently liminal, and that it might adopt the role of the Trickster archetype (Hansen, 2001) that exists outside of awareness and at the edges of attention and consciousness (Cardena, 2020), *where we are not looking*. This is evident in Carpenter's First Sight Model (e.g., 2004), where psi is always present behind the scenes and is expected to emerge

in liminal states and processes. It is noteworthy that this and other models of psi can be explored using traditional scientific methods (Carpenter et al., 2021) in addition to innovations.

Some have reconsidered psi phenomena as emergent correlations, rather than a concrete phenomenon that is found (cf. Rabeyron, 2020). For example, von Lucadou's Model of Pragmatic Information, nudges us to reconsider psi as emergent properties of entanglement correlations rather than something that is sent or caused and received (see Rabeyron, 2020). In turn, some researchers are adapting their research lenses and exploring psi as *excess correlations* rather than assuming that traditional cause and effect processes are at play (Walach et al., 2020). I discuss psi as a connected system in a later section of this paper.

Parapsychology research also suggests that paranormal belief is a consistent correlate of outcomes in psi studies as observed in the sheep-goat effect (Storm & Tressoldi, 2017) and in experimenter effects (Palmer, 2017). On the one hand, this supports psi phenomena as an intriguing and complex system given that attitudes anomalously influence outcomes. On the other hand, it can be interpreted by critics to suggest that researchers are erroneously finding what they expected to find.

### *Cognitive Deficits, Feminine Intuition and Belief*

Research outside of parapsychology has often focused on cognitive deficits in association with paranormal ideation, i. e., that believers may be *lacking* in many ways. This is implicit in some of the existing measures of paranormal belief where belief in the paranormal reflects anything that falls outside of the mainstream scientific discourse, including superstitions, religious thinking, etc. (the Paranormal Belief Scale, or PBS). Thus, belief is constructed and measured as *anti-scientific*. Other measures of paranormal beliefs reflect parapsychological phenomena, that are more narrowly focused on the subject matter of parapsychology (extrasensory perception, mind matter interactions and the survival hypothesis as measured by the Australian Sheep Goat Scale, ASGS). Both accurately tap into the construct of paranormal belief (Drinkwater et al., 2018). Paranormal beliefs are empirically associated with intuitive thinking, tendencies toward confirmation bias, a reduction in conditional reasoning and tendencies to perceive meaning in randomness (apophenia) (Dean, Akhtar, Gale, Irvine, Grohmann & Laws 2022). This substantiates the view that belief is generally associated with less logical, rational reasoning.

Research has also found that it is more likely (or acceptable) for women to express an explicit belief in (most) paranormal phenomena (e. g., Blackmore, 1994; Drinkwater et al., 2017). Thus, there is something about these phenomena that appeals more to women than men. Ward and King (2020) found that women's stronger beliefs in a range of magical (including paranormal) phenomena was underpinned by their tendencies toward greater intuitive thinking in com-



parison to men. In addition, the same study found that preferences for rational thinking styles underpin the skepticism that is more commonly found among males. In a study that controlled for gender and other factors, femininity was found to predict stronger intuitive thinking and more anomalous experiences, belief, and fear. Masculinity, on the other hand, was associated with both intuitive and rational thinking and less fear of the paranormal. Thus, gender role and thinking style interact with emotion, where feminine-intuitive pro-paranormal attitudes tend to be associated with fear, while masculine skepticism tends to be associated with less fear (Rogers et al., 2019).

Knowledge about the correlates of paranormal beliefs may influence the reputation of parapsychology researchers in a type of *negative halo effect* that assumes that parapsychology researchers must exhibit credulous tendencies and that intuitive processes are inferior to rational ones. Implicit in research on belief is the idea that believers, including those finding more evidence for psi, are illogical, and irrational. This may cause women in parapsychology to have to work harder to be taken seriously or feel more scrutinized. In turn, women (in particular, those who are mothers) may be more likely to *jump ship* to a more respectable, perhaps more stable career or have to work harder to be respected as a critical thinker when working with the paranormal.

### *Reclaiming Intuition*

Not all research finds gender differences in intuition (Lange & Houran, 2010). In addition, the assumption that intuition reflects a *lack of rationality* is limited. Although research does support a role for experiential factors and emotion-based reasoning in believing in the paranormal (Drinkwater et al., 2021) other research has found a role for both rationality and intuition (a *complementary* thinking style) in anomalous experiences (Wolfradt et al., 1999). In addition, Rogers et al. (2019) recently proposed that “future work could also move beyond intuitive versus rational distinctions to explore the mediating role played by other thinking dispositions such as absolutism and categorical thinking” (p. 41). Lange and Houran (2010) described and found support for intuition as “a non-sequential information processing mode, which comprises both cognitive and affective elements and results in direct knowing without any use of conscious reasoning” (p. 501). As such, intuitive thinking includes logical processes, among them automated, learned and accurate responses (De Neys & Pennycook, 2019) as well as affective, subliminal, and non-local influences as evidenced in “gut feelings” (Radin & Schlitz, 2005). It is interesting to note that Bem et al. (2015) found that his *Feeling the Future* studies that maximized “fast” thinking (associated with intuitive processes) were statistically highly significant, while those that encouraged slow thinking did not achieve statistical significance (and achieved an overall effect size of 0.03). Thus, “intuitive” processes may be those that relate

more strongly to extrasensory perception. As such, the dichotomy of fast/intuitive = bad and slow/rational = good is inaccurate. A balance between both forms of thinking may be optimal for psi processes and experiences; i. e., integrating masculine and feminine thinking styles.

### *Reclaiming Belief*

The conclusion that paranormal belief and the phenomena they refer to are illogical and irrational and lacking in critical thinking can also be challenged. Rather than people falling into simple binary categories of believer versus nonbeliever, in truth, there are actually different types of believers with cluster analysis indicating *how* people believe, rather than *whether* people believe or not (cf. Schofield et al., 2016). In addition, some believers are healthier than others (Goulding, 2004), beliefs can be adaptive (Betsch et al., 2021), and some have found that believers are just as able to engage in critical thinking as other groups (Roe, 1999). In addition, most people (including parapsychology researchers) are likely to be nuanced in their adoption or rejection of paranormal phenomena, i. e., even when considered as a continuous variable, most people will score in the middle region of the normal curve. It is noteworthy that the *Journal of Parapsychology* is systematically tracking belief and experimental outcomes by inviting authors who submit articles to declare their own beliefs or disbeliefs in psi. This way, it will be possible to further understand the intriguing relationships between belief and psi.

### *Redefining Parapsychology*

Lancaster (2004) has argued that one might apply various lenses to the study of consciousness and epistemological pluralism can facilitate greater understanding. This can be done separately from considerations about ontology. This should also be applied to our field. In parapsychology, the application of critical thinking and skepticism is valuable in explaining what looks like psi but is not, but it should not explain experiences *away*. Instead, research might seek to understand and perhaps even see reality from different (perhaps multiple) perspectives.

In truth, parapsychological phenomena are physical, biological, psychological, social, ecological and can be highly meaningful. They often occur in the context of life; relationships, love, connection, death, and dying. In terms of human experience, we should be reminded of Tart's (2002) observation that "psi phenomena manifest in the complex dynamics of real life and often have great meaning to experiencers. Psi is not merely an "anomaly" or a laboratory curiosity but has fundamental relevance to questions about the nature of human consciousness and to

issues of our relations to others” (p. 31). Thus, subjective experiences should be researched *alongside* the application of theorizing, critical thinking, strong experimental methodology and replications by different research laboratories. Thus, the field might benefit from embracing its truly interdisciplinary nature.

It might be valuable and timely for parapsychology to define itself differently, e.g., as exploring the capacity and potential of human consciousness that is reflective of an umbrella discipline that incorporates a range of foci and sub-disciplines that includes physics, neuroscience, sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and art (among others).

Parapsychology is *both* science and art; it is *both/and*. In addition, the attributes of psi that are the most perplexing may actually be their largest clues (e.g., the role of belief in these phenomena).

Parapsychology cannot move forward in a vacuum and valuable innovations will come from cross fertilization from and dialogue with disciplines outside of parapsychology including research in consciousness, cognitive psychology, transpersonal psychology, clinical psychology, and transpersonal and humanistic psychology, in addition to insights from physics and neuroscience and other social sciences. A case in point is the rich research that has emerged in the context of psychedelics that lends significant insights into consciousness, altered states of consciousness, mystical experiences, and psi phenomena (cf. Luke, 2022).

Feminizing “the paranormal” requires an integrative approach that seeks to draw experts from different disciplines (we cannot all be expert physicists and psychologists) and *work together*. This is already happening in the field, where there is a growing emergence of this form of feminine parapsychology, visible as asserting strong bridges between different aspects of the field, between different disciplines, between mainstream and fringe areas and into areas that have been neglected or taboo. This can also encourage more citizen science via clearer education of the public to work with, rather than against the progression of the field. This is something that has been encouraged by Ventola’s Public Parapsychology, in addition to several chapters in the recent publication on the psychology and parapsychology of ghost phenomena; *Ghosted* (Laythe et al., 2022). There is also a movement to apply and engage parapsychology with issues of human importance and flourishing, including healing (cf. Schmidt, 2015), the environmental crisis, war and issues of inequality as observed in recent projects by Ventola’s Public Parapsychology.

## *Feminine Traits Associated with Paranormal Experiences [and Psi]*

### *Participation in Studies*

Women are generally more likely to seek out paranormal experiences and come forward with stories regarding paranormal experiences but not necessarily more likely to report ESP experiences (cf. Simmonds-Moore & Moore, 2009). Intriguingly, one study found that a *masculine* gender role was associated with both paranormal belief and experience (Spinelli, Reid & Norvilitis, 2001). This may be more important than gender per se and may interact with personality factors.

As it is generally more acceptable for women to volunteer for experiments and psychic events than males, there is likely to be a participation bias in psi studies. This bias translates outside of parapsychology, where it is more common for women to volunteer for studies that explore other anomalous ways of being in the world. For example, in the past, it was thought that synesthesia is a trait connected to the X chromosome and that it was more common among women, but research actually demonstrates an equal balance of those who are male and female with synesthetic traits (Simner & Carmichael, 2015).

If more participants are female (and more researchers are male), this is setting up an artificial (hierarchical) situation that is not akin to experiences in the real world that are more relational. An important issue for a future parapsychology is to think about how researchers might encourage more males and those who are more masculine to participate in studies, as well as encouraging more women to engage in research. One way might be to fuse the laboratory with the real world, as is the case in Holt's innovative work with experience sampling (2013). Other ways to increase diverse participation might be via online investigations and other ways to take experiments and studies out to the public.

### *Femininity and Proneness to Anomalies*

In Jawer's (2005) research, there were several characteristics associated with reporting anomalies, including being environmentally, physically, and sensitive to a range of psi experiences. These factors included being female; being a first-born or only child; being single; being ambidextrous; appraising oneself as an imaginative thinker; appraising oneself as introverted; recalling a traumatic event (or events) from childhood and observing that they experienced the malfunctioning of electrical equipment including televisions, lights, and computers in their presence. Tendencies toward different forms of connectivity within the system (intrapersonal connectivity), and between the person and others (interpersonal connectivity) may encourage

more paranormal experiences (Simmonds-Moore et al., 2019) including psi (extrapersonal connectivity). Below, I discuss intrapersonal connectivity as reflecting higher levels of the individual difference measure transliminality, being more connected to the body (interoception) and exhibiting more apophenia and synesthesia. Interpersonal connectivity reflects more connections to social others, the environment and relationships. Extrapersonal connectivity refers to nonlocal connections, i.e., psi phenomena. These different ways of being connected are described below.

### **Intrapersonal Connectivity**

**Transliminality.** Transliminality (and related measures, including Hartmann's boundary thinness) reflects the enhanced tendency for information to cross boundaries within the system (intrapersonally) and between the person and the social and physical environment (Lange, Houran, Evans & Lynn, 2019; Thalbourne & Delin, 1994). It is characterized by increased connectivity within the brain and nervous system, greater neuroplasticity<sup>4</sup>, wider sensory gating, rapid shifts in state of consciousness and more in between (liminal) states of consciousness (see Fleck et al., 2008). A transliminal system draws information from unconscious and subconscious sources in addition to the environment and holistically integrates information into conscious awareness (Lange, Houran, Evans & Lynn, 2019). Transliminality relates to a range of anomalous, transpersonal, mystical and paranormal experiences (cf. Lange et al., 2019) and mixed findings in terms of psi (Zdrenka & Wilson, 2017). In our study on women, gender roles, boundaries, and paranormal ideation, we found that psychological boundaries interacted with gender role and paranormal cognition among women (Simmonds-Moore & Moore, 2009). Other research suggests an intriguing interaction between transliminality and gender in terms of psi, such that females with high transliminality and males with low transliminality might be more likely to perform well in psi tasks (Houran & Lange, 2009).

