

# **Spirit Communications: Experiments with Mediums**

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The work reported in this thesis is original and carried out by me solely, except for the acknowledged direction and assistance gratefully received from colleagues and mentors.

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Karla Baker Curtis

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## ABSTRACT

### **Spirit Communications: Experiments with Mediums**

This quintuple-blind study assessed the accuracy of information conveyed by mediums, in a protocol that eliminated any sensory input, fraudulent behavior, or the use of “cold reading” techniques. If mediums provide accurate information under these conditions, it indicates they are receiving information from an anomalous source. Twenty-four telephone readings were done using a proxy sitter, with the mediums being given only the first name of a discarnate (a deceased person). Neither the proxy sitter nor the medium knew any information about the discarnate other than the first name, and neither knew any information about the sitter who had selected the discarnate. Six professional mediums participated and each conducted four readings. The 24 sitters were paired into 12 groups, with each group having discarnates of the same gender. After the readings were completed, the sitters received two readings: one from their discarnate (the intended reading) and one from the other discarnate in their group (the control reading). Each sitter provided three ratings for these readings: accuracy (with an overall numerical score between 0 and 6), selection of the reading most like their discarnate (A or B), and an applicability score for the selected reading (a numerical score between 0 and 4). The result of a one-tailed t-test comparing the numerical score average for the intended readings (2.3) and average for the control readings (1.9) was not significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), although the results were significant for some of the individual mediums. Sixteen sitters selected their intended reading, more than expected due to chance (which predicts 12), but not enough to be significant using a chi-square test ( $p < 0.05$ ). A discussion of results and suggestions for future studies are included.

**Keywords:** mediums, sitters, discarnates, anomalous information, accuracy of mediumship readings

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

Mediums allegedly talk with dead people. Each mediumship “reading” is comprised of three or more participants – the medium, the person requesting a reading (known as the “sitter”), and one or more discarnates (deceased persons who knew the sitter). Such “readings” can occur in public settings where there are many potential sitters, or privately with a single sitter. Private readings can be either in person or over the telephone.

Throughout history, mediums have been surrounded by controversy. The preponderance of fraudulent mediums practicing in the mid-1800s through the 1920s has resulted in a legacy of dishonesty and mistrust. Although the research shows that not all mediums from that period used fraudulent practices, the perceptions of chicanery and cheating continue to taint the practice of mediumship up to the present.

Moreover, much of the mainstream scientific community is and has been skeptical of all psychic phenomena, including the work of mediums. Many skeptics allege that all mediumship readings are fraudulent, because all mediums use some variation of sophisticated “cold reading” techniques. Whether used consciously or unconsciously, cold reading occurs when a medium interacts with a sitter in ways that cause the sitter to supply information that the medium then conveys back to the sitter, as if the information came from a discarnate.

Are mediums simply specialized versions of fortune-tellers who prey on unsuspecting or gullible sitters? Or, do they, at least some of the time, convey accurate information? Can people ever trust the information conveyed by mediums?

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to contribute to mediumship research by assessing the accuracy of information communicated by mediums, under conditions that prevent the mediums from: 1) obtaining the information by using their senses (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, speaking, or touching), 2) employing any fraudulent activities, or 3) using any “cold reading” techniques. In current mediumship research studies, sensory input, potential fraud, and the use of “cold reading” techniques have been eliminated by blinding the mediums to any information about the sitters or the discarnates, and by using proxy sitters for all readings. Further blinding of the researchers to most information about the sitters and the discarnates eliminates cueing of the mediums during the readings and cueing of the sitters during scoring. Under these conditions, if the mediums’ information is accurate, we could conclude that their information comes from an anomalous source.

## **Research Question and Hypothesis**

### **Research Question**

Can a medium acquire specific information in a quintuple-blind session that will be rated by the absent sitter as more accurate than a control reading?

### **Hypothesis**

If, during a quintuple-blind session, a medium acquires accurate, specific information about a discarnate (as rated by a blinded, absent sitter), it validates that mediums are not guessing, but are tapping into an anomalous source of information.

## Importance of the Study

### Public's Beliefs about Mediums

Almost one quarter of the people in the U.S. believe that communicating with the dead is possible. A 2005 Gallup survey reported that 21% of the 1,000 people surveyed believe that “people can communicate mentally with someone who has died.”<sup>1</sup> That is less than the 32%, in the same survey, who believe that “spirits of dead people can come back in certain places/situations”<sup>2</sup> or the 31% who believe in “telepathy/communication between minds without using traditional senses.”<sup>3</sup>

Later in 2005, the Gallup organization published survey information comparing the U.S. beliefs to those of Canadians and Great Britons. On the question of belief in communications with someone who has died, the Canadian survey showed a 24% result, and the Great Britain survey showed 27%.<sup>4</sup> When separated by gender, the results diverge. One-quarter of women in the U.S. and almost one-third of women in both Canada and Great Britain believe that communications with the dead are possible. The analogous scores for men are 18% in the U.S., 17% in Canada, and 16% in Great Britain.<sup>5</sup>

While not a scientific indicator, the subject matter of recent successful television shows also illustrates the public's interests in mediums. A weekly drama series in the U.S., *Medium*, aired for six seasons, from January 2005 through January 2011; in this series, a medium helped the Phoenix police department solve crimes by “being able to talk to dead people, as well as foresee events and witness past events in her dreams.”<sup>6</sup>

Another U.S. television show, *Ghost Whisperer*, aired for five seasons from September 2005 through May 2010. The main character was a young woman who had the ability to see and

communicate with the dead. She helped earth-bound spirits to cross over into “The Light” by relaying a message for them or helping them to complete a task.<sup>7</sup> When the show was cancelled, a Zap2It poll reported that it would be the second most-missed show, with 17% of those polled indicating they would miss it.<sup>8</sup>

## **Comfort for the Grieving**

Death is one of the life’s fundamental fears – both one’s own death and the deaths of those we love. If we could have conversations via a medium with deceased friends and relatives, it might help to allay some of these fears. The research supports this conjecture. In a five-year, international longitudinal survey of 596 participants who experienced some type of afterlife encounter (i.e., an experience of “being connected to, or in the presence of, a discarnate entity”),<sup>9</sup> 98% of participants reported that the experience brought them some level of comfort.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Question of Post-mortem Survival**

While the question of post-mortem survival has fascinated (and bedeviled) philosophers, mystics, and some scientists for eons, minimal research has been conducted on the topic. David Fontana, a psychologist, author, and parapsychologist who studied and researched this issue extensively, described the chasm between the importance of the question and the dearth of on-going research exploring possible answers. “[T]he question of whether or not we live after death is by far the most important that faces us, and that has always faced us. It is the most important not only because it has to do with our destiny and with the meaning and purpose of existence, but because it has implications for the way in which we live our present lives.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite the central importance of this question to our lives, we are making slow progress in finding answers. “[T]hose relatively few scientists . . . who do take a professional interest in the paranormal prefer for the most part to ignore the issue of survival, preferring to focus instead on paranormal abilities in the living, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition.”<sup>12</sup> One of the key reasons for these research preferences “is the fear that the question of survival is so closely associated with fraudulent mediumship, spiritualism, religion, ghost stories, and other doubtful areas that any active interest in the subject is likely to give parapsychology a bad name.”<sup>13</sup>

The psychic phenomena that might contribute to our knowledge about survival include apparitions, reincarnation, automatic writing cross-correspondence, near-death experiences (NDEs), and the communications from mediums. Some of these phenomena (e.g., apparitions, automatic writing cross-correspondence) depend on spontaneous occurrences and do not readily lend themselves to planned research. One of the phenomena which can be studied via laboratory research methods is communications from mediums. In fact, the purpose of much of the research with mediums from the mid-1800s through the 1920s was to resolve this question: Do mediums talk with dead people, or does their information come from other sources?

While the question of post-mortem survival is beyond the scope of this study, if mediums do communicate with discarnate beings, they could be important sources of information about the afterlife. On the other hand, if mediums’ information is not the result of communicating with discarnate beings, what is the source of their information? In either scenario, if mediums provide accurate information when sensory input, fraud, and cold reading techniques are eliminated, then studies of mediums can advance our knowledge of psychic phenomena.

## **Mediumship Research Supports Overall Psychic Research**

Whether mediums' information comes from actual discarnates, i.e. post-mortem survival, or from some other source, mediumship research can help us understand more about the psychic phenomena that are employed by mediums. This section summarizes the most current competing theories for mediums' sources of information, each of which assumes the use of one or more psychic phenomena.

### **Survival or Super-psi**

While the evidence from mediums concerning post-mortem survival is not current, writers and researchers continue to evaluate this past data along with data from other psychic phenomena, and to hypothesize possible alternate theories. In the past ten to twenty years, five main theories have been offered as possible alternatives to survival: fraud, mistaken testimony, chance coincidence, the "cosmic reservoir" hypothesis, and "super-psi." ("Psi" is the abbreviated term that is currently used for "psychic phenomena.") The first three theories are cited most often by psi skeptics. While there are a substantial number of documented reports of fraudulent mediums, and, because of the fallibility of memory, mistaken testimony undoubtedly accounted for some number of cases, there is a preponderance of evidence from many well-researched cases showing that both of these explanations have been conclusively eliminated.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary mediumship research has helped to eliminate chance coincidence as a possible explanation for mediums' results. The collaboration between Gary Schwartz and Linda Russek, which began in 1998, revived the scientific study of mediums. With each successive study, they refined the study design and protocol, while also demonstrating that mediums can obtain accurate information in a laboratory setting. Subsequently, Julie Beischel and Schwartz

improved the methodologies used by Schwartz and Russek, and designed a triple-blind study, using eight mediums and eight volunteer sitters, which produced statistically significant accuracy results.<sup>15</sup>

The “cosmic reservoir” hypothesis was first formulated by William James,<sup>16</sup> the famous American psychologist, member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), and founding member of the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR). This theory assumes that a record exists of the totality of human knowledge and experience, and that mediums access this record for information, rather than communicating with the deceased. Traditions such as Theosophy posit the existence of such “akashic records,” and mystics such as Edgar Cayce<sup>17</sup> claimed to have accessed these records. Additionally, Michael Newton, a psychologist and hypnotherapist who specializes in helping individuals remember their existence between lifetimes, has synthesized a description of the records from the many sessions he has led.<sup>18</sup>

While this theory has not received much attention from researchers, it is still mentioned as a possible solution, perhaps because it originated with the brilliant William James.<sup>19</sup> The issues with this theory are several. No direct evidence of these records exists and no known method has been developed for proving or disproving their existence.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, most mediums describe their experiences as obtaining information from spirits, not accessing a psychic reservoir or library.<sup>21</sup>

The most popular alternative hypothesis to post-mortem survival has been “super-psi,” the theory that all information supplied by mediums comes from a combination of telepathy with the living, clairvoyance, and precognition. Coined by sociologist and parapsychologist Hornell Hart in 1959, super-psi was theorized by SPR member and survival skeptic Frank Podmore in the early 1900s.<sup>22</sup> The advocates of post-mortem survival highlight four key issues with the super-psi

hypothesis. First and most importantly, while we have evidence of extraordinary psychic abilities in some individuals,<sup>23</sup> no evidence has been collected showing the breadth and depth of psychic abilities required to obtain all the requisite information communicated in many well-documented mediumship cases. When a proxy sitter is used, when the actual sitter is not thinking about the deceased at the time of the reading, and when the actual sitter does not know all of the information conveyed, this theory assumes that the medium telepathically obtains information from the unconscious of several living individuals (some of whom the medium does not know exist) and puts the information together into a narrative containing data that is subsequently verifiable, and that is delivered at the speed of an ordinary conversation.<sup>24</sup>

Second, super-psi cannot reasonably explain the cases where mediums, during a trance reading, have demonstrated a skill they do not personally possess, such as playing a musical instrument or speaking a different language. In psi research, this type of ability is called “knowledge-how.”

