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# Rethinking Methodologies in Parapsychology Research with Children

DONNA THOMAS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** – In contemporary parapsychology research, children are missing. The wealth of literature with adults highlights children's paranormal experiences as an under-researched topic. Through this article, I argue for children's inclusion in parapsychology research, but with a caveat – as active agents, rather than passive objects. I consider the convergences between missing children and absent women researchers in parapsychology and argue for a rethinking of traditional research methodologies in the field of parapsychology. Traditional methodologies rooted in a patriarchal system could explain the exclusion of children, and the othering of women researchers in the field. I include a discussion around my own research with children, which produces different kinds of meanings and data in the act of knowledge production around paranormal or unexplained experiences.

**Keywords:** children – women – parapsychology – methodologies – matriarchal – patriarchal – participatory

## Methoden in der parapsychologischen Forschung mit Kindern neu überdenken

**Zusammenfassung**<sup>2</sup> – In der gegenwärtigen parapsychologischen Forschung fehlen Kinder. An der Fülle der Literatur über Erwachsene wird deutlich, dass die paranormalen Erfahrungen von Kindern noch nicht ausreichend erforscht sind. In diesem Artikel plädiere ich für die Einbeziehung von Kindern in die parapsychologische Forschung, allerdings mit einem Vorbehalt – als aktive Akteure und nicht als passive Forschungsobjekte. Ich ziehe die Konvergenzen zwischen fehlenden Kindern und abwesenden Forscherinnen in der Parapsychologie in Betracht und plädiere für ein Überdenken der traditionellen Forschungsmethoden im Bereich der Parapsychologie. Traditionelle Methoden, die in einem patriarchalischen System verwurzelt sind, könnten den Ausschluss von Kindern und die Aus-

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1 **Donna Thomas** is a Research Fellow at the University for Central Lancashire, UK. Donna's research interests include the nature of self, consciousness and unexplained experiences, mainly researching with children and young people. Donna explores epistemology and ontology with children, examining how children's living experiences could inform post-materialist science and philosophy. Publications include academic journals, public interest pieces and a book *Children's Unexplained Experiences in a Post Materialist World* (John Hunt Publishing, 2023). In 2019, Donna was awarded 'best paper' by the British Psychological Society's Consciousness and Experiential Section. Presentations include, Science of Consciousness 2020 (University of Arizona) and SSE-PA 2022.

2 Eine erweiterte deutsche Zusammenfassung findet sich am Ende des Artikels.

grenzung von Forscherinnen auf diesem Gebiet erklären. Ich schließe eine Diskussion über meine eigene Forschung mit Kindern ein, die verschiedene Arten von Bedeutungen und Daten im Akt der Wissensproduktion über paranormale oder unerklärliche Erfahrungen hervorbringt.

*Schlüsselbegriffe:* Kinder – Frauen – Parapsychologie – Methoden – matriarchal – patriarchal – partizipatorisch

These crowds and crowds of little children are strangely absent from the written record... there is something mysterious about the silence of all these multitudes of babes in arms, toddlers and adolescents in the statements men made about their own existence.

Laslett (1977)

### ***Introduction***

When I received an invitation to write an article for this special issue of *women in parapsychology*, I discovered some interesting convergences between missing children in parapsychology (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a) and women researchers troubled by their positioning in the field. Scholars such as Nancy Zingrone (2019), Caroline Watt (1996), Beverly Rubik (1994) and Marilyn Schlitz (1994), have charted the neglect of women in parapsychology and a lack of attention to women's involvement in the field (see Alvarado, 1988). Children are also neglected in parapsychology research, rarely involved and often subject to objectification and silencing (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). The convergences between women in parapsychology and children on the margins of research are compelling. As a woman researcher exploring children's unexplained experiences, I may have missed the obvious.

I contemplated whether men researchers often include the voices of children in parapsychology research, those so-called tiny-adults, *irrationalists*, who cannot distinguish reality from fantasy (see Piaget, 1929/2002). I realized as a woman social scientist, taking an excursion into the fields of parapsychology and philosophy, it was primarily men scientists, such as David Luke, Bernardo Kastrup and Chris Roe, who had valued and supported children's insights and living experiences. Carlos Alvarado (1989) was one of the first male parapsychologists to bring attention to the troubles for women in the field. Alvarado (1989: 234) reflects on the absence of women researchers from the canon, highlighting the "common assumption that outlining the work of prominent men in a field is sufficient to explore the history of a discipline." The issue may be gendered but involving children can reveal how the root of the trouble may extend into how science is motivated, enacted and valued in the modern world. In a way that is dismissive of *othered* epistemologies, methodologies and philosophies. Instead dedicated to "the prevailing empiricist paradigm that has tended to dominate scientific endeavours" (Watt, 1996: 85).

I was introduced to the 1991 conference *Women and Parapsychology*, quite recently by the editors of this special issue (see Leverett, 2022; Zingrone, 2022), following a presentation I delivered for the Society for Scientific Exploration and the Parapsychological Association 2022. The absence of children in modern parapsychology research was clearly demonstrated at the recent conference, with my presentation the only one concerned with children. I argued for the importance of children's living experiences, for *strange* research methods which facilitated children as active agents rather than passive objects. I touched on some of the discrepancies between how women researchers may conduct experiments in different ways to men researchers (see Blackmore, 1980; Drucker, Drewes & Rubin, 1977; Rhine, 1962) – at the time not realizing these hints were entangled with the concerns of other women researchers in parapsychology. It seems, when women researchers invite children into parapsychology studies, they can apply methodologies which challenge the traditional and resist the patriarchal. For example, Louisa Rhine in the 1960's handpicked 218 letters written by children, out of a dataset of 30,000 (see Drewes, 2002). This huge task must have been undertaken with attentive care, gathering the children, and foregrounding their stories, within a male-dominated field of science. Drewes and Drucker (1977; 1990) introduced candies into experiments and Susan Blackmore (1980) used soft toys in ESP testing. These are, in some ways, methods designed with the child in mind, an attentiveness and intuition to what makes research more meaningful and interesting for children. The juxtaposition of candies and teddy bears in rigorous scientific experiments will be pursued later.

Through this article, I argue for children's inclusion in parapsychology research – but with a caveat – in a participatory way, as active agents, rather than passive objects (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). I consider inequality for women and children in parapsychology as the result of a masculine order of science and its hegemony within research practice. The invitation into this special issue that children have been afforded, offers a potential to expand on accidental convergences, and hopefully contributes to the ongoing discussions about women, research and paradigms, but perhaps with a difference – as I'll be bringing the children to work.