**Apophenia and pareidolia.** A range of paranormal perceptions and cognitions are associated with tendencies toward making connections and perceiving stimuli (including faces) where none are present (apophenia and pareidolia) (Farias et al., 2005; Fyfe et al., 2008). However, these tendencies also underpin creative cognition which correlates with psi experiences (Holt et al., 2021). Others have found that paranormal cognitions relate to increased sensitivity to weak stimuli (Williams & Blagrove, 2022). Some have argued that tendencies to find meaningful connections might also underpin genuine psi (Mishlove & Engen, 2007; Simmonds-Moore, 2014). These tendencies may be more likely among females (Pavlova et al., 2020).

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4 Making neural connections – indicative of flexibility and adaptability to change.

**Synesthesia.** Synesthesia reflects an additional response to an inducing stimulus, for example consistently experiencing the color purple in response to the letter X. This is a heritable trait that emerges among those with neural systems that are more connected, and which has been associated with exceptional experiences (cf. Simmonds-Moore, 2022). It also correlates with transliminality (Lange, Houran, Evans & Lynn, 2019). Synesthesia-like experiences have been noted in the context of several altered states of consciousness, including sensory deprivation, hypnagogia, psychedelic states, and hypnosis (cf. Simmonds-Moore, 2022). It may contribute to exceptional experiences by providing a concrete experience to a range of unseen stimuli which may include psi.

**Interoception and listening to the body.** Interoception refers to the extent to which one is listening to the body within the psychosocial context and is implicated in consciousness and the sense of self (Craig, 2008). Research has indicated that females tend to have higher interoceptive awareness than males (Grabauskaitė et al., 2017).<sup>5</sup> Recent research has found that exceptional experiences are informed by listening to the body (Simmonds-Moore, 2019a; Simmonds-Moore, Mitchell & Baumeister, 2021) and a greater connection to the body may encourage greater access to psi (after Radin & Pierce, 2015).

### Interpersonal Connectivity

**Empathy.** Psi phenomena and experiences may be more likely where there is an emotional connection or a meaningful relationship. This is apparent in the “continuing bonds hypothesis” between the living and the deceased in the context of after death communications (cf. Beischel, 2019). It is also noted in anomalous entanglement correlations that occur more between friends than strangers in some studies (e.g., Dotta et al., 2009) and are observed in studies that have studied correlations in neural activity between distant pairs (Duggan, 2022). Empathy may play a role in these interpersonal connection experiences. Empathy is associated with the physical mapping of the experiences of others into one’s own body and those who are highly empathic seem to have a stronger neural signature of the experiences of others in their own neural architecture in studies of pain (see Lamm, Decety & Singer, 2010). Empathy “makes it possible to resonate with others’ positive and negative feelings alike – we can thus feel happy when we vicariously share the joy of others and we can share the experience of suffering when we empathize with someone in pain” (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). Intriguingly, empathic responses occur for physically present or imagined others. As such, empathic responses might be activated when people have access to information pertaining to those who are distantly located (or deceased). Surprisingly little attention has been given to the role of empathy in exceptional experiences,

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5 Although, females are less accurate at detecting their own heartbeat.

but recent research has found that some measures of empathy correlate with a proneness to anomalous experiences (Irwin, 2017).

**Connections to nature.** Friedman (2018) has observed that the “Self Concept can be construed in a relatively narrow way, limited to seeing the individual as isolated and bound in the present here-and-now, or it can expand spatially to include nature, others, and transpersonal aspects of the world – or even the cosmos in its entirety, as well as expand temporarily” (p. 233). This could include psi phenomena (extrapersonal connections) in addition to enhanced prosocial connections. Prior research has found an association between empathy and feeling more connected to nature (Fabio & Kenny, 2018) which in turn appear to influence prosocial behaviors (Goldy & Piff, 2020). A feminine approach to parapsychology would relocate psi phenomena back in dialogue with nature. Simmonds-Moore (2019b) has previously argued that *participatory eco-consciousness* reflects a mind-body-other system that emerges where there is greater connection to one’s own mind and body, the local and non-local environment and other people and that this may ultimately lead to more psi experiences (extrapersonal connectivity).

### Extrapersonal Connectivity

**Psi phenomena.** Psi may emerge via *participation* in a system that consists of various components reflecting increased connections intrapersonally and interpersonally (Simmonds-Moore, 2019). Research has found that explicit ESP is more likely among certain personality types and when targets exhibit (negative) emotionality, emotional changes and entropy (e.g., an explosion rather than an image of a static object) (cf. Baptista, Derakhshani & Tressoldi, 2015). Psi is also more likely when participants believe that psi is possible (the “sheep-goat effect,” Storm & Tressoldi, 2017). In addition, it seems to work better implicitly (Palmer, 2015) and on the body (Radin & Pierce, 2015). Psi involves various contributing sources including psychology of the receiver, the sender, the experimenter and attributes of the target (cf. Cardeña & Marcusson-Clavertz, 2015). This is illustrated by Parker’s (2000) *systems* model of psi in the ganzfeld which includes experimenter factors (empathy, warmth expectancy), receiver factors (prior psi experiences, MBTI feeling and perception and involvement in prior studies), sender factors (including the biological relationship between sender and receiver), and target factors (including emotional content and change). This suggests that psi is not a signal that is sent and received, and that various forms of enhanced connection – *within and between individuals* – are important. Those who exhibit heightened connectivity [or liminality] would be more likely to participate in a psi system. A *feminine* approach to the paranormal should focus on boosting connectivity in terms of one’s connection to the self, including the body (intrapersonal connectivity), with others (empathy and compassion; interpersonal connectivity) and with nature/the environment. Information transfer within the system may include body-based information, information about the self, physically present stimuli (e.g., light, electricity, infrasound and

other direct knowledge about life), information relating to others in addition to the information that includes place memories, non-local information, personal and transpersonal insights and conversations with transpersonal realities. The information may then be represented to the self via synesthetic processes. This approach draws on feminist and womanist approaches toward spirituality. Womanism is an expanded feminism that directly seeks to address issues of oppression in terms of race, sexuality and experiences that are directly feminine. Thus, this kind of extended connectivity (after Daniels, 2021) enables awareness of the plight of social, emotional and environmental others that extends beyond the self as love, compassion and potential for overcoming oppression (of people and the environment) (after Holiday, 2010).

### ***Integration of the Shadow: Encouraging Connections and Both/and Thinking***

‘Both/and’ thinking has been noted as important for understanding experiences which transcend the ordinary (Clarke, 2005). I suggest that adopting a both/and approach that incorporates and values the qualities of different ways of knowing will ultimately facilitate the growth of parapsychology. Psi phenomena reflect both/and phenomena as they are both subjective, mental, internal and objective, physical and external. If something has both subjective and objective qualities, it will need to be studied from both subjective and objective perspectives.

A both/and perspective would focus on nurturing different forms of intrapersonal, interpersonal and extra personal connections, *but in a balanced/controlled manner*. If there is too much (or too little) connectivity, the balance may tip away from health (e.g., Hartmann, 1991) such that there is too much rigidity or too much fluidity. In the latter case, one might find oneself in a Jamesian booming, buzzing confusion. Instead, exhibiting greater levels of connection alongside an ability to dip into and out of connected states or expressing a moderate level of connection may be the ideal. This may look like transliminality plus attributes associated with higher level cognitive factors associated with metacognition. In a previous paper about health and experiences, control, application, appraisal, organization (having a framework) and social support were all discussed as important for healthy ways of experiencing exceptional phenomena (Simmonds-Moore, 2012). In turn, there is some evidence that those with healthier connected systems may also perform better at psi tasks (Holt, Simmonds-Moore, & Moore, 2020), but this needs further study.

In alignment with thinking about *both/and* tendencies, my own research suggested that those who identified as females who are androgynous (scoring equally high on scales of masculinity and femininity) were more inclined to believe in (and experience) paranormal phenomena than others (Simmonds-Moore & Moore, 2009). In addition, the same research implied that those who were undifferentiated in terms of gender role (similar to androgynous, but scoring low in terms of the usual ways in which we understand what is masculine and feminine) did



better at ESP.<sup>6</sup> This suggests a balance or integration, or both/and way of being might be ideal for encouraging these experiences, and potentially psi itself.

### ***Feminizing Research Methodologies***

#### *Increase the Use of Mixed Methods*

Parapsychology has been dominated by quantitative research methods which are often assumed to be superior to qualitative methods. *All* approaches are important, as different methods can answer different questions and different ways of knowing, given that there are different perspectives on reality, knowledge and how to go about obtaining and making sense of that knowledge. Femininity must be integrated into a future parapsychology and a both/and or liminal approach will be optimal for the progression of the field and for understanding psi phenomena themselves. Ultimately, there is room for multiple ways of exploring this reality and how psi phenomena fit into it. As noted earlier, parapsychology should not reject hypothesis testing and continue to employ quantitative approaches to answer the questions regarding ontology of psi and how it might work. However, it might also incorporate other methodologies. For example, some of the qualitative research methods can complement these quantitative approaches. John Kruth (2015) presented 5 qualitative methods in his review article in the *Journal of Parapsychology*. Since that time, newer methods are continuing to emerge that may be profitable for gaining different insights into psi phenomena and how they are experienced. For example, transpersonal methods may be particularly valuable for capturing body-based, non-verbal, and intuitive ways of knowing that are more participatory (cf. Anderson, 2019).

Historically, there has been a tendency to honor quantitative research and proof and process-oriented research perhaps over more transpersonal and humanistic and other psychological approaches to the phenomena. This tendency is gradually changing and there are growing numbers of qualitative publications in parapsychology journals and grant awards. Qualitative and mixed methods are generally becoming increasingly accepted in psychology and the value of the full range of research perspectives will facilitate the growth of parapsychology, its knowledge and its acceptability to all. These shifts in research approaches may partially be in response to the results of various meta-analyses that have found consistent statistically significant effects across various paradigms. Statistician Jessica Utts (2018) issued a call to parapsychologists to move forward from focusing on the existence of an anomaly. She noted “future experiments focus on understanding how psychic functioning works and on how to make it as useful as possible. There is little benefit in continuing experiments designed to offer proof, since there is little

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6 Although this was not statistically significant.

more to be offered to anyone who does not accept the current collection of data” (p. 119). Deeper understanding of psi may come from the innovations associated with connecting the dots and engaging in mixed methods and interdisciplinary research as well as exploring theories such as the Model of Pragmatic Information and the First Sight Model. It will also be profitable to bring experiments and research to those experiencing them, including methods such as Experience Sampling and encouraging more citizen science.

### *Prior Selection of Participants*

In their systematic review of explicit free response psi studies, Baptista, Derakhshani and Tressoldi (2015) note that when conducting ganzfeld research (which they consider to be the most promising in terms of effect sizes), “it is wise to make exclusive use of selected individuals” (p. 199) and that “investigators should strive to use participants who are artists, musicians, twins, those who are biologically-related, emotionally close, have prior psi experience, mental discipline practice, prior psi training, belief in psi, and/or other critical characteristics” (p. 199). These factors reflect many of the characteristics of being more connected in intrapersonal and interpersonal ways, as discussed above.

### *Meditation for Researchers and Participants*

Meditation correlates with psi performance (Roney-Dougal, 2015). Given that researchers are part of the psi system and play a role in the phenomena being studied, meditation is a valuable tool for experimenters and those serving as participants. Some have argued that psi phenomena should be clues to facilitate insights into consciousness, and that fusing first and second person approaches may be the most profitable lines forward for a more comprehensive understanding of reality (cf. Baruss & Mossbridge, 2017). Baruss and Mossbridge advocate for the value of meditation for researchers who are exploring consciousness (including those investigating psi phenomena), and note that practicing meditation can lead to more accurate perceptions of time and reality, and therefore insights into psi phenomena.

### *Manipulating Transliminality*

Transliminality may be trait-like, but in their recent systematic review, Lange et al. (2019) note that it is a potentially trainable ability that may be possible via procedures such as biofeedback, meditation and providing feedback in psi experiments. This might be taken account as parapsychology moves forward, given that meditation, in particular, has itself been connected to above chance performance on psi tasks (Roney-Dougal, 2015). This should be done with

regard to healthy connectivity, thus finding the right levels of connectedness in balance with metacognition which may be a future focus for the field. The notion of balance is present in prior works by both Thalbourne (Thalbourne et al., 2003) and Hartmann (1991). Prior research does indicate that psi emerges among those with an optimal level of transliminality, but that optimal levels might be different for men and women (Houran & Lange, 2009). This should be further explored with regard to gender role and rethinking psi as a relational system.

