

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

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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

Zusammenfassung² – In diesem Beitrag wird mein Werdegang als Psi-Forscherin in Brasilien vor gestellt, 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 country 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,³ which supported book translations. Whether biases or publicity appeals, pro-Spiritist ideas can be seen, for instance, in the translation of Hid-

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.⁴ Quevedo undertook a true crusade against mediumistic reli-

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.⁵ 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 context⁶ (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 harmful⁷. 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.

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

- 5 There is evidence that Quevedo distorted information about researchers' approaches and studies to defend his own point of view about Spiritism phenomena (Martinez-Taboa, 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):⁸ "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, Ederlazil, 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 Aresi⁹ (e.g., 1972; 1978) who used parapsychology as a foundation for his therapeutic practices to cure various diseases.¹⁰

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://clinicamenssana.com.br/asp/institucional.asp>

Similarly, Pedro Grisa¹¹ 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 multi-faceted 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

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, Sibele 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.¹² I witnessed and contributed to the transformations of Eclipsy¹³ 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). “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

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 teenager 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,¹⁴ our study group proposal¹⁵ 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*

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).*¹⁶ 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 agency¹⁷ 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.

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* (Cardeña 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 Zusammenfassung¹⁸

Informationen über die europäische „psychische Forschung“, die auch als „wissenschaftlicher Okkultismus“ oder in Frankreich als „métapsychique“ bezeichnet wurde, sowie der amerikanische 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 „unausgeglichenen“ oder „besessenen“ Frauen immer noch sehr stark. In der Tat schwankt der Status der Frauen im Volksmund hauptsächlich zwischen „unausgeglichen“ (katholische Sichtweise) und „begabt“ (spiritistische Sichtweise). Quevedos Sichtweise basierte vor allem auf

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 Medizinern 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.