

REFLECTIONS ON BEING A PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

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ABSTRACT: There are many aspects of being a parapsychologist. The most satisfying are our contributions to knowledge, which stand even in the face of controversy. Other issues include types of individuals in parapsychology, education and training, conceptual approaches, how we experience working in parapsychology, reasons for being in the field and legitimization strategies used by parapsychologists. While some are in parapsychology because of the potential for support of non-materialistic aspects of personality, others believe they may find conventional explanations still not recognized by science. Parapsychologists harm their cause when they make excessive claims about their research results, when they do not publish in refereed journals and when they fail to follow up specific lines of research. All of these issues are a part of the identity and work of parapsychologists.

Although there is an international community devoted to the study of psi phenomena, there are few discussions about aspects of parapsychology as a profession and about our experiences as parapsychologists.¹ In what follows I would like to offer some thoughts about some of these issues. The address is not meant to be a systematic or exhaustive discussion of the topic. Instead I present it as thoughts designed to raise issues, many of which may not have a clear cut answer. My comments will focus on such topics as the accomplishments of our profession, the variety of parapsychologists, education and training, how it feels to be in the field, why we are in the field, approaches and strategies of parapsychologists, and problematic behaviors of parapsychologists.

THE PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL COMMUNITY AND THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I would like to start with a positive message. Our efforts as parapsychologists have contributed to knowledge in significant ways. I argue that we can be proud of the following:

First: The findings of parapsychology serve as a reminder that there is much more to learn about human functioning than the behavioral sci-

This is an expanded version of the Presidential Address delivered at the 46th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association held at Vancouver, August 2-4, 2003. I wish to thank Nancy L. Zingrone for useful editorial suggestions that improved this paper.

¹ For some exceptions see McClenon (1982), McConnell and Clark (1980), Milton (1995), J. B. Rhine (1944), Schmeidler (1971), and Smith (1999).

ences suggest. Over a hundred years ago Frederic W. H. Myers (1900) stated that the duty of psychical researchers was "the expansion of science herself" (p. 123). Much of our work suggests that the communication with the environment we refer to as ESP and PK requires at least an extension of current physics and psychology. In other words, there is more to human capabilities than official science teaches. Parapsychological research serves as a reminder of other possibilities, of challenges we only hope science at large will take on. Certainly official science has not accepted that we have established the reality of phenomena that require an expansion of physical and psychological principles. Nonetheless, I agree with Emily Kelly (2001) when she states: "If psychical research does nothing more than continually shake complacent assumptions about fundamental questions concerning mind, consciousness, volition, that alone is a significant contribution to science" (p. 86).

Second: In addition to extending the reach of human abilities, parapsychology has documented the frequency and complexity of the features of the phenomena it studies and has thus contributed to the overall knowledge of experiences studied by psychology and psychiatry. Our studies show that claims of psychic experiences are more common than previously realized. In addition these studies document the variety of human experience and thus expand the views of their range derived from the behavioral sciences. This includes such "new" experiences as waking and dream ESP, apparitions of the dead, deathbed visions, poltergeists, out-of-body experiences (OBEs), and near-death experiences (NDEs). When one gets into the study of the features of the experiences, the forms ESP takes, the complex patterns of features found in apparitions and in OBEs and NDEs, one realizes our field has contributed much to the cataloging and mapping of a variety of experiences and states of consciousness (Alvarado, 1996a; Irwin, 1994). Some of this work, including Sybo Schouten's (1979) analyses of ESP experiences and my own work with OBEs (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1998-99), shows the further complexity of the experiences by documenting the interaction of its features with other features and with external variables.

This view of complexity is further enhanced when we pay attention to our past history and study the investigations conducted around mental mediums. The detailed studies that Théodore Flournoy (1900) conducted with medium Hélène Smith and Eleanor Sidgwick's (1915) analyses of work conducted with medium Leonora Piper have taught us much about psychological personation, stages and features of trances, and the imagery involved in the mentation.

Third: Parapsychology has contributed to the development of ideas in psychology. Some historians of psychology, such as Régine Plas (2000), have argued that interest and research in psychic phenomena were an important element in the development of psychology. In fact, Plas argues

that interest in the subconscious mind in France was intimately related to interest in telepathy and the like, as seen in the work of Pierre Janet and Charles Richet, among others. The early work of members of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in England contributed much to the development of ideas of the subconscious mind as well as to the study of dissociation. This was particularly true of the work of Edmund Gurney and Frederic W. H. Myers (Alvarado, 2002a).

Furthermore, parapsychology has contributed much to the development of ideas about the mind, particularly those which treat the mind-body problem and ideas of the nonphysical. Examples of this are the ideas Myers (1903) stated in his hundred-year-old classic *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* as well as the later speculations made by such figures as William McDougall (1911), J. B. Rhine (1947), Robert Thouless and B. P. Wiesner (1947), Charles Tart (1979), and John Beloff (1990).

There is also a beginning of studies of the transformative effects of parapsychological experiences, a topic parapsychologists have been reticent to study. But we have made contributions to the study of personal transformations related to psychic experience, as seen in the work of Palmer (1979), Kennedy and Kanthamani (1995), and in my own work with OBEs (Alvarado & Zingrone, 2003), all of which have been published in parapsychological journals.

In recent times most of the studies on the relationship of out-of-body experiences to psychological processes or experiences such as dissociation (Irwin, 2000) and dreams (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1999), as well as studies of the features of the experience (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1998–99, 1999), have been published in parapsychology journals. There is no doubt that, as I have argued elsewhere, most of the contributions to our understanding of the psychology of OBEs have come from parapsychologists (Alvarado, 1992). In fact OBE work represents one of our most recent contributions to psychology and to the more specific area of altered states of consciousness. This is evident in Imants Barušs's (2003) recently published book *Alterations of Consciousness*. In fact, in this book, published by the American Psychological Association, the contributions of parapsychologists to the study of consciousness are presented in more detail than I have ever seen before in psychological publications.

Fourth: The results of parapsychological research have helped to combat superstition and to evaluate popular claims. There are many ideas and traditions about psychic phenomena that have been regarded as superstitions. One of them is the relationship between death and psychic phenomena, a relationship supported in the case of apparitions in such early studies as the Census of Hallucinations (e.g., Sidgwick et al., 1894). In addition, these associations have been reinforced, although by work that admittedly suffered from sampling problems. This includes case collections studies of death-related phenomena by Ernesto Bozzano (1923)

and Camille Flammarion (1920–1921/1922–1923), and more recent work by Graziela Piccinini and Gian Marco Rinaldi (1990) and Sylvia Hart Wright (2001).

The claim that mediums can communicate with the dead has not been substantiated, but a variety of studies from the nineteenth century to our own time have produced evidence for the acquisition of veridical statements by mediums (for an overview see Gauld, 1982). In other instances, such as the investigations of the levitation claims of practitioners of Transcendental Meditation, there has been no supportive evidence to back the claims in question (Mishlove, 1983).

The evaluation of Transcendental Meditation claims brings us to the testing of psychic development claims. Two studies done in the 1970s did not support the claims of followers of Silva Mind Control (Brier, Schmeidler, & Savits, 1975; Vaughan, 1974). This is an important line of research in which parapsychologists may contribute useful information to consumers of development programs.

In addition, many of the early discussions in which automatic writing was seen as the production of the subconscious mind were published in psychical research journals by Frederic W. H. Myers (1884) and William James (1889). This contributed to the idea that not everything that appears to come from discarnate spirits is necessarily so. Our contributions to demystify all kind of claims are particularly important in terms of public education.