### *Boosting Beliefs and their Correlates*

Belief is an important correlate of psi, and one which might be possible to manipulate. If it is possible to increase belief (even just for a short time), it may be possible to encourage more psi phenomena. The Batcheldor effect (see Wehrstein, 2018) has not been systematically investigated in parapsychology but is important in this discussion and relevant to future parapsychology. Essentially, Batcheldor held that belief (or the removal of disbelief) plays a key role in the manifestation of anomalous physical phenomena, which are essentially psychological in their constitution. According to Batcheldor, first person experiences may serve this purpose.

Beliefs might be fostered by encouraging a sense of playfulness into studies whereby one suspends belief and disbelief but engages in the experience for its own sake. Playfulness is one variable that was part of the recipe for psychokinesis experiences in Heath's (2000) study and may render experiences as more likely. Some have connected playfulness and tolerance of ambiguity to creativity (Tegano, 1990). This may be due to the capacity to embrace paradox (Runco, 2019). Tolerance of ambiguity reflects a true *both/and* style of thinking and relates to paranormal beliefs, experiences, and subjective abilities (Houran & Williams, 1998) as well as ESP scoring (Palmer, 2009). Encouraging belief in psi phenomena might also be encouraged via hypnosis, which itself is associated with ESP, particularly among those who score high on transliminality (Tressoldi & Del Prete, 2007). Other approaches might draw inspiration from Lovitts' (Storm, 2016) innovative study on the reversed sheep-goat effect, which essentially tapped into the relationship between beliefs and psi performance. Belief may also be boosted by encouraging more intuitive thinking, which underpins paranormal belief. Ward and King (2020) found that boosting intuitive thinking could actually increase beliefs in paranormal phenomena among those who naturally prefer a rational thinking style (those who tend to exhibit masculine traits). This might be incorporated into protocols for laboratory psi experiments prior to running them. Researchers might also consider ways to encourage apophenia and pareidolia by inviting participants to perceive faces and meaningful stimuli in random backdrops (e.g., asking participants to describe shapes that they see in clouds or tea leaves).

### *Boosting Green Experiences*

Any experience that can influence one's connectedness to nature may also bolster other forms of connectedness. This may be achieved via asking people to meditate on imagery associated with nature or meditation in the context of nature itself. For example, one study found that man-made environments infused with natural (fractal-rich) imagery have a range of positive psychological effects on participants (Robles et al., 2021). A planned project at UWG is to seek to encourage connections with nature via use of Plantwave; software that enables a person to listen to plant music, thus hopefully instilling a greater connection to the environment and encouraging extrapersonal connections including psi.

### *Boosting Empathy and Focusing on Relationship*

Echoing Baptista, Derakhshani and Tressoldi (2015), one ingredient of a more connected system is biological and emotional closeness of participants, including those who are twins.

Studies might particularly focus on prior selection of participants who have a close emotional connection or biological relationship between them and include an assessment of the level of felt connection between all of the participants in the psi system. Empathy and social and emotional connections might also be boosted within experiments by having all contributing participants in the study (experimenter and participants) engage in a meditation together or other shared experience at the outset. Research has found that empathy can be boosted by various interventions, including reading a first-person narrative and fiction (Dodell-Feder & Tamir, 2018), using VR to experience another person's first-person perspective (Han et al., 2022) and mindfulness and meditation interventions (e.g., Bohecker & Doughty Horn, 2016).

### *Boosting Synesthesia and Body Consciousness*

There are several tendencies that render a person more likely to become synesthetic which may be visible in those who are genetically related to synesthetes (Ward & Filiz, 2020). Ward and Filiz found that these include having vivid imagery, better episodic memory and good attention to detail, which suggest a synesthetic disposition or potential that may be more likely to be expressed under certain circumstances (Simmonds-Moore et al., 2019). There is evidence that synesthesia can be trained (Rothen & Meier, 2014) and hypnosis may be one of the more effective ways of doing this (Terhune, Luke & Kadosh, 2017). In addition, some have noted that ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, or the "head tingles") may be synesthesia-like (e.g., Glim et al., 2022). This may be equate to synesthesia-like and body-based experience that is more common than other forms of synesthesia (which occurs among only 5% of the population). In addition, ASMR experiences might be cultivated in the

context of parapsychology experiments, given that it seems to be a body-based response to emotional information that may be encouraged via mindfulness meditation (Glim et al., 2022). A recent (currently unpublished) study at UWG has found that ASMR is associated with more exceptional experiences, but it is not yet clear how this relates to psi. Glim et al. also successfully boosted ASMR responses to auditory stimuli by means of a body scan meditation (Glim et al., 2022). ASMR may also serve to increase psi responses as it is a body-based response to emotional information. Thus, boosting ASMR may also serve to encourage more body consciousness.

### ***Feminizing the Paranormal: Toward a Future Parapsychology***

A future parapsychology will be one that moves beyond binary thinking and perspectives and embraces the liminal nature of consciousness. Such an approach honors the trickster-like nature of psi phenomena (e.g., Hansen, 2001). As Grosso notes in his review of this book, “the paranormal is here to stay, and it will forever remain an outsider, a rebel, and an outlaw to the existing order of mind, nature, and society” (p. 202). The best ways to embrace this slippery status is to embrace the liminal and note that both/and approaches that optimize playfulness, connectivity and meaning will be optimal for the field (methods, participants, researchers). Innovations should be encouraged and given voice, whilst yet honoring the value of replication of methods such as the ganzfeld and Bem’s time reversal studies (cf. Cardena & Marcusson-Clavertz, 2015). This will mean honoring the voices who are less visible, inviting the voices who are less visible, and naming the issues that render women less visible in academia and in parapsychology itself. It is duly noted that parapsychology is already ahead of its cousins in terms of facing the replication crisis, applying systems-type models to the phenomena and in methodological issues and innovations in thinking about the nature of reality. Parapsychology has also made great progress in terms of the application of psi phenomena into issues facing the world in the 21st century in particular with regards to the environment. This is seen in Hunter’s *Greening the paranormal* (2019) and in Annalisa Ventola’s *Public Parapsychology* projects. With that said, parapsychology still remains a relatively WEIRD discipline that is dominated by male scholars. It is time now to also consider ways to address the lack of racial and cultural diversity, issues of war and peace in parapsychology.

Women and marginalized groups should be actively encouraged into the field and males and those who identify as masculine should be encouraged to volunteer for experiments and participation in other empirical investigations. The field of parapsychology should also seek to empower changes via research and engage in mindful activism for “feminine” issues including the environment, peace, and social inequalities.

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## Feminisierung des Paranormalen

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung<sup>7</sup>*

In diesem Beitrag wird erörtert, wie sich die Parapsychologie als Disziplin weiterentwickeln kann, indem ein *Sowohl-als-auch-Ansatz* verfolgt wird. Dies ist ein aus der transpersonalen Psychologie entlehnter Begriff, der eine inklusive und integrierte Perspektive widerspiegelt, die mehrere Arten der Auseinandersetzung mit Forschung, Attributen und kognitiven Wahrnehmungsstilen umfasst, sich über binäre Denkweisen und Seinsweisen hinausbewegt (Integration weiblicher Ansätze mit vorherrschenden männlichen Ansätzen) und Schattenthemen in der Parapsychologie benennt.

Ein Hauptaugenmerk dieses Aufsatzes liegt darauf, Verbindungen zwischen Disziplinen, Wissensformen und Eigenschaften zu fördern, die oft als Gegensätze angesehen werden, einschließlich paranormaler Überzeugungen, Intuition und verschiedener Merkmale, die mit dem Herstellen von Verbindungen (auf intra-, inter- und extrapersoneller Ebene) assoziiert sind. Ein *Sowohl-als-auch-Ansatz* würde kritisches Denken, methodische Strenge und wertvolles Wissen aus Experimenten und anderen quantitativen Ansätzen beibehalten und würdigen, während gleichzeitig Erfahrungen der ersten Person, Bedeutungsgebung und nonverbale Formen des Wissens anerkannt werden. Dies zielt nicht darauf ab, traditionelle Ansätze herabzusetzen, sondern erkennt vielmehr an, dass es viele Arten des Wissens gibt und dass verschiedene Methoden unterschiedliche und potenziell neue Einsichten in außergewöhnliche Erfahrungen und Psi-Phänomene liefern können. Durch die Anwendung einer Reihe quantitativer, qualitativer, gemischter und innovativer Methoden auf das Thema können neue Erkenntnisse gewonnen werden.

Als Disziplin wird die Parapsychologie wachsen, wenn sie Innovationen in der Methodik fördert und sich an mehr interdisziplinären Gesprächen beteiligt. Feminine Ansätze würden partizipatorisch erweiterte und systemische Ansätze zum Verständnis von Psi-Phänomenen fördern, bei denen es offenbar von Natur aus um Beziehungen und Verbindungen geht. Diese Ansätze könnten einen Teil der Forschung außerhalb des Labors verlagern und versuchen, zu verstehen, zu befähigen, zu entstigmatisieren und zu heilen (Menschen und Umwelt). Sie würden ebenfalls darauf abzielen, die Erfahrenden und Laien zu befähigen, sich stärker an der Forschung zu beteiligen. Das Feld der Parapsychologie könnte auch versuchen, Veränderungen durch Forschung zu ermöglichen und sich in achtsamer Weise für „weibliche“ Themen wie Umwelt, Frieden und soziale Ungleichheiten zu engagieren.

Um voranzukommen, sollte die Parapsychologie ihren Schatten integrieren; ein Jungianischer Begriff, der Eigenschaften umfasst, die ignoriert oder verdrängt wurden, und der den positiven

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<sup>7</sup> Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

Schatten einschließt, der Wachstum ermöglichen kann, wenn er mit dem, was bewusst und sichtbar ist, integriert wird. Die Integration des Schattens bedeutet auch, dass das Feld anerkennen muss, was derzeit ausgeklammert oder versteckt wird, einschließlich Frauen, Minderheiten und Forschung, die außerhalb eines westlichen Standorts (WEIRD – Western, educated, and from industrialized, rich, and democratic countries) stattfindet.

In der Geschichte der Parapsychologie gibt es mehrere bedeutende, dauerhafte und oft innovative Beiträge von Personen, die sich als weiblich identifizieren. Zum Beispiel gibt es historisch gesehen einige sehr prominente Frauenfiguren. Außerdem gibt es derzeit eine weibliche Präsidentin der Parapsychological Association sowie mehrere Frauen, die Forschungsgruppen, Organisationen und Labors leiten. Es gibt jedoch einige wichtige Stimmen, die nicht im Feld geblieben sind oder an dessen Rändern verbleiben. Einige Frauen verlassen die Parapsychologie und wenden sich anderen, besser akzeptierten akademischen Disziplinen zu. Hinzu kommen praktische Gründe hinsichtlich Zeiteinteilung und konkurrierender Lebensaufgaben, die außerhalb von Wissenschaft bestehen. In der postmodernen akademischen Welt ist es häufig der Fall, dass Zeit von der Forschung abgezogen wird. Dies kann ein größeres Problem bei Frauen sein, insbesondere bei Müttern.

Der WEIRD-Bias deutet darauf hin, dass der größte Teil der Forschung in der Psychologie und Parapsychologie in westlichen, gebildeten, industriellen, reichen und demokratischen Ländern durchgeführt wird, wobei viele Teilnehmer Studentinnen und Studenten im Grundstudium sind (die in der Parapsychologie oft weiblich sind). Als Disziplin kann die Parapsychologie nur davon profitieren, wenn sie mehr Frauen mit unterschiedlichem Hintergrund und solche, die außerhalb des Westens arbeiten, aktiv dazu ermutigt, sich in diesem Bereich zu engagieren, und sie dabei unterstützt, dort zu bleiben. Dies könnte durch kleine Stipendien, Konferenzen und aktive Bemühungen um Integration geschehen.

Das Feld sollte auch Attribute zurückgewinnen und integrieren, die (nach westlichem Verständnis) eher mit weiblichen Eigenschaften in Verbindung gebracht werden, und zwar mit denen, die das Feld dominiert haben. Einige kognitive Stile, Seinsweisen und Einstellungen wurden mit männlichen Seinsweisen in Verbindung gebracht, während andere im Westen mit weiblichen Seinsweisen assoziiert wurden. Feminine Ansätze könnten als intuitives Denken, somatisches Wissen, Verbindungen, Beziehungen, Subjektivität und qualitative Forschungsansätze zusammengefasst werden, maskuline Ansätze als rationales Denken, Vernunft, Objektivität und quantitative Forschungsansätze. Dies steht im Einklang mit den Geschlechterrollen als einem vom Geschlecht getrennten Konstrukt, das in der Parapsychologie noch nicht ausreichend erforscht ist, aber auf unterschiedliche Weise mit Intuition und paranormalen Glaubensvorstellungen zusammenzuhängen scheint. Diese Eigenschaften und kognitiven Stile werden oft als Gegensätze dargestellt, obwohl der Mensch das Potenzial hat, auf viele kognitive Stile,

Seinsweisen, Bewusstseinszustände und Potenziale zurückzugreifen. Die Einbeziehung und Integration vieler Wissensformen wird neue Einsichten in parapsychologische Erfahrungen und Psi-Phänomene ermöglichen.

