

PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Main areas of study:

- **Extrasensory Perception (ESP)**
 - Clairvoyance: the ability to experience the occurrence of an event without physically perceiving it (with the five “normal” senses).
 - Precognition: the ability to predict a future event.
 - Telepathy: the ability to read someone’s mind and to tell others the thoughts perceived in this fashion.
 - Remote Viewing: the ability to describe places being visited by other people without having any normal form of communication with the visitors.

- **Psychokinetic (PK) Abilities:**
 - The ability to make an object move by mind control, without being in physical contact with it.
- **Poltergeist Phenomena:** movement of objects, noises and unexplained happenings that are not the result of one individual’s conscious effort.
- **Kirlian Photography:** a photographic process which claims to be able to photograph “auras” or energy patterns external to the body.

Related Areas:

- **Out-Of-Body Experience:** the experience of having your conscious awareness separated from your body.
- **Near-Death Experience:** experiences reported by individuals after having been close to death, or pronounced clinically dead and then resuscitated.
- **Psychic Healing:** curing physical and psychosomatic illnesses through “non-medical” methods, including faith healing, prayer, or psychic healing power.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Parapsychology, or psychic research (PSI), may be one of the oldest areas of study, interest and controversy in the history of human consciousness.
- It is precisely because of its long association with “the occult” that *modern* psychologists remain skeptical at best
- The first organized, Western scientific studies began in 1882 with the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in London.
- In the United States, serious study in parapsychology got underway in 1927, at Duke University, with the establishment of the first laboratory devoted to the investigation of psi - specifically ESP and PK.

THEORIES OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY

- No single theory of what psi is, or how it can be accomplished, has received much support.
- Aside from rare reports of specific, talented individuals, most psi skills can be demonstrated in a laboratory with small to moderate levels of significance.
 - (4 - 12% above random chance.)

Three General Theorists:

- Walker (1975, 1984) ESP and PK are products of hidden variables in quantum mechanics.
 - Not scientifically testable.
- Stanford (1974, 1977): Psi ability is a “sixth sense” which involves the ability to project the mind.
 - Interesting, and most popular, but lacks clear definition of the term and explanation of how it functions.
- Schmidt (1975) proposed the existence of mathematically derived “psi sources.”
 - Developed a mathematical model or axiom to try to explain how psi can be independent of space and time.

GENERAL PROBLEMS IN RESEARCH

1. Inadequate reporting of test procedures and experimental designs
2. Failure to replicate most parapsychology experiments
3. Absence of psychological, predictive laws and theories of psi
4. Lack of harmony between psi and established physical and biological laws and theories
5. Absence of generally observable psi phenomena in the real world
6. General absence of scientific evidence in the laboratory to establish the existence of psi
7. Absence of clear proof that extraneous variables cannot account for psi

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