Fifth: Our researchers have used and pioneered statistical techniques to study phenomena. Philosopher and skeptic Ian Hacking (1988) has argued that early use of randomization and probability calculations took place in the context of nineteenth-century studies of telepathy. A particularly influential paper was that published by Charles Richet (1884) in the *Revue philosophique* which inaugurated the use of probability theory in psychical research at a time when psychologists were using statistical methods only infrequently. Following this, British researchers continued the use of statistical calculations in such classic works dealing with spontaneous experiences as *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney, Myers, & Podmore, 1886) and the *Census of Hallucinations* (Sidgwick, et al., 1894), not to mention experimental work. Later parapsychologists, from H. F. Saltmarsh and S. G. Soal (1930), J. Gaither Pratt (1936), and Charles Stuart (1942), and later contributions (summarized by Burdick and Kelly, 1977), developed methods by which to evaluate experimental free-response material quantitatively. It may be argued that the best of our current techniques may be adapted to aspects of the study of subliminal perception, unconscious learning, and dream and waking imagery.

Sixth: Parapsychology has also contributed to the study of fraud and self-deception. Instructive cases have been reported since the nineteenth century. This includes a mediumship case with no apparent motivation of

fraud reported by Henry Sidgwick (1894) and the efforts taken by several members of a community to convince one individual of poltergeist manifestations discussed by Hereward Carrington (n.d., pp. 2-19). More recently we could mention the writings of Ejvegaard and Johnson (1981) on an apparition case, Delanoy (1987) on metal bending, and Stevenson and colleagues (Stevenson, Pasricha & Samararatne, 1988) on cases of the re-incarnation-type.

It is important to recognize that the above-mentioned contributions have been made under extremely difficult conditions. Individuals coming from other disciplines such as medicine, physics, psychology, or biology are often unaware of how easy they have it in their fields, enjoying all kinds of resources supportive of their work. Regardless of the usual problems with resources everywhere, I do not think anyone can dispute that, in a large measure, they enjoy much higher levels of funding than we do. Furthermore, except in small or developing research specialties, mainstream scientists have never faced the serious personnel problems we face in parapsychology. We have never had enough people working in the field, especially full-time workers.

PERSONNEL IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

In his Presidential Address to the Society for Psychical Research in 1900, Frederic W. H. Myers noted that the early work of the Society had only a "small company of labourers" that was not enough to accomplish the necessary work (Myers, 1900, p. 123). In 1955 J. Fraser Nicol said that there were less than ten full-time parapsychologists (Nicol, 1955). In the mid 1970s Lawrence LeShan (1976) estimated that there were less than 30 full-time workers in the field. More recently, Matthew Smith (1999) argued that the number of full-time parapsychologists in the field was less than the number of people employed in a medium-sized McDonald's fast food restaurant.

Historically speaking, the field of parapsychology has always depended on small groups of individuals. During the early years of the SPR most of the research work was conducted by Edmund Gurney and Frederic W. H. Myers, as well as by Eleanor Sidgwick and William Barrett. The magnitude and range of this early work was remarkable, as was its depth and quality. One only has to examine the two major nineteenth century works of the Society (Gurney, Myers & Podmore, 1886; Sidgwick et al., 1894) to realize how much attention was given by a small group of psychical researchers to studies that helped to shape the course of parapsychology.

The dependence of parapsychology on the work of a few individuals can be documented in other countries and organizations. In the United States there was a period when James H. Hyslop ran the American Society

for Psychical Research. An analysis I conducted of authors of the journal of the society for the 1907–1920 period when Hyslop was active showed that out of 331 articles, 220 (67%) were authored by Hyslop. Similarly, in 1926 French researcher Eugène Osty mentioned that he was the only researcher at the Institut Métapsychique International at Paris, and he was only joined occasionally by other collaborators (Osty, 1926, p. 23).

Similarly, another small group at Duke University constructed a new parapsychology by carrying on an experimental research program of unprecedented magnitude. Like the SPR, the work conducted at J.B. Rhine's Parapsychology Laboratory centered around a small group: Betty Humphrey, J. G. Pratt, J. B. Rhine, L. E. Rhine (on occasion), and Charles Stuart (Mauskopf & McVaugh, 1980). Their work focused on methodological and psychological issues and paved the way for the development of modern experimental parapsychology.

Current research units and organizations around the world work with very small staffs. Examples include the Rhine Research Center, the Division of Personality Studies, and the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory in the United States, the Koestler Parapsychology Unit in Scotland, Inter Psi and the Centro Integrado de Parapsicologia Experimental in Brazil, and the Instituto de Psicología Paranormal in Argentina. Many modern examples of the relatively important influence of a few individuals on the course of our field may also be cited. There is no question, for example, that the systematic work of Gertrude Schmeidler on beliefs in ESP and ESP scoring (Schmeidler & McConnell, 1958), of Ian Stevenson (1974a) with reincarnation cases, of William Roll (1972) with poltergeist cases, and of Charles Honorton with experimental explorations (e.g., Honorton, 1997) and with discipline-building literature reviews of ESP and altered states of consciousness (e.g., Honorton, 1977), did much to develop the field and to build research specialties in modern times. This reliance on a few individuals encourages creativity from a few gifted researchers, but it also brings us problems. Whole lines of work may suffer greatly or even disappear with the death or retirement of a single individual. Such reliance on a few workers deprives us of the work force and community that more established disciplines have. This community is essential to produce basic research, to replicate research, to refine our techniques and instruments, and to provide the general correctives that other disciplines have but that are underdeveloped in ours.

Most of the parapsychologists who are PA members and who present papers at PA conventions are not full-time workers in the field. In a paper Tart presented in 1967 in which he surveyed PA members he found they spent only 10% of their time in parapsychology (Parapsychology in 1967, 1969, p. 7). More recently, Blackmore (1989) reported an average percent working time in parapsychology of 49%, out of a small sample of 18 parapsychologists. It seems that most of us only devote a fraction of our work-

ing time to parapsychology. This is not surprising considering the following well known facts. First, we have almost no institutions that can afford to employ someone full-time. Second, there are very few opportunities for financial support in parapsychological research. Third, those employed in academia are usually expected to do more than parapsychology, such as teaching other subject matters. Fourth, in many circles association with parapsychology is a social and an intellectual stigma. As we all know, the consequences of such a small work force are serious, and only a handful of research projects are conducted every year, something that hinders our progress. I believe that, under such conditions, we deserve to feel especially proud of what we have accomplished.

THE VARIETY OF MEMBERS OF THE PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

There are other interesting aspects of the profession besides its low numbers of members. In what follows I focus on PA parapsychologists, but we should keep in mind that there are many individuals that are involved in parapsychological research that do not belong to our Association.

We may refer to some individuals in our community as public workers; that is, they dare to publicly defend the field or identify themselves with research. In comparison, there are those individuals who, while helpful privately on occasion, are not willing to take a stand in public due to such consequences as losing prestige, jobs, and funding. One wonders what would be the effect of having those silent allies speak up and more actively defend the field. Support from formerly silent groups has traditionally been valuable in fights for social causes and it should not be an exception here. If at least they were willing to argue for the importance of further research I believe they would make a difference and would provide a significant help to those of us who have dared (sometimes paying the price) to identify ourselves with parapsychology. While we can understand the reasons for a lack of public involvement, there is certainly little to admire in such individuals, considering the courage and sacrifices continuously shown by many more public parapsychologists.²

We may also talk about those few whose main intellectual identity is in parapsychology and those whose identity lies in other fields.³ The former includes such figures as past PA presidents John Palmer and Richard Broughton and the latter such individuals as Daryl Bem and Etzel Cardeña. As I see it, both types of workers are important to keep the field

² In my experience this lack of involvement sometimes is accompanied by a tendency to offer liberal advice and criticism in private.