### *Children, Women and Science*

Nancy Zingrone in 1988, wrote about the inequality found in academic publication practices in two prominent parapsychology journals<sup>3</sup> between 1937–1986. Zingrone summarizes how two thirds of the journals' authors were male, noting how “disparities between rates and habits of males and females in parapsychology conform to some extent to those obtained in other disciplines” (1988: 321). Zingrone (1988 – see also Zingrone & Alvarado, 2019) importantly draws attention to what socially constitutes inequality for women in science. Academic writing

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3 *Journal of Parapsychology & Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research.*

itself embodies the “normative regimes of the phallogocentric symbolic order” (see Handforth & Taylor, 2016: 628), or masculine discourse. Scientific practice is a type of knowledge production imbued with a hegemonic regularity of the rational and the ordered (see Handforth & Taylor, 2016). It is a symbolic order that has historically seen women and children written out of history by male theory and language (see Pinggong, 2018). Feminist scholars interested in language and psychology, such as Helen Cixous (1977), Luce Irigaray (1981) and Julia Kristeva (1980), bring attention to the phallogocentric order of science. These feminist scholars claim the site of a different kind of feminine discourse, described by Irigaray as *parler femme*, by Cixous as *écriture féminine* and by Kristeva as the *semiotic* (see Pinggong, 2018):

Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history by her own movement [...] When I say ‘woman’, I’m speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history.

Cixous et al., *The Laugh of the Medusa*, 1976

Cixous’ (1977: 875) *universal woman as subject* is a force, a semiotic with the potential to break “an arid millennial ground”. It is women’s imaginary as “inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms” (ibid.: 877) – similar with children’s playing, drawing and creativity when sharing experiences and meanings (see Thomas, 2021, 2022b). *L’écriture féminine* (feminist writing) is seen in the autoethnographic (Ellis et al., 2010), writing the body, metaphor and symbology. Never considered science, the semiotic of women – and children – juxtaposes the mathematical, statistical and linguistic. Certain methodologies can privilege *l’écriture féminine*, such as qualitative or participatory approaches to research, where stories, art and the body are prioritized as valuable research data. The hierarchy of research methodologies in parapsychology that heavily relies on patriarchal discourse, appears to position qualitative research at the bottom, as White (1994: 6) notes “in the missionary position.”

The 1991 conference proceedings of *Women in Parapsychology* (see Coly & White, 1994), challenges a patriarchal scientific model which excludes *othered* epistemologies and methodologies. With children, epistemologies emerge as a spatial flow, a manifestation of multiple voices and images which splatter the patriarchal ordering of scientific discourse. Children in parapsychology research make us question the “pre-existing, formalized, methods-driven methodologies ... that are never enough for the too much of inquiry” (St. Pierre, 2008: 608). Utts (1994) highlights the binaries inherent in male-orientated parapsychology research, such as hard data over soft data and dualism over unity. When I consider the way children were researched *on* historically, the emphasis on gathering hard data to evidence children’s psi abilities comes to the fore. Many cause and effect school experiments on children ran between the 1950’s – 1970’s (see Rhine & Pratt, 1957; Van Busschbach, 1956), with minimal attention paid to any socio-cultural

factors that can influence children's experiences. Psi experiments with children were rooted in the masculine ordering of science, limiting exploration around children's extra-sensory perception, within a reductionist model of materialism.

The materialist paradigm influences how children, and their experiences are often measured in adult-orientated studies. Past ESP research *on* children appeal to Piagetian cognitive development models to measure intelligence and capabilities of children (see Drucker, Drewes & Rubin, 1977). Child development and assumptions made about children's capacities to authentically engage in research are two problematic areas that warrant examination. Measuring children's cognitive capacities creates "yardsticks by which children progress and development is measured and found wanting" (see Murris, 2017: 1). Piaget's model has been appropriated and reduced in modern society, rendering children as "dominated by the irrational, ludistic tendencies or magical thinking, largely unable to distinguish fantasy from reality until seven or eight years of age when concrete logic develops" (Wigger, 2019: 29). Contemporary research in childhood studies significantly challenges this view of children and their capacity to engage in research (Anderson, 1998; Dan et al., 2019; Larkins et al., 2015; Murris, 2017; see Punch, 2002). Scholars argue for a redefinition of certain ideas such as intelligence, considered multiple rather than monolithic (Gardner, 1983), the social rather than egocentric nature of children (Harris, 2000), how children's thinking processes can be complex (see Barrett, 2012; Murris, 2017); and how logical young minds can be, even in imaginative play (see Dias & Harris, 1988, see Wigger, 2019). What comes to the fore is the nature and shape of children's knowledge, their *logic* and complex cognitive processes – their semiotic, their archetype of spontaneity, impulsiveness and creativity – which demands a rethinking of research methodologies.

Research involving children will often apply adult-centred methods, creating barriers for children's significant engagement in research practice (see Punch, 2002). Traditional methods which embody the regularity of the rational and ordered, immediately exclude any epistemological authority of children over their own experiences. In the past, experiments were mostly conducted in school contexts, viewed as natural testing sites (see Rhine & Pratt, 1957) where scores of children could be tested on. For example, in 1941, A. A. Foster conducted ESP-related tests with "50 plains-Indian children" (Foster, 1943: 94) in a Canadian state-governed school. The aim of the study was to test the effectiveness of a new type of ESP test against a standard technique. The intention for Foster to be inclusive by producing "*the only published report with Indians as subjects*" (ibid.: 95), masks the atrocities inflicted on children from First Nation communities in state-run schools. For readers who may not be aware of the histories of these children, their stories are filled with separation from their families and communities, their languages, knowledges and belief systems, ignored, silenced, abused and replaced with western doctrine (see Malloy, 2017). The tests were delivered by adults-in-authority, representative of an abusive system into which these children were forcibly placed.

The effect of teacher-pupil relationships in ESP testing with children in schools was examined by Anderson and White (1963). Their results show how positive teacher-pupil relationships can affect ESP scores. Drucker, Drewes & Rubin (1977) identified how children perform better on ESP related tests in their own homes, rather than in school. The neglect of interactional, social and cultural factors which congregate around the moment of ESP testing in children is problematic for women, men, children and the field (see Maraldi & Krippner, 2019). The neglect of *soft data*, when soft data is crucial, is an act of the phallogocentric order. Interconnections in research spaces is something Beverley Rubik examines in her 1991/1994 contribution to *Women and Parapsychology*. Rubik endorses the feminine archetype in parapsychology, seeing the masculine archetype as that which aims to tame and measure nature – an attitude inherent to physicalist metaphysics. The experimenter, the participant and the target are interconnected and should be considered in studies on the paranormal, according to Rubik (1994). Where I particularly join with Rubik, is with her call for participants to co-design experiments, hypothesis and target selection (see 1994). Rubik is alluding to participatory research practice, an approach I use with children in research. As a style of enquiry that emerged in fields such as childhood studies in the early 1990's (see Larkins et al., 2015), participatory research developed alongside sociological paradigm shifts. Participatory research creates opportunities for children to be acknowledged as competent social actors rather than passive objects of research (see Dixon et al., 2019). It is an approach that is showing to offer astounding potentials for involving children in parapsychology research (see Thomas, 2021).

