



Editorial: The Changing Face of Parapsychology

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Acting as the program chair for the previous two combined conferences of the *Parapsychological Association (PA)* and the *Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE)* has given me a special insight into the current research and activities in the field of parapsychology and consciousness studies. Of course, the PA is focused on parapsychology, as the name suggests, and the SSE has a tradition of exploring a more expansive area that is recognized as *edge science*. Readers of this journal are familiar with the structure and guidelines for the field of parapsychology, but many may not be as familiar with the definition of edge science as interpreted by the SSE which is described as

...topics that are for various reasons ignored or studied inadequately within mainstream science [...] Topics of interest cover a wide spectrum, ranging from apparent anomalies in well-established disciplines to rogue phenomena that seem to belong to no established discipline, as well as philosophical issues about the connections among disciplines. (JSE, 2022)

Though each of these organizations has a distinct and separate character, they share the same directive to examine experiences and phenomena with a strict scientific approach. With this common goal in mind, the two organizations have come together in the past to combine our knowledge and provide fertile ground for further collaboration and exploration. The submissions provided for the two collaborative conferences that I had the privilege to chair have made it clear to me that the members of the PA are becoming more accepting of the expanded edge sciences, and members of the SSE are following the lead of PA researchers by adopting many more of their strict scientific protocols, careful methodological reviews, and enhanced analysis techniques.

Both organizations have always shared some characteristics. The SSE was founded by researchers from the PEAR lab who demonstrated some of the most carefully constructed parapsychological experiments ever to be published, and the president of the SSE for the past 12 years has been William Bengston who is a research methodologist by trade. In addition, the PA has consistently published and presented diverse edge science topics such as hypnosis (e.g. Cardena, 2006), dreams (e.g. Van de Castle & Pimm, 2012), discussions of the long-body in Navajo culture (e.g. Roll, 2005; Williams, 2005), exorcisms (e.g. Rueda, 2006); subjective experiences (e.g. Simmonds-Moore, 2006), and hauntings and ghosts (e.g. Sherwood, 2012; O'Keeffe, et al., 2008). Though neither organization has been completely isolated in their efforts, in the past few years, they both have become more accepting of different perspectives and new advances related to parapsychology, consciousness studies, and edge science.

The field of parapsychology is changing. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, those revered researchers who are the luminaries of the late 20th century are passing away or retiring after long, influential careers. Just in the past few years, we have lost stars such as Carlos Alvarado, K. Ramakrishna Rao, Robert Jahn, Brenda Dunne, Elizabeth Rauscher, Erlander Haraldsson, Lawrence LeShan, and even the staunch critic James Randi. Those same luminaries influenced public opinion and the next generation of researchers and, as a result, the field is advancing in new ways.

This issue of the *Journal of Parapsychology* includes topics related to Near-Death Experiences, micro-PK influencing electronic devices, and current practices in the remote viewing community. Though well-known researchers such as Patrizio Tressoldi and Luciano Pederzoli have contributed to this issue, works by younger researchers such as Debra Katz and Erika Annabelle Pratte have also been included bringing both a new perspective and new energy to the journal. In addition, there are nearly 80 abstracts of presentations that were included in the 2021 joint conference of the PA and SSE, showcasing the diversity and diligence of the research community connecting these two organizations.

The face of parapsychology is changing. The scope of topics included in the field is expanding, and researchers are getting closer to the research participants as they acknowledge the value of exploring the phenomenological aspects of psi experiences. Some research participants are learning the rigor of scientific protocols and contributing to research design following the examples set in the past by people such as Robert Van de Castle (e.g. Dwyer, Van de Castle, & Pimm, 2010; Krippner, 1993) and Alex Tanous (e.g. Osis & McCormick, 1980). Qualitative methodologies are being integrated into our journals following strict protocols and careful analyses, while Bayesian approaches have become more commonplace. Applications of our findings are taking center-stage with counselling services incorporating psi and utilizing dreamwork and mind-altering substances as potential treatments for those who are having difficulties integrating their experiences into their daily lives.

But most of all, just in the past two years, our methods of communication have changed dramatically. Of course, we continue to rely on publications to provide our academic references, but online meetings, symposia, and courses have become standard with nearly every organization offering online activities for members and for the public. Much of this must be attributed to the work of Annalisa Ventola who has been tirelessly expanding the activities of both the PA and SSE to meet the needs of our global community.

As you read through the articles in this journal, realize that this communication method has been used since the 19th century to allow researchers to exchange ideas, and it will continue to be a valuable resource for the sciences. But also consider the ways that our communication can change. Watch the upcoming issues of the *Journal of Parapsychology* for new and exciting approaches to share information and enable the exchange of ideas in the field of parapsychology and consciousness studies.

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