In diesem Aufsatz wird auch die Parapsychologie als eine *Sowohl-als-auch*-Disziplin erörtert. Die Parapsychologie ist eine führende wissenschaftliche Disziplin, die erfolgreich konsistente Effekte nachgewiesen hat, die den Effektgrößen und Replikationsraten in anderen, anerkannten Disziplinen, einschließlich der Psychologie, entsprechen. Trotz ihrer methodischen Strenge nimmt die Parapsychologie eine Grenzposition als Wissenschaft ein. Parapsychologische Phänomene sind physikalische, biologische, psychologische, soziale, kulturelle und ökologische Phänomene. Als solche kann die Disziplin sowohl eine Kunst als auch eine Wissenschaft sein. Es könnte für das Fach von Vorteil sein, mehr Verbindungen zu anderen Fachgebieten herzustellen und in interdisziplinären Teams zusammenzuarbeiten, um die Phänomene besser zu verstehen und Innovationen durch gegenseitige Befruchtung und Dialog zu fördern. Pluralismus in der Erkenntnistheorie und Offenheit in Bezug auf die Ontologie sind von großem Wert, wobei die Anwendung von kritischem Denken und Skepsis beibehalten werden sollte, während Erfahrungen nicht wegdiskutiert werden und versucht wird, die Realität aus verschiedenen (vielleicht mehreren) Perspektiven zu verstehen und zu sehen.

Ein *femininer* Zugang zum Paranormalen würde Intuition und paranormale Glaubensvorstellungen in ausgewogener Weise reintegrieren und fördern, indem die Konnektivität in Bezug auf die eigene Verbindung zu sich selbst, einschließlich des Körpers (intrapersonale Konnektivität), zu anderen (Empathie und Mitgefühl; interpersonale Konnektivität) und zur Natur/Umwelt verstärkt wird. Psi kann durch die Teilnahme an einem System entstehen, das aus verschiedenen Komponenten besteht, die verstärkte Verbindungen auf intra- und interpersoneller Ebene widerspiegeln. Ein *Sowohl-als-auch*-Ansatz legt nahe, dass es ein optimales Maß an Verbundenheit geben sollte, während gleichzeitig einige kognitive Eigenschaften auf höherer Ebene erhalten bleiben, einschließlich Faktoren wie Ambiguitätstoleranz und Metakognition.

Eine zukünftige Parapsychologie wird eine sein, die über binäres Denken und binäre Perspektiven hinausgeht und die liminale Natur von Psi anerkennt. Innovationen sollten gefördert und zum Ausdruck gebracht werden, während gleichzeitig der Wert der Replikation von Methoden wie der Ganzfeld-Studien und der Presentiment-Studien von Bem gewürdigt werden sollte. Es ist dringend notwendig, die Stimmen derjenigen einzubeziehen, die weniger sichtbar sind, und die Probleme zu benennen und anzusprechen, die Frauen in der Parapsychologie weniger sichtbar machen. Darüber hinaus ist es an der Zeit, dass die Parapsychologie über Möglichkeiten nachdenkt, sich mit dem Mangel an ethnischer und kultureller Vielfalt, mit Fragen von Krieg und Frieden und mit der Umwelt auseinanderzusetzen.



## Fortgesetzte Diskussionen zu früheren Beiträgen

### Nachtrag zum Artikel „Ein neuer europäischer Fall vom Reinkarnationstyp“

In: *Zeitschrift für Anomalistik*, 14(1) (2014), 25–44

DIETER HASSLER<sup>1</sup>

Seit Prof. Ian Stevenson (1918–2007) mit seiner Forschung zu Spontanerinnerungen kleiner Kinder an ihre angeblichen früheren Leben die Standards gesetzt hat, sollte, wenn möglich, auch das spätere Leben des Kindes als Jugendlicher und Erwachsener beleuchtet werden. Das habe ich in dem in der Ausgabe 14(1) in dieser Zeitschrift berichteten Fall getan und habe inzwischen weitere Informationen erhalten, über die ich weiter unten als „Nachtrag“ berichten will. Zuvor aber werde ich zum besseren Verständnis eine kurze Zusammenfassung des Falles geben.

### Rekapitulation des Falles

Der Fall stellt eine Besonderheit dar, weil er (1) gelöst werden konnte, (2) kein innerfamiliärer Fall ist und (3) aus Deutschland kommt, von wo es insgesamt nur sieben veröffentlichte Fälle von Kindern mit Spontanerinnerungen an ihr angebliches früheres Leben gibt.<sup>2</sup> Ein weiterer Fall aus Deutschland basiert auf kindlichen Alpträumen, zumeist aber auf Träumen und Flashbacks eines Erwachsenen (Hassler, 2018).

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- Dieter Hassler**, geb. 1939 in Frankfurt am Main, arbeitete nach Abitur und Studium der Elektrotechnik an der TH Darmstadt ca. 4 Jahre als Entwicklungsingenieur bei Rhode & Schwarz in München. Anschließend wechselte er Ende 1970 zu Siemens UB Med in Erlangen, dem heutigen Siemens Healthineers, und arbeitete dort bis zum Vorruhestand 1995 in der Grundlagenentwicklung für ultraschalldiagnostische Geräte, für Lithotripsie und Röntgentechnik. In diese Zeit fallen Heirat, die Geburt zweier Töchter und der Hausbau in Uttenreuth. Seit dem Jahr 2000 bis heute befasst er sich wissenschaftlich mit der Reinkarnationsforschung, d. h. mit Erinnerungen kleiner Kinder an ihr früheres Leben, außerdem mit Rückführungen Erwachsener in deren frühere Leben und mit der Überlebensfrage allgemein. Daraus gingen vier Bücher, neun Veröffentlichungen in Fachzeitschriften und die Homepage [www.reinkarnation.de](http://www.reinkarnation.de) hervor. Hassler ist kein Mitglied einer Religionsgemeinschaft oder Sekte oder sonstigen weltanschaulichen Gruppe. E-Mail: [dieter.hassler@gmx.de](mailto:dieter.hassler@gmx.de)
  - Zwei bei Stevenson (Stevenson, 2005: Wolfgang Neurath und Helmut Kraus), je zwei bei Hassler (Hassler, 2011, S. 239–244: Kadjscha Schuster und Katharina Hofbeck; sowie Hassler, 2022: Herbert und Tochter G. C.) und den vorliegenden Fall des Rolf Wolf.

Es begann mit einer unbestimmten Vorahnung einer Frau, Frau Wolf (Pseudonym), die, wie sich später zeigte, auf der Autobahn einen tödlich endenden Unfall eines 18-jährigen jungen Mannes erleben musste. Der junge Mann starb am Unfallort in ihren Armen und erschien ihr anschließend in drei aufeinanderfolgenden Nächten im Traum. Jedes Mal bat er darum, bei ihr wiedergeboren werden zu dürfen. Die Frau lehnte das zunächst ab. Im dritten Traum jedoch kam es zu einem Kompromiss, wonach er zu ihr kommen darf, wenn er kein Selbstmörder gewesen ist, die Angelegenheit mit seiner eigenen Familie geklärt hat und innerhalb von 18 Monaten reinkarniert.

Frau Wolf hatte diese Angelegenheit längst vergessen, als ihr Sohn Rolf exakt auf den Tag genau 18 Monate nach dem tödlichen Unfall auf der Autobahn am 9.9.1997 zur Welt kam.

Als Rolf drei oder vier Jahre alt war, erzählte er seiner Mutter ganz unvermittelt: *„Ich habe schon einmal gelebt. Ich starb bei einem Verkehrsunfall, aber es war nicht schlimm. Ich habe ein bisschen am Kopf geblutet, und mein Bein tat weh.“* Nun erinnerte sich Frau Wolf wieder an das Ereignis, denn Rolfs Aussage entsprach genau ihrer Erinnerung an das damalige Unfallgeschehen.

Frau Wolf konnte die Mutter des seinerzeitigen Unfallopfers ausfindig machen und besuchen. Sie erfuhr, dass es sich bei dem Verunglückten um den 18-jährigen blonden und blauäugigen Mario (Name geändert) handelte, der von deutsch-italienischer Abstammung war. Er war in Oberitalien in hügeliger Landschaft in der Nähe eines Sees beerdigt worden. Dies entsprach einem Traumbild von Frau Wolf, das sie am dritten Tag nach Marios Tod hatte.<sup>3</sup>

Rolfs Aussage über seinen Tod im früheren Leben ist knapp und kann nur von seiner Mutter bezeugt werden. Deshalb wurde als zusätzliches Element des Falls Rolfs Verhalten mit dem von Mario verglichen und ergab in 13 von insgesamt 16 Verhaltensmerkmalen eine gute Übereinstimmung (siehe dazu die Tabelle in Hassler, 2014: 35–37). Alleine fünf Merkmale beziehen sich auf Eitelkeiten in Körperhaltung, Körperpflege und Kleidung, die Mario und Rolf gemeinsam sind.

Man kann Rolfs Schmerzen in den Knien, die er mit 12 Jahren beklagte (Osgood-Schlatter-Krankheit), als eine körperliche Parallele zwischen Rolf und Mario betrachten. Die Knie-schmerzen erinnern an die Unfallsituation, in der der Unterschenkel des rechten Beines von Mario nach dem Unfall in einem unnatürlichen Winkel abgestanden hatte.

Marios Mutter berichtete auch noch von psychokinetischen Phänomenen oder Spukgeschehen nach Marios Tod. Einmal schaltete ihr Autoradio selbsttätig auf Marios Wunschprogramm um. Ein zweites Mal ging das Licht im Geschäft der Mutter ohne erkennbaren Grund aus und erst wieder an, nachdem sich die Mutter laut darüber beschwerte.

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3 In Wirklichkeit fand die Beerdigung erst drei oder vier Tage *nach* dem Traum statt. Die Entscheidung jedoch, das Opfer in *Pieve di Cadore* in Italien zu bestatten, hatte die Mutter des Verstorbenen unmittelbar nach dessen Tod getroffen.

## Neu gewonnene Zusatzinformationen

Am 17.8.2021 erkundigte ich mich bei Rolfs Mutter darüber, wie es ihrem Sohn in der Zwischenzeit ergangen sei. Im Folgenden berichte ich die neuen Informationen und Erkenntnisse aus diesem Gespräch.

Aus dem Obduktionsbericht war bekannt, dass Mario bei dem Unfall eine Nierenquetschung erlitten hatte. Rolf wurde mit einer Abflussbehinderung des Urins geboren, die zu einer Nierenstauung führte. Er musste mit einem Katheder leben, und die Ärzte befürchteten, dass er ein Leben lang zur Dialyse muss. Glücklicherweise kam es anders. Die Nieren erholten sich, und Rolf, inzwischen 24 Jahre alt, ist seit dem 10. Lebensjahr diesbezüglich gesund.

Aus dem Obduktionsbericht geht weiter hervor, dass Mario vor dem Unfall mit dem Auto seiner Mutter einen Sicherheitsgurt getragen hatte. Daraus schließt Marios Mutter, dass er keine Selbstmordabsicht hatte. Allerdings war Mario betrunken.

Rolfs sexuelle Orientierung folgt offensichtlich nicht dem Muster aus dem angenommenen früheren Leben. Mario war homosexuell gewesen. Rolf interessiert sich für das weibliche Geschlecht und plant, seine Freundin zu heiraten.

Rolfs Körperbezogenheit – man könnte auch Eitelkeit dazu sagen – besteht noch immer.

Rolf hat Angst vor dem Autofahren. Wenn er bei seiner Mutter im Auto sitzt, muss diese sehr langsam fahren, obwohl er keine bewussten Erinnerungen mehr an den Unfalltod hat, den er glaubte, im früheren Leben erlitten zu haben. Einen Führerschein hat er noch nicht gemacht, überlegt aber, dies vielleicht doch noch nachzuholen.

Mit 18 Jahren, als Rolf so alt wie Mario war, als dieser den Unfalltod erlitt, hatte auch er selbst einen Unfall. Im Januar 2016 erlitt er einen Stromschlag an der Starkstromleitung der Stadtbahn in einer deutschen Großstadt. Sein Freund, der ihn begleitete, konnte ihn von der Stromschiene lösen und so vor dem Tod retten. Als sie vom Gleisbett herunter waren, ging Rolf kurz danach mit Herzversagen zu Boden. Passanten konnten ihn wiederbeleben und sorgten dafür, dass er ins Krankenhaus eingeliefert wurde. Einige Tage später konnte er das Krankenhaus wieder verlassen.<sup>4</sup> Diese Ähnlichkeit der Ereignisse im früheren und heutigen Leben kennt man von Rückführungsfällen. Man spricht von „Alterssynchronizität“ (Hassler, 2015: 567, 569, 834).