³ There is, of course, another group of individuals that have mixed identities. Half of their time they are psychologists, psychiatrists, physicists, or other professions, and the other half they are parapsychologists.

going. Research is not necessarily better because it comes from one group or the other. Important contributions may come from either group. Still, we need to recognize the strength of each group. To maintain a professional field we need the first group. These are the individuals who present research yearly at PA conventions, a smaller number of whom make the administration of the PA possible and who edit the journals of the field. The second group I refer to is usually in a good position to help us reach the wider scientific world because of their political connections and prestige. This was evident in the publication of the initial Bem and Honorton (1994) ganzfeld paper in the *Psychological Bulletin* and in the recent book *Varieties of Anomalous Experience* published by the American Psychological Association and edited by Cardeña and others (Cardeña, Lynn & Krippner, 2000).

Another interesting and sometimes discussed distinction is made between professionally trained and amateur workers. J. B. Rhine (1953a) drew that distinction and argued for the importance of amateurs. Certainly we have to be careful to avoid the arrogant position that claims only those persons with specific formal university training can contribute to parapsychology. I would prefer the sagacity, talent and experience of some field investigators who research hauntings and mediumship claims (e.g., Cornell, 2001) over the opinion of many other workers who hold graduate degrees from universities but have no experience in the field. Having specific training and degrees are no guarantee of common sense or creativity, particularly in such a difficult discipline as our own. At the same time, we also need to use the best techniques and approaches of science in order to understand better our phenomena. In today's modern world it is difficult to make sense of something like ESP or PK without drawing on the accumulated knowledge of the sciences and their research techniques, efforts which require formal training. Sometimes this creates problems when some individuals argue that research is too technical, full of methods, techniques, and terms that are not understood by the uninitiated. Part of the problem here may be that, as Emilio Servadio (1966) once said, parapsychology attracts people who do not have scientific training and who may not care about the requirements of science. Servadio complained about amateurs performing "experiments" that in reality "have as much in common with science as a child's scrawl with an architect's carefully studied blueprint" (p. 68). Sometimes these issues arise in the context of understanding the importance of conducting research that teaches us something about a phenomenon as opposed to research done only to document dramatic performances or the mere existence of a phenomenon (Alvarado, 1996d). In any case, amateurs may still exist in our field more than they do in other such fields such as psychology and physics because these other fields have had the acceptance of society and, consequently, the possibility and the means of becoming a professional discipline. The

lack of professionalization in parapsychology sets us apart from those other disciplines. This leads us to the topic of the next section, the problem of education and training.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY

As we all know the profession of parapsychology is not regulated. There are no certification programs or organizations, nor any way to control the use of the term *parapsychologist*. In many phone books, and on the Internet, the term *parapsychologist* is used as a synonym for *psychic*. In some places, such as Brazil, there have been attempts to define the profession legally, but without success (Hiraoka, 2002).

Most parapsychologists come to the field from other areas of science or of academia. As is well known, most people in the field do not have an educational background in parapsychology in the same way that members of other disciplines have in their own fields. McConnell and Clark (1980) reported in their survey of PA members that only five out of 203 respondents claimed doctoral training in parapsychology as their main area of training. The situation is better now due to Robert Morris's efforts at the University of Edinburgh, as well as to the efforts of Deborah Delanoy and others at universities in the UK (Smith, 1999). But most researchers in the field today have not been trained in parapsychology and basically conduct research based on their training in psychology, psychiatry, physics, and other disciplines, as well as on their own private study of the parapsychological literature. This is all good in terms of techniques and general scientific philosophy. Formal training in research from another field can certainly be applied to parapsychology, as many of us know from personal experience. In fact, this is essential for progress. In addition, it is not uncommon for some scientists to shift research areas, for which they self-train themselves by gaining knowledge of the relevant literature and methodology through personal study.

While I do not doubt training from other disciplines applies well to parapsychology, I worry about the lack of a parapsychological education in some of the workers in the field. I am using the word education here as a wider construct than training to include an overarching perspective that is formed out of a sense of identity, and of general knowledge of the field. It is unfortunate to note that some individuals active in our field are so highly specialized that they barely know anything outside of their own narrow specialty area. This produces serious problems. For example, there are some experimental ESP researchers and researchers in areas related to the concept of survival of bodily death that have little or no idea what goes on in the rest of parapsychological research. However, both sides could learn from each other about the complexity of psychic phenomena. Views about

the nature of ESP that come from experimental studies and nothing else provide only part of the picture (Alvarado, 1996c). As seen in such studies as Steve Braude's (2003) recently published analysis of survival evidence, psi functioning in survival contexts is certainly different in the way it manifests in the laboratory and shows different levels of complexity, at least in terms of the forms of the manifestations. While this work may expand the views of experimentalists, experimental work is also important to the evaluation of survival evidence. This work tells us something about the capabilities of the living that will help us evaluate survival evidence. Unfortunately, some people interested in survival are not aware of this work.

Do we have a general view of the variety and origins of theoretical concepts? What relevant work was conducted on our subject by the previous generation? As I documented 21 years ago in a paper published in the *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research* (Alvarado, 1982), there are many examples of publications in our field that show lack of familiarity with the history of our methods, and with previous findings and concepts. This is why I have devoted part of my career in parapsychology to reminding others of the richness of the literature of the past, be this in terms of specific phenomena or issues (e.g., Alvarado, 1989a), of more general considerations of social aspects (e.g., Alvarado, 1989c), or of the importance of particular concepts or agents of change (e.g., Alvarado, 2003). It has been disappointing to me that younger workers in the field still have to be reminded of the existence and careers of recently deceased parapsychologists, or that these younger workers still have to be told that some of their interests have been discussed before in great detail by those that preceded them. Unfortunately, this lack of perspective is not limited to the youngest workers of the field. Some experienced researchers also show this tendency to myopia, nor is this ahistorical situation uncommon in other scientific fields. Still, one would expect that anyone who considered themselves a practicing parapsychologist would want to have a general knowledge, if not a detailed one, of the history of one's own specialty and of areas of the field outside of it. The lack of familiarity with our shared past has practical implications in that much of what has gone before would help current researchers to generate hypotheses, and to refine theoretical models and evaluate the work of others (see Alvarado, 1982).

This criticism should not be taken to imply that everyone should be a scholar in the past literature of parapsychology, nor that this will solve our current problems. As I argued in the twenty-one-year-old paper cited above, I do not consider the study of our past literature to be a substitute for contemporary research. The issue instead is one of context; current work should be carried out by those who are well-informed about the relevant past developments of the field.

But more than this is included in the meaning of the word education. Being educated not only means knowing how best to collect and analyze

data, nor having simple knowledge of antecedents in the literature. Instead, being educated means being aware of continuities and discontinuities in the development of parapsychological ideas and having a familiarity with philosophical, psychological, and general existential issues of the field. In other words, being educated means having a commitment or at least an understanding to the collective identity of parapsychology as a field, even to the point of acknowledging the well-known difficulties to the achievement of consensus on many substantive issues.

There is a parapsychological culture and identity that you find in some workers in the field but not in others. It is a quality that allows us to go beyond our research specialty, beyond the technical aspects of our research to the wider picture of our professional identity, and, of course, to the implications of our work. Having this sense of the field is an identity that stands in stark contrast to the identity of those who see the field just as a technical specialty for data crunching, or a mere intellectual curiosity.

