

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

BY NANCY L. ZINGRONE AND CARLOS S. ALVARADO

ABSTRACT: The authors review the past and recent concerns about the precision and applicability of parapsychological terminology and discuss the following points: (1) the proliferation of terminology across several eras; (2) the problems caused by this proliferation, including the increasing difficulties one has in determining the proper use of specific terms; (3) the attitudes towards specific terms, mainly technical ones; and (4) the standardization attempts expressed at congresses and conferences. It is pointed out that it has not been possible to standardize parapsychological nomenclature because of lack of agreement. The authors suggest that the formulation of a terminology may be a dynamic social process that, at least in the case of an underdeveloped discipline such as parapsychology, cannot be ordered in a methodical way.

A number of recent publications suggest a growing interest in parapsychological terminology. Several journals have published articles that criticize specific terms and examine the general theoretical assumptions underlying parapsychological terminology (Beloff, 1979; Lucadou, 1984; Neppe, 1984; and Thalbourne, 1985). Braude (1979) has published a book that probes the philosophical and conceptual foundations of some currently used terms. In addition, recent conferences have featured presentations and discussions on some of the problems inherent in parapsychological terminology. Some authors have suggested that standardization and redefinition are long overdue.

Because we believe that no serious effort to refine the disciplinary language of parapsychology should proceed without the benefit of the lessons of the past, we have surveyed the parapsycho-

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TABLE I
 EXAMPLES OF TERMS COINED BY PSYCHICAL RESEARCHERS (1880s-1920s)

Psychical researcher	Term	Definition
Aksakof (1890/1895)	<i>Telekinetic</i>	Movement of objects without contact
Boirac (1908/1917)	<i>Metagnomy</i>	ESP
Fisher (1926)	<i>Metakinesis</i>	Movement of objects without contact
Holt (1914)	<i>Telepsychosis</i>	A telepathic experience
Hyslop (1907c)	<i>Telemnasia</i>	Telepathy of subconscious memory
Myers (1895)	<i>Retrocognition</i>	ESP of past events
Prubusch (1929)	<i>Parascopy</i>	ESP
Richet (1922)	<i>Cryptaesthesia</i>	ESP
Sudre (1926)	<i>Thorybism</i>	Poltergeist disturbances

logical literature on this topic. What follows is a brief review of our findings. Among the points we discuss are: the proliferation of parapsychological terminology; the influence of laboratory work on terms; the past efforts to promote precise and useful coining; parapsychologists' attitudes, past and present, toward specific types of terms and toward terminological standardization; official efforts to impose a consensus; and finally, recent efforts to reopen the debate.

THE PROLIFERATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Before 1882, the year the Society for Psychical Research was founded, there was an abundance of lay terms for supernatural phenomena.¹ Among them were: *divination*, *miracles*, *necromancy*, *oracles*, *scrying*, and *wraiths*. The development of mesmerism and spiritualism added many new expressions, such as *animal magnetism*, *lucidity*, *medium*, *séance*, and *somnambulism*.² In the early period of formal parapsychology (the 1880s to the 1920s), a number of writers contributed terms. Among these writers were: Aksakof (1890/1895); Boirac (1893, 1908/1917); Myers (1896, 1903); Richet (1922); and finally, Sudre (1926). Table 1 lists some of the terms they proposed.³

¹For general reviews of these periods that are not, however, specifically concerned with terminology, see Ennemoser (1854) and Inglis (1977).

²For more information on this period, see: Howitt (1863) and Inglis (1977).

³See also Bret (1927), Fisher (1926), Hayes (1893), Holt (1914), Morselli (1908), and Prubusch (1929).

During this early period, a creative and prolific neologist, P. T. Bret, devised one of the most complex and extensive classifications of psychic phenomena ever suggested.⁴ In his *Précis de Métapsychique: Subconscient et Métapsychisme* (1927), he included an equally extensive terminology. The book contained a glossary of 185 terms, a fourth of which were of his own invention. In a later paper, Bret (1939a) outlined three basic principles for creating terminology: (1) to "have a single name for each modality" from which other parts of speech may be derived; (2) to use the prefix *meta* for all basic phenomena, the prefix *tele* for all varieties of phenomena produced from the basic ones, and the suffix *gnosie* to imply direct paranormal knowledge without sensory contact; and (3) to "never employ technical terms used in another science" (p. 244, our translation).⁵ At the time when Bret emphasized the suffix *gnosie*, Richet (1922) and others (e.g., Fisher, 1926) preferred *esthésie* (e.g., *cryptaesthésie*).

It is likely that the majority of the new terms proposed between 1930 and 1959 originated in J. B. Rhine's parapsychology laboratory. Modern writers often wrongly assume that Rhine coined the terms *extrasensory perception* (J. B. Rhine, 1934) and *psychokinesis* (L. E. Rhine & J. B. Rhine, 1943). Both these terms, however, were in use before Rhine began his work in parapsychology.⁶ Nonetheless, Rhine's laboratory was "a fertile source of nomenclature designed to meet the new demands which its pioneering work created" (Beloff, 1982, p. x). As can be seen in Table 2, rather than using largely phenomenological terms as earlier authors did, Rhine's staff coined terms that literally described specific testing procedures.⁷ Rhine in-

⁴Bret (1878 - ca. 1951) was a relatively unknown French physician who lived in Lisbon and published a number of books and papers on psychical research between 1920 and 1941. He discussed many classic mediumistic and spontaneous cases (e.g., Bret, 1927, 1939a, 1939b, 1940). According to Sibille (1951), Bret had a wide knowledge of metapsychics and other disciplines. However, Bret's contemporaries considered him to be dogmatic about the efficacy of certain controversial explanations and about the reality of certain contested phenomena.