Inzwischen hat Rolf auch seine Mutter aus dem früheren Leben besucht. Diese gab an, ihn anhand vieler Merkmale hundertprozentig als ihren verstorbenen Sohn wiederzuerkennen (s. Tabelle in Hassler, 2014: 35–37). Rolf erkannte seine frühere Mutter jedoch nicht. Sie kam ihm nur irgendwie bekannt vor.

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4 Rolf habe ein Nahtoderlebnis gehabt, hieß es, über das er aber heute nicht mehr reden will.

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## Rezensionen

Yuval Noah Harari

### **Homo Deus: Eine Geschichte von Morgen**

London: C. H. Beck, 2022 (15. Aufl.)

ISBN 978-3-406-72786-3, 653 Seiten, € 14,95

#### **Rezensent/-in:**

GABRIELE LADEMANN-PRIEMER, HANNES LEUSCHNER<sup>1</sup>

Das Buch *Homo Deus* von Yuval Noah Harari, einem israelischen Historiker, findet großes und anhaltendes Interesse: Die zwei Jahre nach der hebräischsprachigen Erstausgabe (2015) erschienene deutsche Übersetzung liegt mittlerweile bereits in der 15. Auflage als Paperback vor. Manche Leserinnen und Leser mögen begeistert sein, andere beunruhigt oder ängstigt es. Wie auch immer: Das Buch liegt offenbar ‚im Trend‘.

Harari skizziert darin einen großen Geschichtsentwurf, der in drei Phasen gegliedert ist: Teil I – „Homo sapiens erobert die Welt“, Teil II – „Homo sapiens gibt der Welt einen Sinn“, Teil III – „Homo sapiens verliert die Kontrolle“.

Die Eroberung der Welt durch den Homo sapiens verbindet sich mit der Sesshaftwerdung der Menschen sowie der Domestizierung von Tieren, ihrer Ausbeutung und teilweisen Aus-

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1 **Gabriele Lademann-Priemer**, Jahrgang 1945, Studium der Theologie in Hamburg und Heidelberg, seit 1975 Pastorin der jetzigen Ev.-luth. Kirche Norddeutschland (vorher Hamburgische Landeskirche, seit 1977 Nordelbische ev.-luth. Kirche), Promotion im Fach Religionswissenschaft nach einer Feldforschung in Afrika in Marburg, Gemeindepastorin in Hamburg, von 1992–2011 Beauftragte für Sekten- und Weltanschauungsfragen, Schwerpunkte Afrikanische Religionen sowie Ideologiekritik. Website: <http://www.glaube-und-irrglaube.de/>

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rottung. Es ist ferner die Zeit der Religionen und Götter, die sich jedoch als hilflos zur Lösung der großen Probleme von Hunger und Seuchen erweisen. So viel sie auch angerufen wurden, so viele Opfer man ihnen auch brachte, sie hörten nicht. Kein ‚Wunder‘, denn Harari zufolge waren und sind sie nichts als Fiktionen; auch die Auferstehung Jesu nennt er in einem Interview wörtlich einen ‚Fake‘.<sup>2</sup>

Jegliche Theismen, so Harari, wurden dann in der geistesgeschichtlichen Entwicklung der Menschheit verdrängt vom Humanismus, in dem der Mensch selbst mit seinen Gefühlen im Mittelpunkt steht. Sinngebend ist nunmehr die menschliche Erfahrung; statt auf eine göttliche hört man auf die ‚innere Stimme‘.

Aber auch den Humanismus sieht Harari schon an seinem Ende und prophezeit dessen Beerbung durch den Post- oder Transhumanismus.<sup>3</sup> Den Kampf um Unsterblichkeit, Glück und Macht sollen nun, anstelle von Menschen oder Göttern, Bio- und Nanotechnologien fortführen, indem im Cyborg der organische Körper mit nicht-organischen Apparaturen verschmolzen wird, um den Menschen zu optimieren: Mit solchen Mensch-Maschine-Hybriden wird offenbar längst experimentiert. Harari erwähnt, dass Soldaten des US-Militärs Chips eingepflanzt werden, um der Entstehung eines ‚Posttraumatischen Belastungssyndroms‘ vorzubeugen (S. 440). – Empfindungen und Emotionen werden nunmehr zu Algorithmen, und die Unsterblichkeit erhofft man sich in einer Datencloud.

Die philosophisch-naturwissenschaftliche Prämisse von Hararis Überlegungen ist, dass die menschliche Seele nicht existent sei, weil sie sich auf dem heutigen Stand der Naturwissenschaften nicht nachweisen lasse, und dass die der darwinschen Evolutionstheorie zugrundeliegenden zufälligen Mutationen der DNA die Vorstellung eines ‚Individuums‘ obsolet werden ließen. Ebenso wird der menschliche Geist auf eine Sammlung von Erlebnissen reduziert, somit könne er nicht unveränderlich, und dadurch, in Hararis Logik, auch nicht unsterblich sein. Beide, Seele und Geist, werden als ‚nicht nachgewiesen‘ ausrangiert. Allerdings gesteht Harari zu, dass die Wissenschaft wenig über Geist und Bewusstsein wisse, denn die Frage bleibe offen, wie aus elektrischen Signalen im Gehirn Bewusstsein entstehe.

Die bisherige Vorrangstellung des Menschen gründe also nicht in einem ‚Göttlichen Funken‘, der ihn von den Tieren unterscheide, sondern in seinen hervorragenden Qualitäten als Netzwerker. Durch Kooperation und Kommunikation sei die Menschheit zu einem Organismus (bzw. ‚Datenverarbeitungssystem‘) geworden, der erhalten werde durch das Gleichgewicht von Macht (Wissenschaft) und Ordnung (Religion); letztere werde gestützt u. a. durch heilige Bücher, die zwar fiktiv seien, aber gleichwohl Geltung hätten. Religionen – und mit ihnen Bücher und Mythen – hätten nämlich Harari zufolge die Funktion, die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen zu zementieren.

2 <https://gloria.tv/post/ZVGqWrdVbeuN4swFDENDUui4v#20> (abgerufen am 7.7.2022).

3 Post- und Transhumanismus und verwandte Begrifflichkeiten werden nicht immer klar auseinandergehalten und teilweise unterschiedlich definiert. Zur Vertiefung siehe u. a. Loh (2019) und Kohler (2019).

Auch den Humanismus versteht Harari als eine ‚Religion‘, deren zentraler Mythos vom individuellen ‚Ich‘ durch naturwissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse (eigentlich, so möchte man hier kritisch anmerken, durch mangelnde Erkenntnisse!) widerlegt sei. Gedanken und Gefühle, durch die ein ‚Ich‘ sich als solches (fälschlicherweise) wahrnehme, seien nichts weiter als Algorithmen, die technologisch in immer höherem Maße simuliert und beeinflusst werden könnten.

Harari konstatiert zum Ende seines Buches drei Prozesse, von denen er das (noch) herrschende humanistische Paradigma gefährdet sieht:

1. Die Wissenschaft konvertiert zu einem allumfassenden Dogma, das behauptet, Organismen seien Algorithmen und Leben sei Datenverarbeitung.
2. Intelligenz koppelt sich vom Bewusstsein ab.
3. Nicht-bewusste, aber hochintelligente Algorithmen könnten uns schon bald besser kennen als wir uns selbst. (S. 608)

Und was bedeutet das für die Menschheit? In letzter Konsequenz, auch wenn Harari weitere Szenarien wie das der Herrschaft einer biotechnologisch überlegenen Herrschaftselite durchspielt, die Abschaffung des Menschen als solchen durch seine eigene Schöpfung, das Ende der Menschheit nicht durch göttliche Erlösung, sondern durch eigene Erlöschung. Diese Konsequenz steht dann freilich im Widerspruch zum Titel des Buches: Nicht Gott (beziehungsweise ‚göttlich‘ im Sinne der antiken Götter, wie Harari meint, siehe S. 79) wird der Mensch, sondern völlig überflüssig.<sup>4</sup>

Harari schreibt über dieses komplexe und durchaus beunruhigende Thema eingänglich, unterhaltsam und ganz so, als habe er es von einer epistemologisch erhabenen Warte, aus der er ohne Werturteil gelassen vergangene und zukünftige Geschichte schauen könne, im Blick. Dabei versäumt er jedoch zu reflektieren, dass seine eigenen Betrachtungen auf eben den scientistischen, darwinistischen, kulturevolutionistischen und -funktionalistischen Annahmen über die Welt gründen, die seines Erachtens nahezu zwangsläufig in die von ihm geschilderten posthumanen Szenarien führen würden – so sie denn in dem Maße als gesichert gelten dürfen, wie Harari, der in der von ihm viel bemühten Naturwissenschaft und Psychologie als Laie gelten muss, suggeriert. Er entwirft ein nahezu geschlossenes System. Dieses erscheint auf den ersten Blick logisch-rational, doch es zeigt bei näherer Betrachtung zahlreiche Bruchlinien und Unebenheiten.

Sehr selektiv zitiert er beispielsweise bezüglich des Zusammenhanges von Gehirn und Bewusstsein Forschungen aus dem Neuroimaging, interessiert sich aber beispielsweise nicht für solche Befunde, die belegen, dass ein Gehirn selbst dann noch funktionieren kann, wenn das Gewebe zum Teil zerstört ist. Die Forschung um Nahtoderlebnisse, die sich theologisch mit

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4 Seinen Frieden mit einer solchen Vision findet Harari womöglich durch seine mehrjährige Übung in der Vipassana-Meditation nach S. N. Goenka. Dem 2013 verstorbenen Begründer dieser buddhistisch/hinduistischen Meditationsschule widmet Harari sein Buch, geht aber nirgends explizit auf diesen eigenen weltanschaulichen Hintergrund ein.

der Frage nach einer möglichen Existenz nach dem Tode sowie mit der Unsterblichkeit befasst, wird von Harari ebenfalls nicht zur Kenntnis genommen.

Und auch historisch ist sein Zugang durchaus nicht so alternativlos, wie er sich gibt: Harari führt geschichtliche Abläufe im Wesentlichen auf Gesetzmäßigkeiten und Kausalitäten auf makroskopischer Ebene zurück und vernachlässigt, dass auch das vorerst mikroskopische Handeln Einzelner weltgeschichtliche Auswirkungen haben kann: Es hätte immer auch anders kommen können. Wenn auch nicht unbedingt den einzelnen Menschen, so doch die menschliche Gesellschaft als Ganzes scheint Harari als rational handelnd im Sinne des rational choice zu begreifen: Die Sinnlosigkeit, in die ein solcher Ansatz letzten Endes mündet, mutet und traut er der Menschheit zu.

Man kann Hararis Buch der Science Fiction zurechnen, indem er von gewissen als wissenschaftlich erwiesenen postulierten Prämissen aus Zukunftsszenarien Fäden spinnt, die sich ganz ähnlich auch in als solcher deklariertes Science-Fiction-Literatur finden.<sup>5</sup> Im Hintergrund steht die Frage, was ist der Mensch, was ist Bewusstsein sowie die Überlegung, dass ‚Gott‘ überholt sei, verknüpft mit einem Bild des Menschen, als sich stets entwickelnd, bis es in der Überschneidung mit der KI aufgeht und von ihr überholt wird. Wird der Mensch zu einem Wesen, das von Chips gesteuert und dessen Bewusstsein in einer ‚Cloud‘ gespeichert werden wird? Die Verlängerung des Lebens bis zur möglichen Unsterblichkeit in der Cloud erscheint so manchem offenkundig als hoffnungsvoll.

Religionen hingegen werden von Harari auf Dogmen und Ordnungsprinzipien reduziert und Götter *eo ipso* als Einbildung definiert. Dass sich Schamanen, Propheten und Religionsgründer auf Visionen und Offenbarungen berufen, die die gesellschaftliche Ordnung sprengen, wird übergangen. Will man solche Vorgänge auf letztlich dysfunktionale Überhitzungen des Gehirns reduzieren, wäre die grundsätzliche Frage nach dem spezifischen Inhalt der Offenbarung und dessen Sinngehalt nicht gelöst. Religionen lassen sich als Systeme der Sinnggebung betrachten – woher kommt der Sinn? Schwerlich aus der Biochemie, denn Sinn geht über Funktion (oder ggf. Dysfunktion, die in einem streng kausalen Weltbild nur zufallsbedingt sein könnte, wobei der Begriff von ‚Zufall‘ noch zu diskutieren wäre) hinaus.