The lack of this deeper sense of what the profession is comes, to some extent, from the contemporary tendency of specialization or overspecialization in our professions. But also it comes from the lack of organized educational programs that provide systematic exposure to different aspects of the field. In terms of professionalization parapsychologists are hybrids; we are a community formed from a combination of self-teaching and extrapolation from the training programs of other disciplines. In spite of recent educational developments and past discussions of education in the field (Shapin & Coly, 1976; Smith, 1999), the fact is that there are not many educational programs where a student can be exposed to a wide range of parapsychological literature. By this I mean systematic exposure to the range of phenomena of the field, to their classifications and terminology, to the classic and the contemporary literature, to the various methods and techniques used in the field now and in the past, to the historical development of the discipline, and to the wide range of theoretical models presented so far. It is unfortunate that at the moment no single educational and training program in existence can achieve this goal.⁴

We must also be aware that training and education in parapsychology are particularly problematic in those geographical regions or countries where parapsychology is even more underdeveloped than it is in the States and parts of Europe. In previous writings I have discussed several problems Latin American parapsychologists face (e.g., Alvarado, 1996b, 2002b). One of these is the lack of general training in scientific research. Some of those engaged in research do not have training in data collection and analysis, a situation that is rapidly changing in such countries as Argentina and Brazil. Consequently, compared to the United States and parts of Europe little

⁴ Of course, the lack of educational programs depends to a great extent on the lack of a numerous and well organized parapsychological profession.

scientific research gets done in Latin America. Instead, most parapsychological work is limited to discussions from the old literature, to literature reviews, and to conceptual and theoretical discussions. To further complicate matters many of these parapsychologists have difficulties reading English. Because most current research in parapsychology is published in English, this creates additional serious difficulties in training and educating Latin American parapsychologists.⁵

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A PARAPSYCHOLOGIST?

If you can identify with the language barrier faced by Latin American parapsychologists you will have an idea of the frustrations some members of that community feel as they attempt to stay current with the literature of the field. But there are many other aspects to our experiences as parapsychologists.

Many of us, myself included, feel that we are working in an area full of great potential. In fact, some may even feel that they are pioneers because they are exploring areas that have great implications for humankind. While S. David Kahn (1976, p. 213) has suggested that with better replication rates parapsychologists will lose the romance of being lonely workers in an unrecognized field, I believe that most of us will not miss his so-called romance. One of the worst aspects of being a parapsychologist is, in fact, working in a field where one gets little respect from science and society at large. Let me illustrate with some personal experiences.

Soon after I returned to Puerto Rico in 1997 after having acquired a Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Edinburgh for work on a parapsychological topic, a member of my family handed me a newspaper clipping about local "parapsychologists" who had recently been convicted and sent to jail. The clipping in question described how some charlatans had obtained money from some people under the promise of helping them to use some occult procedures (Cordero, 1997). How would you feel when you find the profession described in such a way in the press? I felt that I had come home to be identified with charlatans.

In Great Britain, obtaining a Ph.D. in psychology with Robert Morris nets you a conventional academic job in psychology with the prospects of a conventional career unfolding before you. In Puerto Rico my degree branded me as a parapsychologist with little to offer to psychology. I sent my CV to a university well-known for their federally funded science programs through a family friend who had contacts at the university only to have the CV returned almost immediately. From the comments of the fam

⁵ On the wider issue of the language barrier in parapsychology see Alvarado (1989b).

ily friend, it was obvious that the university wanted nothing to do with a parapsychologist. In another institution I was able to teach a graduate level parapsychology course a few times but it was eventually canceled for lack of students because someone in the registrar's office who found parapsychology distasteful had told the students that the course had been closed when it was still open. While others in the field have had much worse experiences than mine (see Hess, 1992), the ones I had made my life difficult, especially financially. Even more, such rejections made me feel marginal in society, and I found myself needing to bolster my spirits by reminding myself of my belief in the importance of parapsychology.

Another problem we sometimes encounter as parapsychologists is that some individuals we have contact with want to tell us about our subject matter. As Charles Richet (n.d./ca 1928) said in the 1920s, when dealing with psychical research "everybody regards himself as qualified to utter negative or affirmative opinions which have no more value than if, without being a chemist, one were to speak to a chemist of the derivations of pyridine, or to a physicist, of the waves of radium, or to an astronomer, of the heat of the stars" (p. 28).

You may encounter issues of this sort especially if, as a parapsychologist, you have contact with the public, many of whom do not like the way in which we study psychic phenomena. Common objections to us are the overuse of statistical analyses and the lack of studies with special subjects. Some of those who come from spiritism, to give a particular example in my experience, are adamant that we need to go back to the phenomena of mediumship as well as to the ideas of Allan Kardec, Gustave Geley, and others. When we take a look at the other pole, that is, at the critics, we find all kind of skeptical attitudes equally critical of our work, but in different ways, with emphases on methodological flaws and logical inconsistencies. The end result is that we feel that we are stuck in the middle of a battlefield, being attacked on all sides, from New Agers and spiritists, from well-meaning members of the general public, from an increasingly hostile mainstream scientific community, and from organized skepticism. We are in a situation that is far from being pleasant or comfortable, particularly when it is realized that, with very few exceptions, we are the only group that takes an empirical approach to the problem by conducting research.⁶

Perhaps the worst parts of being a parapsychologist are the accusations of fraud. The classic case in modern times is that of George R. Price (1955), who accused parapsychologists of fraud in the pages of *Science*. We still find accusations of fraud directed at researchers who have particularly good results in the laboratory but more recently such accusations are not published where they can be refuted. They are merely disseminated

⁶ I am aware that the members of the other communities also claim similar problems and disadvantages (Hess, 1993).

through gossip, through correspondence, or in on-line chat rooms. These accusations are particularly distressing because they often question someone's integrity without any evidence. Such accusations are irresponsible and libelous. But the problem is that once the rumor is out reputations are damaged beyond repair, particularly outside the field. Price (1972) publicly recanted over 20 years later. But who remembers that? The damage had been done.

Parapsychologists have cited frequently Henry Sidgwick's (1882) statement: "We have done all we can when the critic has nothing left to allege except that the investigator is in the trick" (p. 12). But wearing this as a badge of honor does not nullify the negative effects such views can have on our profession. In fact, incidents of this sort are demoralizing because they remind us how vulnerable we are to the tactics of irresponsible and unethical critics.

WHY ARE WE IN PARAPSYCHOLOGY?

In the face of all these unpleasant experiences one may ask why some of us stay in parapsychology. Obviously many of us must obtain something from the field or have specific motivations if we stay in it though faced with so many difficulties. In a recent paper James Carpenter (2002) listed three reasons: to explain unexplained phenomena, to eventually make practical use of the phenomena, and to learn more about human nature. In an international survey published in Spain by Francisco Gavilán Fontanet (1978), the proportion of the most frequently endorsed reasons given for interest in parapsychology were: 31% to explain phenomena through the use of the scientific method, 24% to answer questions about the nature of man, and the meaning of life, death and the beyond, and 23% personal experiences or the experiences of others.

