

Institute of Paranormal Psychology

The [Institute of Paranormal Psychology](#) (IPP) is a psi-research organization established in 1994 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Headed by Jorge Villanueva, it also offers educational resources and publishes a regular online bulletin. (This article also considers accusations of plagiarism made against the institute's former lead researcher Alejandro Parra.)

Experimental Research

Ganzfeld ESP

During the early 2000s the Institute reported telepathy experiments employing the ganzfeld method. In the largest of these, participants numbered 138, with half of the trials carried out under ganzfeld stimulation, the other half under normal waking consciousness.^[1] A CD containing 3,500 high-resolution colour pictures was used to provide target images. Outcome measures strongly favoured the ganzfeld over waking consciousness: ganzfeld trials gave a hit rate of 41.3% ($p = 0.001$) compared with an insignificant rate of 27.5% in non-ganzfeld trials, a significant difference ($p = 0.016$). However, a hypothesized relationship between prior psi experiences and ESP scores was not supported.

Villanueva has recently described plans to adapt the ganzfeld telepathy experiment for in-home testing, in the hope that familiar surroundings will help to facilitate psi ability.^[2]

Psychometry

Research reported in 2008 investigated the phenomenon of psychometry, a type of anomalous cognition triggered by handling a physical object.^[3] Investigators recruited 74 people with prior experience of either psychometry or anomalous experiences, along with 30 people who claimed no such experiences. They were asked to touch several token objects and report their impressions, which were later coded for accuracy. Participants who reported psychometric ability were more accurate than those who only reported having had anomalous experiences ($p = 0.041$).

Significant evidence of psychometry was obtained in a follow-up study using sacred objects.^[4]

Psychomantium ESP Testing

The Institute has carried out research into the psychomanteum, a mirror-gazing device used in ancient Greece as an oracle to contact the dead. In 2006, the Institute carried out a study to see whether this method can facilitate ESP scoring in place of the ganzfeld method.^[5] Participants subjected to psychomanteum testing scored only marginally more than control participants who were not, and both below the level of significance (28.6% and 26.2% respectively). In a second experiment reported in 2011 with a similar number of participants, the results were

marginally significant (30.5%) for the psychomanteum condition and non-significant (29.2%) in the control condition.^[6]

The later article discusses at some length a variety of potential psychological correlates. A positive correlation between prior psi experiences and extraversion was found; however, a comparison between performance on psi tasks and personality measures did not confirm previous trends that favoured openness and extraversion.

ESP and Hypnosis

The Institute has conducted two free-response studies to investigate the potential of hypnosis to facilitate ESP.^[7] One hundred and one participants were separated into two groups according to their the ability to enter a hypnotic trance and then run through ESP testing. Confirming prediction, high hypnotizables significantly outperformed low hypnotizables ($p = 0.012$.)

Anomalous Remote Diagnosis

Two hundred people who reported previous psi experiences were given photographs of deceased individuals and asked to discern the cause of death.^[8]

Some handled the photograph and attempted to get information mentally, while others used a pendulum. Results from the mental activity were highly significant ($p = 0.001$) and were significantly more successful than the pendulum results.

In the second part of the experiment, participants were given photographs of individuals who had committed suicide and asked to discern how they had died (overdose, gunshot, etc). Mental activity gave only trending significance ($p = 0.075$), while pendulum activity was non-significant. The researchers speculated that psychological defences may block mental psi phenomena when the target material is of a highly emotional nature.

Premonitions Survey

Two groups were surveyed, 255 participants who were interested in paranormal topics and 429 undergraduate students who were not.^[9] Analysis of survey data found that 90.7% of the paranormal group and 21.7% of the non-paranormal group reported having experienced premonitions in dreams. Furthermore, 99.2% of people interested in the paranormal and 51.7% of students reported having experienced premonitions such as gut feelings. Dream premonitions in the paranormal group were often of a serious nature involving family members. These contrasted markedly with trivial dream premonitions reported among the non-paranormal group.

Counselling Service

During the 1990s the Institute set up a counselling service run by a clinical psychologist to provide information and advise people troubled by paranormal-seeming activity. Today, the service includes workshops run by sensitives (mediums, psychics, healers, and dowsers).

Library

The Institute's library contains 6600 books, thousands of hours of video and audio tapes, and over 12,000 issues of academic journals and popular magazines – constituting the most important collection of its kind in Latin America. Its Agencia Latinoamericana de Información Psi (ALIPsi) is an internet-based database of parapsychology references and online information related to the Spanish-speaking literature (www.alipsi.com.ar).