Stellenweise scheint Harari selbst zu zweifeln und zu warnen vor den Folgen einer sich selbst optimierenden und dabei das bisher Menschliche hinweg rationalisierenden KI. Gleichzeitig aber kann das Buch als eine Handlungsanweisung für Technokraten und als Rechtfertigung für KI verstanden werden, denn Harari scheint eine Entwicklung für durchaus folgerichtig (und dadurch gewissermaßen als unausweichlich legitimiert) zu halten, in der der Mensch als Wesen mit einem Bewusstsein, das sich nicht auf biochemische Vorgänge reduzieren lässt, abgeschafft wird.

Folgen wir diesem Entwurf, so würde die nihilistische Künstliche Intelligenz in eine Hölle der Abhängigkeit und schließlich der Selbstvernichtung führen, denn der zugrundeliegende

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5 Die deutsche Untertitelung des Buches lässt in dieser Hinsicht offen, ob es sich um eine (fiktive) oder die (historische) Geschichte handelt, die englische Untertitelung präzisiert aber den Anspruch, nicht eine ‚story‘, sondern ‚history‘ darzulegen.



Szientismus führt zur Verengung und Vereinseitigung. Das Leben in der Cloud wäre keine Unsterblichkeit, sondern Gefangenschaft in der Datenbank, wohingegen im religiösen Verständnis (zumindest der drei monotheistischen Weltreligionen) der menschliche Geist und das menschliche Bewusstsein in Verbindung mit dem göttlichen Geist in die Freiheit führen und der Geist in der Lage ist, moralisch-ethische Urteile zu fällen – wobei es sich um etwas handelt, dessen Harari sich im Rahmen seines Buches konsequent enthält.

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Heiner Schwenke (Hrsg.)

## **Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche: Liebe und Glaube**

**Morgengedanken / An meine Sally, die Verklärte (Transzendente Erfahrungen – Phänomene und Deutungen, Band 4)**

Baden-Baden: Karl Alber, 2022

ISBN 978-3-495-99977-6, 166 Seiten, € 34,00

### **Rezensentin:**

GABRIELE LADEMANN-PRIMER<sup>6</sup>

Berichte von Begegnungen mit den Geistern Verstorbener sind umgeben von und vernebelt durch das Urteil, ‚pathologisch‘ zu sein, weshalb wenig und wenn, dann nur im vertrauten Kreis, darüber gesprochen wird, obwohl viele Menschen solche Erscheinungen zu haben scheinen. Bekannt geworden sind u. a. die Begegnungen des Pfarrers Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740–1826) in Waldersbach im Steintal/Elsass mit seiner verstorbenen Frau Magdalena Salomé geb. Witter, von jemand, der nicht als ‚Spinner‘ verschrien ist und dem das Steintal bis heute ein ehrendes Andenken bewahrt aufgrund seiner sozialen und reformpädagogischen Tätigkeiten.<sup>7</sup>

Ähnliches hat Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) mit seiner verstorbenen Frau Margareta (gen. Meta) geb. Moller erlebt, um nur zwei der bekanntesten Beispiele zu nennen, auf die in den umfangreichen Anmerkungen des neu erschienenen Bandes von Heiner Schwenke (Hrsg.), „Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche: Liebe und Glaube: Morgengedanken An meine Sally, die Verklärte“ Bezug genommen wird.

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6 **Gabriele Lademann-Priemer**, Jahrgang 1945, Studium der Theologie in Hamburg und Heidelberg, seit 1975 Pastorin der jetzigen Ev.-luth. Kirche Norddeutschland (vorher Hamburgische Landeskirche, seit 1977 Nordelbische ev.-luth. Kirche), Promotion im Fach Religionswissenschaft nach einer Feldforschung in Afrika in Marburg, Gemeindepastorin in Hamburg, von 1992–2011 Beauftragte für Sekten- und Weltanschauungsfragen, Schwerpunkte Afrikanische Religionen sowie Ideologiekritik.

7 Bemerkenswert ist, dass auf Wikipedia die Erscheinungen der Verstorbenen und deren Einfluss auf Oberlin nicht erwähnt werden (Oberlin, 2022). In der deutschen Ausgabe des Heftchens des Musée Oberlin in Waldersbach heißt es allgemein: „Stets von einer Welt, die diese übertrifft und in welcher sich unser Schicksal erfüllt, angezogen, sympathisierte Oberlin mit den nicht konformistischen Theologen, welche die Idee des Übernatürlichen verteidigten gegen jede Verflachung der Frömmigkeit, komme sie von den Orthodoxen, den Deisten oder den Rationalisten.“ Bas-Rhin, France, o. J., ohne Seitenzahlen.

Im 18. Jahrhundert und in der ersten Hälfte des 19. wurden die Schriften des Sehers Swedenborg (1688–1772) über seine Visionen und Erscheinungen gelesen und waren einflussreich, trotz der Kritik Kants, die er in „Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik“ (1766) geäußert hatte. Kant nennt die „Arcana Coelestia“ Swedenborgs „acht Quartbände voller Unsinn“ und bezeichnet die Geisterseherei als etwas, das „kranken Gehirnnerven“ entspringe.

Justinus Kerner (1786–1862) hingegen, Unteramtsarzt in Weinsberg, nannte diejenigen, die die Erfahrungen aus „dem Nachtbereiche der Natur“ leugneten, „Glasköpfe“, heute würde man ‚Betonköpfe‘ sagen. Es gab also sowohl Gelehrte, die sich mit Visionen, Erscheinungen und Geistern beschäftigten und diese wissenschaftlich einzuordnen suchten, als auch eine rationalistische Gegenströmung. Die Auseinandersetzung darum, was als ‚rational‘ und was als ‚irrational‘ wahrgenommen bzw. definiert wird, gibt es bis heute.

Hintergrund für ablehnende Haltungen sind zum einen die Ausführungen Kants gegen Swedenborg. Zum andern setzte sich seit der Aufklärung zunehmend ein ‚szientistisches‘ Welt- und Menschenbild durch, wonach „die Materie das einzig Wahre und Wirkliche“ sei.<sup>8</sup>

Der Herausgeber von Jäsches Schrift, Heiner Schwenke, leitet am Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Berlin das Projekt „Transzendente Erfahrungen, Phänomene, Ideen und Urteile“. Er befasst sich mit der Möglichkeit der Erscheinung Verstorbener, die er als „Begegnung“, nämlich als eine wechselseitig erlebte Verbindung von zwei Personen bezeichnet. In einem Jäsches Schrift beigegebenen Essay setzt er sich sowohl mit Kants Bestreitung dieser Erfahrung auseinander als auch mit der kirchlichen Dämonisierung solcher Begegnungen bis hin zur Pathologisierung des Erlebens durch eine Betrachtungsweise, die sich als wissenschaftlich versteht. Anmerkungen zur Biographie Jäsches und zum Manuskript der Morgengedanken runden den Essay ab.

Jäsche, ein Schüler Kants, war ordentlicher Professor für theoretische und praktische Philosophie an der Universität von Dorpat (heute: Tartu/Estland). Seine erste Frau Sally ist mit 33 Jahren im Februar 1808 an einer Krankheit verstorben und erschien dem Witwer ein einziges Mal in der Nacht ihres Todes, ohne dass er sich danach gesehnt, ja an die Möglichkeit geglaubt hätte. Durch das völlig überraschende Erlebnis fühlt er sich nunmehr mit ihr inniger verbunden als im tatsächlichen Leben, schläft gut und ist gestärkt, auch wenn die Trauer um den Verlust damit nicht geschwunden ist. Nach einer akribischen Schilderung setzt er sich in einem weiteren Teil seiner Schrift damit auseinander, inwiefern es sich um eine Täuschung oder um Wunschdenken handeln könne und inwieweit das Erlebnis im Widerspruch oder in Übereinstimmung mit der kantschen Philosophie stehe. Verstand, Vernunft sowie Überzeugung und Erleben will er in Einklang bringen. Man solle jedoch nichts in den Bereich der Lüge und des Selbstbetrugs verweisen, bloß weil es unerklärlich scheine.

Der Verstand beziehe sich auf das Endliche, wohingegen die Vernunft im Endlichen „einen Spiegel des Unendlichen“ sehe und insofern Zugang habe zum Bereich des Religiösen [oder

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8 Vgl. Walach (2022). Das szientistische Weltbild nahm im Laufe der Zeit dogmatische Züge an.

Ideellen], dessen, was heute vielfach mit dem vagen Begriff des Spirituellen bezeichnet wird. Der Verstand wird in der Zeit Kants als das Vermögen der Unterscheidung definiert, wohingegen die Vernunft ihm übergeordnet ist als Erkenntnisvermögen und als Vermögen der Stiftung der Einheit aller Erkenntnis.

Jäsche hält es für möglich, dass die Seele mit einem „ätherischen Körper“ umhüllt sei, mit dem sie in die „ätherischen Lichtregionen“ aufsteige. Die Vorstellung eines ‚Ätherleibs‘ findet sich auch sonst in verschiedenen Schriften dieser Zeit, bei Jäsche in Beziehung gesetzt zu dem ‚unverweslichen [geistlichen] Leib‘, von dem im 1. Brief des Paulus an die Korinther im 15. Kapitel die Rede ist.

Der philosophische Teil setzt eigentlich Kenntnisse der damaligen Philosophen voraus, aber das wird erleichtert durch detaillierte Angaben in den insgesamt 189 Anmerkungen. Dennoch wird der Leserschaft einige Geduld abverlangt.

Empfehlenswert ist das Buch denjenigen, die mit der Frage nach der Möglichkeit von Erscheinungen oder dem ‚Leben nach dem Tode‘ umgehen. Ferner ist es vermutlich interessant für Menschen, die sich haupt- oder ehrenamtlich als Angehörige oder professionelle Helferinnen und Helfer mit ‚Trauerarbeit‘ befassen, denn es könnte die Tür öffnen für ein unbefangenes Gespräch über den ‚Kontakt‘ zu den Verstorbenen.

Entscheidend erscheint mir im Nachhinein letztlich nicht die Frage, ob solche Erscheinungen ‚tatsächlich‘ möglich sind, sondern, welche Wirkung sie zeitigen. (Biblich gesprochen: „An ihren Früchten [also an ihren Folgen] sollt ihr sie erkennen.“) An den Wirkungen zeigt sich am ehesten, ob es sich um ‚pathologische‘ oder ‚gesunde‘ Formen des Erlebens handelt, wobei man berücksichtigen muss, dass die Antwort auf diese Frage vom jeweiligen Kulturkreis und dem kulturellen Hintergrund abhängig ist. Die Wirkung besteht für Jäsche darin, dass er gestärkt aus der Begegnung hervorgeht und weiß, dass er weiterleben und seine Pflichten erfüllen muss.

Schwenke weist darauf hin, dass Jäsche sich so weit dem philosophischen System Kants verpflichtet fühlt, dass er die Begegnung letztlich in den Bereich des Glaubens verweist, dessen Quelle die Liebe zu einer verstorbenen Person sei, was auch die Reihenfolge im Titel „Liebe und Glaube“ zeigt. Daher bleibt nach Schwenke das erkenntnistheoretische Problem im Grunde ungelöst. Die Frage bleibt offen, ob das Problem wirklich ‚erkenntnistheoretisch‘ zu lösen ist. Gerade diese Offenheit macht jedoch den Reiz aus.

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Ronald Hutton

## Queens of the Wild

### Pagan Goddesses in Christian Europe: An Investigation

New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022

ISBN 978-0-300-26101-1, 245 Seiten, € 23,50

#### Rezensentin:

MERET FEHLMANN<sup>9</sup>

In fünf Kapiteln befasst sich Ronald Hutton, der wohl profilierteste Forscher zum Thema *pagan studies*, mit den vermeintlich heidnischen Göttinnen Europas. Der Hauptfokus liegt dabei auf der akademischen wie kulturellen Geschichte Großbritanniens.

Das erste Kapitel befasst sich mit der zentralen Frage *What is a pagan survival*. Im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert war die Vorstellung, dass heidnische Überbleibsel bis ins Mittelalter, ja gar in die Frühe Neuzeit weitergegeben und heimlich gepflegt wurden, im Schwange. Diese Entwicklung ging so weit, dass in Großbritannien in den 1930er Jahren gar „korrigierend“ in die Brauchgestaltung eingegriffen wurde, um Bräuche möglichst authentisch erscheinen zu lassen. Zunehmend flossen diese Ideen auch in breitere Kreise und fanden neue Vermittlungswege in Reiseführern und Infobroschüren zu Sehenswürdigkeiten. Eine weitere, im frühen 19. Jahrhundert aufgekommene Traditionslinie sah einen heidnischen Kult im Verborgenen am Werk, dessen Anhänger:innen ab dem Mittelalter als Hexen verfolgt worden seien. Diese Idee wurde von der breiten Mehrheit der britischen Forschenden unkritisch übernommen, fand aber auch Befürworter unter kontinentaleuropäischen Historikern; zu nennen sind vor allem Carlo Ginzburg (\*1939) und Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (\*1929).