⁵Among the terms ending in *gnosie* that Bret proposed were *metagnosy* (originally suggested as the basic term from which all others were to be differentiated), *psychognosy* (a kind of mind-reading), *pragmanosy* (roughly equivalent to the current, popular definition of clairvoyance), *pathognosy* (paranormal diagnosis of illness), and *hylognosy* (defined as paranormal knowledge of "matter inaccessible to the senses, unknown, lost, or hidden") (1927, p. 36; our translation).

⁶Pagenstecher used the term *extra-sensory perception* in 1924, Fisher in 1926, and Sainville in 1927. Each of these authors understood the term in essentially the same way Rhine did. Holt used *psychokinesis* in 1914 to denote the "power" necessary for mediumistic communication. Boirac's term (1908/1917, p. 129), *vital psychokynesia*, first used in 1908, was similar in meaning to Rhine's *psychokinesis*.

⁷Operationalisms and terms that described or named various apparatus designed to study physical phenomena did exist before Rhine (see Carrington, 1939, for examples). However, phenomenological terms were more widely used.

TABLE 2
 TERMS USED BY J. B. RHINE AND ASSOCIATES AT DUKE UNIVERSITY'S
 PARAPSYCHOLOGY LABORATORY (1930s-1950s)

Card testing procedures	Dice testing procedures
<i>Before touching</i>	<i>High dice test</i>
<i>Blind matching</i>	<i>Low dice test</i>
<i>Down through</i>	<i>Placement test</i>
<i>Open matching</i>	<i>Sevens test</i>
<i>Psychic shuffle</i>	<i>Singles test</i>
<i>Screen touch matching</i>	

Note: These terms are taken from Rhine (1934) and from the glossary of the *Journal of Parapsychology* for the period in question.

roduced a number of important changes that precipitated the shift in emphasis from phenomenological to operational descriptions. For example, he and his workers reduced broad areas of study in psychological research to specific hypotheses amenable to laboratory testing (J. B. Rhine, 1934). They standardized test procedures and methods of analysis.⁸ Rhine's laboratory disseminated the new methodology through the publication of their journal, the production of testing handbooks (Humphrey, 1948; Stuart & Pratt, 1937), and the publication of basic texts (Pratt, Rhine, Smith, Stuart, & Greenwood, 1940; Rhine & Pratt, 1957). The research production of Rhine's laboratory dominated American parapsychology during the 1940s and 1950s. Consequently, most terms in use in those years, although by no means all, were phenomenologically limited. Terms were coined to describe procedures rather than phenomena, and otherwise expressed methodological concerns. This was also true of English terms during the period.⁹

In languages other than English, however, terminology continued to encompass a wider range of phenomena and problems (e.g., spontaneous phenomena, physical mediumship). Non-English terms reflected a wider variety of underlying assumptions as well as widely differing degrees of acceptance of the objective reality of the phenomena (e.g., some terms implied energetic explanations for some

⁸See also Mauskopf and McVaugh (1980) and L. E. Rhine (1971) for discussions of this period.

⁹For good examples of English operationalisms see Soal's experimental reports (Soal, 1940; and Soal & Goldney, 1943), and West's (1945, 1954) reviews of British research. Soal (1949) also presents British reactions to American terms in his review of Humphrey's *Handbook*. In addition, a complete glossary of Soal's terms appears in Soal and Bateman (1954, pp. 362-367).

TABLE 3
TERMS OF RECENT COINAGE (1960s-1980s)

Terms	Source
<i>Allobiofeedback</i>	Braud (1978)
<i>Delta-afferentation</i>	Neppe (1984)
<i>Focusing effect</i>	Ryzl & Pratt (1963)
<i>Omega</i>	Palmer (1986)
<i>Preferential effect</i>	Rao (1962)
<i>Psi-in-process</i>	Giesler (1984)
<i>Psi trailing</i>	Rhine & Feather (1962)
<i>Psi-mediated instrumental response</i>	Stanford (1974b)
<i>Psychopraxia</i>	Thalbourne (1982b)
<i>Remote viewing</i>	Targ & Puthoff (1974)
<i>Transtemporal inhibition</i>	Tart (1978)

phenomena instead of more spiritualistic descriptions). Sudre's (1956) terms *thorybism* (denoting noisy poltergeist activity) and *hylocasty* (apport) were in use in French. Cazzamalli (1954) coined *radio-cerebral-psychograph* and *psychobiophysics*. Non-English terminology is still quite different in emphasis from that used by English-speaking parapsychologists. Quevedo's (1969/1971) term *ecto-colo-plasm* and Andrade's (1970/1976) use of *psi-matter* are cases in point.¹⁰

New terms have also entered the literature during the modern period (1960s to 1980s). We have listed only a small sample of recently coined terms in Table 3. Many modern neologisms represent refinements in methodology, new phenomena under study, or proposed explanatory models and concepts.