A central focus of feminist and participatory research with children is epistemology. These approaches to research open debate around who can be a knower, what can be known and what constitutes and validates knowledge (see Stanley & Wise, 2013). In my own studies with children, I argue how children's experiences and ways of being can also catalyze ontological concern, through exploring the nature of self and experience, and examining the ways children's experiences challenge the dominant materialist scientific paradigm (see Thomas, 2022b). White (1994) examines knowledge and queries whether feminist approaches to science are relevant for parapsychology research. White (1994) notes how some questions are not amenable to experimental scrutiny, so they are not asked. Even in the case of subjective phenomena such as near-death experiences that are resistant to experimental study (see Irwin, 1995). The now vast literature on NDEs is seeping into mainstream healthcare systems, with new guidelines for researching NDEs recently published (see Parnia et al., 2022). Unfortunately, children are relegated to a footnote in the guidance, with a fleeting reference made to case study research (see *ibid.*, 2022). Yet another example of missing children, a travesty as the article is concerned with *future directions* in NDE research.

White (1994) calls for a plural approach to parapsychology, where other forms of knowledge and methodologies are valued. Women researchers in the past adapted experimental methods

to suit child subjects such as the candies and toys mentioned earlier (see Blackmore, 1980; Drucker, Drewes & Rubin, 1977). It reveals a tension between their intuitions, perhaps *l'écriture féminine* methodologies, with an orientation to the dominant, patriarchal scientific paradigm. An unconscious move “to speak and write as men do so to enter history, when logically speaking it is a history our speech should disrupt” (see Gauthier, 1986). Children’s semiosis, or ways for representing their experiences converge with *women’s discourse* (see Irigaray, 1981), the schizoid position of being simultaneously in history and not in history, written out of history by male theory (see Pinggong, 2018). Louisa Rhine in some ways fought for the recognition of children’s epistemologies contained in their letters. Marilyn Schlitz (1994) reflects on her own tension as a women researcher, describing her ‘mixed orientation’ towards parapsychological research (see Watt, 1996). Schlitz refers to Louisa Rhine’s letters, demonstrating the paradox between her appreciation of children’s accounts and “her reluctance to challenge the underlying assumptions of J.B. Rhine’s experimental approach to psi phenomena” (Irwin, 1995). I recognize my own tensions too, appreciating the scientific experiment while advocating for *othered* children, methodologies and epistemologies. I wrangle with validating claims about children, on behalf of children, and despair at times with the business of re-authoring and *re-languaging* children’s experiences, to suit rule-governed journals and troubling reviewers.

For feminist researchers and in research with children, criticisms are often levied against methodological rigor and validity (see Dallimore, 2000). Scientific criteria such as validity and replicability may not be applicable to research practice with children, their living experiences and epistemologies. Blehenberg et al. (2013) argue that external validity and reliability are less significant for research with people, for example, repeating a measurement is practical rather than feasible. Validity can take on different meanings and processes, as in the case of *transactional validity*, a common approach in participatory research involving co-analysis with participants – “heralded as a stronger version of validity reached through triangulation” (Caretta & Perez, 2019: 360). Emotional expression as an epistemological principle (see Stanley & Wise, 2013) can be a signal of validity from a child. Often, children can express emotional responses (fear, delight, wonder) when they share their accounts. Attention to language can reveal how children will use validation strategies in their reporting, bringing witnesses and reported speech into their paranormal stories where possible, utilizing nominalizations (see Thomas, 2021). Long silences between words show deep reflection and the search to find adequate ways to describe what they have experienced. The trouble of missing children and women researchers in the field of parapsychology is reflective of the larger issue of the *othering* of epistemologies, semiosis and methodologies in mainstream science, rather than biased men scientists.



### *Children in Parapsychology*

For children to come into the space of the special issue of women and parapsychology, signifies an important move towards involving children in parapsychology research. The wealth of literature that studies anomalous experiences with adults (see Cardena & Alvarado, 2014; Pechey & Halligan, 2012; Roxburgh & Roe, 2014; Wahbeh et al., 2019), highlights anomalous experiences in childhood as a significantly under-researched area (see Thomas, 2021; 2022a; 2023). Children show to have experiences similar with anomalous experiences identified in adult populations. Examples of studies with adults outside closed clinical contexts include measuring anomalous experiences and beliefs (see Wahbeh et al., 2019), non-pathological self and experience alterations (see Cardena & Alvarado, 2014), prevalence of anomalous experiences in non-clinical groups (see Pechey & Halligan, 2012) and voices and visions in mediumship (see Roxburgh & Roe, 2014). Recent pilot studies I have conducted *with* children *outside* clinical contexts, demonstrate a wide range of experiences in childhood that carry features of anomalous experiences, such as telepathy, precognition, mediumship, NDE's and OBE's (see Thomas 2021; 2022a). Other experiences were identified as peak or mystical (see Hoffman, 1998). Like adults (see Hastings, 1983), most children report potential healing or transformational potentials from their experiences, especially when supported by adults in authority (see Thomas, 2021).

A recent systematic review into children and anomalous or unexplained experiences (see Thomas, 2021), demonstrates how children's experiences are used as predictors for their well-being in adulthood and as markers of psychosis risk (see Rabeyron & Watt, 2010). Links have been made between children in crisis and anomalous experiences, with studies examining the role of childhood trauma. Scimeca et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between extra-sensory perception and traumatic experiences in childhood, showing how dissociated states and emotional distress can mediate anomalous experiences (such as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition). Rabeyron and Watt studied the relationship between paranormal experiences, mental health, psi abilities and childhood trauma. Their results found a significant correlation between "mental boundaries associated with paranormal experiences and childlikeness" (Rabeyron & Watt, 2010: 487). The "empirical association between voice-hearing, measures of dissociation and trauma particularly (though not exclusively) childhood sexual abuse," are highlighted by Longden et al. (2012: 28). These are important studies for showing correlations between trauma, anomalous experiences and states of consciousness (see Thomas, 2022a). Yet, most studies concerned with childhood trauma *do not involve children* and are retrospective accounts of traumatic histories reported by adults.