For some, involvement in the field is certainly a scholarly pursuit of the first magnitude due to its great intellectual challenge. Perhaps this is why such philosophers as C. D. Broad (1962) have been concerned with the field. Several writers have stated that the intellectual and methodological difficulties of parapsychology make the field particularly challenging, especially as regards critical thinking. F. C. S. Schiller (1927) argued that for anyone "who wished to apprehend the real method of science and to appreciate its real difficulties, there is no better training ground than *Psychical Research*" (p. 218). J. B. Rhine (n.d., p. 3) commented on the value of parapsychology as a discipline in which to learn to evaluate new claims and criticisms, a context that provides an excellent opportunity to develop a scientific mind. Similarly, years later John Beloff referred to the educational value of parapsychology in this way:

It teaches us . . . how difficult it is to arrive at any definitive conclusions about it. It raises for us, in its most acute form, the eternal question: 'What can I believe?' . . . At one instant it will open up for us exciting vistas of new worlds to be conquered; at the next, it will cause them to vanish again in a haze of doubts. It forces us to reckon with the almost bottomless duplicity of our fellow creatures, and yet it forbids us to take refuge in any easy cynicism no matter how fantastic the case under consideration. In a word, it plays tug-of-war with us so that we can enjoy neither the peace of mind of the committed believer nor the complacency of the skeptic (Beloff, 1990, p. 55).

However, there are other reasons. For me it is a question of reminding myself, and others, of the potential of humankind. It is greatly satisfying to participate in research as well as to teach students about what may be the most exciting possibilities of the human mind. It does not matter if we are talking about ESP scores in the lab or reports of spontaneous cases. Regardless of the final explanation we will be learning something about the abilities of the mind to process information in what now seem to us to be unconventional ways. This will certainly extend our current knowledge. Furthermore, I see parapsychology as part of the emerging field of positive psychology, a psychology devoted to growth and strengths, to positive abilities. Unfortunately, however, like other related areas of psychology, those who identify with positive psychology do not acknowledge the contributions of parapsychology (e.g., Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003).

Probably one of the most frequent motivations to be in parapsychology is the search for different forms of transcendence of physical limitations. The question here, and one for which such critics as James Alcock (1987) take us to task, is the use of parapsychology to demonstrate or to suggest that human beings have a component beyond our material constitution. There is no question that this has been a driving force in parapsychology. In his seventeenth-century work *Saducismus Triumphatus* Joseph Glanvil (1682) saw poltergeists, apparitions, and other phenomena as evidence of a spiritual world. In his *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, Myers (1903, Vol. 2, p. 257) concluded that psychic phenomena "prove that between the spiritual and the material worlds an avenue of communication does in fact exist." Others such as William McDougall (1911), J. B. Rhine (1947), Joseph Gaither Pratt (1964), Charles T. Tart (1979), John Beloff (1990), and Ian Stevenson (1981) have emphasized how ESP and other phenomena are indicative of the existence of the mind independent of the body. In J. B. Rhine's words: "The psi researches show the natural human mind can escape physical boundaries under certain conditions . . . Accordingly a distinct difference between mind and matter, a relative dualism, has been demonstrated by the psi experi-

ments . . ." (J. B. Rhine, 1947, p. 205). More recently, Charles Tart (2002) argued for the importance of the spiritual implications of parapsychology.

However, not everyone is in parapsychology to provide support for dualism or spirituality. Some have had a physicalistic outlook that does not emphasize the mind, the spirit, or any form of transcendence. Italian Ferdinando Cazzamalli (1954) was highly critical of Rhine's emphasis on non-physicality, preferring to follow the old psychic force model prevalent in the spiritualistic and some of the psychic research literatures. Such Soviet scientists as Dubrov and Pushkin (1982) also upheld physicalistic assumptions. Others, like Dick Bierman (1996), have been critical of dualism, assuming that physics will eventually explain psi. For Irvin Child (1976), the fact that parapsychology shows the independence of the mind from the body was not proved. In his words: "We may eventually arrive at an understanding of paranormal phenomena that is just as dependent on physics and chemistry as our understanding of color perception" (p. 117).

APPROACHES TO PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Our reasons for being in parapsychology may also inform our approaches to the field. Those interested in showing the existence of aspects which transcend the physical existence of human beings may conduct a type of parapsychological research designed to support those ideas. The studies of Alan Gauld (1968) and Silvio Ravaldini (1983) on the life and work of Frederic Myers and Ernesto Bozzano, respectively, offer us insights on the methods they followed to explore their passion for the survival issue. Both researchers conducted extensive bibliographical studies that attempted to combine different types and gradations of cases in a way that would favor the survival perspective. In addition, Bozzano's (n.d.) desire to prove survival led him to develop his concept of *psychic rapport* which separated telepathy from spirit communication through mediums. In his view, telepathy worked only when there was some type of link between persons, such as an emotional link or an object in common. In mediumistic communications it was not unusual to find veridical cases with no links between the medium and living persons. In these cases, Bozzano argued, telepathy would not work and the case indicated discarnate agency. More recently, others have proposed other demarcation criteria between ESP from the living and survival-related influences (Schwartz, Russek, Nelson, & Barenstsen, 2001; Stevenson, 1974b). Regardless of the validity of these ideas, the point here is how different conceptual approaches in survival have guided work in the field.

J. B. Rhine's work is a reminder of the use of parapsychology for particular purposes. Anyone who has read J. B. Rhine's *New World of the Mind* (1953b) will remember that Rhine did not limit his work to a defense of a

nonphysical conception of the human mind from the results of experimental psi research. He also attempted to extend the implications of his card and dice tests to religion, philosophy, and more practical issues such as an ethic of behavior and a rejection of communism.

Another more extreme example is the Catholicism-based parapsychology developed by Oscar González Quevedo, a Spanish parapsychologist and Jesuit priest living in Brazil. He argues that parapsychology allows us to arrive at particular demarcation criteria between the supernatural and the parapsychological (González Quevedo, 1996; see also Omez, 1956/1958). I believe most of us would agree that the concept of the supernatural (or the direct influence of God on the world) is a problematic one, especially in terms of the constant expansion of science. Furthermore, González Quevedo has argued that phenomena such as ESP are properties of the soul. Granted this, the powers cannot be manifested consistently through the human body because the body had lost the property (or state of grace) for channeling them ([González] Quevedo, 1969/1971, Chapter 36; see also Wiesinger, 1948/1957). Religious reasoning explains in part why this author postulates we should not induce nor develop psychic phenomena. Followers of this system do not conduct empirical studies, depending instead on analyses of published material. I have also been informed by one of our Brazilian PA members (Wellington Zangari) that members of Gonzalez Quevedo's parapsychology group are not allowed to question his theoretical explanations and that only members of his inner sanctum are allowed to use his library, which is reputed to be rich in historical materials. So the religious influence (or mentality) extends beyond the conceptual into the structure of his organization and the social roles allowed to his followers. Fortunately for the future of parapsychology in Brazil, this archaic form of the field is rapidly declining. The last ten years have seen the rise of a new breed of scientific parapsychologists in Brazil, all PA members, who are changing the field (Zangari & Machado, 2001). The most prominent members of this group include Fátima Regina Machado, Fabio da Silva, and Wellington Zangari.

Another important conceptual issue which divides some parapsychologists from others is the current dichotomy between those who conduct work following unconventional or conventional explanatory models (see Palmer, 1986). For some the only real parapsychological work is that which is conducted using procedures that emphasize the interpretation of results as due to such new principles as novel forms of communication. This explains why parapsychology is defined in the glossary of the *Journal of Parapsychology* as the study of "certain paranormal phenomena," and in turn *paranormal* is defined as a phenomenon that "exceeds the limits of what is deemed physically possible according to current scientific assumptions" (Glossary, 2002, p. 427). Does this mean that to do parapsychology or to be a parapsychologist one has to focus only on research based on

models or assumptions assumed to represent new forms of communication or new principles of nature?