Although, on the face of it, the introduction of new terms and the refinement of old terms signal progress in parapsychology, new terms also bring serious new problems. Not the least of these are, specifically, the increasing terminological isolation of some segments of the English-speaking parapsychological community from other segments, and, generally, the isolation of English-speaking parapsychologists from their non-English-speaking colleagues.¹¹

¹⁰For other examples of earlier terms see Bret, 1940; Kherumian, 1948; Musso, 1954; and Van Rijnberk, 1952. Examples of more recent terms can be found in De Boni, 1960/1975; Dubrov and Pushkin, 1982; and Jordán Peña, 1975.

¹¹Part of the latter problem arises from the inability of English-speaking parapsychologists to read other languages or, even if they are fluent in other languages, from their general disinterest in non-English work. International collaboration is not much closer to being a reality in parapsychology today than it was when Murphy (1954) made a strong plea for it.

PROBLEMS OF PROLIFERATION

In 1921, Walter Franklin Prince reviewed a discussion of terminology that had taken place at a then recent congress. He said: "In general, the physical sciences have technical terms with fixed senses understood the world over. . . . But it is not so with psychical research" (p. 554). Prince identified a number of problems inherent in parapsychological terminology, most of which still persist:¹²

1. *Different meanings for the same terms.* The old term *telergy*, introduced by Myers (1896, p. 174; 1903, vol. 1, p. xxii) was meant to explain telepathy through a supposed physical action on the brain of the percipient. Constable (1918), however, used *telergy* in a more general way, implying "the power in us all which *must be* for telepathy to exist" (p. 41). Sudre (1926), and later Quevedo (1969/1971), used *telergy* to denote a specific psychic energy or supposed fluidic force that both writers believed to be fundamental to paranormal physical phenomena.

2. *Different terms for the same phenomena.* In the old literature writers used a variety of terms to denote *extrasensory perception*, among them *supernormal cognition* (Osty, 1922/1923), *cryptaesthesia* (Richet, 1922), *metagnomy* (Boirac, 1917/1918), and *metaesthesia* (Fisher, 1926). Later, Thouless and Wiesner (1947) suggested *psi-gamma*.

3. *New and confusing definitions of words already in use in common or in scientific language.* *Psychometry* and, to a lesser extent, *psychokinesis* are in use in other disciplines as well as in parapsychology. According to Thalbourne (1982b), the term *psychometry* was coined by J. R. Buchanan "to refer to the practice in which *sensitives* hold an object in their hands and obtain *paranormal* information about the object or its owner" (p. 62). However, the term is more widely in use in psychology and psychiatry to mean "the measurement of the duration and force of mental processes" (Hinsie & Campbell, 1960, p. 598). Its derivative, *psychometrics*, is widely used and refers to specific aspects of psychological and personality testing. *Psychokinesis* was also in use in psychiatry in the 1960s as "T. S. Clouston's term for defective inhibition; [and to refer] to the clinical syndrome known as *impulse insanity*" (Hinsie & Campbell, 1960, p. 596).

SOME ATTITUDES ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

Readers of parapsychological journals frequently complain about the unnecessary complexity of specific terms and about the unne-

¹²The headings of these paragraphs are taken from Prince's discussion. The examples are ours.

essary use of "jargon" in technical reports. Mrs. Salter was among the first to address the problem of jargon. In her review of Bret's *Précis de Métapsychique*, she said: "It is probably a drawback to any science to be too heavily encumbered with 'jargon'; it must certainly be a drawback in psychical research, which derives much of its material from ordinary men and women, and should strive therefore . . . to be intelligible to them" (Salter, 1932, p. 225).

Complexity frequently obscures or inhibits the intelligibility of terms. New terms coined to correct the inadequacies of old terms are, unfortunately, often more complex than the old ones. This problem may have led Besterman to consider the coining of new terms "as a rule to be deprecated" (1929, p. 183). Criticisms of the writings of Bret (Amadou, 1954; Salter, 1932), Holt (Friend, 1915), and Richet (Anonymous, 1923b; Holt, 1922) contained admonitions against the creation and use of cumbersome terms. An anonymous writer (1923b), probably Ralph Shirley, editor of the *Occult Review*, wrote: "Surely the plentiful use of Greek composite words transmogrified into modern language aids us not one whit in our knowledge of the essential meaning of psychical phenomena" (p. 136).

Some writers supported the creation of new terms if they were part of a carefully prepared terminology. Bret (1927), in particular, complained of "indifference," "negligence," and "disorder" (p. 6) in parapsychological terminology. In his opinion, "metapsychics" could not attain the status of a science until a well-crafted vocabulary had been completed. Bret's terms, however, like those coined by many contemporary parapsychologists with similar complaints, tended to exacerbate existing terminological problems instead of solving them.

Boirac's concern predated Bret's by a decade: "Unfortunately, the students of these sciences have not always been aware of the importance of having a really appropriate language. . . . Many of the difficulties which have impeded the progress of the psychical sciences have been due to the insufficiency of their verbal equipment" (Boirac, 1917/1918, p. 7). Others, such as Anastasy (1902), Fisher (1926), Hayes (1893), Osty (1928), Prince, (1921), Prubusch (1929), and Sudre (1925), also supported the creation of a technical and widely used terminology.