Recent psychosocial studies suggest a high prevalence of *psychotic-like experiences* in children aged between 9–12 years (see Kelleher & Cannon, 2020). These are experiences that carry features of anomalous phenomena but are not viewed as medically significant to meet

the diagnostic criteria for psychosis and schizophrenia. In my own studies with children, the data is starting to show a pattern with children aged 9–12 years who demonstrate a higher incidence and wider variety of types of anomalous experiences (see Thomas, 2022a). This can be a significant age for some children, as they experience puberty, raising questions around the relationship between transitional states in children and unexplained experiences (see Thomas, 2022a). In contemporary parapsychology research, children are glaringly absent. This may in part be a result of how children are perceived, in terms of their capabilities and the skills for conducting meaningful research with children (see Drewes, 2001; Thomas, 2021).

### ***Researching Unexplained Experiences with Children***

Involving children in research has a long history in disciplines such as childhood studies (see Dan et al., 2019; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Punch, 2002). There are debates and disagreements around how research with children should be approached. For example, research with children can be considered against two extremes, either children are just the same as adults or entirely different from adults (Punch, 2002). Each position entails different methods in research with children, and any research with children raises issues of power, protections and ethics (see Alderson, 1995; Dan et al., 2019). Ethics is viewed as the central difference between research with adults and children (Punch, 2002). With children, consent and involvement in research must go through adult gatekeepers who can limit children's involvement in research (see Pickles, 2018).

Researching unexplained experiences with children may be viewed as ethically problematic, due to the blurred boundaries between paranormal experiences and mental health (see Rabeyron & Watt, 2010). Paranormal experiences are often considered as predictors or symptoms of mental illness, where experiences often amount to hallucinations or delusions of the disordered child. Some psychologists consider paranormal experiences as normal psychological phenomena based on innocent cognitive errors (see Rivas, 2006). Research also suggests that there is no link between paranormal experiences and mental health disorders (see Goulding 2004), and anomalous experiences can catalyze or improve wellbeing for adults (see Kennedy & Kanthamani, 1992) and children (see Thomas, 2021). With these contradictions yet to be settled, researching unexplained experiences with children still gives rise to fears around protecting children. Protections in research with children is also controversial, raising tensions between children's rights to be involved in research and keeping children safe (see Dan et al., 2019; Pickles, 2018). What may be more dangerous is to continue to assume children's experiences as symptoms of illness before they are explored *with* children.

In my own studies, older children report instances of being diagnosed against their own understandings around their experiences – catalyzing suffering and mistrust in children (see

Thomas, 2021). Children are showing to be capable of engaging in research around their own unexplained experiences, often appreciating the research space in which they can comfortably and safely share their experiences with researchers and peers (see Thomas, 2021). Ethical practice in research with children and their unexplained experiences involves similar procedures with any participatory research undertaken with children. Participants will give informed consent following access to information about the research. Children can leave the study at any time, signposting and support is made available for any children requiring additional support following research (something that has not yet occurred). Children must have parental consent to take part. Unexplained experiences is an important research agenda, identified by children who resist mainstream adult-theorizing of their unexplained experiences.

The studies I conduct involve children in different ways. Some children co-design research studies, while some children are participants in studies. The participatory ethos extends to children who do not co-design studies or conduct research. Participants are invited to choose which methods they want to engage with or to co-interpret research data. Children's knowledges and the ways they communicate their living experiences are privileged in studies. Participatory research challenges the logical positivism inherent in traditional qualitative research (see St. Pierre, 2008), by shifting agendas, power and value towards research participants and their experiential authority.

Researching unexplained experiences with children gives rise to reports involving talking with deceased relatives, premonitions, senses of being stared at, visions, voices, out of body experiences, and peak or mystical experiences (see Thomas, 2021, 2022b). Example studies include: researching NDEs with cardiac arrest survivors (see Thomas, 2023), exploring subtle connections such as telepathy in children (see Thomas, 2022b, 2023) and identifying unusual experiences in children populations (see Thomas, 2022b). Some studies I undertake with children also use traditional methods such as questionnaires and focus groups (a traditional qualitative research method that facilitates a group of participants to focus on a research topic), trying to traverse some thematic and statistical ground to legitimize the commonality of these kinds of experiences for children (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). But this is the afterthought, not the soul of the research. The 'real' research starts with the children, from co-design through to co-interpretation and analysis. Agendas are co-identified between the adult and children researchers (see Thomas, 2022b), as in many participatory research processes between adult researchers and children (see Crook, 2020; Dan et al., 2019; Larkins et al., 2013).

Participatory research methods can depart from the traditional and involve art, play, drama and other modes of semiosis. When children share their unexplained experiences, often there are not many words. Methods such as art and play, for example, become integral for knowledge production. Circling back to masculine and feminine forces in language (see Lacan, 1981; Kristeva, 1980), children's language of the paranormal shares a resonance with the language of

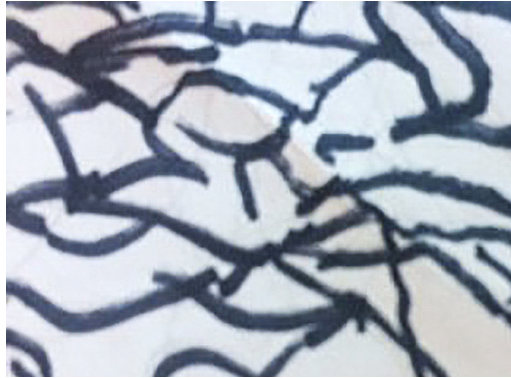
the feminine, the metaphor, the body, the symbol. As women are asked to “disrupt the norms that subjugate them and recreate their own means of representation in order to break away from that subjugation” (see Fotaki, 2019: 43), children are invited to represent their experiences through methods that challenge traditional research conventions. Art as research method can facilitate new lenses for seeing that can disrupt “norms of knowledge construction and representation...and the ontological and epistemological assumptions shaping research processes and representations” (Skukauskaitė et al., 2021). For children, art becomes essential, not just for representing, but for reflection, discernment and meaning-making about their own experiences (see Figures 1–6).

Art as representation of unexplained experiences produces a kind of data that requires a disruption of the developmental and visual realism often assigned to children’s artwork. The mainstream aesthetic/deficit logic in children’s art education implies children’s drawings as realistic in intent, where children progress towards representation of what they see in the physical world (see Schulte, 2021). Adults can often distort and misconstrue what we do not understand about how and why children draw, as we force it into our adult perspectives (see *ibid.*). Adult researchers may often look for the observable in children’s drawings. There may be an emphasis on capturing truth and validity of the observable world (see *ibid.*). Children are trying to represent, through their images, experiences betwixt and between the physical and non-physical.