Third, mediums’ use of the deceased person’s tone of voice, gestures, and unique point of view are not adequately explained by the super-psi hypothesis.<sup>25</sup> A minimum level of telepathy may be used to access data from the minds of others. However, a much greater level of telepathy is necessary to combine and correlate the data, then present it so that it replicates various traits of the deceased or demonstrates the deceased’s point of view.

Finally, super-psi is not a mutually exclusive alternative to survival. Even if one of the theories could be verified as true, it does not necessarily follow that the other is false.<sup>26</sup> Both super-psi and survival assume the use of psi by mediums. With the former, the medium is employing psi with living persons and, with the latter, using psi with deceased persons.

## **Survival psi or Somatic psi**

In 2009, the philosopher Michael Sudduth made a significant contribution to the survival versus super-psi debate, by analyzing some of the rationales each side uses to explain mediumship.<sup>27</sup> One of the arguments survivalists cite is: A medium communicating with a discarnate is more plausible than the super-psi theory because it is a simpler use of psychic phenomena. Communicating with a discarnate is using telepathy with one entity. Super-psi assumes that mediums use telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition with multiple sources, obtaining bits and pieces of information from each, and then combining the pieces into a coherent whole. (This same argument was summarized above as the first issue with the super-psi hypothesis.)

While this argument may still be valid when considering a medium's use of psi, Sudduth correctly observes that if discarnates do communicate certain types of information for which there is evidence (e.g., details of events and issues occurring after their deaths), it would require the deceased to use similar levels of telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition as used by a medium if the super-psi phenomena were active. In these cases, "discarnate psi would have to be at least as powerful and refined as living agent psi."<sup>28</sup> By pointing out that both the survival and super-psi hypotheses rely on a similar level, scope, and sophistication of psychic abilities, Sudduth's analysis has served to reframe some of the terms in the debate. Sudduth used the term "survival psi"<sup>29</sup> to mean psi between a discarnate and a living person (e.g., a medium).

In a subsequent article summarizing their process-focused research with mediums, Beischel and Adam Rock coined the term "somatic psi," to "describe telepathy with living persons, clairvoyance (including the psychic reservoir), and precognition on the part of the medium but not including survival psi."<sup>30</sup> With this new term, Beischel and Rock are combining

the super-psi and psychic reservoir hypotheses into one.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the definition also allows the term to be used for the phenomena which occur in psychic readings, as contrasted to mediumship readings, where telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition are used with a living client. “The term somatic is used in reference to the physical body of the living client in the psychic readings as well as the ‘body’ of information described by the psychic reservoir hypothesis.”<sup>32</sup> This definition can be extended to refer to the physical body of any living person whose unconscious may be tapped and to the clairvoyant or precognitive viewing of any physical item or event. Therefore, somatic psi refers to any psi that is not survival psi, thereby including all psi among living persons, psi between a living person and any tangible item or earthly event, and psi between a living person and the psychic reservoir. The debate has now been reframed between “survival psi” and “somatic psi.”

## **Scope of the Study**

### **Delimitations**

- This study does not investigate the source of the mediums information, e.g., survival psi or somatic psi. Rather, the study is more narrowly focused on whether the information that mediums report is accurate, as scored by sitters. Therefore, the Literature Review in Chapter 2 does not include either historical or current research on the question of post-mortem survival.
- For simplicity of terminology throughout this document, the term “discarnate” is used to identify the deceased person with whom the sitter wishes to communicate via the medium. This study, however, does not attempt to prove whether such a discarnate exists or is the source of the mediums’ information. Moreover, if discarnates do exist, this study

does not address or investigate any characteristics of such discarnates, nor does it include any of the current or historical research in human consciousness, or any of the current theories concerning what energetic forces or elements might survive bodily death.

- The Literature Review in Chapter 2 does not provide an exhaustive or comprehensive review of all mediumship research. Rather, since this study is focused on the possible accuracy of communications from mediums in the absence of any sensory data, the emphasis in the Literature Review is on those mediums who proved to be both accurate and ethical. The extensive, additional reports regarding fraudulent and/or unsuccessful mediums are not included.

## **Limitations**

- This study cannot and does not answer the question of whether mediums, in general, report accurate information to sitters. It is probable that mediums, as a group, are similar to most other professions—they are comprised of individuals with a wide range of both competencies and ethics. However, all the mediums participating in both the pilot and dissertation studies demonstrated professionalism, honesty, and integrity in all interactions with the Principal Investigator (PI).
- This study reports the accuracy of reading results for six professional mediums, using a specific research methodology. This study is not a report on the overall competency of any of these mediums when working in their normal environments, i.e., providing in-person or telephone readings for sitters.

## Definition of Terms

Since most of the methods, mechanisms, and variables in psychic research are neither well known nor well understood, many of the terms are defined by what they are not rather than what they are. For example, no one knows exactly what happens when telepathy occurs, but we do know the following—for certain people and under certain conditions, information is transferred from one person to another in the absence of any sensory data (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, speaking, or touching). So, psychic phenomena are defined as those methodologies or processes that occur in the absence of sensory data, hence “extrasensory.” If information is available through normal sensory channels, it cannot also be valid psychic data.

**Anomalous information:** Information received or communicated by means other than the senses (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, speaking, or touching).

**Clairaudience:** Hearing information or activities that are outside of one’s current physical, sensory auditory field.

**Clairsentience:** Feeling (via emotions) or sensing (via bodily sensations) information or activities that are outside of one’s current physical, sensory field.

**Clairvoyance:** Seeing information or activities that are outside of one’s current physical, sensory visual field.

**Discarnate:** Deceased person with whom a medium purportedly communicates.

**Extrasensory perception (ESP):** Perception or communication by means other than the senses (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, speaking, or touching). ESP includes the more specific phenomena of telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, and precognition.

**Medium:** A person who purportedly can communicate with individuals who have died. Mediums who communicate via psychokinesis are known as **physical mediums**. Mediums who receive information via clairvoyance, clairaudience, and clairsentience are known as **mental mediums**. Mental mediums are divided into two types: those who go into a trance during a reading (known as **trance mediums**) and those who do not. Trance mediums often have a **control**, an entity who speaks through the medium while the medium is entranced.

**Parapsychology:** The study of psychic phenomena.

**Post-mortem survival:** The theory that some portion of an individual survives bodily death.

**Precognition:** Knowing of an event or occurrence before it actually happens.

**Proxy sitter:** An individual who knows little or nothing about either the actual sitter or the discarnate, and who takes the place of the actual sitter during a reading.

**Psi:** Abbreviated term meaning “psychic phenomena.”

**Psychic:** adj., Outside of the normal human senses. n., A person who obtains information outside of the normal human senses.

**Psychokinesis:** The ability to affect or move a physical object solely through mental effort.

**Reading:** A session in which a medium, on behalf of a sitter, communicates with one or more discarnates, who, when living, were known to the sitter.

**Sitter:** Person who requests a reading from a medium. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, mediums did readings in person, so the person requesting the reading "sat with" the medium. See also **proxy sitter**.

**Somatic psi:** Any psi that is not survival psi. Somatic psi includes all psi among living persons, psi between a living person and any tangible item or earthly event, and psi between a living person and the psychic reservoir.

**Super-psi:** The theory that mediums' information comes from telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience and other psychic processes with living persons, not from communications with discarnates. Super-psi is an alternate explanation to post-mortem survival.

**Survival psi:** Psi between a discarnate and a living person.

**Telepathy:** The communication of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions between one or more persons in the absence of any sensory communication.

Chapter 1 Endnotes:

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## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

*“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed, second it is violently opposed, and third, it is accepted as self-evident.” — Arthur Schopenhauer*

### **Overview of Mediums and Mediumship Research - 1800s to the Present**

Mediums emerged in the popular consciousness of Europe and North America in the mid-1800s as a part of the Spiritualist ideology. Almost all Spiritualist mediums were “physical mediums,” causing or purporting to cause physical manifestations such as levitations, apparitions, rapping, and table tipping. Most studies of mediums were sponsored and conducted by members of the British Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR), dating from the formation of the organizations (1882 and 1885, respectively)<sup>1</sup> through the early 1950s.<sup>2</sup> The SPR and ASPR researchers attended hundreds of séances and private sessions with mediums, concluding that most were frauds,<sup>3</sup> some had psychic abilities which they at times supplemented with fraudulent activities, and a few were genuine.<sup>4</sup> Among the frauds was the notable Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society and self-proclaimed channel and medium, while the mediums with genuine abilities were represented by Mrs. Leonora Piper and Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard. Mrs. Piper (1857-1950)<sup>5</sup> and Mrs. Leonard (1882-1968)<sup>6</sup> were mental mediums with telepathic skills who went into trances where they exhibited personalities and voices different from their own. Both Piper and Leonard were “discovered” by famous members of the SPR, Piper by the American psychologist William James,<sup>7</sup> and Leonard by the British physicist Sir Oliver Lodge.<sup>8</sup>

Piper was the first mental medium to be extensively studied and, because of the volume of SPR and ASPR records of her readings, remains the most-documented medium.<sup>9</sup> Leonard was studied by the SPR for 40 years, from just before World War I until just after World War II. This included many hours of successful readings with proxy sitters<sup>10</sup> where a researcher, who knew very little information about either the deceased or the actual sitter, provided Leonard with a piece of data or an object to prompt her contact with the deceased. Although there was never any question of Leonard's honesty,<sup>11</sup> because there were so many fraudulent mediums and so few good ones, many scientists and non-psychic researchers were skeptical of all mediums. That perspective continues today.