If we agree to this view we will be defending the idea that it is proper to define a scientific field by a particular model or at least by a specific overarching concept. But this is unnecessarily narrow and limiting. Psychology, for example, has always been formed by a variety of concepts that have coexisted with other ideas and, on occasion, some have simply been more dominant than others (Robinson, 1986). While some practitioners define psychology by their preferred theoretical orientation it is clear that the field is more than particular models favored by some of us. For example, traditionally, hypnosis researchers have been divided between those who claim that hypnosis is an altered state or a form of dissociation and those who define the phenomena as social roles (Lynn & Rhue, 1991). No one will say that one perspective is "real" or "proper" hypnosis research over the other; what we have here are different ways of explaining phenomena. Psychology encompasses different views of the nature of the mind, or of human behavior, and the important overarching goal is to understand the subject matter through any conceptual framework that is helpful as opposed to defining and limiting the research enterprise to a single explanatory model.

In terms of parapsychology it would be more productive if we defined the field as the study of some phenomena that we do not understand but that may have a variety of explanations. One can be a parapsychologist and conduct research without assuming paranormality as previously defined. Parapsychologists study a group of phenomena science still does not understand by trying to learn more about the characteristics of the phenomena and their relationships to other variables. This work need not be limited to particular assumptions. The task of parapsychology is to understand the phenomena whether or not their final explanation is conventional or unconventional. This wider perspective was evident in the initial goals set by the SPR.

In the now classic *Objects of the Society* (1882) it was stated that to be in psychical research "does not imply the acceptance of any particular explanation of the phenomena investigated, nor any belief as to the operation in the physical world, of forces other than those recognised by Physical Science" (p. 4). There are different approaches one may take to try to explain psi phenomena. All are valid and necessary as long as they bring an understanding of the subject matter. This is why defining a whole field of study only on the basis of the paranormality of experiences (as previously defined) is shortsighted and may prevent progress along different fronts. While it is valid to prefer and to focus on testing specific theoretical models or processes, the tasks of parapsychology as a whole should be centered on understanding the phenomena whatever their nature may be and not in solely validating a single explanatory model. Our task as scientists is to

follow the data wherever it takes us. Science in general has sometimes failed to do this when confronted with claims such as those of ESP. Parapsychologists should not make the same mistake in failing to follow alternative explanatory processes just because they are not paranormal.

Having said this, we also need to remember the importance of those theoretical views and approaches that challenge our worldviews and that seem unlikely to be explained by the usual sensory-motor mechanisms; in other words, the paranormal as defined before. It is precisely those ideas that may bring change and important discoveries by challenging the established paradigms. I am not arguing for the abandonment of such views, as long as they are kept empirical. Neither am I proposing a parapsychology based only on conventional explanations. What I propose is avoiding a definition of the field solely as a paranormal science, as above defined.

LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES OF PARAPSYCHOLOGISTS

It may be argued that the emphasis on conventional hypotheses is a strategy some parapsychologists have used to legitimize our field. Whether or not this is true, it is important to be aware of the strategies parapsychologists have used to establish their field, in addition to our understanding of their research efforts, as McClenon (1982) has said. In fact, legitimizing strategies are the internal means that researchers use to render the field more acceptable in the face of so much criticism. One of these devices relates to the way our current research or concerns are depicted in light of our past. Sometimes our current work is validated by comparing it to previous work, even to the extent of distorting the record. An example here is the way in which J. B. Rhine and Louisa E. Rhine discussed the work they conducted while they were at Duke University. In one of her papers L. E. Rhine (1967) argued that it was only during the modern period that ESP was established enough so as to be used as an alternative explanation for mediumistic communications, something that could not be done in the 1920s. But as I have argued in more detail elsewhere (Alvarado, 2003), ESP explanations were certainly taken seriously in the old days. Such a point of view was clearly not a development coming only from the experimental work conducted by the Rhines and their associates. Another example: both J. B. and Louisa Rhine argued that the unconscious nature of ESP only became evident because of experimental work conducted during the 1940s (J. B. Rhine, 1977; L. E. Rhine, 1971). While it is true that this work may have supported the idea, the concept that psi is an unconscious function had been clearly articulated before the Duke work, as can be seen in Myers's (1903) work. But the Rhines discussed the idea as if it had been an original invention coming out of their work, possibly to enhance the importance of the developments related to the Duke work.

The reinvention of concepts and the rewriting of history have been important in the construction of a modern identity for parapsychologists.

Another way psychical researchers have traditionally tried to deal with their phenomena has been to draw analogies to other processes of the physical world. The purpose here has been to show that psychic functioning is part of the natural world (on the use of metaphors see Williams & Dutton, 1998). The concept of physical and biological radiations has been applied throughout the history of mesmerism, Spiritualism, and psychical research to explain ESP, PK, healing, materializations, and other phenomena. In his recent history of telepathy Luckhurst (2002, pp. 75–92) chronicled some of the early attempts to present this phenomenon as a force of nature similar to light, electricity and magnetism. Early exponents of this movement included William Barrett, who speculated of telepathy's similarity to electrical induction (1876), and William Crookes, who drew an analogy with such radiations as X rays (1897). Invocation of the analogies to radio (Warcollier, 1938) also served this function.

The use of value-free terminology has been another method by which we have attempted to legitimize our field (on terminology in general see Zingrone and Alvarado, 1987). Call it *anomalous cognition*, *delta-afferentation*, *extrasensory perception*, *paranormal cognition*, or *ultra perceptive faculty*, the attempt here has been to present a scientific sounding and sometimes theory-free term. But terms have been used on purpose to emphasize particular views as well. To refer to processes which transcend the physical world while at the same time interact with it Myers (1903) gave us such terms as *methereal*, *psychical invasion*, and *psychorrhagy*. Richet's (1922) *crypthesthesia*, Sudre's (1926) *prosopopesis* and Roll and Pratt's *recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis* (Pratt & Roll, 1958) were designed to separate the conceptualization of our phenomena from spiritual connotations. In the past other terms have been proposed to separate the field from the occult and from Spiritualism. This seems to have been Charles Richet's (1905) intention (at least in part) when he introduced the term *metapsychics* to refer to psychical research. Later on William McDougall (1937) adopted and redefined the term *parapsychology* from the German literature to differentiate the field from psychical research with its traditional study of mediums and spontaneous cases. He used parapsychology to refer to "the more strictly experimental part of the whole field implied by psychical research" (p. 7).

On other occasions it seems that the use of new terms is believed to be of help in the acceptance of our work because they separate the writer, albeit temporarily and superficially, from the parapsychological tradition. Possible examples of this are such terms as *remote viewing* and *anomalous cognition*. This attempt to disconnect the work from parapsychology is sometimes seen in the use of neutral names for our organizations. Some past and present examples of this strategy are: Division of Personality Studies, Laboratories for Fundamental Research, Mind Science Foundation,

Science Research Unlimited, and Psychophysical Research Laboratories. On occasion, both in private and in print (Honnegger, 1982, p. 22; Honorton, 1976, p. 218), there have been suggestions to drop the "Parapsychological" out of the name of the PA. There is no question that there may be advantages to this strategy, an important one being facilitating the acquisition of grant money. While the latter may work for a while, I believe once the outside world knows that we are dealing with the same old ESP and PK and with other traditionally parapsychological phenomena, we will be in the same position because we may be perceived as trying to deceive mainstream science by camouflaging parapsychology in the protective coloring of a neutral name. While there may be associations with traditional parapsychological terminology that range from the controversial to the sensational and unacceptable, the main issue is the implications others perceive in our claims.