Im europäischen Raum lassen sich für die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts große Veränderungen in der Landwirtschaft nachweisen; viele der Bräuche, die als Ausdruck einer heidnischen Vergangenheit gedeutet wurden, waren vielmehr Ausdruck dieser rasch voranschreitenden Veränderungen. Das gilt auch für das *Magnus Opus* von Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831–1880) *Wald- und Feldkulte* (1875/7) (vgl. Perabo, 2022), das in vielen Bereichen als direkter und nicht zu unterschätzender Ideengeber für James George Frazer (1854–1941) und sein Buch *The Golden Bough* (Erstausgabe 1890) fungierte (Frazer 1993: 399–412, 447–464; Ackerman 1991: 48). Wie die Volkskundlerin Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann (1918–1993) Mitte der 1960er-Jahre ausgehend von den Materialien Mannhardts nachweisen konnte, drückte sich in diesen von ihm dokumentierten, vermeintlich aus heidnischer Zeit stammenden Bräuchen eher der Wunsch

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nach sozialer Gerechtigkeit aus (Weber-Kellermann, 1965: 187–290). Ein weiteres Problemfeld, das sich in einem solchen Verständnis der Landbewohner:innen eröffnet, resultiert in ihrer einseitigen Festlegung auf eine Rolle als Träger:innen der Tradition. Diese Vorstellung einer heidnischen Vergangenheit, die ihrer Entdeckung harrt, konnte sich weit über die Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts halten.

Die nachfolgende Forschungsgeneration des späten 20. Jahrhunderts lehnte teilweise auch den Begriff des *pagan survivals* als wenig zielführend ab. Gewisse Forschende entwickelten die Idee, dass als heidnisch verstandene Elemente mit Gewinn als „areligious folklore“ (S. 39) verstanden werden sollten, da sie auf vielfältige Weise anschlussfähig sind. Um die Jahrtausendwende traten vereinzelt jüngere Forschenden auf den Plan, die erneut eine heidnische Abstammung der Hexenreligion postulierten. Als wohl bekanntestes Beispiel kann Emma Wilby mit *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (2006) gelten.

Das nächste Kapitel befasst sich mit *Mother Earth*. Aus der Antike sind Göttinnen, die für die ganze Natur stehen, bekannt, aber sie sind in der Tendenz von marginalem Charakter, da keine Tempel oder Inschriften bekannt und überliefert sind. Typische Vertreterinnen dieses Typus sind Gaia und Terra Mater. Das heidnische Pantheon blieb auch nach dem Wechsel 390 n. Chr. zum Christentum als einziger tolerierter Religion im römischen Reich bekannt. In der Moderne erst wurde Mutter Natur vom christlichen Gott befreit. Im 19. Jahrhundert war in England die Vorstellung eines Dreiklangs von unberührter Natur, Mond und göttlicher Weiblichkeit auf dem Vormarsch. Das ist ein wichtiger Schritt für das bis heute vorherrschende Bild der Mutter Natur oder Großen Göttin. Verbreitet wurde diese Vorstellung durch J.G. Frazer, Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928), Jacquetta Hawkes (1910–1986) oder auch Robert Graves (1895–1985), die von einer Abfolge verschiedener patriarchaler Invasionen als Ursprung des Niedergangs des Matriarchats sprachen. Gemeinsam ist diesen Denker:innen eine deutlich rückwärts gewandte, sozialkonservative Haltung. Die genannten Personen verstanden sich mehrheitlich als Wissenschaftler:innen und nicht als Exponent:innen von sozialen Bewegungen. Innerhalb der sozialen Bewegungen fanden sich Personen, die sich dem Matriarchat oder gar seiner Wiedereinrichtung verschrieben; erinnert sei an Matilda Joslyn Gage (1826–1898) oder an Otto Gross (1877–1920) (zu Gage: Brammer, 1993; zu Gross: Kanz, 2000).

Die Idee einer matriarchalen Vergangenheit blieb zwar innerhalb der Wissenschaft nicht ohne Widerspruch, gerade auch weil ein essentialistisches Bild von Weiblichkeit entworfen wird, auch war die Anschlussfähigkeit eines solchen Weltbildes mit Wellen von feindlichen Invasionen in einem nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zunehmend postkolonial werdenden Europa gering. Dennoch fanden sich immer wieder Personen, die diese Vision der Vorzeit mit Erfolg propagierten. Zu nennen ist die Archäologin Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994), wobei deren Kurgan-Hypothese, dass das matriarchale Europa von Reiternomaden aus den russischen Steppen überrannt wurde, im Zusammenhang mit dem von Russland begonnenen Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine im Februar 2022 durchaus eine gewisse Aktualität gewann. Man denke an Bilder eines sich hypermännlich gebenden, barbrüstigen Putins hoch zu Ross und sein Verständnis der Ukraine als weiblich, die dem russischen Reich einverleibt werden soll (vgl. Hiltmann, 2022).

Im Fall von Gimbutas ist vor allem das Problem zu nennen, dass im englischsprachigen Raum die breitere Leserschaft wie Vertreter:innen aus der Wissenschaft die enge Verbindung von Gimbutas mit völkischer und nationalsozialistischer Wissenschaft in ihrer akademischen Sozialisation (ihre Stationen führten sie in den 1940er-Jahren nach Wien und nach Tübingen) nicht realisieren. Da stellt Hutton leider auch keine Ausnahme dar, wenn er zwar kritisiert, dass sie ihre Vorstellung des matriarchalen Alteuropas als ganz neu präsentiert und die Bedeutung der Vorarbeiten ihre Vorläufer:innen verkleinert (S. 73), aber deren wahre Färbung nicht erkennt (vgl. Chapman, 1998, Meskell, 1995; Fehlmann, 2020).

Das dritte Kapitel nimmt sich *The Fairy Queen* an. Die Elfenkönigin ist eine englische Erscheinung, die im ausgehenden Mittelalter an Popularität gewann und deren Blütezeit in der Frühen Neuzeit endete. Feen und Elfen sind praktisch identisch, sie gelten traditionellerweise eher als gefährlich, da sie Krankheiten und Unglücksfälle auslösen sollen. Aus angelsächsischer Zeit, aus der sie stammen sollen, sind wenige Quellen überliefert. Ab dem 12. Jahrhundert tritt in England die Tradition von schönen Frauen (und auch Männern) auf, die nachts erscheinen, um zu Musik zu tanzen.

Im 12. Jahrhundert tauchen sogenannte *fays* in den Ritterromanen auf; sie dienen oft als „plot devices“ (S. 81) und fungieren als bessere Version der Adligen. Wichtig werden sie wohl in dieser Funktion auch in dem Zusammenhang, dass Adelsfamilien sich gerne auf solche übernatürlichen Wesen als Stammütter beriefen. Als bekanntes Beispiel sei an Melusine erinnert.

Eine weitere typische Vertreterin dieser Art von Fee ist auch Morgan le Fay aus der Artus-tradition, deren Darstellung als heilkundige und mächtige Zauberin auf einer Insel von Circe aus der Odyssee beeinflusst sein soll, wie Hutton rapportiert. Die weiblichen Beispiele sind meist bekannter und haben ein längeres Nachleben als ihre männlichen Gegenstücke.

In Schottland werden in Hexenprozessen regelmäßig Feen und die Elfenkönigin genannt, die aber als Handlanger des Teufels gedeutet werden. Auch in England ist eine solche Lesart verbreitet, dass Elfen Dämonen sind und ihre Heimstatt in der Hölle ist.

Das vierte Kapitel ist *The Lady of the Night* gewidmet. Überlieferungen rund um diese nachts mit ihren Anhängerinnen ausreitende Gestalt finden sich im ganzen westeuropäischen Raum. Es scheint sich dabei um einen vor allem von den armen Klassen verbreiteten Mythos zu handeln. Erste Erwähnung dieser zur Nacht ausreitenden weiblichen Gestalt findet sich im *Canon Episcopii* aus dem 8. Jahrhundert n. Chr., der darin eine Vorgaukelung des Teufels sieht. Ihr Name wird mit Diana wiedergegeben. Nördlich der Alpen war der Kult von Diana wenig präsent. Ihr Name war aber durch ihre Erwähnung in der Bibel präsent, das gilt auch für den Namen Herodias. Diese nimmt als Namensgeberin und Hauptfigur eines vorchristlichen Hexenkultes in der Toskana eine wichtige Rolle in Charles Godfrey Lelands (1824–1903) Hexenevangelium *Aradia* (1899) ein.

Viele Berichte über diese numinose Gestalt stammen aus dem heutigen Frankreich und Deutschland, Gebiete, die im 9. Jahrhundert bereits stark christianisiert waren. Im norditalienischen Raum tritt ab dem 14. Jahrhundert zunehmend eine Vermischung von Berichten über diese numinose Gestalt mit Häresieanklagen und Sabbat-Vorwürfen auf.

Auch wenn man in Skandinavien nach Vorbildern für diese Gestalt sucht, wird man nicht wirklich fündig. Zwar kennt die skandinavische Überlieferung ausfahrende Göttinnen und Frauen, dennoch kann keine bekannte Göttin als Vorbild oder Modell dieser *Ladies of the Night* dienen. *The Lady of the Night* erweist sich als großzügige und gnädige Schutzherrin, die sich um die Nöte der armen und marginalisierten Menschen (S. 142) kümmert. Dadurch hat sie einen transgressiven Charakter, weil sie „structures of politics and religion“ (S. 142) ignoriert, was auch in ihrer Erscheinung als Frau zum Ausdruck kommt. Ob man so weit gehen will wie Hutton, der in der *Lady of the Night* eine der großen gegenkulturellen Gestalten der Menschheit sieht, sei jedem und jeder selbst überlassen. Meiner Meinung nach vereinigt diese Gestalt eindeutig gegenkulturelles Kapital, die aber in Machtlosigkeit und Mangel wurzeln, was ihr Potential wohl etwas einengt.

Weiter geht es mit *The Cailleach*: Dabei handelt es sich um eine sagenhafte Gestalt aus gälischem Gebiet, die im Rahmen volkskundlicher Sammeltätigkeiten „entdeckt“ wurde. Sie gilt als von unfassbar hohem Alter und als Riesin, die die Landschaft anlegte. Das Zusammentreffen mit ihr ist für Menschen eher gefährlich, meist weist sie eine enge Verbindung zu Tieren und zur Natur auf. Sie wurde im Laufe des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als ehemalige Göttin gedeutet.

Aus dem mittelalterlichen Irland stammen einige Dichtungen über die Cailleach, die aber ein deutlich anderes Bild zeichnen, da es sich um das Lamento einer alten Frau über die Vergänglichkeit der Welt und zugleich um einen Lobgesang auf den Trost des Christentums handelt.

Als übernatürliche Vorbilder der späteren Cailleach finden sich in Irland und Wales als weiblich imaginierte Schlachtgeister. Anders zeigt sich das Bild im schottischen Hochland und auf den Hebriden. Aus diesen Gebieten sind vor 1900 keine Aufzeichnungen zu dieser Gestalt bekannt. Hutton meint, es sei gut möglich, dass das „Volk“ selbst um 1900 damit begann, verschiedene übernatürliche Gestalten unter der Bezeichnung Cailleach zu subsumieren. 1920 machte sich Eleanor Hill (1860–1935) dafür stark, dass sich hinter der Cailleach eine Göttin verberge. Diese Deutung griff 1934 J.G. Mackay auf, der die Cailleach durch die ihr manchmal nachgesagte Bindung zu Hirschen als allumfassende Naturgöttin (im Sinne der Mutter Erde) verstand. Er deutete auch die als Hexen verfolgten Personen des Mittelalters als Priester:innen ihres Kultes. 1935 veröffentlichte Donald Alexander Mackenzie (1873–1936) ein populäres Buch über Folklore, worin er verschiedene Gestalten als Verkörperungen einzelner Facetten einer Großen Göttin deutete; die Cailleach stand für Alter. Dieser Beitrag sollte das Bild der Cailleach durch das ganze 20. und bis ins 21. Jahrhundert hinein prägen, wie der 2003 erschienene Nachzügler Gearoid O Cruaioichs *The Book of the Cailleach*, der sich vor allem auf irisches Material bezieht, belegt. Wie Hutton bemerkt, kann im vorliegenden Fall mit gutem Gewissen festgehalten werden: „The Cailleach as a great goddess of the ancient Gaels, is a creation of modern folklorists“ (S. 158).