Perhaps the best-known 20<sup>th</sup> century medium was Eileen J. Garrett (1893-1970).<sup>12</sup> Similar to Piper and Leonard, Garrett was a trance medium; unlike her predecessors, Garrett honed her psychic abilities by receiving formal training and providing many hours of mediumship readings at the British College of Psychic Science.<sup>13</sup> In the 1930s, Garrett participated in experiments with the ASPR, the SPR, and the Rhine Institute at Duke University.<sup>14</sup> Although she was a willing participant in the experiments, Garrett was skeptical of the Spiritualist claims that mediumship proved survival after death.<sup>15</sup> Her abiding interest in psychic research and her entrepreneurial spirit led her to establish the Parapsychology Foundation in New York City in 1951.<sup>16</sup>

Studies of mediums languished for many years after WWII. The early research sponsored by the SPR and ASPR focused on using mediums to prove post-mortem survival. In more recent years, the relatively few psychical researchers interested in post-mortem survival have focused on near-death experiences and reincarnation instead of mediumship. Research with mediums re-emerged in 1995 when Gary Schwartz and Linda Russek collaborated with the medium Susy

Smith.<sup>17</sup> Schwartz and Russek completed four additional studies in 1999 and 2000,<sup>18</sup> expanding and improving their protocol with each subsequent study. Then, in 2007, Schwartz and Julie Beischel designed, conducted and published an even more rigorous triple-blind study, which had significant results for mediumship accuracy.<sup>19</sup>

Beischel, now working as the head of her own laboratory, has since designed the Beischel Quintuple-blind Protocol<sup>20</sup> (the “Beischel protocol”), one of the two most current protocols for working with mediums. This protocol blinds the mediums, the sitters, and three researchers—hence the quintuple blinding—and uses a three-part reading design: 1) Discarnate-directed, 2) Life Questions, and 3) Reverse Question. The Discarnate-directed segment allows the discarnates to begin the reading by conveying information of their choosing. The Life Questions segment asks the discarnate for answers to four questions concerning the former physical life: 1) How would you describe your physical appearance? 2) How would you describe your personality? 3) What were your hobbies or favorite activities? 4) What was the cause of your death? The Reverse Question segment asks the discarnate for any specific questions, comments, or requests to be conveyed by the medium to the sitter. Beischel has not yet published results for any quantitative studies with this protocol. As of June 2011, she has a study in process and “the data collected to date show significant differences between the scores that blinded sitters gave their actual readings compared to the scores they gave decoy readings.”<sup>21</sup> This author’s study used the Beischel protocol as a starting point.

The other current protocol for mediumship research was developed by Emily Williams Kelly, working in the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia. Kelly developed a protocol similar to, but not as rigorous as, the Beischel protocol, but obtained inconclusive results with this. She then developed a different protocol based on the mediums

being shown photographs of the discarnates. The second study had significantly positive results, and is currently the largest and most successful laboratory study with mediums.<sup>22</sup>

One notable difference exists between the early mediumship studies and the more recent ones. In the early history of mediumship research, individual mediums were studied and the results of their readings documented, so the medium being studied was always clearly identified. In the more contemporary research, a study is defined and mediums are recruited to participate, so the mediums are research participants and, usually, are not identified by name.

## **Mediums Selected for Detailed Discussion**

Based on historical documents, the first mediums known to have practiced in the U.S. were the Fox sisters. Since their emergence in 1848, hundreds, if not thousands, of mediums have practiced their real or imagined talents. Of the subset of mediums who were studied, many were definitely fraudulent, some appeared to have genuine talent but also resorted to fraudulent activities from time to time, and a few appeared to have genuine talent and were never suspected of any type of fraud at any time.

Space constraints prohibit a thorough review of all mediums studied throughout history. Therefore, since this author's study focuses on the possible accuracy of mediums' information received through non-sensory means, this chapter includes four mediums who were shown via research to have genuine abilities and who were never suspected of fraud by any knowledgeable and respected researcher. The four mediums included are one physical medium, David Dunglas Home, and three trance mediums: Leonora Piper, Gladys Osborne Leonard, and Eileen Garrett.

Then, to provide a more balanced view of all mediums, the author has included detailed discussions of three mediums who were famous, whose work was well-documented, and who

appeared to have genuine talent but who also used fraud to supplement their talents. The three mediums in this category are the first two documented mediums in the U.S., the Fox sisters, and Arthur Ford, a famous trance medium of the 1930s. The abilities of and research on all the mediums are presented in chronological order, a summary of which is shown below.

**Table 1: Mediums Discussed in Detail**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Summary of Abilities</b>	<b>Years Practiced</b>
Kate & Maggie Fox	Physical	Genuine and fraud	1848 - 1893
David Dunglas Home	Physical	Genuine	1846 - 1871
Leonora Piper	Trance	Genuine	1884 - 1911
Gladys Osborne Leonard	Trance	Genuine	1914 - 1962
Eileen Garrett	Trance	Genuine	1920 - 1939
Arthur Ford	Trance	Genuine and fraud	1924 - 1970

Finally, because so many fraudulent mediums have practiced throughout history, this chapter concludes with a summary of the scope and types of fraud used to dupe sitters. Because fraud was so prevalent among mediums, it has served to taint all mediums, including those practicing today.

## **Historical Studies with Physical and Trance Mediums**

### **Early Physical Mediums**

A great deal of controversy has surrounded the abilities of the early physical mediums, and no consensus was reached on the veracity of their abilities. Included in this section are the Fox sisters, the first mediums to gain widespread popularity in the U.S., and David Dunglas Home, a Scotsman who demonstrated his abilities in both the U.S. and England for 25 years,<sup>23</sup> and on whom the SPR researchers' opinions were divided. Some of the researchers believed his abilities were real and valid, while others were convinced he was a world-class showman and conjurer.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Fox Sisters**

In 1848, two girls in Hydesville, New York, Maggie and Katie Fox (ages 15 and 11, respectively), began communicating with a spirit who allegedly haunted the house where they lived with their parents and older sister. After several weeks of hearing noises within the framework of the house, the sisters began making rapping noises back, and devised a communications method where two knocks meant “yes” and silence meant “no.” Through their communications with the spirit, they ascertained the story of his death, including where his body was buried in the house’s cellar. Digging at that spot resulted in fragments of human bone and hair.<sup>25</sup>

After many neighbors observed the girls at work, a pamphlet was published with signed statements from 22 witnesses, which resulted in even more people traveling to Hydesville to ask questions of the spirit. During this time, the girls discovered that they could communicate with other spirits in other venues, and soon were on the road demonstrating their mediumship abilities.<sup>26</sup> Both women continued to work as mediums through much of their lives, even though their notoriety took its toll on their health and wellbeing (both sisters drank heavily). One died in 1892 and the other in 1893.

Their reputations are decidedly mixed. While their abilities were successfully tested on many occasions in accordance with the experimental controls practiced at the time, each sister signed a confession late in her life admitting that everything had been fraudulent, and demonstrating how they had faked the rapping sounds. Within a year, both women had withdrawn their confessions, alleging that they had been unduly influenced by people who believed that mediumship was sinful, and who had promised them significant compensation for their confessions. As a result, no consensus was reached on the veracity of their abilities.<sup>27</sup>

Charles Richet, a Paris physiologist and part-time SPR researcher, provided a quite plausible summary of the Fox sisters' abilities. He believed that most mediums' abilities were "unreliable and erratic. Even the good ones tended to eventually suffer from the decline effect. . . . It was possible that when young and relatively unspoiled, the Fox girls had possessed some mediumistic talents. It was possible that whatever small ability they possessed had failed long ago, lost in the circuslike promotion that surrounded them."<sup>28</sup> Despite the dramas and uncertainties associated with their abilities, the Fox sisters opened the doors for many mediums who followed. In addition, Richet's assessment of their abilities proved prescient for many mediums, both his hypothesis of "the decline effect," which is discussed in a later section, and his belief that the sisters were neither completely genuine nor completely fraudulent. Richet surmised that the sisters possessed some genuine mediumistic talents and they also cheated some of the time. That assessment proved to be accurate for many mediums throughout history.

### **David Dunglas Home**

David Dunglas Home (1833 – 1886) was the "most celebrated of the physical mediums"<sup>29</sup> investigated by researchers in the early years of mediumship research. Home was an unpaid physical medium who demonstrated his abilities for over 25 years, from ages 13 to 38, at which time he retired due to ill health.<sup>30</sup> His specialties were levitating tables, playing an accordion without touching it, and holding hot coals in his hands. Unlike many other physical mediums, he did not operate in a dark room but often did demonstrations on the spur of the moment in places he had never been before.<sup>31</sup> While he had detractors, "no fraud of any sort on his part was ever detected."<sup>32</sup>

Home was investigated by the chemist and British Royal Society fellow William Crookes. To Crookes' amazement, he could not find any physical explanations for the feats he witnessed, and concluded that Home possessed or controlled some psychic force. Crookes published his findings in a journal for which he was the editor, only to find himself and his associates attacked in anonymous articles published in other scientific journals.<sup>33</sup> The scientific community's reaction to Crookes' studies of Home would be repeated through the next century and into the present one. "Crookes was naïve about how his colleagues might see his paranormal investigations. He'd expected demands for replication, perhaps competition from those who wanted to conduct their own studies of Home. He had anticipated criticism of the equipment he'd used, suggestions for better tests. He'd not expected to be slandered by anonymous reports—or to see his friends slandered with him. . . . The message seemed clear enough. Investigating supernatural events was off limits to scientists, unless the findings proved fraud. Those who chose to ignore that rule—unspoken but strictly enforced—would find themselves off limits as well."<sup>34</sup> It is unclear whether the doubts about Home were so strong because of uncertainty concerning his abilities, or because people could not allow themselves to believe that things so odd and unexplainable might actually happen.

Unlike Home, many fraudulent physical mediums were practicing at that time. With the use of props such as cabinets with trapdoors, double-sided drawers, finely woven muslin, phosphorus and ether, and by performing in darkened rooms, spirits and objects could be made to appear out of thin air.<sup>35</sup> Home seemed to be an anomaly because he worked in daylight, primarily without props. So, did Home have true abilities? Or was he a clever conjurer who was never exposed, or some combination of the two? These questions recur in all mediumship research.