Another strategy to obtain credibility is to show the outside world that we are aware of alternative explanations of psychic phenomena. While this is part of normal scientific discourse, it also projects a good image of our critical abilities, something that is particularly useful when one is identified with parapsychology professionally. In fact, one can find this in some of the classics of parapsychology. Much space was devoted to the problems with human testimony and consideration of chance coincidences in *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney, Myers & Podmore, 1886, Vol. 1, Chapter 4, Vol. 2, Chapter 13). Similarly, in his 1934 monograph *Extra-Sensory Perception*, J. B. Rhine (1934, Chapter 9) devoted sections to alternative explanations, if only to counter them. Later examples included Robert Tocquet's (1970/1973, pp. 147-149, 219-227) discussion of fraudulent miraculous healings and stigmata and Ian Stevenson's (1975, pp. 18-44) analysis of sources of error in the study of reincarnation-type cases.

I became aware of the rhetorical value of writing about fraud and other normal explanations while I was crafting a paper published 16 years ago on luminous phenomena around mediums, mystics, saints and other individuals (Alvarado, 1987). I knew I was writing about a topic that was rare and unconventional, even among parapsychologists, and I was worried about the reception of the paper. While a section on fraud and other normal explanations should always be part of examinations of cases such as the ones I discussed, including that section was also a strategy to establish credibility.

More recently, Robert Morris has devoted much time to what looks psychic but is not. I believe that Morris's success in revitalizing parapsychology in academic circles in Great Britain (Smith, 1999) comes to some extent from this strategy of showing the world of psychology that he is aware of a wide range of pitfalls in behavioral research, not to mention some that are specific to parapsychology (Morris, 1986; see also Wiseman & Morris, 1995).

Another way in which we try to enhance our credibility as scientists is by confining most of our efforts to such conservative phenomena as ESP. A quick look at the research papers presented at the last four PA conventions (2000–2003) shows that the preferred research topic of PA members was ESP (see Table 1). Much less attention was paid to PK or to OBEs, mediumship, hauntings, or poltergeists. Certainly scientists have to focus their efforts in order to make advances. In some ways this process started in modern parapsychology with J. B. Rhine's (1934) monograph *Extrasensory Perception*, in which, while discussing a classificatory scheme of psychic phenomena, Rhine reduced parapsychology to ESP. Regardless of the scientific reasons for this strategy, the fact is that traditionally modern parapsychology has focused most of its efforts on ESP and has neglected a wide variety of other phenomena, even if they can be related to ESP when one speculates on their mechanisms. While such a strategy has focused our research, it has also limited our knowledge of the variety of experiences people report. We know much less than we should about other psychic experiences, their impact on people, and their relation to mental health concerns, among other issues. So we have paid for our strategy of limiting the range of topics studied (Alvarado, 1996c).

In addition to a strategic separation from specific phenomena there is also a tendency among some of us to want to drop survival research in

TABLE 1
TOPICS OF RESEARCH PAPERS AT RECENT PA CONVENTIONS,
2000–2003 (N= 63)

Topic	N	%
<i>Experiments</i>		
ESP	38	60.3
PK/DMILS ^a	9	14.3
<i>Spontaneous Cases</i>		
Variety of psychic experiences ^b	9	14.3
Hauntings	2	3.2
NDEs	1	1.6
Recollections of previous lives	1	1.6
Apparitions	1	1.6
Poltergeists	1	1.6
Mediumship	1	1.6

^aSome of these may be classified as ESP.

^bThese are questionnaire studies considering a variety of experiences (e.g., waking and dream ESP, OBEs).

general from the agenda of parapsychology. There have always been attempts to disconnect survival from parapsychology for a variety of reasons. René Sudre (1951) argued that survival was not demonstrated by the facts and that it was a topic outside the scope of science, part of the "inaccessible refuge of religious beliefs" (p. 389, my translation). George Zorab (1983) had a similar view when he referred to survival research as the "forlorn quest." Because survival is so difficult to test for scientifically, several figures in the field – such as J. B. Rhine (1974), Gerd Hövelmann (1983) and Harvey J. Irwin (2002) – have branded the subject as untestable and consequently an unproductive area of research. While this may be debated by arguing that there are ways to investigate difficult topics if one follows approaches or analyses that are more subtle than those providing a simple "yes" or "no" decision on the testability issue (e.g., Braude, 2003), I am concerned here with views that see interest in survival as a contaminant in the quest to be seen as scientific. The most recent example is Irwin's (2002) statement that interest in survival may "compromise . . . the standing of parapsychological research as a legitimate scientific endeavour" (p. 25). This position, however, is problematic and should not satisfy most parapsychologists because similar political concerns have affected and are still affecting the whole field of parapsychology in terms of its relationship to psychology.

We would do well to consider that such conservative attitudes are in the eye of the beholder and that, consequently, demarcation strategies flow in different directions. While some parapsychologists may feel that interest and research on survival contaminate their more elegant and controlled work that follows from physics or psychology, we need to be aware that others have similarly dismissed parapsychology in general whether or not they perceive survival research to be part of the enterprise. Psychologists, as Deborah Coon (1992) has argued, have a long history of trying to separate their field from the general public's conception that psychic phenomena are studied by psychologists. A good historical example of this was American psychologist Joseph Jastrow's comments in his book *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, published in 1900. He wrote:

Pernicious is the distorted conception, which the prominence of Psychical Research has scattered broadcast, of the purposes and methods of Psychology. The status of that science has suffered, its representatives have been misunderstood, its advancement has been hampered, its appreciation by the public at large has been weakened and wrongly estimated, by reason of the popularity of the unfortunate aspects of Psychical Research, and of its confusion with them (Jastrow, 1900, pp. 75–76).

Attempts to separate our work from specific phenomena and topics present a multitude of agendas and self-interests. So while some of our

own shun specific areas of the field because they want their own areas to appear more scientific, others outside the field do the same thing to the whole discipline. As Michael Winkelman (1982) has said, "Academia's failure to include parapsychology is mirrored in parapsychology's failure to respond in a responsible manner to the general population's concern with the areas popularly referred to as occult" (p. 15).

It is regrettable that we feel that we need to deny parts of our subject matter for political purposes, especially when the most conservative experimental ESP studies are similarly disregarded by others outside the field. In our efforts to be accepted, we have become worse than our critics, we have dissociated ourselves from some part of the basic claims of our field by employing the strategy of denial used by outside critics. It is almost as if our traumatic experiences with criticism and rejection have forced us to excise parts of our nature in order to be acceptable to outsiders, and to ourselves. As with other types of traumatic experiences, such defense mechanisms are not necessarily completely conscious nor are they adaptive. By abandoning traditions, areas and problems we are merely turning our backs on important issues, and we are condemning ourselves and everyone else to ignorance on questions that may be of great importance.

As I have argued before, and here I am referring to issues and phenomena not necessarily connected to survival,⁷ we should research such problems so as to increase our empirical knowledge of neglected issues (Alvarado, 1996c; Alvarado & Zingrone, 1996). It is true that some problems obtain more attention than others because they are more easily testable and that some research programs are more productive or progressive than others. But not everything that is important is easily testable. After all, parapsychology has traditionally been about the hard problems. Let us form our identity as parapsychologists not through artificial prescriptions of neglect or demarcation, but by attempts to study systematically any relevant problem the best way we can. The combined knowledge of the behavioral and natural sciences has enough methodologies to study any problem scientifically and critically. This is not to say we are capable of testing or measuring anything we want, but we can at the very least try to learn something about the features and correlates of all the phenomena that fall into our purview. Let us not be conservative at the expense of knowledge.