It is probable that antipathy toward complex or unclear terms was fueled, at least in part, by the perceived importance of balancing the researcher's need for succinct and usable technical terms against the public's need for descriptive and easily understandable terms. Certainly Salter, quoted above, and indeed many modern parapsychologists have argued that parapsychology *must* effectively serve two masters—the public and the professional community. Al-

though our opinion is that this perennial balancing act has been debilitating to both scientific progress and professionalization in parapsychology, a discussion of the point is beyond the scope of this paper. It is likely, however, that J. B. Rhine's view was closer to Salter's than to ours. Rhine published a number of popular books (1937c, 1947d). He was interested in marketing ESP test materials, and he relied on the public for data and funds.¹³ The terms his staff coined were particularly successful in both laboratory and general usage. As can be seen in Table 2, Rhinean terms were easily abbreviated for daily use in the laboratory and in research reports (*before touching* became *BT*, *open matching* became *OM*, *screened touch matching* became *STM*), as well as for use in publications intended for the general reader, such as the earliest practical manual issued by the Parapsychology Laboratory, Stuart and Pratt's *Handbook for Testing Extra-Sensory Perception* (1937). The glossary of the *Journal of Parapsychology* continued the work of translation for the lay reader by "avoid[ing] constant redefining . . . of commonly recurring terms in papers" (Anonymous, 1937, p. 156). Similarly, the revised manual, Humphrey's *Handbook of Tests in Parapsychology* (1948), while it did not include a glossary, paid particular attention to clear definitions of terms and abbreviations in the text. Humphrey's explicitly stated purpose was to make things easier for the lay reader who wished to test himself or herself, and for the student or new researcher beginning a series of experiments.

As is common in other sciences, different researchers devised different terms and abbreviations for their own use. What was clear to one laboratory was not necessarily clear to another. When Soal (1949) reviewed Humphrey's *Handbook* in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, he said: "The present reviewer has always found it difficult to remember the connotation of American terms like *BT*, *OM*, *STM* without referring to a glossary" (p. 20). Had Soal gone on to maintain that different terminology was a prerogative of different laboratories (instead he listed some of his own operational abbreviations), it is likely that Rhine would have agreed. Rhine did reserve the coining of new terms for the individual researchers, who, in the course of writing up specific experiments might coin terms for new effects or methods. A short exchange of letters between Rhine (1947a, 1947b, 1947c) and D. H. Rawcliffe (1947a, 1947b) in 1947 illustrates Rhine's tendency to connect terminological development with experimental work.

¹³For evidence of this attitude see J. B. Rhine (1937b, p. 162) and also Mauskopf and McVaugh (1980, chapter 6).

Before publication of *The Psychology of the Occult* (1952), Rawcliffe wrote Rhine to propose a variety of new terms, among them *psynosis*, meant to indicate "the operative factor" behind all forms of ESP (Rawcliffe, 1947a). Rhine (1947a) replied that the term failed to cover the whole range of psychic phenomena because it did not include psychokinesis. Rhine noted that the term *psi* was already in use. It combined both phenomena and thus made Rawcliffe's term less useful.

Rawcliffe, in a reply (1947b) that included a more detailed description of his terms, invited Rhine and his research staff to discuss them. In the first of two replies to this letter Rhine (1947b) defended the terms already in use and added:

It was decided that just as he who pays the piper calls the tune, those who are experimentally working with these phenomena will naturally determine by their usage in their published reports what terms are the most usable in their communications to one another.

This is not to say that good suggestions may not come from some other and that they will not be welcome. What I do mean is that if you wish to introduce a term it is best to do it in connection with a report of experimental work.

Although a draft of Rhine's reply was given to his colleagues for comment, a copy was prematurely sent to Rawcliffe. The written reactions of B. M. Humphrey and J. G. Pratt were similar to those that we had upon first reading. Humphrey (1947), presumably unaware that Rhine's letter had already been sent, prepared an alternate version with comments in which she pointed out that Rhine's response could antagonize Rawcliffe and that Rhine had contradicted himself regarding previously published comments (Rhine, 1945) in which he had maintained that researchers should avoid accepting terms on any other grounds than their usefulness. The qualifications or prominence of the term's coiner, she said, should not be taken into consideration. Presumably this statement could be logically extended to the occupation of the neologist as well. Pratt (1947), in a note appended to Humphrey's draft, underscored this last point when he asserted that "signal contribution[s]" to parapsychology could also be made by those who had never done experiments.

Rhine forwarded a few of Humphrey's paragraphs in a second letter to Rawcliffe (Rhine, 1947c). These paragraphs are particularly instructive concerning the attitude of the laboratory staff as a whole, illustrating, as they do, a commitment to the public as consumers of parapsychological literature.