## Reactions to Results of Early Psychic Research

Crookes was not alone in his experience of being doubted—or even slandered—by mainstream scientists. All the early psychic researchers were subjected to similar slights and criticisms. Often, the studies were rejected for publication—sometimes without being read—by the peer-reviewed journals.<sup>36</sup> Or, when they were published or reviewed, the reports were accompanied by commentary which eviscerated the studies' conclusions by assuming the results were due to a lucky coincidence or sloppy, inadequate research methods.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note the difference in the perspectives of the researchers versus their critics. The researchers did not believe that all mediums or other purveyors of psychic abilities were genuine. In fact, it was quite the opposite. In most studies, they expected to expose fraud, and were surprised on the few occasions when they found no sensory, physical reasons for the phenomena they witnessed. There are many examples of the researchers' reports of fraudulent mediums: the Newcastle mediums, Madame Blavatsky, and the Creery sisters.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, the critics of these studies alleged that the only difference between the fraudulent mediums and the mediums that seemed genuine was one of two things—the seemingly genuine mediums were better at duping the researchers or the researchers were sloppy in those particular studies. The critics began with the assumption that all mediums were frauds. With that underlying assumption, they were free to posit possible failings in the conduct of the experiments. From the critics' viewpoint, because all mediums were frauds, studying them did not and never would constitute “real science,” and anyone who spent their time in such pursuits was either a charlatan or a fool.

Moreover, without fraud or another logical explanation for the activities, how much data must be collected before the researcher can posit the occurrence of anomalous events? The

skeptics can always find some fault with the experimental methods, and more rigor is almost always possible. In an article in the ASPR Journal published in 1958, the philosopher C. J. Ducasse eloquently articulated the need for real skepticism—not close-mindedness—from the critics of psychic research. “[A]llegations of detection of fraud, or of malobservation, or of misinterpretation of what was observed . . . have to be scrutinized *as closely and as critically* as must testimony for the reality of the phenomena. For there is likely to be just as much wishful thinking, prejudice, emotion, snap judgment, naiveté, and intellectual dishonesty on the side of orthodoxy, of skepticism, and of conservatism, as on the side of hunger for and of belief in the marvelous. The emotional motivation for irresponsible disbelief is, in fact, probably even stronger—especially in scientifically educated persons whose pride of knowledge is at stake—than is in other persons the motivation for irresponsible belief.”<sup>39</sup> Since critics of psychic research have been consistent in their perspectives from the beginning of such research through today, it is useful to remember Ducasse’s admonition.

## **Trance Mediums**

The reports and data for trance mediums are from mediums who were sufficiently well-known to attract the attention of researchers, and then limited further to those who agreed to work with researchers. The best-known and most-studied trance mediums in the Western world are three women: Leonora Piper, Gladys Osborne Leonard, and Eileen Garrett.

### **Leonora Piper (1857-1950)<sup>40</sup>**

It was 1885, in Boston, when William James had his first, anonymous sitting with Leonora Piper.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, both the SPR and ASPR were busily exposing fraudulent practices

among mediums on both sides of the Atlantic. Many of the SPR members, particularly prominent mediums and some of their spiritualist followers, were outraged by the researchers' reports of fraud. The researchers "had assumed that spiritualists would admire dedicated researchers taking an interest in the occult, sorting out the legitimate phenomena from the fraudulent. Instead, it seemed that the churches of spiritualism were not so different from the churches of Christianity. . . . [N]either could tolerate evidence contradicting what they wished to believe."<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the ASPR's "annual report on mediums—barring the curious anomaly of Leonora Piper—had degenerated into a list of exposures of professional practitioners, seven in Boston alone within one year."<sup>43</sup> Because Piper was such an anomaly to the researchers, her behavior and habits were subjected to minute scrutiny. Detectives were hired to follow her and her husband, newspapers were allowed to be delivered only on the days when no readings were scheduled, her mail was read by others, and sitters were prevented from giving their real names or any personal information. An ASPR researcher sat in and transcribed almost all sessions to insure the rules were followed.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, to test that her trance state was not fraudulent, the researcher found "that she was not disturbed by being pricked, cut, burned, or having ammonia held under her nose."<sup>45</sup> The researchers even convinced her to travel to England to be tested for several extended periods, under the assumption that if she were deceiving them in some way they had not yet found, it would be more difficult for her to continue such activities in a foreign country. The result was this: Piper was studied for over twenty-five years by members of the SPR and ASPR, and was never "detected doing anything suspicious."<sup>46</sup>

When she went into a trance, another personality emerged who provided the information for the sitters. For many years, this so-called "control personality" identified himself as Phinuit, a deceased French physician whose command of the French language was unremarkable and

whose identity was never verified.<sup>47</sup> Piper's readings were decidedly mixed; some days she provided no information and other days she conveyed startlingly accurate information that she had no normal means of obtaining. Nevertheless, the researchers saw that "the transcendental eeriness of the good days" made them forget the bad ones.<sup>48</sup> "A few people who caught her on bad days and never returned were unimpressed. But almost everyone who worked with her extensively—some of them off and on for twenty-five years—became convinced that she truly had paranormal powers."<sup>49</sup>

In later years, Piper's control switched to the recently deceased George Pelham, a friend of one of the SPR researchers. With Pelham as her control, Piper often conveyed information known only to Pelham and the sitter, as well as exhibiting Pelham's mannerisms, vocabulary, and point of view. In one five-year period, Pelham (through Piper) correctly recognized 30 sitters whom he had known during his lifetime, and did not claim to recognize any of the sitters that he had not known. Also, while in a trance, Piper "displayed all the keenness, perspicacity, intelligence, and other characteristics possessed by George Pelham in life, and convinced a large number of Piper's sitters that it really was he."<sup>50</sup>

In William James' farewell address to the SPR in 1895, he made his now famous statement about proving the existence of a phenomenon:<sup>51</sup> "If you will let me use the language of the professional logic-shop, a universal proposition can be made untrue by a particular instance. If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn't seek to show that no crows are; it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white."<sup>52</sup> He identified his own white crow as Piper. And, further, while he did not know the source of her knowledge, he was convinced that it was "never gained by the ordinary waking use of her eyes and ears and wits."<sup>53</sup>

### **Gladys Osborne Leonard (1882-1968)<sup>54</sup>**

Gladys Osborne Leonard, a British medium, was studied by the SPR for 40 years, including many hours of successful readings with proxy sitters.<sup>55</sup> Leonard's control was Feda, allegedly the spirit of an Indian ancestor. While Feda's existence could not be proved, a legend within Leonard's family told of a young Indian girl who had died in childbirth.<sup>56</sup> Leonard began working as a professional medium just before the beginning of World War I, and her communications from those killed in the war brought her some renown. She became even more famous when Sir Oliver Lodge, an eminent British scientist, professor, and past-president of the SPR, published the book *Raymond*, Lodge's account of communications from his son, as conveyed through Leonard.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to her work with proxy sitters, Leonard is well known for the extensive number of book and newspaper tests she successfully completed. In the book tests, the discarnate specified the precise location of a book (e.g., on the third shelf from the top, the ninth book from the left) in a room familiar to the discarnate but completely unfamiliar to Leonard. Then, the discarnate provided a page number on which a message having relevance to the sitter would be found.<sup>58</sup> One of the SPR members, Mrs. E. M. Sidgwick, analyzed 532 book tests and published the results in 1921. "She classified 92 (17%) as successful, 100 (19%) as approximately successful, 96 as dubious, 40 as nearly complete failures and 204 as complete failures. In a control experiment . . . 1800 'sham' book tests were subjected to a similar analysis. There were 34 successes (under 2%) and 51 partial successes (under 3%)."<sup>59</sup> While Leonard's results are far, far better than chance (i.e., the "sham" book tests), they were successful or partially successful only one-third of the time. While those results are impressive, they are far from perfect. It seems to be a fact of mediumship research that the results are much, much better than chance, but are

still unpredictable. As philosophy professor and psi author Stephen Braude observes, mediums' readings tend to be "a curious mixture of statements strongly suggesting survival, statements suggesting telepathy from the living, and a certain amount of rubbish."<sup>60</sup>

In the newspaper tests, Leonard provided "references to items that would appear in designated positions the following day on the front page of *The Times* newspaper, a page which at the time contained only a number of long, closely printed columns giving notices of births, marriages, deaths, memorials, and other personal details. . . . Of the 25 newspaper tests that took place in the first phase of this work, 18 produced good results, three were inconclusive, and four were failures. The ratio remained constant for all the subsequent tests."<sup>61</sup> The newspaper tests effectively eliminated telepathy with the living as the source of the information, because the front page of the newspaper was typeset in the evening before publication, hours after the reading occurred. The position of the information "could not have been known to the sitter, to the medium, or to any other living person at the time of the sitting. Nor, again given the fact that the page had not been set up, could it have been sensed clairvoyantly by the medium. This leaves only precognition as an alternative explanation to survival."<sup>62</sup> However, the explanation of precognition presupposes that Leonard was able to see, in advance, the exact moment when the sitter was reading the front page of *The Times* newspaper, and was able to sense, also in advance, the words or phrases that would have particular meaning to the sitter.<sup>63</sup> While not impossible, such an explanation is improbable, particularly since the information conveyed, while relevant and accurate, often had no particular emotional impact for the sitter.

As with Piper, Leonard was known to be a person of honesty and integrity. "There was never once any question of fraud or dishonesty during her entire career. Those who knew her

well were convinced of her complete veracity and of her interest in trying to acquire for her sitters the most accurate evidence possible.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Eileen Garrett (1893-1970)<sup>65</sup>**

Unlike Piper and Leonard, Eileen Garrett worked not only as a medium, but also as a psychic, using clairvoyance and telepathy with living persons. She claimed uniqueness only in her level of sensitivity, and believed that most other people, with some training, could be as sensitive.<sup>66</sup> Her perspective might have come because of her own training. Although she had premonitions and saw auras in her early childhood in Ireland,<sup>67</sup> she also trained, as an adult, at the British College of Psychic Science, giving thousands of readings in a five-year period. At the end of her training, she was one of the most well known mediums in the world and was in great demand.<sup>68</sup>

Garrett had two controls during her 50-year career as a medium and psychic in Britain and the U.S. The first was a man named Uvani; later came a man named Abdul Latif, who claimed to be a Persian astronomer and physician from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Garrett was very interested in mediumship research, particularly studies to help understand the process of mediumship, including possible explanations for a medium’s controls. Since more of her focus was on the mediumship process, less case study data is available from her readings.<sup>69</sup>

Garrett was as well known for her psychic work and clairvoyant premonitions as her mediumship work. Perhaps her most famous premonitions were her three spontaneous visions over a three-year period preceding the crash of the British dirigible R-101 in 1930. Garrett’s 1926 vision showed the dirigible intact while, in the 1928 vision, it wobbled about and gave off smoke. In the third vision in 1929, it was clearly burning and smoking.<sup>70</sup>