Den Abschluss der Studie bildet ein Epilog zum *Green Man*. Der grüne Mann scheint ein Produkt der englischsprachigen Länder zu sein, dessen Popularität sich hauptsächlich auf dieses geographische Gebiet beschränkt. Seinen Ausgangspunkt nahm dieser Mythos mit Julia Somersets (1901–1971) Aufsatz zum *Green Man*, der 1935 in der Zeitschrift *Folklore* erschien. Darin schlägt sie eine Deutung des *Green Man* als eine im gesamten europäischen Raum ver-



breitete Vegetationsgottheit vor, die im Rhythmus der Jahreszeiten sterbe und auferstehe. In dieser Vorstellung ist ein deutlicher Einfluss der Theorien von J. G. Frazer und Margaret Murray (1863–1963) auszumachen. Mit dieser Interpretation trat Somerset bei einigen Mitgliedern der *Folklore Society* offene Türen ein.

Bis in die 1990er-Jahre erschienen immer wieder Bücher und Berichte, die diese Deutungsweise popularisierten, obwohl bereits 1979 die klärende Studie *Jack in the Green* von Ray Judge veröffentlicht wurde. Judge gelang es zu zeigen, dass diese Figur wohl auf Brauchaktivitäten von Kaminfeuern zurückging und sich vor 1800 kaum ein Beleg dazu finden lässt. Viele der Forschenden, die das vorherrschende Bild des *Green Mans* korrigierten, waren unabhängige Wissenschaftler:innen.

Als Verkörperungen des *Green Man* werden immer wieder Robin Hood und der grüne Ritter aus *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1400) angeführt. Im Falle des grünen Ritters scheint es, dass er, obwohl grün gewandet, nicht eine Verkörperung der Natur ist, sondern ritterliche Tugenden vermitteln soll, er also für positive menschliche Eigenschaften und Fähigkeiten steht. Auch dieses Beispiel zeigt, der *Green Man* „took on life of his own as a religious figure, responding to modern needs“ (S. 190).

In der *Conclusion* kommt alles zusammen. Mutter Natur und Cailleach sind Vor- und Rückseite der gleichen Medaille; die eine steht für die nährnde, fruchtbare Natur, während die andere die rücksichtslose und furchtbare Natur verkörpert und für die Unausweichbarkeit des Alterns steht. *The Lady of the Night* und die Elfenkönigin halten beide Hof, sie bieten Unterhaltung und Tanz. Nach Hutton sind sie in ihrer Funktion eher mit Heiligen als Gottheiten zu vergleichen, da es darum geht, ihre Gnaden und ihre Gunst zu erringen, um die eigene Situation zu verbessern. Gemeinsam ist den hier vorgestellten Gestalten, dass sie durch ihre Weiblichkeit einen je nach Blickwinkel bis zu einem gewissen Grad als transgressiv zu betrachtenden Charakter aufweisen, gerade wenn sie „current structures of academic debate“ (S. 196) sprengen. Hutton schließt mit der Bemerkung, dass die polarisierenden Begriffe christlich und heidnisch in unserer postsäkularen Gesellschaft nicht mehr hilfreich sind, sondern dass neue Bezeichnungen ge-/erfunden werden sollen. Ein Befund, dem ich mich nur anschließen kann.

*Queens of the Wild* ist ein typischer Hutton: Er räumt mit verbreiteten Vorstellungen, die einen uralten, aus heidnischen Zeiten stammenden Ursprung neuheidnischer Gottheiten postulieren, auf. So gesehen liefert er das, wofür er mindestens seit seiner grundlegenden Studie *The Triumph of the Moon* über die Geschichte des modernen Neuheidentums (1999) bekannt ist. Wie bei ihm üblich, ist auch das neue Buch ein solide recherchiertes Stück Wissenschaft, das in einem zugänglichen, aber doch wissenschaftlichen Schreibstil verfasst ist, um den Lesenden Huttons Anliegen zu verdeutlichen, dass Vorstellungen von „pagan survivals“ meist ein ideelles, aber kein reelles, historisch belastbares Vor-Leben haben.

Bei der Lektüre ist mir aufgefallen, dass eine gewisse Diskrepanz zum Untertitel *Pagan Goddesses in Christian Europe* besteht. Weist doch die Mehrzahl der vorgestellten numinosen Entitäten – die Feenkönigin, die Cailleach und auch der *Green Man* – eine geographisch auf Großbritannien beschränkte Heimat auf, während nur bei der *Lady of the Night* und der

Mutter Erde eine gesamteuropäische Verbreitung gegeben ist. Bei allen diesen Gestalten zeigt Hutton auf, dass sie wesentlich jünger sind, als gerne angenommen wird, und dass verschiedene Wissenschaftsdisziplinen bei ihrer Genese eine zentrale Rolle spielten. Die in der *Conclusion* aufgeworfene Frage nach der als nicht zielführend erkannten Unterscheidung in heidnisch und christlich scheint mir eine der zentralen Fragen zu sein, an denen sich die *Pagan Studies* bis jetzt ohne sehr viel Erfolg abarbeiten. Oft genug geht dabei die kreative Energie, die hinter einer solchen Aneignung und Umformung der Geschichte und der Mythen steht, vergessen. Da ist *Queens of the Wild* keine Ausnahme, worin Hutton überzeugend zeigt, dass diese Gestalten kaum über einen heidnischen Ursprung verfügen, er aber auch keine Antwort liefert, woher dieses Bedürfnis kommt, sie als „pagan survivals“ zu sehen.

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# Fanny Moser Award 2023

for outstanding work on the topics of  
recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK),  
poltergeist phenomena or hauntings



The Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e.V. (IGPP) in Freiburg (Germany) is offering the Fanny Moser Award for an outstanding scientific work on parapsychological topics. The award is endowed with 3,000 € (further information: <https://igpp.de/allg/fanny-moser-preis.htm>). It was offered by Dr. Fanny Moser (1872–1953), early patron of the IGPP and author of two major books of German parapsychological research entitled “Okkultismus” (Moser, 1935) and “Spuk” (Moser, 1950). In her testamentary disposition, Moser states that a “prize for the best work” on her research topics should be offered on a regular basis, comprising in the broadest sense the study of paranormal, anomalistic experiences and occult phenomena.



The announcement of the Fanny Moser Award 2023 focuses the topic of “RSPK” (recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis), poltergeist phenomena or hauntings. The award will be given for a scientific work (monograph, scientific article, dissertation, exhibition catalog or similar). The work must make explicit reference to the topic “RSPK”. The reference can be of empirical, experimental, theoretical, conceptual, clinical, therapeutic, natural-scientific, social- or cultural-scientific, historical, philosophical nature, interdisciplinary and may also include elements of art. The publication should not date back more than five years.

Send the **applications** (self-nominations or proposals by others) to the expert jury at the IGPP [Fanny-Moser-Preis@igpp.de] by **January 15, 2023**. Include the following documents: a PDF of the scientific paper that is to be awarded, a detailed application letter relating to the award in question, and a short curriculum vita of the author.

The award ceremony is expected to take place in Freiburg in mid-May 2023.

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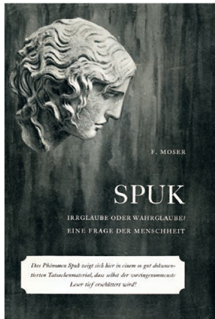
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# Fanny-Moser-Preis 2023

## für herausragende Arbeiten zum Thema »Spuk«



Das Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e.V. (IGPP), Freiburg im Breisgau, vergibt zum dritten Mal den mit 3.000 € dotierten Fanny-Moser-Preis für herausragende wissenschaftliche Arbeiten zu parapsychologischen Themen (weitere Informationen: <https://igpp.de/allg/fanny-moser-preis.htm>). Der Preis wurde ausgelobt von Dr. Fanny Moser (1872–1953), frühe Mäzenin des IGPP und Verfasserin zweier Hauptwerke der deutschsprachigen parapsychologischen Forschung über »Okkultismus« (Moser, 1935) und »Spuk« (Moser, 1950). Mosers testamentarische Verfügung sieht vor, dass »regelmäßig ein Preis für die beste Arbeit« zu den von ihr bearbeiteten Forschungsthemen ausgelobt werden soll und meint damit im weitesten Sinne die Erforschung paranormalen und anomalistischer Erfahrungen und Phänomene.



Die Ausschreibung des Fanny-Moser-Preises 2023 rückt das engere Thema »Spuk« in den Fokus. Ausgezeichnet werden soll ein wissenschaftliches bzw. publizistisches Werk (Monografie, wissenschaftlicher Artikel, Dissertation, eine Studienabschlussarbeit, Ausstellungskatalog o.ä.). Die Arbeit muss einen expliziten Bezug zum Thema »Spuk« aufweisen. Der Bezug kann empirisch-experimenteller, theoretisch-konzeptioneller, klinisch-therapeutischer, naturwissenschaftlicher, kunst- oder kulturwissenschaftlicher, sozialwissenschaftlicher, historischer, philosophischer, diskursanalytischer oder auch interdisziplinärer oder

anwendungsbezogener Art sein und kann auch künstlerische Aspekte enthalten. Die Veröffentlichung soll nicht länger als fünf Jahre zurückliegen.

**Bewerbungen** (Selbst-Nominierungen oder Vorschläge durch Dritte) sind bis zum **15. Januar 2023** an die interdisziplinäre Fachjury am IGPP [Fanny-Moser-Preis@igpp.de] zu richten und sollen folgende Unterlagen beinhalten: ein Exemplar der vorgeschlagenen Arbeit (gerne auch PDF), ein aussagekräftiges Bewerbungsschreiben, das den Bezug der Arbeit zum ausgelobten Thema darstellt, sowie eine Kurzvita des Verfassers/der Verfasserin.

Die Preisverleihung wird voraussichtlich Mitte Mai 2023 in Freiburg stattfinden.

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UP TO \$1 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR RESEARCH INTO THE SURVIVAL OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER DEATH

THE 2023 BIGELOW INSTITUTE FOR CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES GRANTS PROGRAM: "THE CHALLENGE"

After a massive international response judged by a panel of outstanding experts, the 2021 Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies (BICS) essay contest ("The Contest") established that there is *evidence beyond reasonable doubt* for the survival of consciousness after permanent physical death ("life after death," or "the afterlife"). Building on that success, the 2023 BICS Challenge will fund research into contact and communication with post-mortem or discarnate consciousness leading to the reception of higher order information of benefit to humankind with the allocation of a grand total of up to **\$1 million in grants**.

Up to \$50,000 will be awarded to 12 projects and up to \$100,000 will be awarded to a further 4 projects, exclusively in the field of the survival of consciousness after death. (BICS reserves the right to determine the value of each project and the final amount awarded.)

As a general guide, historical examples of such contact and communication with "the afterlife" have included: Emanuel Swedenborg; Allan Kardec; William Stainton Moses; Edgar Cayce; and Jane Roberts.

Historically, the methods used have been wide-ranging, including, but not limited to, automatic writing, dreams, visions, veridical hallucination, trance, hypnosis, direct voice, mental mediumship, physical mediumship, so-called spirit boards, instrumental transcommunication (ITC), etc.

Applicants are free to decide on their approach, but projects must address the hypothesis that valid higher order information, generally classed as "wisdom," can be received in communication with post-mortem or discarnate consciousness through the use of robust methodologies.

In the first instance, applicants should submit a **preliminary proposal** with professional bio, or bios of all team members, showing their qualifications and experience in this field ("the survival of human consciousness after death"). Individual applicants may apply. In addition, BICS encourages researchers to form teams or consortia, ideally, but not necessarily, with a host entity.

Preliminary proposals should be precise and succinct, and include an abstract, a thorough budget breakdown showing how payment instalments will be tied to research deliverables ("milestones") over the course of the project, and a clear demonstration that the project design is novel and will stand up to academic scrutiny.

Preliminary proposals are invited from November 1st, 2022, to January 1st, 2023, with selected applicants being invited to submit full proposals from January 1st, 2023, to April 1st, 2023. Grants awarded will run from August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, to May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 (9 months).

Preference will be given to new and innovative studies. BICS will not enter into discussion or "coaching" of proposed projects. Further terms and conditions can be found at [bigelowinstitute.org](http://bigelowinstitute.org).

**Submit your preliminary proposal from Nov., 1st, 2022, until Jan., 1st, 2023, to Dr Colm Kelleher at [info@bigelowinstitute.org](mailto:info@bigelowinstitute.org).** Submissions will be considered and approved on a rolling basis, therefore applicants should submit *as early as possible*.

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## Guidelines for Authors

- Manuscripts submitted for publication must meet the usual scholarly standards and requirements. Particular attention is paid to logical consistency and clarity of reasoning, and to the use of literature and other documents supporting arguments or hypotheses.
- Manuscripts must be submitted in electronic form in a common text format (docx, doc, odt, rtf; but *no* pdf files!).
- The manuscript must include an abstract describing as precisely and shortly as possible the content of the article (e.g., questions, methods, results, conclusions). It also must include some keywords.
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