We feel that a term should be as descriptive as possible and also that long usage of a term is a point in its favor. For these reasons, the group decided that it would be very difficult to adopt your terms. We are somewhat restricted in the choice of terms because of the fact that in this country at least, we are dependent upon the acceptance of our work by the general public and upon their understanding of our findings; that is, we have practically no select group of readers who are *primarily* parapsychologists. . . . Thus at the present time at least, we would be greatly handicapped in our communications with our readers in general and with other scientists if we were to adopt the terms suggested since they are not descriptive and a definition would have to be included each time they were used. (Rhine, 1947c)

Nothing exists in the manuscript collection to suggest that Rawcliffe ever replied directly to either of the last two letters in the exchange.¹⁴ The guidelines that Humphrey referred to in her note to Rhine were published in an editorial in the *Journal of Parapsychology* and predated the exchange with Rawcliffe by a few years. In the editorial, Rhine (1945) outlined his opposition to efforts to standardize parapsychological terminology. He felt the time was not "ripe for a discussion of existing terminology" (p. 149; see also Rhine, 1937a, p. 83). Until parapsychology reached a consensus on the nature of the phenomena and on the principles governing it, Rhine felt that parapsychology had little hope "of handling so delicate a problem as that of bringing about agreement in any actual instance" (p. 149).

Rhine's (1945) seven guidelines, although similar in some respects to previous ideas, are probably the clearest and most systematic expression of the principles involved:

First, a term should be as descriptive as reasonable brevity will allow.

Second, the adaptability of the term to general usage. . . .

Third, there should be no unwarranted assumptions or unsubstantiated hypotheses implied in the choice of the term.

Fourth, it is advisable to consider the international character of the field of study and to try to use terms that offer little difficulty in translation. . . .

Fifth, long usage of a given term or acceptance by a considerable body of people . . . may be given weight in its favor, but not against serious defects it may have in respect to the points listed above.

¹⁴Rawcliffe (1952) later published a harsh critique of parapsychology. J. B. Rhine (1953) reviewed the book and suggested that Rawcliffe may have turned against the field as a result of the indifferent reception his terminology encountered. In a brief reply to the review, Rawcliffe (1953) called Rhine's argument "the sheerest poppycock."

Sixth, no respect for authority should be shown in assigning a name.

Seventh, consistency with already established scientific patterns of usage should be respected, along with any other factors that will aid the student to grasp and retain the meaning of the term more easily. (pp. 148–149)

When Humphrey pointed out the potential conflict between Rhine's sixth guideline and his second reply to Rawcliffe (Rhine, 1947b), she was uncovering relatively common behavior. Rhine certainly was not the first terminologist to break his own rules, nor probably would he be the last.¹⁵

RECENT ATTITUDES

Much of the negative comment vented at the proliferation of terminology has been aimed specifically at jargon. Recently, Beloff (1982, pp. vii–viii) mentioned the necessity of maintaining a clear distinction between the two.

An exchange of letters published in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* over the years between 1979 and 1983 touched on similar issues. Two readers complained about the increasing use of jargon in SPR articles (Grosse, 1979; Nisbet, 1979). Four others drew distinctions, albeit unclear ones, between jargon and technical language (Hövelmann, 1983a; Sargent, 1979; Thalbourne, 1982a; West, 1982). Although, in general, all the correspondents deplored the use of jargon "which obfuscates meaning" (Sargent, 1979, p. 195), the latter writers made a case for the usefulness of technical expressions and "appeal[ed] for tolerance of technical detail and language" (West, 1982, p. 398). It was felt that the use of technical language when done with a "virile sense of moderation in our recourse to technical expressions" (Thalbourne, 1982a, p. 397), as well as the use of "complex diagrams, or details of statistical calculations [are] often unavoidable" (Hövelmann, 1983a, p. 90) if writers hope to meet the requirements of a high standard of scientific reporting.

In a recent editorial statement in the same journal, Beloff (1985) wrote: "We wish to apologize to readers who may still be having problems with the terminology used in some of our more technical

¹⁵See, for example, Myers's (1885, p. 24) endorsement of descriptive terms and disagreement with terms first used as metaphors and later "incessantly sliding into an assertion of fact." See also his later complex and theory-laden neologisms (Myers, 1896) and our discussion of Bret in this paper.

articles. However, psychical researchers need their technical vocabulary no less than other scientists" (p. 137).

The persistence of a commitment to popularization in parapsychology can be seen in the above exchanges, in Beloff's editorial, in the history of the SPR,¹⁶ and most clearly in Rhine's (1947c) last letter to Rawcliffe. However, working parapsychologists, even those with *no* interest in popularization, have repeatedly made similar points about jargon.

Honegger and Hövelmann recently published criticisms along these lines.¹⁷ Honegger (1982) objected strenuously to terminology that was "unnecessarily theory-laden" or "unintentionally demeaning and confusing" (p. 22). Hövelmann (1983b), in the *Zetetic Scholar*, put such criticism on stronger and more substantive ground in his "Seven Recommendations for the Future Practice of Parapsychology." The fourth recommendation read as follows: "Parapsychologists should cease to pretend that they are able to *explain* anything by means of their present terminology which is merely *descriptive* and build up a *standardized, methodically constructed* terminology as soon as possible" (p. 131). The *Zetetic Scholar* published a variety of responses to Hövelmann's recommendations. According to Palmer (1983a), the problem is that "we use the same set of terms to label what we seek to explain . . . as we use to label the principle or process which . . . might serve to explain it. . . . What we need is one standardized set of descriptive, theoretically neutral terms and a separate set (or sets) of theoretical terms." Palmer continued in his reply: "Current usage of terms like 'psi' often create the illusion that we are explaining an anomaly when in fact we are only identifying one. . . . Our present terminology . . . serves to retard the development of genuine theory building in parapsychology by giving us this subtle illusion of understanding" (p. 164).¹⁸

In a later paper, Hövelmann (1984) extended the argument. He laid the blame for the lack of replicability in parapsychological research partly at the doorstep of its inadequate terminology: "The

¹⁶For examples of this in the old literature, see statements by some prominent SPR members (e.g., Gurney, Myers, & Podmore, 1886, vol. 2, p. 273; and Myers, 1896, p. 166).