About this time it was announced that England was building two dirigibles, the R-100 and the R-101. Eileen knew that one of the ships would be flying to India when it was completed, and she was now convinced that it would crash. So certain was she of this that she asked a friend to convey this information to Sir Sefton Brancker, the Director of Civil Aviation, who would be making that first flight to India. Brancker was amused by the account of the phantom airships Mrs. Garrett had seen, but he did ask her which ship would survive the trip and which would be destroyed, and she replied that the R-101 would crash. That was precisely what happened a year later.<sup>71</sup>

In the months following the crash of the R-101, several of the deceased crew members communicated through Garrett in séances, providing technical details of the events leading up to the crash. These details convinced aviation experts of the veracity of her information.<sup>72</sup>

Garrett submitted to many psychological and physiological tests designed to examine the differences between her and her two controls. The psychological word association tests were generally inconclusive.<sup>73</sup> One round of physiological tests (e.g., blood count, bleeding time, clotting time, pulse, respiration, blood pressure) conducted in the U.S. showed remarkable and distinctive differences between her and her two controls. Then, when the tests were repeated in London by a different group of physicians, the results were not appreciably different for the three entities.<sup>74</sup>

In 1939, Garrett stopped her mediumship practice to focus on research, although friends and acquaintances continued to seek her insights.<sup>75</sup> In 1941, she started a publishing company in New York despite her lack of knowledge or experience in the industry. After her psychic training, she appeared to make many of her life decisions based on her inner knowing. That was certainly the case with her publishing company. Her staff was quite aware that she hired and fired employees based on her perception of their energy and aura.<sup>76</sup> As her final contribution to psychic research, in 1951 she created the Parapsychology Foundation that provided grants, published books, and sponsored nineteen successful international conferences.<sup>77</sup>

As with Piper and Leonard, Garrett was a medium of integrity. “No hint of fraud was ever attached to Eileen Garrett throughout her life, and none of the many eminent scientists who worked with her on research into the processes of mediumship ever expressed any doubt as to her integrity.”<sup>78</sup>

Piper, Leonard, and Garrett may be as unique for their unsullied reputations as for their successful mediumship results. The next section provides a summary of the mediumship of Arthur Ford, a contemporary of Garrett.

### **Arthur Ford (1897-1971)<sup>79</sup>**

While most mediums were women, Arthur Ford, a minister in the American Spiritualist church and a practicing medium from the 1920's until his death in 1971, was referred to in the 1930's as “America's most famous medium.”<sup>80</sup> Ford's record—and his reputation—are mixed. A number of prominent persons and researchers, including Aldous Huxley, Upton Sinclair, and William McDougall (a Harvard psychologist who supported J. B. Rhine's early experiments in ESP at Duke University), witnessed private and public sessions where they were convinced of Ford's paranormal capabilities.<sup>81</sup> However, evidence also shows that Ford resorted to pre-reading research and other methods of obtaining information about his subjects.<sup>82</sup> Allen Spraggett, who knew Ford personally, wrote the biography on which this summary is based. He concluded, after researching and analyzing the breadth of Ford's work, “Arthur Ford had genuine paranormal powers which, at times, he augmented with mediumistic research.”<sup>83</sup> In his later years, Ford separated himself from the Spiritualists, because he believed they supported grossly fraudulent mediums and hoodwinked the public by sponsoring séances at large Spiritualist camps.<sup>84</sup>

The two most publicized events of Ford's forty-year career as a medium were with famous men—Harry Houdini and Bishop James Pike. Houdini, the magician and escape artist, was a psi skeptic who also longed for authentic communications from deceased loved ones, especially his mother. He devoted a great deal of energy, particularly in the latter part of his life, to exposing fraudulent mediums, calling them “leeches who batten on the bereaved.”<sup>85</sup> At the same time, he collaborated with his wife Beatrice to devise a secret correspondence that he hoped would prove he lived after death.<sup>86</sup> Houdini died in 1926. In a 1928 séance, Ford, via his control Fletcher, received a message for Beatrice from Houdini's mother. Later that year, Ford received and decoded a message from Houdini which Beatrice attested was the correct secret correspondence she and Houdini had fashioned.<sup>87</sup> Many journalists and skeptics attempted to discredit Ford and to promote alternate theories of how he could have obtained the information via ordinary means. However, none of the alternate theories were proved.<sup>88</sup>

Bishop James Pike was the Episcopal Bishop of California from 1958 until 1966, when he resigned his position after being censured and having heresy procedures brought against him. Pike was a liberal, social activist bishop who questioned a number of the basic church teachings, including the virgin birth and the Trinity doctrine. Pike's son, Jim, committed suicide in 1996 after struggling with a drug addiction, and Pike sought out mediums to communicate with him.<sup>89</sup> Allen Spraggett organized a televised séance with Ford and Pike, after which Pike was convinced Ford had contacted his son and a number of other relatives and colleagues, based on the breadth and detail of the information provided.<sup>90</sup> In the televised reading, Jim (as transmitted through Fletcher) indicated he had private information he wanted to provide to his father. Subsequently, Ford conducted a private reading for Pike, conveying the sensitive information.

Several years later, after Ford's death, Spraggett was researching Ford's life and had access to Ford's private papers. Among those papers, Spraggett found newspaper clippings and other documents that contained important details Ford had conveyed to Pike in the televised reading. These findings certainly indicate a lack of integrity and serve to discredit Ford's mediumship abilities. Interestingly, other instances showed the opposite; a private reading between Ford and Pike (Pike's widow reviewed the notes for Spraggett) showed that Ford provided information that, as can best be discerned, was known only to Bishop Pike and Jim.<sup>91</sup>

Ford had no fondness for researchers. He once complained that "a researcher burned him with a cigarette while he was in a trance to see if the trance was real."<sup>92</sup> On the few occasions he allowed himself to be tested in a laboratory environment, the results were inconclusive.<sup>93</sup> Both William Roll, director of the Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, North Carolina, and Ian Stevenson, professor of psychiatry and subsequent head of the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia, wanted Ford to participate in studies in their labs, but neither was successful in convincing Ford to work with them.<sup>94</sup> Spraggett reports that Stevenson "spoke positively, in private, of Ford's psychic ability and recommended him to intelligent seekers after mediumistic evidence. To me [Spraggett], Stevenson admitted that he believed Ford had paranormal powers. But he had heard reports of chicanery on Ford's part . . . and these made him cautious about the final judgment."<sup>95</sup> It is quite likely that Ford is properly categorized as a medium with genuine talent who also resorted to fraudulent activities when his talent was not readily accessible or when it waned in later years.

## **Brief Summary of Fraudulent Mediums and Their Techniques**

The Fox sisters were the beginning of the Spiritualist religious movement, a loosely organized confederation with two key core beliefs: 1) human beings survive bodily death and continue to live in the form of a soul or a spirit, and 2) mediums can communicate with these souls/spirits.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the history of mediumship is intertwined with Spiritualism. Unfortunately, most of the Spiritualist mediums practicing during the movement's peak, the 1840s through the 1920s,<sup>97</sup> had questionable reputations and many were exposed as frauds.<sup>98</sup> This legacy has tainted mediums and mediumship research up to and including the present day.

The types of fraud practiced by physical mediums are different than those perpetrated by mental mediums. Physical mediums need to show objects moving and appearing/disappearing out of thin air. Mental mediums needed to obtain accurate information about their sitters. Because most of the mediums practicing during the height of Spiritualism's popularity were physical mediums, most of the documented cases involved fraudulent physical techniques. The following paragraphs summarize the types of fraudulent activities used by three famous physical mediums, the Davenport Brothers and Madame Blavatsky, and then provide examples of the fraudulent practices used by mental mediums to gain insights about their potential sitters.

### **Techniques of Fraudulent Physical Mediums**

In the mid-1800's, Ira and William Davenport of Buffalo, NY invented what became known as "a Davenport cabinet" and created quite a popular show. The cabinet was a large armoire with a window in the front that was covered by a velvet curtain. The brothers sat in chairs inside the armoire and allowed the audience members to tie their hands and feet, and even to tie them to their chairs and to each other. Once the doors were closed and bolted shut, hands

appeared through the curtain and the sounds of musical instruments were heard in the room.

When the audience members opened the cabinet, however, both men sat tied as they had been at the beginning of the performance. In later years, Ira explained how they used rope tricks first to free themselves and then to restrain themselves once again. The key to most physical mediums' fraud was to perform in darkness in their own homes.<sup>99</sup> But, even outside their own environment, they created opportunities to fake apparitions. "One female medium was found to have an ingenious wire dummy, covered with a thin skin of rubber, which could be inflated during a dark séance to resemble the 'spirit' form of a small child. Deflated, it could be folded and worn as a stylish bustle, neatly concealed in her skirts. . . . Others hid packets of clothing . . . in their undergarments. The cloth was made bright in spots by luminous oil, made of phosphorus and ether . . . [then] bits of glass or paste diamond sewn into the cloth added a brighter glitter."<sup>100</sup>

In the late 1800's, SPR members investigated Helena Petrovna Blavatsky after she had gained such a significant following that she created her own religious group, the Theosophical Society. "She could produce the most amazing physical effects. Shattered dishes mended themselves, apports materialized, and sealed letters, bearing personal spirit messages"<sup>101</sup> appeared in her hands. She was investigated by the SPR's Richard Hodgson after she moved to Madras, India and built a temple for her work. Over several months, Hodgson was persistent and pugnacious, and pestered her servants until he finally wore them down. He concluded that Madame Blavatsky, as she was known, was a total fraud. He discovered that she had a network through which she acquired information about her sitters, she was very adept at mimicking others' handwriting, and she had a series of secret drawers and passages through which her servants passed her objects and letters.<sup>102</sup>

## **Techniques of Fraudulent Mental Mediums**

Generally, the fraudulent techniques of mental mediums can be grouped into two categories: hot reading and cold reading. “Hot reading” means that the medium actively researches information on potential sitters prior to a reading. “Cold reading” means that no prior research has been done, but the medium uses specific techniques during a reading to gain information about the sitter.

