

# Feminizing the Paranormal

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**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.