¹⁷For similar discussions see Morris (1975) and Stanford (1974a).

¹⁸This particular pitfall of imprecise use of terms was recognized relatively early on in parapsychology. See Barrett (1924), Bozzano (1922), and Hyslop (1907b). Hyslop (1907a) stated in the first issue of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* that the *Journal*, as a policy, would use the terms *telepathy*, *clairvoyance*, and *premonition* in a purely descriptive way. Whether this policy was consistently applied, even in Hyslop's own work, is debatable.

obscure, inconsistent, and ambiguous terminological means, which presently are at our disposal, cannot be used for a clear, unmistakable, and unambiguous formulation of instructions, experimental purposes, etc." (p. 296).

An additional respondent to the *Zetetic Scholar* article (Stokes, 1983) took issue with Hövelmann's intent and suggested that a new terminology has to be developed hand in hand with testable theories in order for the first to have a firm empirical basis. The current lack of reliable findings suggests that such development may have to wait until a more consistent data base is obtained.

At first glance it appeared to us and to Stokes that a basic disagreement existed between the two authors; that is, Stokes seemed to argue for theory-bound terminology and Hövelmann seemed to argue for theory-free terminology. In fact, Hövelmann, in response to an earlier draft of this paper in which we used points made in his 1984 contribution to the *European Journal of Parapsychology*, argued that both inadequate terminology and replication problems were symptoms of a lack of understanding of the purpose of experimentation. He wrote: "Strictly speaking, the latter means that inadequate terminology is an inevitable consequence of inadequate philosophy/theory" (Hövelmann, 1986).

In general, controversies over the intellectual framework in which standardization should be couched have taken on a frustratingly circular bent. Some argue that terminology must be formed in advance of experimentation. Others argue that it must be formed in advance of theoretical development. And still others argue that terminology is a consequence of experimentation or theoretical development. Still others maintain that terminology, theory, and experimentation are all bound together and cannot be constructed separately or understood except in their interaction with one another. These arguments seem to us to be based on fundamental differences of opinion about what constitutes a proper theory, about how theories must develop, and about how methodology is categorized as adequate or reasonable for theoretical tasks at hand. Such fundamental disagreements were very much in evidence at the Dallas workshop on terminology.¹⁹ Viewpoints similar to Palmer's, Hövelmann's, and Stokes's complicated the discussion. Participants voiced what seemed to us to be a justifiable defensiveness about the criteria by which they judged terms to be

¹⁹This took place at the 1984 Parapsychological Convention in Dallas. The meeting, convened by M. A. Thalbourne, was informal and not a part of the convention's program. Our comments reflect our own opinions and are based on both our contemporary notes and on memory.

theory-laden or imprecise. These criteria, when articulated, were very often unshared by some or all of the other participants. There were *real* differences in degrees of confidence in parapsychological findings, and in the appropriateness of certain proposed theories that could not be minimized. There were *real* differences in methodological philosophies that could not be written off as consequences of incompetence or failures of training. As can be seen in the attitudes reflected in print, and at other meetings, coming to grips with these types of fundamental differences, particularly when they constitute the hidden text of a debate rather than the acknowledged text, often severely inhibits the production of adoptable solutions to perceived terminological problems.

EFFORTS AT STANDARDIZATION

Congresses and Conferences

Although Forthuny (1923) speculated on the idea of an academy to regulate "metapsychic vocabulary," the only official attempts at regulating usage in parapsychology occurred at several of the international congresses held in the 1920s.

A motion proposed by Walter Franklin Prince at the 1921 congress at Copenhagen was unanimously approved. The resolution, published in the conference proceedings, read as follows:

Resolved: that the proposition that a special committee be appointed to consider and if possible prepare a standard glossary of technical terms suited to the needs of psychical research, and to be employed internationally, is referred to the General Committee, with recommendation that they put it into effect and that a report be rendered at the second Congress. (Prince, 1922, p. 540)

At the second congress, held in Warsaw in 1923, delegates set up a committee comprised of one member from each nation represented at the meeting. The committee was to work on the problem and present guidelines at the third congress (Anonymous, 1924; Sudre, 1923). The committee developed several suggestions, among which were: (1) that new terms should be derived from Greek or Latin, and (2) that terms considered ambiguous or discredited from a scientific point of view should be eliminated (Sudre, 1923).