Lamar Keene was a professional Spiritualist medium for 13 years<sup>103</sup> and a fraud. While he specialized in physical mediumship, his autobiography also describes the files at the Spiritualist camp in Chesterfield, Indiana that were comprised of notes “from every service or public séance ever held at Chesterfield. . . . Each contained the name of the person and the question asked. There must have been tens of thousands of individual index cards.”<sup>104</sup> He and his partner minister in their Spiritualist church obtained information on their members by a number of different means. First, they required that anyone interested in a private or group séance attend three public services. In each of these sessions, the sitter was asked to provide three important pieces of information: their first and last names, several questions to which they sought answers, and the first and last names of three people in spirit. The “ministers” used this information as the starting point for a file on each congregant. After that, they stole things from purses and billfolds in the séance room and made use of two-way mirrors and electronic recorders in all areas of their church.<sup>105</sup> When those strategies failed, Keene resorted to cold reading techniques.<sup>106</sup>

The elements of “cold reading” were derived from the psychologist Sybo Schouten’s observations about the inherent collaboration that takes place between a sitter and a psychic during a reading. (Schouten used “psychic” as an inclusive term for mediums and all other practitioners who receive anomalous information by extrasensory means.<sup>107</sup>) Based on his

analysis of studies with psychics and mediums as well as his own experiences as a sitter, he identified 12 psychological processes and factors that contribute to successful sittings:

1. The “psychic controls the encounter to a much greater extent than the client is aware of.”<sup>108</sup>
2. Many of the statements are of a general nature so that they are correct for many people.
3. The client’s appearance provides the psychic with information.
4. The client’s nonverbal reactions provide information to the psychic.
5. The client wants the reading to be successful, so avoids disagreeing.
6. The client remembers correct statements and does not remember incorrect ones.
7. Clients, in general, tend to underestimate the probability of correct statements.
8. The client will believe statements allegedly from paranormal sources more readily than if the statements had been said in a normal conversation.
9. Because many statements can have multiple interpretations, clients can “read in” a correct interpretation.
10. Clients overestimate the psychics’ paranormal abilities.
11. To the client, their issues are unique; to the psychic, they are often typical.
12. The client is unaware of how much information or feedback he/she contributed.<sup>109</sup>

Schouten hypothesized that, since the client has come to the psychic for information about a specific problem, the client wants the reading to be successful; the 12 psychological factors listed above help sitters meet that goal. Unlike psi skeptics, Schouten believed “that in most cases neither the psychic nor the client is aware of their respective contributions and the psychological processes involved,”<sup>110</sup> so most psychics were not actively or intentionally fraudulent. Psi skeptics often use a list similar to Schouten’s to explain the means by which most psychics use cold reading techniques to consciously manipulate their clients. They provide such a list as a set of instructions that anyone can follow to perform cold readings:

1. Be confident.
2. Use polls and surveys so that you know what different types of people generally believe.
3. Be modest about your skills.
4. Emphasize that the reading’s success is dependent on the client’s participation.
5. Use crystal balls or tarot cards or other tools.
6. Use “stock phrases.”
7. Observe the client’s appearance and reactions closely.
8. “Fish” by using questions rather than statements.
9. Listen to everything the client says.
10. Be a good actor.

11. Flatter the client.
12. Most importantly, “Tell the client what he wants to hear.”<sup>111</sup>

## **Contemporary Research with Mental Mediums**

After the studies of well-known trance mediums in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, research with mediums essentially stopped until the late 1990s. Other areas of psi research—telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition—were much more popular.<sup>112</sup> While earlier studies of mediums almost exclusively used trance mediums, research in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century studied mediums who remained awake and alert during their readings.

During the hiatus of medium research, the topic was kept alive with the scholarly classic, *Mediumship and Survival: A Century of Investigations*,<sup>113</sup> published in 1983 on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research, and with the publication of a number of books about mediums<sup>114</sup> and channeling,<sup>115</sup> written for the general public. (While mediumship is defined as “talking with the dead,” channeling is more broadly defined as communication with any type of discarnate being.)<sup>116</sup> A review of several books published during the 1950s-1980s illustrates the frequent linking of mediums with the occult, which may partially explain why most researchers steered clear of working with mediums.<sup>117</sup> While all of parapsychology research contends with suspicions of fraud by skeptics, research with mediums has been even more suspect, due to the legacy of the many fraudulent mediums throughout history. Because of this legacy, all studies with mediums address whether fraud has been ruled out as a possible cause of the results, and contemporary protocols must ensure that both “hot reading” and “cold reading” techniques are prevented.

## **Research with Mediums in Laboratories or Other Controlled Environments**

### **Schwartz-Russek Studies**

#### *Study #1: Medium to Medium Communication*

The first documented contemporary study of mediums was conducted in 1998 by Gary Schwartz, Linda Russek, and Don Watson, in collaboration with two mediums, Susy Smith and Laurie Campbell. In this study, Smith drew five pictures, four while in purported communication with four discarnates, and one from her own mind as a control. Campbell then contacted each discarnate to obtain descriptive information about each of the four “directed” pictures, and used clairvoyance to obtain information about the control drawing.<sup>118</sup> This study was neither rigorously designed nor controlled; for example, two of the discarnates were close relatives of the researchers, and the mediums and researchers were together when the researchers and Campbell each attempted to match the drawings to their sources. However, it did demonstrate that information from Smith was transferred to and/or received by Campbell through some type of non-sensory communications,<sup>119</sup> and it served as a launching pad for more rigorous laboratory studies of mediums. While Schwartz, et al. concede that “psi with the living” (rather than post-mortem communications with a discarnate spirit) is a plausible explanation for much of the information Campbell obtained, they highlight the differences in Campbell’s experience when obtaining information purportedly from a discarnate versus using clairvoyance for information on the control drawing. With the discarnates, Campbell “was flooded with descriptive and dynamically interactive information of a personal and emotional nature,”<sup>120</sup> and she had difficulty getting the discarnate to focus on the information she requested. These experiences with discarnates were in marked contrast to her experience of remotely viewing the control

drawing, which was without emotional content and devoid of any sense of another's energetic presence.<sup>121</sup>

Susy Smith, the medium who created the drawings in this study, was a well-known psychic and writer. Trained as a journalist, she wrote over 25 books on psi, including her own biography, a biography of Gladys Leonard, and two books she claimed were channeled from William James.<sup>122</sup> She also founded the Survival Research Foundation, now defunct, and offered a reward to the first person who successfully received a code that she would transmit after she died. This experiment lasted for a few years after her death, during which time no one provided the correct code.<sup>123</sup>

#### *Introduction to Studies #2 through 5*

Schwartz and Russek continued their research collaboration with a series of four enhanced and expanded studies of mediums. The next three studies were conducted in a laboratory setting, each designed to incorporate greater controls, mitigating issues discovered by the researchers in prior studies and addressing issues raised in critiques. The fourth study was conducted via telephone from Schwartz and Russek's home. In all cases, the studies used professional mediums, individuals who advertise themselves as mediums and who conduct readings as a business. For clarity, these four studies are identified by the names used by Schwartz and Russek: HBO<sup>124</sup>, Miraval<sup>125</sup>, Canyon Ranch<sup>126</sup>, and Campbell Readings.<sup>127</sup>

#### *Study #2: HBO*

In the HBO study, five mediums and two sitters were participants. All five mediums did readings for one sitter and, due to time constraints, two mediums did readings for the second sitter. Each sitter was an acquaintance of one person on the research team but they were unknown to the mediums. The only information provided to the mediums by the researchers was

that each sitter, in the past ten years, had experienced the deaths of several persons with whom she had had close relationships. The readings were done in a room where the sitter and medium were separated by a screen. Each medium conducted the 15- to 20-minute readings in their usual style and was permitted to ask questions of the sitters that could be answered by a “Yes” or a “No.” In this study, the mediums heard the voice, inflection, and intonation of the sitters.

After the sessions, the researchers tallied the number of “Yes” and “No” answers. Comparing the Yes-No answers from all seven sessions, the average accuracy for all questions was 85%. Wondering whether the readings with more questions were more accurate, the researchers rated the first five questions from all sessions, resulting in 88% accuracy. Comparing the accuracy of the first five questions to a 50-50 chance of a Yes-No answer on each question, the chi-square result was significant at  $p < 0.006$ . While this is a statistically significant result, it is not clear that comparing the overall number of Yes-No answers is the best accuracy measure. Because the questions, which can be reviewed in the published portions of the transcripts, are a mix of general questions (e.g., “Do you have a grandfather in spirit?”<sup>128</sup>) and very specific data where the medium requests only confirmation (e.g., “He tells me he contributes to his passing. . . . He does take his own life, correct?”<sup>129</sup> and “She died in the house. . . . They both died in the same room ten months apart.”<sup>130</sup>), the raw number of “Yes” answers does not distinguish between the questions that could be applicable to many people and the questions/statements that are likely to be true for only a small number of people.

To address this issue of proper comparisons, the researchers created an after-the-fact control group. They took statements made by the mediums to the first sitter, turned them into 70 questions, some with Yes-No answers and others requiring a content-type answer, and had 68 undergraduate students provide answers. The combined accuracy of the control group was 36%.

However, the accuracy of the control group is irrelevant, as Richard Wiseman and Ciaran O’Keeffe observed,<sup>131</sup> because the members of this group were asked to perform a very different task than the mediums. “Conceptually, this is equivalent to testing archery skills by having someone fire an arrow, drawing a target around wherever it lands and calling it a bullseye, and then testing a ‘control’ group of other archers by asking them to hit the same bullseye.”<sup>132</sup> An even bigger issue with this study, also discussed by Wiseman and O’Keeffe and expanded upon by Ray Hyman in his critique of all the Schwartz-Russek studies,<sup>133</sup> is the potential for rater bias. The mediums’ accuracy is judged by the sitters’ spontaneous Yes-No answers to the mediums’ statements and questions. If the mediums’ statements were ambiguous, the sitter could still only choose to answer either “Yes” or “No.” These two critiques assume a positive bias toward the survival hypothesis from the sitters. The authors assume that sitters’ participation in the study is evidence they believe in post-mortem survival, and therefore are more predisposed to accept the mediums’ statements as true than someone more skeptical. Wiseman and O’Keeffe also observe that, since both sitters had at least six people close to them who had recently died, more statements would apply to them than to someone with fewer associated discarnates. Conversely, Schwartz cites several cases where the sitter answered “No,” but later realized the information given was correct.<sup>134</sup> Because the accuracy results from the HBO study were based only on the sitters’ responses, with no external or objective validation, they are interesting but not conclusive.

