

Joining Forces for the 2010s: Positive Influence in the Development of Parapsychology in Non-English Countries

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I am very happy (and surprised) to be President of the PA. Thank you. I am the third Spanish-speaking parapsychologist – after Carlos Alvarado and Etzel Cardeña – and hope that I will be able to make a difference. I joined PA in 1987. I have been especially interested to find ways to make the PA appear more attractive to younger parapsychologists and to those who consider themselves outsiders but with an interest in parapsychology. When I started my parapsychological career, I published a peer-reviewed quarterly journal, the *Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal*. The journal's impact on many young parapsychologists in several Spanish-speaking countries was impressive. Although the *Revista* was discontinued for financial reasons (1990-2004), my colleagues and I inaugurated a new online publication, the *E-Bulletin Psi*, of which thirteen issues have been published to-date.

Starting in 1994, the Institute of Paranormal Psychology (IPP) was also established as an educational center dedicated to the scientific study of paranormal/anomalous events, with a focus on experimental, clinical, and empirical research, plus the collection and publication of case reports dealing with parapsychological experiences. The work of the IPP is supported by students' fees and by the income from an endowment, and there are many "study groups" concentrating on different topics in the field – historical, educational, clinical, theoretical, and experimental/methodological.

As parapsychology becomes more transdisciplinary than multidisciplinary,

the need to communicate more effectively with scientists from other disciplines for planned, inter-laboratory collaboration becomes increasingly evident. Latin American countries are not the exception. Our research is being presented outside of the field now (I publish a number of articles in psychological journals) more than ever and its potential relevance outside of our discipline and its conceptual implications for science in general are being recognized. Our research can and should address and contribute to larger issues about consciousness, mind, and brain. It is time for us to become more visible as serious players in the broader domain of consciousness investigation by the alternative medicine community, the cognitive sciences, physics and other fields.

As the PA reaches the beginning of the decade, we are faced with a variety of issues about the function, purpose, and development of our Association. In this short message I want to emphasize cooperation and involvement, but I do not want to promote the illusory view that there are no real differences in approach and method or that those differences are not important. Our differences are fundamental to our identity as a profession and cannot be dismissed by mere calls for union that ignore the roots of our differences and offer little in the way of specific solutions to our problems. What I propose is the constructive use of our differences to serve our best interests. Our disagreements signal our strength because they highlight the different areas of expertise that have been brought to bear on the complex problems of our field.

I have always been a believer that, in parapsychology, one individual can make a profound difference. That this is

so is evident in the work of such researchers as Charles Honorton and Ian Stevenson, whose work shaped their areas of specialty. Some other parapsychologists, among them John Beloff in Scotland, Piero Cassoli in Italy, Soji Otani in Japan, J. Ricardo Musso in Argentina, and Gertrude Schmeidler in the United States, have also inspired and encouraged new researchers. Similarly, many of you can make a difference in the affairs of the PA in a variety of ways.

The issue of membership is an important one. We must do better in attracting new Associate and Full members, and in encouraging those who are currently Associates to apply for Full membership. Your action could make a significant difference. Of course, such encouragement does not guarantee acceptance. Applications for membership are judged on their merits by the Board who takes into consideration a variety of factors such as the applicants' research track record, their publications and the strength of letters of recommendation. On occasion, some applications are rejected, but your involvement could bring many new members to PA. If you think you can recommend someone for membership, please write to our Executive Director at business@parapsych.org and request the appropriate forms. Offer to write a letter of recommendation to support the applicant. If we all took it upon ourselves to recruit new members to the PA, similar increases could be made in other countries.

Although these days it seems to be fashionable to say that we need to be more international in the membership department, I like to think I have had some positive influence in the

Non-English countries (such as Argentina, Brazil, Italy, France, and Portugal). As a President, I would recommend that we put special effort forth in raising funds for our organization. The only solution is "new blood." We are lucky that this year there was a "new face" running for President, and that some more "new faces" ran for the Board. We need new members at every level.

We are currently trying to organize our non-English speaking members to work together and also to interact more frequently with the English-language community. Our first steps were small, limited at present to assistance with written and verbal communication in English (I remember the efforts of the EuroPA and the AIPA in the 90s). Many other PA members have language skills that may be put to use in constructive ways. For exam-

ple, multilingual members could help during the evaluation of membership applications written in a language other than English by translating applicants' interests and research to the Board. I am thinking about a lot of things for Durham 2012, such as a survey of PA members (the last one was in 1997), a roundtable in honor of the Krippner's birthday (80 years old!), etc.

We can all offer much to effect future change. The Board is always open to ideas from the membership. If you see a problem with something (e.g., international relations, dealing with the media, relations with other scientists, development of research standards) you can be part of the solution by offering specific suggestions or by volunteering to form committees to deal with the problems about which you care the most. Your participation has to be coordinated

with the Board, but your input and effort can make an important difference. In addition, because of our diversity the membership of the PA has a variety of talents, approaches, and experiences all of which can be useful to further the professional goals of the Association.

There are a lot of hardworking and intelligent people out there dedicating themselves to fieldwork. They are publishing on their websites and in popular books tantalizing hints to the data from which the field as a whole could benefit, both scientifically and methodologically. Many of these folk also seem eager for more education, for excellence: many of them want to do the best job possible for their clients and for themselves, whatever their ideologies. What should our response be?



Nancy Zingrone, Carlos Alvarado, and Alejandra Parra (Hoyt Edge and Lefty Nelson in the background) at the banquet dinner at the 54th Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association in Curitiba, Brazil.