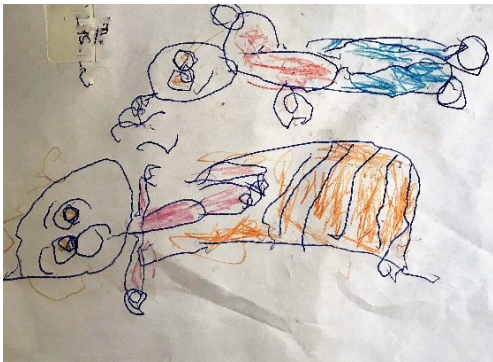
Taking the example ‘*portal to another world*’ (see Figure 6), drawn by Lily aged 5 years. A visual realism interpretation would categorize the image as ‘the scribbling stage’ (see Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). This would entail our observations of Lily’s image ‘are securely tethered to the graphic marks on the page’ (see Schulte, 2021: 56). An image that may not be recognizable to many adults and often construed as random and deficit (compared to artistic aesthetics). In the case of Lily’s image, time, observation, relation and talk around the process of mark-making (participatory approaches), reveal a portal that Lily travels through to reach other worlds. Lily also experiences seeing figures in her room (identified as her great grandmother, when Lily recognized the figure from a set of family photographs). The image depicts a sensation, a state of consciousness rather than a physical portal, a universal symbol similar with geometrical patterns found extensively across the art data (see also Figure 2). Some images are familiar, such as figures, hands and bridges, representing both physical and symbolic artefacts. Figure 1 was drawn by Jack aged 4 years. Sadly, Jack’s teacher had died unexpectedly a few months earlier. Jack’s picture represents a vivid dream he had, where he met his teacher on a rainbow bridge. The dream supported Jack in his grief. It is interesting that Jack experienced meeting his teacher on a rainbow bridge, if we consider its presence across different mythologies and cultural narratives. For example, the rainbow bridge is important to Hopi mysticism and heritage (see Hassell & Evans, 1999).



**Figure 1.** George, aged 4 years. Meeting deceased teacher in a dream.



**Figure 2.** Callum, aged 14 years. Peak experience in nature.



**Figure 3.** Ella, aged 14 years. OBE in hospital.



**Figure 4.** Yasmine, aged 14 years, layers of reality.



**Figure 5.** Loretta, aged 9 years. The Invisible Hand (left).

**Figure 6.** Lily, aged 5 years. Portal to another world (right)





The interplay between children's experiences, wider theory and eastern/modern western philosophy can be astounding (see Thomas, 2022). Some children<sup>4</sup>, for example, produce geometrical patterns and shapes through their art responses, similar with ancient cave-paintings and mark-making in natural artefacts such as red ochre (see Figure 2). Some scholars suggest patterns are linked to early visual cortex systems (see Hodgson, 2019). Others propose "that the non-figurative images are in fact universal representations ... once perceived by our shamanic ancestors during altered states of consciousness" (Luke, 2010: 8). Etzel Cardeña (2020) makes connections between self-representation, art and anomalous experiences. Cardeña (2020: 206) notes how the subjective can be represented in objective ways, were themes such as "hypergeometry were integrated by scientists and artists alike," to represent an underlying reality prior to space/time. Younger children can intuit the nature of reality as *like the sea and people are raindrops*, similar with, for example, new theories in cosmopsychisms (see Shani & Keppler, 2018). Children assign a reality to their experiences, often qualified as realer than real. As Roy Bhaskar (1979) mused, precision in meaning over accuracy in measurement (1979) is far more valuable in research with people. When children draw their unexplained experiences, a creative space unfolds where children can access wisdom, intuition and reflective meanings around what they have experienced (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a).

### ***Example Data: Experiences, Resistances and Convergences***

Inquiry as a push toward the intensive, barely intelligible variation in living that shocks us and asks us to be worthy of it. It asks us to trust that something unimaginable might come out that might change the world bit by bit.

St. Pierre, 2008: 608

Included here are examples of data from two separate studies, one carried out in 2019 and the other, a rapid review study conducted in 2022. The 'Who am I Study' (2019) explored the nature of self and anomalous experiences with 18 children aged 4–18 years (see Thomas, 2021). The rapid review (2022) was conducted with forty children aged 4–11 years in a school context, with the aim to identify children's unexplained experiences. Both studies were conducted in the UK. The rapid review invited children to experiment with and evaluate participatory research methods that could be used with other children in future research. Both studies are valuable for exemplifying how participatory research methods may be used with children in parapsychology research (see Thomas 2021, 2022b). The studies demonstrate examples of children's experiences while highlighting some convergences between women researchers and children's resistances to normative systems of thought and research practice.

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4 Children who have peak or mystical experiences often draw geometrical patterns to represent self and connections between others and the world.

### ***Research and Resistance with Children***

If the child is wildish, she may, unfortunately, be subjected to her parent's attempts at psychic surgery over and over again, for they are trying to remake the child, and more so, trying to change what her soul requires of her. Though her soul requires seeing, the culture around her requires sightlessness. Though her soul wishes to speak, her culture requires silence.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés, 1992: 171

I've been engaged in fieldwork at the time of writing. A few days earlier, I ran a focus group with ten children aged 4–5 years, to explore with them their *unusual* experiences. In the UK, it's close to the summer holidays, the children are excited, and mischief is in the air. As I create a *research circle*, from pillows, blankets, the odd plastic chair, I have a sense this isn't going to go well today. My hope or assumption is that the children will sit still, focus on the research tools (toys, paints, crafts) and reveal many different kinds of experiences. My adult researcher's expectations and assumptions were swiftly shattered. It began with fist fights over blankets, two children attempting to hang upside down on the chairs, and one child disappearing to the toilet, requiring a search party (he was found!). OK, at least I have my camera running! Ah! At the end of the session, I notice some suspicious painty fingerprints on the lens and realize in horror, the record button was turned off. I left with a headache, with the feeling of failure and with the promise 'that's it, no more!' When I recovered, gathered my thoughts and a few crumpled written notes, I marveled on what I had learned from the session. I considered how children engaged with small world play items to act out their lucid dreams and premonitions (the topics we settled on after two children revealed '*I always know I am dreaming when I dream*' and '*I know things before they happen*'). I also stayed with their resistances, to being in the circle, being asked questions and choosing instead to be *wildish*. As Pinkola Estés (1992: 171) muses "pressure to be adequate, in whatever manner authority defines it, can chase the child away." It was a good exercise for the woman researcher to also sit with expectations and assumptions.