### *Study #3: Miraval*

In the Miraval study, Schwartz and Russek improved the design to include an initial period where the sitter was silent. This study used four of the five mediums from the HBO study and ten sitters, one of whom was the sitter who had readings from all five mediums in the HBO

study. Each sitter was to have a 20-minute reading with each medium. The sitter entered the room after the medium and sat about six feet behind the medium. For the first ten minutes, the medium provided whatever information they received for the sitter, while the sitter was silent. In the final ten minutes, the medium could ask for Yes-No feedback, as in the HBO study. The researchers then created transcripts of all sessions and intended to have each sitter return to their lab to score the transcript. Transcripts included every item spoken by the mediums, with each item to be scored on a -3 to +3 scale, where -3 was “definitely an error, -2 probably an error, -1 possibly an error, 0 may be an error or may be correct, +1 possibly correct, +2 probably correct, +3 definitely correct.”<sup>135</sup>

Unfortunately for the study, only one sitter returned for scoring, the sitter from the HBO experiment. Because of time constraints, she had had readings with only two of the four mediums. The percentage of items the sitter rated as +3 were 77% for the silent period and 85% for the Yes-No period. The accuracy results for the Miraval study, while quite impressive, consisted of only two transcripts of a repeat sitter. The sitter and the mediums affirmed they had had no intervening contact between the two studies, and the mediums were not aware they were reading for a repeat sitter until after each reading was completed. Even with those assurances, because mediums’ processes for obtaining information is not well understood, results from a repeat sitter do not have the same weight as those from a new sitter. Nevertheless, this study provided anecdotal evidence that a medium could report accurate information for an unidentified person in the absence of any sensory input.

#### *Study #4: Canyon Ranch*

Again, Schwartz and Russek made design improvements for their next study, Canyon Ranch. This study included five sitters and three mediums, all of the mediums having

participated in the HBO study. The sitter and medium were separated by a screen; the medium sat with his/her back to the screen. Similar to the Miraval study, each session lasted 20 minutes. In the first ten minutes, the sitter was silent. In the second ten minutes, the medium could ask questions, but, unlike Miraval, the sitter indicated the answer with a nod of the head, while a researcher spoke the answer aloud. As with the Miraval study, transcripts were prepared and the sitters rated the readings. In an improved design, each sitter rated all fifteen readings, the three that were for them and the twelve control readings (four additional sitters read by each of three mediums). The sitters used the same -3 to +3 rating scale as in the Miraval study. The results tallied all the +3 items (“Hits”) and all the -3 items (“Misses”) and compared Hits and Misses for actual readings (i.e., his/her own reading) to Hits and Misses for the control readings (i.e., another sitter’s reading). The percentage of Hits was 40% for the actual readings and 25% for the control readings; the percentage of Misses was 29% for the actual readings and 42% for the control readings. While not as high as the results in the two previous studies, the Canyon Ranch results are statistically significant.

While this methodology provides much better control data than the HBO study, rater bias is still a possibility in the scoring. It is quite likely that the sitters remembered enough of the items from their own readings that they were aware, when scoring the readings, of which ones were their own and which were the controls. Nevertheless, this study provided the genesis for future study designs where the sitters were blind to which transcripts were their intended readings.

#### *Study #5: Campbell Readings*

The last of the Schwartz-Russek studies, the Campbell Readings, were experiments based on the medium Laurie Campbell’s observations that she often received information intended for

a client several hours before the scheduled reading. This led to a design that incorporated three phases: an “absent sitter” phase, a “silent sitter” phase (as had been used in the Miraval and Canyon Ranch studies), followed by a reading where the medium and sitter could hear each other and the sitter could respond to Yes-No questions. This study used one medium (Campbell) and three sitters. Phases two and three were conducted by telephone, with the phone being muted for Phase 2. While three sitters were used, Schwartz and Russek only report the results for one sitter, the medium George Dalzell. Even though the results with Dalzell are very impressive, the absence of results for the other two sitters raises the concern of selective reporting. With results for only one medium-sitter pair, this study does not provide valid statistical results, but does include interesting anecdotal information that is helpful for future study designs.

In Phase 1, the sitter-absent, pre-reading period, Campbell listed eight individuals by name and two by first initial. Dalzell rated five of these individuals as having special significance to him. In Phase 2, with Dalzell on the muted phone, Campbell listed eight individuals, with only one repeated from Phase 1. Four of the new individuals were rated as having special significance by Dalzell. Anecdotally, this shows that it is possible for mediums to obtain accurate information with the “sitter absent” and with the “sitter silent and non-local.” In Phase 3, Campbell reported information purportedly from nine individuals, some of whom were repeats from Phases 2 and 3, seven of whom were of special importance to Dalzell.

During the reading, Campbell provided many significant details to Dalzell, including four specific facts not known by Dalzell at the time of the reading, but later confirmed by others as correct. Additionally, Dalzell corrected Campbell on the spelling of a relative’s name, only to discover after the reading, that Campbell’s spelling was correct. This provides anecdotal evidence that the medium is not simply reading the mind of the sitter. In this study, the

researchers knew the identity of the sitter, so it might be possible that the medium could connect through the researchers to the sitter. Of the 21 unique individuals named by Campbell, Dalzell did not recognize three of them and rated those as errors. Interestingly, the researchers have close relationships with persons having these three names. At the time of the reading, Dalzell was secretly a practicing medium and had just finished a book that was scheduled for imminent publication. It is not known how a sitter who is also a medium might affect the results.

The Schwartz-Russek collaboration was important for reviving the scientific study of mediums, for demonstrating that mediums can obtain accurate information in a laboratory setting, and for making significant advances in mediumship study designs. Mediumship studies are inherently subjective. Much of the information conveyed by mediums is more right brain than left brain, more conceptual and symbolic than precise and specific. It is difficult to gauge how much white noise or personal bias the medium injects into their readings. Moreover, regardless of the sources of the information, the process does involve some type of information accessed by or transferred to the medium. As with all communications, that process is likely to be inexact.

If, as the current theory suggests, some of mediums' information is obtained by super-psi, anyone associated with the study to any degree may be influencing the results. And, since the access or transfer of information via super-psi is primarily unconscious, it is very difficult to fashion design controls that prevent contamination or leakage. Researchers cannot know for certain which controls help and which hinder the process or the results. Schwartz and Russek posit<sup>136</sup> that being a part of these studies may have affected the results, perhaps similar to psi researcher Dean Radin's reports that individuals watching a phenomena have been shown to

affect it.<sup>137</sup> If this is true, it complicates the design of mediumship studies and indicates that significantly more work needs to be done.

### **O’Keeffe-Wiseman Study**

In 2005, a study of five mediums and five sitters was published by Ciarán O’Keeffe and Richard Wiseman, both of whom are psychology professors, parapsychology researchers and skeptics of mediumship.<sup>138</sup> They recruited the mediums from a Spiritualist organization in the U.K., and the sitters from a university. The study was conducted on five days, with each medium doing a reading for each of the five sitters in a day, resulting in each of the five sitters being read by each of the five mediums. In all cases, the sitter was in an adjacent soundproof room listening to the music of their choice. One researcher worked with the sitters and the other with the mediums. The mediums and sitters had no contact and were blind to the others’ identities.<sup>139</sup>

Each of the readings was transcribed and broken into a series of statements. All the statements from all the readings were then randomized and sent to each sitter, who scored each statement on a scale between 1 (not applicable) and 7 (very applicable). The score for each reading was created by averaging the scores for the set of statements that comprised the reading. The resulting reading scores, averaged by sitter, ranged from 3.10 to 3.50, with a mean of 3.25. Averaged by medium, the reading scores ranged from 1.78 to 4.46, with the same mean of 3.25.<sup>140</sup>

O’Keeffe and Wiseman analyzed the data to determine if a significant difference could be found in the sitters’ ratings of their own readings compared to sitters’ ratings of the decoy readings (the ones intended for other sitters), and found no significance in any of the analyses. In fact, only one instance found a sitter rating his own reading higher than the ratings of the other

four sitters for that reading.<sup>141</sup> The authors concluded that this study “did not support the existence of mediumship ability. . . . It is possible that genuine mediumistic ability does not exist . . . . Alternatively, it is possible that genuine mediumistic abilities do exist, but that this study failed to find evidence of them because, for example, the mediums involved in the experiment do not possess such abilities or the setting in which the study was conducted did not elicit such abilities.”<sup>142</sup>

Julie Beischel, who worked with Gary Schwartz on the study discussed in the next section, questioned two key aspects of the O’Keeffe-Wiseman study. First, no trial runs were done with the mediums to see if they could perform under the stringent conditions of the experiment. Rather than concluding that these mediums are not accurate, Beischel might conclude that these mediums were not accurate under the conditions of this experiment.<sup>143</sup> Her analogy for creating the appropriate conditions for experiments with mediums is both reasonable and evocative.

One cannot study football on a basketball court using baseball players and the rules of hockey. If negative results are achieved in this situation, it is not appropriate to conclude that the phenomenon of football has been disproven. In turn, it is not appropriate to claim that a quarterback has exceeded passing records if all (or even some) of his passes occurred in the absence of a defense or using a non-regulation ball. In order to study football appropriately, only trained, skilled participants and the established equipment, environment, and regulations should be used. The same is true of mediumship. Thus, negative results from a study using methods that did not appropriately optimize the experimental environment and positive results from a study that did not maximize all possible controls are equally ineffective in establishing new scientific knowledge.<sup>144</sup>

Second, she believes that randomizing the statements in the readings has the potential of losing potentially relevant information. Because human conversation is contextual with interdependent statements, taking statements out of context and out of order is, to use Beischel’s metaphor, like playing football on a basketball court.

In addition to Beischel's observations about the protocol in this study, the fact that the researchers are skeptics could also affect the results. Evidence has shown that experimenters' beliefs can affect the results of psi studies.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, as Beischel correctly observes, because "the mechanisms and limits of telepathy as well as other parapsychological phenomena such as precognition and clairvoyance are unknown at this time, definitive controls for them are not possible."<sup>146</sup> We do not understand the factors that contribute to some studies finding anomalous information being accurately received by mediums, and other studies finding no such evidence.

### **Beischel-Schwartz Study**

Beischel and Schwartz improved the design methodologies used by Schwartz and Russek in a triple-blind study using eight mediums and eight volunteer sitters.<sup>147</sup> The eight sitters were chosen based on four key criteria: 1) an answer of "yes" or "unsure" to a question about belief in an afterlife; 2) the willingness to participate in mediumship research; 3) having had a "very close" relationship with someone who was deceased (the "discarnate"); and 4) the discarnate could be paired with the discarnate of another selected sitter, according to the study's protocol. The discarnate pairing protocol matched discarnates of the same gender while maximizing differences of "age, physical description, personality description, cause of death, and hobbies/activities. Four deceased parents were paired with four deceased peers of the same gender for a total of four pairs of sitters."<sup>148</sup> Each sitter-discarnate pair was read by two different mediums, so each sitter had four readings to score, two actual readings and two control readings. All readings were done over the telephone.

Unlike the earlier Schwartz-Russek studies where the mediums reported information from any discarnates who appeared, this study was designed for the medium to focus on a

specific discarnate identified earlier by the sitter. The study was triple-blind: 1) the medium knew nothing about the sitter-discarnate pair other than the first name of the discarnate; 2) the researchers acted as proxy sitters and were blind to any information about the sitters or discarnates, other than first name of discarnates; and 3) the sitter was absent and did not know when the reading was scheduled.