Suggestions for terminology were presented at the third congress, held in Paris in 1927. Although the proceedings of the conference

do not present the text of the papers on terminology (Anonymous, 1928),²⁰ a report of the conference (Anonymous, 1927, p. 236) lists four papers on the topic. W. H. Salter (Anonymous, 1927, p. 315) opened the session by stating that the SPR had decided not to change any of the terms they had been using. Even if problems were inherent in the terms, the fact that they were convenient made it desirable to retain them (Anonymous, 1927, p. 315).²¹ The conference report went on to say that "every name proposed by a delegate was consistently rejected by all the others for a variety of reasons" (Anonymous, 1927, p. 314, our translation).

Bret (1939b) reported that he unsuccessfully tried to interest Hans Driesch in using his influence to form a commission at the 1930 congress in Athens for the development of a terminology based on the prefix *meta*. To judge from the proceedings of the conference (Besterman, 1930) as well as those of the conference held in Oslo in 1935 (Anonymous, n.d. [ca. 1935]) there were no further discussions on the standardization of terminology in this particular series of congresses.

Other organizers, at other times and in other countries, however, have brought the topic of terminology before their meetings' attendees. At the First Italian Congress of Metapsychics, held in Sienna in 1949, one of the points agreed on was that the congress "accepts the proposition made by some delegates on the necessity and urgency for revision and unification of the vocabulary of metapsychics" (Anonymous, 1949, p. 250, our translation). However, like the resolutions that preceded it, this one produced no revised vocabulary, so far as we know.

In the early 1950s, the Parapsychology Foundation began their series of international meetings. The First International Conference of Parapsychological Studies, hosted by Tenhaeff at the University of Utrecht in 1953, recommended that the terms *psi-gamma* and *psi-kappa*, proposed as substitutes for *ESP* and *PK* by Thouless and Wiesner (1947), be adopted for general use (Anonymous, 1954). Although

²⁰Quartier (1928), writing in the proceedings of the congress, implies that the presentations on terminology were not published because they were "fruitless sessions" (p. vi., our translation).

²¹In an anonymous (n.d. [ca. 1927]), untitled report drafted by an SPR committee that we think may have been the text of Salter's presentation, the author suggested that "the terminology used by Myers in *Human Personality* . . . notwithstanding certain defects in form be substantially preserved." It is not surprising, therefore, that the work of this section was described years later by Vesme (1934, p. 66) as being impeded by the "opposition of the Anglo-Saxons." See also Bird's (1927, p. 687) amusing account of this session.

these terms are currently in use in some quarters, they have not found their way into general usage. (However, the shorter expression *psi* has been almost universally adopted.)

As a result of the Parapsychology Foundation's interest in international collaboration, another attempt was made. In the March-April 1957 edition, the *Newsletter of the Parapsychology Foundation* published a listing of parapsychological terms (Anonymous, 1957a). These terms were preparatory to a committee report to be given at the International Research Coordination Meeting of the Parapsychology Foundation, held in France the following August. At that meeting George Zorab presented a paper called "Clarification and Unification of Parapsychological Terms" (Anonymous, 1957b, pp. 1-2). He reported on the work already done by the committee devoted to terminology (of which the previously mentioned list of terms and an accompanying international table of translations were presumably a part). According to the conference report (Anonymous, 1957b), Zorab stressed "the importance of establishing definitions that will accurately represent the meaning of parapsychological terms while being readily translatable into several languages" (p. 2). One of the four resolutions passed at that conference established an official preparatory committee under Zorab's chairmanship with Eric J. Dingwall, Rosalind Heywood, and Emilio Servadio as committee members. Recent communication with the surviving members of the committee suggests that this attempt to standardize parapsychological terminology was as fruitless as preceding ones had been. Servadio (1985) wrote that "practically nothing" was done by the committee, while Dingwall (1985) said that the committee engaged only in "informal discussion at which it was decided that, in view of the various difficulties and complications, the matter should be dropped."

After a period of inactivity, interest in standardization has recently been revitalized. Hövelmann broached the subject in a presentation at the 1982 Parapsychological Association convention at Cambridge (Hövelmann, 1983b; see the above discussion of his paper). At the 1985 Parapsychological Association convention, in the context of a further discussion on the lack of "a sharp terminological distinction between the events in nature that need to be explained and the theoretical constructs proposed to explain them," Palmer (1986, p. 138) called for the Parapsychological Association's Council to "set up a committee to formulate recommendations for modifications in parapsychological terminology" (p. 141). An earlier version of the present paper (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1986), given in the same symposium, concurred with Palmer on this point (although we have since come

to doubt the usefulness of such a committee). Of the other two "terminological" presentations (Ballard, 1986; Thalbourne, 1986), the first voted against an official committee, and the second focused on specific terms.

The Glossaries

In 1896, addressing the growing confusion over the meaning of specific terms, F. W. H. Myers wrote: "We have been repeatedly asked to furnish a glossary of the unfamiliar words which those inquiries [psychical research] oblige us to use" (p. 166). He eventually published a glossary, which was revised some years later (Myers, 1896, 1903). Myer's glossary was not the first, however.

Allan Kardec, in his book *Le Livre des Médiuims* (1861), published one of the first glossaries dealing with paranormal phenomena. Mainly a collection of terms presumably coined by Kardec, the glossary reflected Kardec's spiritistic concepts. F. W. Hayes published another early glossary in 1893. This volume was mainly a list of spiritualistic terms.