As women researchers are resisting patriarchal methodologies and paradigms, older children (teenagers) can resist adults' medical and scientific interpretations about their unexplained experiences:

I always have a strong feeling there's something more than what everyone else feels about the world, like it's not just science ... it's not black and white, sometimes people just feel things that no one else does which like I can't really explain it. Just because someone else doesn't feel it, doesn't mean it's not a real thing.

Chloe, aged 17 years

Chloe had experienced voice-hearing from the age of five years. The voices, for Chloe, have always been helpful, offering guidance. As Chloe has grown older, she recognizes the voices as

messages for others and from deceased family members. In some ways demonstrating mediumship capabilities that are often reported by adults as starting in childhood (see Roxburgh & Roe, 2014). For older children like Chloe, earlier and continuing experiences can inform a resistance to normative ideas of the world taught by close carers, and through formal education systems. I find that many teenagers are resisting dominant discourses and systems, such as science and mental health. Their increasing engagement in cyberspaces and virtual realities may also inform their intuitions and challenges towards a fixed physical reality (see Thomas, 2023). Often, children's experiences can be diagnosed very quickly by well-meaning adults, before experiences are explored *with* children:

So then my dad was like I think you're schizophrenic so then I was like oh my god then maybe these things that I'm seeing are not real. So then I was like I won't say anything because they won't take it seriously.

Emma, aged 16 years

Emma's story reveals how adults can catalyze tension and distress for children when they report unexplained experiences. Emma shared a range of experiences, such as visions, premonitions, voice-hearing, and sleep paralysis. Her Father's reaction has implications for how Emma understands and makes decisions about sharing/not sharing her experiences. Perhaps the father assumes the role of "the ambivalent mother" (Pinkola Estés, 1992), the parent who bends to the desires of the village rather than the child. In other parts of her story, Emma describes an inner struggle created by her parents' responses to her experiences. The struggle is between her own experiential understanding of her reality and what society is telling her it is (illness/disorder). Tensions between living experience and intuition with how adults theorize children's experiences is felt by many older children. Many children are left alone, without the mentorship of the elder or the comfort of the community.

When you've had mental health issues you don't bring up these types of things because people in society have just such a different view on it...I did have these things (experiences)... I didn't tell anyone cause I thought not many people would understand.

Ruth, aged 15 years

I don't feel like I could tell my mum if I said something like that, she'd be like ah you sound mental, I mean they're a bit more closed off to it do you know what I mean. I can see that so you know I just keep it to myself I just wouldn't get a good reaction.

Aaron, aged 17 years

The loneliness for many children who experience the unexplained, bleeds through Ruth's reflection on her premonitions, telepathic moments and mediumship capabilities. Her experiences have been subjected to the system, the clinical measuring of mental illness, that doesn't seem to



measure anything, when the process of diagnosis is uncovered (see Counter & Spillane, 2022). As a young person, Ruth has endured the mental health system, only to come through the other side and be more resolute in her own meanings around her experiences. For Aaron, he cannot tell his close adults about his experiences, nor many of his peers. The chance to be involved in research and share experiences of this nature, seems to be highly valued by older children. Younger children will share regardless of what adults think. Often, it's worried parents of younger children who will get in touch about their child's experiences.

### *Children as Young Researchers: Exploring Experience*

Children can demonstrate scepticism towards their own experiences, like the hard scientist, trying to establish logical answers or explanations concerned with cause and effect. The following dialogue was recorded in a research session in 2022. The participants are a group of children aged 9 years:

C = child

C1: I heard a zombie noise in my bathroom this morning it was like this blarghh

C2: hang on what if someone was on the toilet (children laughing)

C3: Maybe it was the water in the pipe outside

C2: Like blarghheee like that

C1: Yeah it was exactly like that

It was interesting to sit back and let the children take over the questions, probing C1's claim that he heard a zombie noise in his bathroom. Children can be very quick to call out what they consider to be untrue or exaggerated. See how children turn to logical explanations to counteract the reality of a zombie in the bathroom – a person in the toilet, noisy pipes and so on. Replication of the noise for testability, pursuing all possibilities. The initial claimant of the experience, conceding to these other possibilities. Then there are other instances when children (younger and older) will first examine other causes for the phenomena, as a means for legitimising their unexplained experiences:

I saw a spider, a giant one on the stairs. But my dad didn't see it. We checked the cameras (CCTV) to see if the spider was on there it wasn't. But when I went back to the wall where the spider was I saw tiny scratch marks.

Jess, aged 17 years

Jess is a young person who reports a wide range of unexplained experiences including telepathy, seeing and hearing beings in her home and exceptional dreams. Several children (younger and

older) have reported visions of spiders over the last two years (2020–2022) and Jess is no exception. In the example, Jess aims to validate her experience of seeing a strange large spider by checking the home's CCTV camera system and trying to obtain a witness (her father). Jess does find her evidence in the form of physical scratch marks in the wall, although the spider was described as non-physical. Hamed who is aged 9 years, also describes examining other external causes for his voice hearing experiences:

H= Hamed; R = Researcher

H: When I'm playing I hear a voice saying my name

R: Is that a friendly voice?

H: Yes

R: How does it make you feel?

H: It's unusual so I ignore it and I check outside to make sure. I just feel it's a bit weird hearing a call and hearing voices

Hamed's experience of voice-hearing is linked to the activity of play, a state of consciousness in children which may catalyse these kinds of experiences (see Tanous & Donnelly, 1974; Thomas, 2022a, 2023). Hamed describes his own processes for understanding his experience by ignoring it and examining conditions outside to ensure the voice isn't coming from a physical agent. Play and using toys as research method can evoke deep reflection in children. When I ask children to evaluate research methods such as art and play, they note how these methods offer affordances to remember aspects of their experience that may be lost in narration. Hussain and George, two boys aged 9, wanted to use play items to represent their experiences. They chose superhero figures:

R: Whose this guy? (pointing to venom figure)

C1: He's the guy I see in my room

R: What's he doing there?

C2: He's looking at us (points to batman and other figures)

R: Can everyone see that guy? (points to venom)

C1: No only batman can see him

R: Who does batman represent in your game?

C1: Me

I reflect on the scary figure of venom, on the hero batman who George has chosen as his representative in play. I hear George's fear around his experiences (George states he 'gets scared')

so suspect George may not embody Batman in moments when he sees the scary figure, that no one else can see. I tell George about all the other children who also see scary figures, explaining it could be a natural part of being human, sharing research findings, applying deep listening and offering reassurances informed through existing research data generated from studies with other children. George is surprised other children have these types of experiences and comforted by the knowledge that this could be a normal aspect of childhood.