WHEN PARAPSYCHOLOGISTS HARM THEIR CAUSE

The conservatism some express about particular areas of parapsychology can be, in my opinion, harmful to the field. But parapsychologists ex

⁷ This may include controversial and dramatic phenomena such as auras, materializations and religious miracles.

hibit many other behaviors that also hinder the field in a variety of ways. One such behavior encompasses statements about the existence of the phenomena we study. Let me give some examples from the old days. In 1913 Hyslop stated that survival was "proved and proved by better evidence than supports the doctrine of evolution . . ." (Hyslop, 1913, p. 88). In 1921 Gustave Geley wrote: "Today we know well the genesis of materializations" (Geley, 1921, p. 174). In 1923 Camille Flammarion stated that "telepathy . . . is as certain as the existence of London, Sirius and oxygen . . ." (Flammarion, 1923, p. 22). These, and many more recent statements such as overenthusiastic evaluations of the value and role of meta-analysis in parapsychology (Broughton, 1991) and statements predicting the acceptance of parapsychology by science in a relatively short time period (e.g., Honegger, 1982, p. 21; Murphy & Kovach, 1972, p. 475; Stanford, 1974, p. 160) do not help our credibility.

Certainly we have a right to express our opinions and to evaluate our evidence as we see fit, and it is important to express what we believe. But we need to strike a balance between exaggerated claims and the need to present our claims in a convincing way. After all, if we do not project a positive feeling in our writings, how can we expect to convince others to engage in meaningful discussions of our findings? What worries me is that sometimes we present a too positive and rosy picture of the field, forgetting to acknowledge the difference between our personal hopes and the state of the field as a whole. A view of the field that does not acknowledge the social reality we suffer under does not help parapsychology among other scientists because we appear to be ignoring the obvious and exaggerating the replicability of our research.

But to promote our views, be they bold or conservative, we need to do something even more basic. We need to increase the frequency of formal publication of our research. Most of our research work stays in PA proceedings and does not get published in refereed journals, whether they are parapsychological journals or the journals of other disciplines. This creates serious problems in the diffusion of information. While journals are abstracted in a variety of databases, the privately printed PA proceedings are not. Consequently, if someone does not attend a PA convention, or if one does not buy a copy of the proceedings (sold almost exclusively to PA members), he or she will not have access to current research information. Do we really think it is in the best interests of parapsychology to allow only a very small group of individuals to have access to our research reports? We always complain that our work is not cited nor widely read, but to some extent this is our own fault.

The fact that some of this research can be found now in personal websites, or that it may appear in the future on the PA website is helpful, but it is no substitute for formal journal publication. Outsiders do not value websites as reliable publication outlets. If we allow our research to remain only

in such private venues, no matter how many hits such a site would get, we will project the image that parapsychologists do not follow the standard publication practices of science, and like the occultists, provide our materials only to those few "in the know."

Another problem, and one that may be explained by the low number of research workers in our field, is the lack of replication and extension on promising leads and on specific theoretical models. There have been few attempts to follow Thouless and Wiesner's (1947) model of psi psychophysical interaction, Hans Eysenck's (1967) model of cortical arousal and ESP, Harvey Irwin's (1979, 1985) ESP information-processing model and his absorption-synesthesia OBE model, or Roll and colleagues' rotating beam model of poltergeists (Roll, Burdick & Joines, 1973). There is a general lack of follow-up in some of our most important areas. One wonders if the same will happen to other lines of research, such as attempts to replicate, extend, and understand the correlations between ESP and geomagnetism or local sidereal time. Of course, we have to acknowledge once again that some of this may be explained by the lack of human and financial resources in the field. But when one sees parapsychologists abandoning their own promising research areas and coming up with new projects when there is so much basic research to be done on the questions they previously asked, one wonders if our profession sometimes has an undisciplined tendency towards the pursuit of the novel.

In addition, as Rex Stanford (2003) has suggested, there is a need for research that goes beyond relationships between two variables. The great bulk of our experimental psychological studies have tried to relate ESP to belief in its occurrence, as well as to introversion-extroversion, altered states of consciousness, creativity, experimenter effects, and other variables. But there is much to do to understand why, for example, an altered state may induce ESP. It may be argued that an altered state affects ESP by producing psychophysiological changes, nonlinear thinking, or changes in a person's belief systems, or by reducing ownership resistance (Alvarado, 2000). Furthermore, one or more of the variables probably interacts with a variety of other mediating and moderating variables (Stanford, 2003).

Another important research-related issue is that of wasted opportunities. It is unfortunate to see that most recent free-response ESP researchers have done nothing with the rich imagery of participant's mentation other than use it for defining hits and misses statistically. While explorations of this sort have been conducted by Deborah Delanoy (1989), and more recently by James Carpenter (1995) and Adrian Parker (Parker, Persson & Haller, 2000), they are exceptions.⁸ Almost all of our recent free-response ESP work has not been conducted with these interests in mind. In other

⁸ See also Hastings's (2001) and White's (1964) analyses.

words, as parapsychologists we limit what we can learn by the way we analyze our data.⁹

Similarly, other research areas are also affected by what we chose to emphasize in our research. Most of the questionnaire research of spontaneous experiences is generally limited to the experience's prevalence or frequency as the unit of analysis (e.g., Irwin, 1994). This may project a simplistic view of the phenomena because we can easily forget the different features of the experiences and ignore possible interactions between those features (Alvarado, 1996a, 1997).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the topics in this address may look somewhat disconnected, all of them touch on a central issue. I am referring to aspects of our identity as parapsychologists: who we are and what we do. Reflections on who we are and what our common problems are go a long way towards revitalizing and empowering us, especially in the light of the ever-present hostility and indifference of mainstream science. Issues such as what types of persons become involved in the field, how effective our training and education is, our feelings, our motivations, our conceptual approaches to phenomena, and the strategies by which we seek to legitimize our field, should always be kept in mind as we chart our future, especially as we enter this new millennium. Awareness of these issues allows us to consider the resources we have to go forward.

There is no doubt that, regardless of how few we are, we can claim to have contributed to knowledge even if our findings are not completely accepted by science at large. I have argued that our efforts as parapsychologists have contributed to: keep open the range of our potential as human beings, our understanding of the prevalence and features of a variety of experiences, the development of ideas in psychology, the fight against superstition and the evaluation of popular claims, the development of statistical techniques, and the study of varied forms of deceptive behaviors.

While we may be poor in numbers and in resources, we are not poor in talent, creativity or energy. It is possible that we look foolish in the eyes of some and heroic in the eyes of others. Regardless of how we are seen, we ourselves need to keep in mind our own goals and our own sense of the function we play in society. While our problems as a profession may

⁹This is further complicated by the practice of only using first-time participants. While it may be argued that this comes from the belief that first-timers are more spontaneous and that this may produce better results, such practice does not allow us to study possible recurrent patterns in our participant's mentations, such as symbols and distortions.

not be solved in our lifetime, we need to go forward with our work. Our efforts are an important attempt to expand human knowledge and to understand human potential by considering phenomena and concepts that go unnoticed by other sciences. In time, as we can draw from the expanding knowledge of other fields, we will make further advances that will lead to the improvement of our profession and the expansion of our currently limited knowledge.

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