Other later glossaries included Bret's "Vocabulaire Métapsychique" (1927, pp. 29–58), the dictionaries of Depascale and Rinaldini (1927), López Gómez (1929), and Fodor's (1933) well-known *Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science*. More recent works include the glossaries of Amadou (1954, pp. 358–364), Dale and White (1977), Jordán Peña (1975), Morel and Dalí Moral (1977), Teixeira de Paula (1976), and Thalbourne (1982b). The glossary by Dietz, de Jong, and Zorab (1956) was particularly interesting because terms were translated into Dutch, English, and French.

However, many of these glossaries suffered from severe problems. Some were incomplete and focused on the terms of specific persons or countries. Aage Slomann urged the compilation, therefore, of an international glossary. Having unsuccessfully presented the idea to the Parapsychology Foundation in 1961, Slomann (1962) approached the SPR. His paper lists a number of alternate plans for a glossary, including one in which lists of equivalent terms in different languages would be published in either dictionary or encyclopedic form. Slomann presented the idea again at the Seventh Annual Parapsychological Association Convention in 1964. At that point Slomann was reporting encouragement from the SPR and some promise of funds from Rhine's Parapsychology Laboratory (Slomann, 1964, p. 297). However, to our knowledge, no dictionary resulted.

Some consensus on the usefulness of Thalbourne's (1982b) glossary is being reached. In addition to a recent SPR editorial urging its use (Beloff, 1985), a number of positive reviews have been published (Alvarado, 1983; Palmer, 1983b; White, 1983), and a committee at the Institute for Parapsychology has recently used Thalbourne's glossary in their major revision of the glossary of the *Journal of Parapsychology*. In addition to Thalbourne's recent effort, the best of the previously published glossaries (among them are Dietz, de Jong, & Zorab, 1956; Fodor, 1933; and Dale & White, 1977) may help to decrease terminological confusion in parapsychology, particularly that caused by the diversity of languages and national preferences extant in the discipline.

Although it has been proposed at least once that other parapsychological journals include a glossary (Thalbourne, 1982a, p. 398), the *Journal of Parapsychology* is currently the only journal that regularly prints one. Staff-written, the *Journal's* glossaries have been included in nearly all issues of the *Journal* from 1937 to 1938, and from 1942 to the present.²² The impact of this glossary on the common usage of technical expressions in the English language literature has been considerable. Later glossaries have repeatedly relied on the *Journal's* definitions (see, for example, Dale & White, 1977; Rhine & Pratt, 1957; and Thalbourne, 1982b). For the most part, however, phenomenological, philosophical, and theoretical terms have been beyond its scope.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the course of this paper, we have mentioned the proliferation of terminology in different periods and by different means. We have catalogued some attitudes toward the coining and correct usage of terms and looked briefly at various working committees and other formal attempts to standardize parapsychological terminology. Two primary attitudes emerge. They are that: (1) it is (eternally) necessary to improve our nomenclature; and (2) it is difficult to resist solving terminological problems by coining entirely new and often more problematic terms. In addition, one distressing fact clouds the developments reviewed here. That is that terminological discussions evoke highly subjective and often emotionally laden discussion. It is possible that the tendency to personalize terminological debate is indicative

²²From 1939 to 1941, the *Journal of Parapsychology* was edited in New York by an editorial team headed by Gardner Murphy. Murphy's group did not include a glossary in their issues.

only of the diversity of training and world views among parapsychologists. It is more likely, however, that some deeper entanglement of speaker and language is at the root of the problem.

We undertook our historical investigation to briefly and superficially review the chronology of terminological concerns in the hope that we might provide some perspective and guidance to those who are currently engaged in standardization attempts. While we have attempted to provide some historical context, we have not been able to provide any reassurance that terminological consensus can in fact be achieved. On the contrary, we have discovered that direct and formal attempts to impose consensus usually fail. Further, from what we have reviewed, it seems entirely possible that the formulation of any disciplinary language is a dynamic social process that *cannot* be ordered in a methodical way, at least in underdeveloped disciplines like parapsychology. (Studies of terminology in other fields are necessary before generalizing our points to science at large.)

In parapsychology, successful, albeit impermanent, terminological refinement has proceeded from an on-going, mainly indirect, negotiation between the individuals who produce our research literature, those who examine the philosophical and conceptual underpinnings of parapsychological theory, methodology, and terminology, and those who draw the synthesis on which the glossaries are based. Perhaps this is as it should be. Perhaps we are mistaken in seeking to enforce consensus, to obtain some *resolution* to our terminological crises. Perhaps it is the process itself that is of paramount importance to the progress of the field.

With that in mind, we will venture beyond our domain as historians and issue our best advice. Parapsychology must provide the environment in which continued terminological negotiation can take place. This can be accomplished by: (1) maintaining a willingness to commit meeting time and journal pages to terminological topics; (2) encouraging deeper and more substantive criticisms of theories, models, and terms from both parapsychologists and outside critics; (3) instilling an abiding sense that the coining and defining of terms is a difficult but often necessary business that calls for a reduction of emotional investment in, and the application of, reasonable and deliberate criteria to one's *own* terms (as opposed to only the terms of others); and (4) requiring that parapsychologists exercise more than a little restraint in the face of the often overwhelming urge to create yet another neologism.

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Institute for Parapsychology
 Box 6847, College Station
 Durham, NC 27708