Data produced from several recent studies is showing unexplained experiences in children to be a common phenomenon (see Thomas, 2022a, 2023). Children with and without medical conditions have similar types of experiences, with older children demonstrating peak or transcendent experiences (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a). The aim here is not to set out research findings, rather it is to argue for the value for involving children in parapsychology research. Claims are often made about anomalous experiences in childhood from the perspective of adult research participants, rather than engaging children in research. The rationale for children's exclusion has been touched on already, in terms of children's assumed lack of competency and research methodologies which devalue the *other*. Participatory research offers potentials to involve children in safe and creative ways, handling potential trigger situations, affording vigilance in safeguarding issues and in some ways, inherently therapeutic for children who never have an opportunity to share and reflect on their experiences. Children take ownership in research moments, defining their experiences in accordance with their own theorising of self, others and the world. It involves courageously stepping into the unknown *with* children and trusting what will occur. It seems this participatory research process is fruitful, as children demonstrate experiences similar with those reported by adults, theorize material in line with academic science and philosophy and shed new insights into what it could mean to be human (see Thomas, 2022b).

## *Discussion*

The dark soft languages are being silenced: Mothertongue Mothertongue Mothertongue  
falling one by one back into the moon.

Margaret Atwood, 1995

It strikes me that women in parapsychology may carry the same load as other women, and men, across disciplines – in terms of navigating a male-orientated scientific culture (see Utts, 1994). Children reveal another dimension for parapsychology research that invites in different ways for doing research. Children demonstrate the transcendent, the space beyond masculine and feminine disagreements, the raw and intimate relating with a realm of experience from which adults are often exiled. Where Rubik speaks of the feminine archetype (1994), here enters the

child archetype with its messy, impulsive, spontaneity – revealing a semiosis which transcends and bring into focus the feminine and the masculine in scientific practice. Children's involvement in participatory parapsychology research revives the issues so vehemently raised by women researchers, around the phallogocentric scientific paradigm (1991). Children force an examination of various forms of knowledge production in parapsychology that could potentially inform a wider understanding of the nature, form and function of paranormal experiences (see Thomas, 2021, 2022a, 2023). The presence of children in parapsychology pushes further enquiry into its nature as a discipline that, like children, also sits on the margins of the mainstream.

In its quest to be accepted as a legitimate science, parapsychology, as Watt (1996: 86) notes, “aspires to gain respectability for its controversial subject matter by aligning itself with the hard sciences.” Rubik (1991: 53) describes this as physics envy – “a reduction of the soft to the hard, with the hard regarded as fundamental ... [with] attempts to move towards greater hardness.” This may be a troublesome direction for parapsychology, when shifts in metaphysics and scientific models are challenging the hard sciences. To warrant legitimacy, scientists must appeal to an assumption that the world is physical and that subjective experiences are an epiphenomenon of complex brain activity. Rather than physics envy, contemporary philosophers and scientists are challenging material metaphysics, arguing for the inclusion and valuing of subjective experience, nature and myth (see Carr, 2013; Kastrup, 2017, 2018, 2019; Sheldrake, 2012). Detected in the philosophizing and writings of male scientists is a shift towards the green man, the sky father, the archetypal presence of the masculine in nature (see Smith, 2017). Parapsychology as a discipline requires all modes of enquiry, the soft and the hard, the child, the green man-sky father, the earth mother and all configurations of experience in between.

In her novel *Marsh Languages*, Margaret Atwood (1995) calls for a “return to that maternal life-giving aspect which is being silenced, and to question who is doing this silencing” (Zimmerman, 2021). In some ways, women and men researchers are appealing to an ‘ethics of the maternal’ (see *ibid.*), returning to the soft languages imbued with meaning that has been lost through the statements men made about their own existence (see Laslett, 1977). Men such as Aristotle and others, igniting a patriarchal tradition which assumes a hegemony over most mainstream disciplines. A metaphysics assumed and modeled through Galileo's telescope, Newton's calculus and Descartes dualism. These ideas by men scientists have been challenged for a while now, by women researchers, philosophers and scientists (see Barad, 2007; Bradoitti, 2013; St. Pierre, 2008). Statistically, more women researchers enter *soft sciences* such as social science, life science etc. (see Makarova et al., 2019), that appeal to the qualitative and participatory methodologies. These choices can be socially-constructed, where education systems can gender the sciences in ways which deter females from choosing scientific subjects (see *ibid.*). Yet, the patriarchal is embodied in hard subjects and sciences which repel the *leécriture feminine* and create the *schizoid* (see Irigaray, 1981). The tensions women researchers

feel in parapsychology research (see Schlitz, 1994) between the feminine and masculine betrays a conformity to hard science which excludes and marginalises children from parapsychology research. Women researchers already point to the troubles of methodology as they manifest their contradictions with soft toys and hard experimental science.

Wrangling *with* and writing about children, *l'écriture féminine* and *othered* methodologies embodies a simultaneous push into the past and the future, to gather that which has been lost and inform where we go from here. Parapsychology research can appeal to and utilise critical praxis between living experience, scientific experiment, theory and philosophy – areas of research that women researchers seem to be especially advanced in. As I consider the writing of men scientists, the green men, sky fathers, who hint at the unknowable, the indescribable, the feminine, I double-check the histories of the women researchers who have for decades written about the same troubles with the mainstream narrative. It's both an injustice and a relief. Where do children and paranormal research then, go from here. I'll let Rosy, aged 8 years, advise us:

Adults have more experience, so adults think children only have more imaginative than experience. They should try and feel that vibe and feel the children talking they should try and dig into it.

Rosy, aged 8 years

Apart from the temptation to correct the Rosy's word from 'imaginative' to imagination, I'm not sure what else I could add to that.

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## Methoden in der parapsychologischen Forschung mit Kindern neu überdenken

### *Erweiterte Zusammenfassung<sup>5</sup>*

Es gibt interessante Konvergenzen zwischen von der parapsychologischen Forschung vernachlässigten Kindern (siehe Thomas, 2021, 2022a) und Forscherinnen, die Probleme mit ihrer Positionierung in diesem Forschungsfeld haben. Wissenschaftlerinnen wie Nancy Zingrone (2019), Caroline Watt (1996), Beverly Rubik (1994) und Marilyn Schlitz (1994) haben die Vernachlässigung von Frauen in der Parapsychologie und einen Mangel an Aufmerksamkeit für die Beteiligung von Frauen auf diesem Gebiet aufgezeichnet (siehe Alvarado, 1988). Kinder werden ebenfalls in der parapsychologischen Forschung vernachlässigt, selten einbezogen und häufig objektiviert und zum Schweigen gebracht (vgl. Thomas, 2021, 2022a). Die Konvergenzen zwischen Frauen in der Parapsychologie und Kindern am Rande der Forschung sind überzeugend. Das Problem mag geschlechtsspezifisch sein, aber die Einbeziehung von Kindern kann zeigen, wie sich die Wurzel des Problems darauf erstrecken kann, wie Wissenschaft in der modernen Welt motiviert, umgesetzt und bewertet wird. Auf eine Weise, die alternative („othered“) Epistemologien, Methodologien und Philosophien ablehnt.