Additionally, the library provides an advisory service offering bibliographical support to undergraduate students and journalists.

Publications

Between 1990 and 2004, the IPP published fifty-four issues of a peer-reviewed quarterly journal, the *Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal*. It publishes experimental research, theoretical papers, historical and philosophical essays, book reviews, and reports of other activities. The journal has educated many young parapsychologists in Spanish-speaking countries and has carried on exchanges with over fifty parapsychological journals around the world. The journal was discontinued for financial reasons in 2004 and replaced in 2006 by a low-cost online publication, the [E-Bulletin Psi](#). Thirty issues have been published to-date including more than 300 articles by 120 authors reaching over 12,000 readers in 2021.

Website

[Institute of Paranormal Psychology](#).

Plagiarism by Alejandro Parra

In 2021, the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* published a retraction^[10] of a 2017 paper^[11] contributed by Alejandro Parra, the Institute's principal researcher until 2021. The paper, which described anomalous and paranormal experiences reported by nurses, was found to contain multiple instances of plagiarism without attribution.^[12]

Since this retraction, other similar instances of plagiarism by Parra committed over many years have come to light. Biologist and psi researcher [Michael Nahm](#) revealed 22 cases in publications since 2006, including entire sections of books and articles.^[13] Nahm further reports that some researchers in the field knew about Parra's plagiarism yet failed to expose it. This is also noted by [Etzel Cardeña](#), who learned from a past journal editor that Parra had been repeatedly warned about it.^[14]

Cardeña and three other authors whose work was plagiarized by Parra presented evidence to the [Universidad de Ciencias Empresariales y Sociales](#) in Buenos Aires where Parra obtained his doctorate (which also contained substantial instances of plagiarism). However, their communications were ignored by university officials. Cardeña also contacted the [Universidad Abierta Interamericana](#) where Parra was

working at the time, following which Parra was dismissed from all its activities and programmes.^[15]

Different views have been stated about the extent to which this type of malpractice should be held to discredit experimental research in which (presumably honest) colleagues participated. The Institute director Jorge Villanueva defends research findings in which he and others were responsible for designing and executing experimental procedures, recruiting participants and running statistical analyses,^[16] considering fraud to have been 'impossible' and the results to be 'absolutely genuine'.^[17]

Australian parapsychologist Lance Storm, editor of the *Australian Journal of Parapsychology*, draws attention^[18] to guidelines by the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#) which state that minor instances of plagiarism occurring in an article that contains original research do not necessarily warrant retraction of the entire article, since plagiarism is not the same as data fraud. Storm further notes that the effect size reported in two ganzfeld telepathy experiments led by Parra were large by parapsychology standards (0.3), but that several ganzfeld experiments reported by other researchers had similar or larger effect sizes, and argues that that alone is not cause for suspicion.

Other parapsychologists insist that all of Parra's research findings should be embargoed until cleared of suspicion. Nahm writes:

I don't think one can trust data published by a person who has profoundly sympathized with and enacted scientific dishonesty since at least 2006. Moreover, contents of interview reports can also be regarded as data. Therefore, plagiarizing them and presenting them as results obtained in one's own research project even amounts to data fabrication.^[19]

As a consequence, Nahm considers, 'all other data presented by Parra should be disregarded unless one is willing to check his original data records very, very thoroughly, and then finds absolutely nothing to complain about.' Cardena concurs, commenting that 'all of Parra's work should be considered questionable unless determined to be otherwise'.^[20]

Michael Duggan

Literature

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Villanueva, J. (2022). Testing ESP "In-Home" under Social Restrictions: Starting Research Trials. *Mindfield: The Bulletin of the Parapsychological Association* 14/2, 22-25.

Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Parra & Villanueva (2006).
2. ^ Villanueva (2022).
3. ^ Parra & Argibay (2008).
4. ^ Parra & Argibay (2009).
5. ^ Parra & Villanueva (2006).
6. ^ Parra & Villanueva (2011).
7. ^ Parra & Argibay (2013b).

8. ^ Parra & Argibay (2013a).
9. ^ Parra & Argibay (2013c).
10. ^ Braude (2021).
11. ^ Parra & Giménez-Amarilla (2017).
12. ^ Nahm (2021), 624-26, gives details.
13. ^ Nahm (2021).
14. ^ Cardeña (2021).
15. ^ Cardeña (2021), 640-41.
16. ^ Storm (2021).
17. ^ Villanueva (personal communication 5th April, 2023).
18. ^ Storm (2021).
19. ^ Nahm (2021), 632.
20. ^ Cardeña (2021), 640.