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5 Aus dem Englischen von Gerhard Mayer.

Mit diesem Artikel plädiere ich für die Einbeziehung von Kindern in die parapsychologische Forschung – allerdings mit einem Vorbehalt – auf partizipative Weise, als aktive Agenten und nicht als passive Objekte. Ich betrachte die Ungleichheit von Frauen und Kindern in der Parapsychologie als Ergebnis einer männlichen Wissenschaftsordnung und ihrer Vorherrschaft in der Forschungspraxis. Die den Kindern gewährte Einladung zu diesem Themenheft bietet das Potenzial, zufällige Konvergenzen zu erweitern und hoffentlich zu den laufenden Diskussionen über Frauen, Forschung und Paradigmen beizutragen, aber vielleicht mit einem Unterschied – da ich die Kinder in die Arbeit einbeziehen werde. Dass Kindern Raum in dem Themenheft *Women and Parapsychology* eingeräumt bekommen, bedeutet einen wichtigen Schritt hin zur Einbeziehung von Kindern in die parapsychologische Forschung. Gerade die Fülle an Literatur, die anomale Erfahrungen mit Erwachsenen untersucht, macht deutlich, dass anomale Erfahrungen in der Kindheit ein maßgeblich unerforschtes Gebiet darstellen. Es zeigt sich, dass Kinder Erfahrungen machen, die den von Erwachsenen gemachten außergewöhnlichen Erfahrungen vergleichbar sind. Kinder zeigen, dass sie in der Lage sind, ihre eigenen unerklärlichen Erfahrungen zu erforschen, und schätzen oft den Forschungsraum, in dem sie ihre Erfahrungen bequem und sicher mit Forschern und Gleichaltrigen teilen können. Partizipative Forschungsmethoden können von den traditionellen Methoden abweichen und Kunst, Spiel, Schauspiel und andere Formen der Semiose einbeziehen. Methoden wie zum Beispiel Kunst und Spiel werden zu einem integralen Bestandteil der Wissensproduktion. Die kindliche Semiose des Paranormalen teilt eine Resonanz mit der Sprache des Weiblichen, der Metapher, dem Körper, dem Symbol. So wie Frauen aufgefordert werden, die sie unterdrückenden Normen zu durchbrechen und ihre eigenen Darstellungsmittel zu schaffen, um sich von dieser Unterdrückung zu befreien, werden Kinder aufgefordert, ihre Erfahrungen mit Methoden darzustellen, die traditionelle Forschungskonventionen in Frage stellen.

Das akademische Schreiben selbst verkörpert die normativen Regime der phallogozentrischen symbolischen Ordnung oder des männlichen Diskurses. Wissenschaftliche Praxis und traditionelle Parapsychologie sind eine Form der Wissensproduktion, die von einer hegemonialen Gesetzmäßigkeit des Rationalen und des Geordneten durchdrungen ist. Es handelt sich um eine symbolische Ordnung, in der Frauen und Kinder in der Vergangenheit durch die männliche Theorie und Sprache aus der Geschichte herausgeschrieben worden sind. An Sprache und Psychologie interessierte feministische Wissenschaftlerinnen wie Helen Cixous (1977), Luce Irigaray (1981) und Julia Kristeva (1980) lenken die Aufmerksamkeit auf die phallogozentrische Ordnung der Wissenschaft. Diese feministischen Wissenschaftlerinnen beanspruchen den Standort einer anderen Art des weiblichen Diskurses, der von Irigaray als *parler femme*, von Cixous als *écriture féminine* und von Kristeva als *semiotisch* beschrieben wird (siehe Pinggong, 2018). Das Imaginäre der Frauen ist „unerschöpflich, wie die Musik, die Malerei, das Schreiben: ihr Strom von Phantasmen“ (Cixous, 1977: 877) – ähnlich wie das Spielen, Zeichnen

und die Kreativität von Kindern, wenn sie Erfahrungen und Bedeutungen teilen. Was bei der Forschung mit Kindern in den Vordergrund tritt, ist die Art und Form des kindlichen Wissens, ihre Logik und ihre komplexen kognitiven Prozesse – ihre Semiotik, ihr Archetyp von Spontaneität, Impulsivität und Kreativität –, was ein Überdenken der Forschungsmethoden in der Parapsychologie erfordert. Traditionelle Methoden, die die Regelmäßigkeit des Rationalen und Geordneten verkörpern, schließen unmittelbar jede erkenntnistheoretische Autorität von Kindern über ihre eigenen Erfahrungen aus. Ein zentraler Schwerpunkt der feministischen und partizipativen Forschung mit Kindern ist die Erkenntnistheorie. Diese Forschungsansätze eröffnen eine Debatte darüber, wer ein Wissender sein kann, was gewusst werden kann und was Wissen konstituiert und validiert.

Kinder eröffnen der parapsychologischen Forschung eine weitere Dimension, die zu neuen Forschungsansätzen einlädt. Kinder zeigen das Transzendente, den Raum jenseits männlicher und weiblicher Unstimmigkeiten, die rohe und intime Beziehung zu einem Erfahrungsbereich, aus dem Erwachsene oft verbannt sind. Wo Rubik vom weiblichen Archetyp spricht (1994), tritt hier der kindliche Archetyp mit seiner chaotischen, impulsiven Spontaneität ein – eine Semiose, die das Weibliche und das Männliche in der wissenschaftlichen Praxis transzendiert und in den Fokus rückt. Die Einbeziehung von Kindern in die partizipative parapsychologische Forschung belebt die von weiblichen Forschern so vehement aufgeworfenen Fragen rund um das phallogozentrische wissenschaftliche Paradigma (1991). Kinder erzwingen eine Auseinandersetzung mit verschiedenen Formen der Wissensproduktion in der Parapsychologie, die möglicherweise zu einem breiteren Verständnis der Natur, Form und Funktion paranormaler Erfahrungen beitragen könnten. Die Anwesenheit von Kindern in der Parapsychologie treibt weitere Untersuchungen ihrer Natur als eine Disziplin voran, die, wie Kinder, auch am Rande des Mainstreams steht.