Each reading was structured into three parts: 1) “Deceased-Directed,” where the medium provided whatever information they received, after being given the first name of the discarnate; 2) “Life Questions,” where the proxy sitters “asked four specific questions about the named discarnate’s physical appearance, personality, hobbies, and cause of death;”<sup>149</sup> and 3) “Reverse Question,” where “the experimenter asked, ‘Does the discarnate have any comments, questions, or requests for the sitter?’”<sup>150</sup> The transcripts for each pair of sitters were generated by a researcher blind to information about the sitters and discarnates. The appropriate pair of transcripts was scored by each sitter on three different scales. Both readings were: 1) scored item-by-item on a 7-point scale for “fit” and a four-point emotional significance scale; and 2) given an overall numerical score between six (“Excellent reading, including strong aspects of communication, and with essentially no incorrect information”<sup>151</sup>) and zero (“No correct information or communication”<sup>152</sup>). Finally, each sitter made a forced choice, choosing the reading that was more applicable to them, and then rating that choice on a five-point scale of “clearly more applicable to me . . . [to] neither seemed applicable to me.”<sup>153</sup> The published results of this study evaluate the latter two scoring methods, which rated overall quality and overall applicability. The results of the item-by-item scoring were not included and have not been published.

The results of the sitters' overall scoring of the transcripts were positive and statistically significant for both measures. The summary quality rating scores were significantly higher for the actual readings (mean = 3.56) than for the control readings (mean = 1.94), with a *t* test score of 3.105, which is significant at  $p < 0.01$ . On the forced choice rating, 81% of the sitters chose the reading with their discarnate, also a significant result at  $p=0.01$ , using a one-tailed exact binomial. It is actually quite amazing that mediums can report ANY accurate information, after being given only the first name of a discarnate otherwise unknown to them, while conducting a reading with a proxy sitter who has no additional information about the actual sitter or discarnate, and when the actual sitter is unaware the reading is occurring.

This study also reports an average overall quality rating for each medium, with quite a range of results. Three of the mediums had excellent results, averaging scores on the actual readings between 5.0 and 5.5 out of a possible 6.0, with the corresponding control readings being rated between 1.5 and 2.0. Two of the mediums had more modest results of 3.5 for the actual readings, with the control readings scored at 2.0 and 2.5, and three of the mediums had essentially the same scores for actual and control readings, with scores between 1.0 and 3.0. The differences among the mediums in this study indicates either differences in the mediums' abilities to find, access, and/or receive information or in the sources' abilities to offer and send information.

### **Kelly-Arcangel Studies**

In early 2011, Emily Kelly, a parapsychology researcher and author, and Dianne Arcangel, a grief counselor and author, published two studies in which they collaborated as investigators. After the first study produced results that were not significant, they revamped their

protocol and conducted a larger second study with results that were highly significant.<sup>154</sup> In both studies the investigators acted as proxy sitters, and the readings were conducted by telephone.

### *Study #1*

In the first study, four mediums provided three readings each for a total of 12 sitters. Each sitter knew when their reading was scheduled, and they were instructed to sit quietly and think about the discarnate(s) they wanted to contact. At the beginning of the reading, a proxy sitter gave the medium the first name and birthday (month and date only) of a sitter.

Each reading was transcribed and each sitter was sent their own reading plus three control readings. The sitters scored each item in each reading for accuracy and significance, and then chose the reading they thought was theirs. The results were not significant; only two sitters chose their intended reading. The chance expectation is three.<sup>155</sup>

### *Study #2*

For the second study, Kelly and Arcangel made significant changes to their protocol. In this study, the sitters were not told when their reading would occur, and the mediums were given a photograph of the discarnate rather than information about the sitter. The study included nine mediums, two who did six readings each (for a total of 12), and seven who did four readings each (for a total of 28), and 40 sitters. Based on the appearance of the person in the photograph, the discarnates were assigned to one of four groups—males over 30, males under 30, females over 30, and females under 30.

After the readings were transcribed, sitters were sent their intended reading plus five more readings from their discarnate group for scoring. Unlike the previous study, the sitters did

not score each item in the readings. Rather, they gave each reading an overall score between one and ten. Thirty-eight sitters returned their scores, and their ratings were converted to ranks of one through six, and then analyzed using the sum-of-ranks method. The results were highly significant.<sup>156</sup>

The researchers discuss the possibility that some information about the discarnate could be obtained from looking at the photograph, and conclude that it is unlikely to have influenced the results beyond a minimal degree. The most obvious factors, gender and age, are neutralized by scoring the reading from a discarnate with five other readings of discarnates with the same gender and a similar age. Moreover, studies assessing the information that can be gained from still photographs show inconsistent and inconclusive results.<sup>157</sup> Using a photograph of the discarnate as the medium's prompt is quite an interesting idea. Since, as is discussed in a later section, much of the information mediums' receive is visual, a visual starting point for the reading may very well be helpful in establishing a connection with the correct discarnate. It may, however, open the study to criticism because of the possible use of "cold reading" techniques (e.g., using the appearance of the discarnate to posit information about them).

This second Kelly-Arcangel study is the largest and most successful laboratory study with mediums, so it is an important contribution to mediumship research. The major issue with the protocol, in this author's opinion, is the lack of blinding among Kelly and the sitters. Kelly knew approximately one-third of the sitters, some of whom were close friends. In addition, she knew the relationship of the sitter and the discarnate in a similar number of cases and, in a few cases, actually knew the discarnate. Two sitters were used in both Study #1 and Study #2. While the researchers report that the sitters' scoring of the readings appear to have no correlation with the information Kelly knew about the sitters and discarnates,<sup>158</sup> it is unfortunate that stricter

selection criteria and blinding were not used. The state-of-the-art for mediumship research includes full blinding of researchers, mediums, and sitters.

## **Research with Mediums in Group Settings**

### **Robertson and Roy Studies**

In the same time period as the Schwartz-Russek and Beischel-Schwartz laboratory studies with mediums, Archie Roy, a physics and astronomy professor at Glasgow University, and his colleague T. J. Robertson collected data for two extended periods from sessions where mediums provided readings for one or more participants in either a public venue or a smaller, private setting.

#### *Study #1: Preliminary Study Assessing Acceptance of Mediums' Statements*

Some skeptics of mediumship assert that mediums' statements are often so general that they are easily applicable and readily accepted as true by both recipients (the person to whom the medium is directing the statements) and non-recipients (all other persons attending the session). The purpose of this two-year study was to measure and compare non-recipients' acceptance of mediums' statements with recipients' acceptance of the statements. In this study, ten mediums gave readings to 44 recipients, after which each statement in the reading was either accepted or rejected by the recipient as applicable. The 44 readings were also rated for applicability by 407 non-recipients, individuals who were present at a session with a medium but who were not given a reading.<sup>159</sup> If the skeptics' assertion of the generality of mediums' statements were true, no appreciable difference would be shown between the number of statements accepted by the recipients and non-recipients. Based on this premise, Robertson and Roy assumed the non-recipients' ratings of the statements in the reading represented the results attributable to chance.

Comparing non-recipients' ratings with actual recipients' ratings resulted in an extremely wide gap; the calculated probability of the recipients' results being due to chance was less than one in 10,000 million.<sup>160</sup>

In the later parts of this study, they experimented with a weighting process that would further refine the scoring by assigning lower weights to more general statements, those chosen more often by non-recipients, and higher weights to more specific statements, those chosen less often by non-recipients.<sup>161</sup> Their preliminary results from use of the weighting suggested that the gap between the recipients scoring and non-recipients scoring widens when weights are applied.<sup>162</sup>

In all sessions, the recipient was randomly selected before the session by one of the experimenters who drew a number from a set of cards that corresponded to one of the chairs in the audience. Therefore, it was not possible for the mediums to have any prior information about the recipient. However, this study had two critical design issues which were enumerated and discussed by Robertson and Roy, which made the results less impactful than they otherwise might have been. First, in all experiments, the recipient was known to all participants, so there is the potential for rater bias from both recipients and non-recipients. Second, since these were in-person readings, it was possible for the mediums to use some cold reading techniques, e.g., using the appearance of the recipient as a basis for statements and observing the recipients reaction to the statements given.<sup>163</sup>

Robertson and Roy then created a more robust protocol which eliminated the two issues identified in the first study, and which introduced a double-blind element so that neither of them, as researchers, could influence the results while the experiments were underway.<sup>164</sup> They

implemented several variations of this new protocol, the Robertson-Roy Protocol (RRP), in a second study.

*Study #2: Applying the Robertson-Roy Protocol to a Series of Experiments*

In the RRP, as in their Study #1, the recipient was selected by one of the researchers, although more care was taken to ensure blinding of the researchers for the duration of the protocol, from the selection process through the scoring of all readings. The RRP had two primary differences from Study #1: 1) the medium sat behind a screen and faced away from the audience, so the medium received no visual or verbal clues from the recipient; and 2) the participants did not know the identity of the recipient. Thirteen experiments were carried out over a two-and-a-half year period, using ten mediums, approximately 300 participants, and generating 73 sets of statements (i.e., 73 readings).<sup>165</sup>

Rather than implementing the RRP as designed, the researchers developed eight different variations of the protocol, so that, in addition to comparing results across all the experiments, they could also analyze the effect of different variations on the results. In many sessions, several different variations of the protocol were used. In total, eight experimental designs were used: 1) RRP as written; 2) RRP except that participants know the identity of the intended recipient; 3) RRP except that the participants are falsely informed of the identity of the intended recipient; 4) RRP except that the medium does not do a reading for anyone present, rather the medium reads a set of statements from a previous experiment with a different medium and different participants (thus, the recipient is not among the participants); 5) Design #4, except that a participant is falsely identified as a recipient; 6) the protocol from Study #1; 7) RRP, except that the medium chooses a recipient at random prior to going behind the screen; 8) Design #7, except that the medium indicates the recipient to all participants.<sup>166</sup>

First, analyzing the data across all experiments (approximately 1,700 data points) and comparing the results for recipients versus non-recipients, the researchers show that the two populations are distinctly different and that the probability that this difference is due to chance is less than one in 100,000,000 million.<sup>167</sup> Second, the researchers compared the data across the variations in the experiment, attempting to quantify the effects of various individual factors (e.g., a participant knowing he's the recipient, a participant incorrectly believing he's the recipient). While the results of this comparative analysis are too involved to explain here, one conclusion is noteworthy. Robertson and Roy's results indicate that "believing oneself to be the recipient (even though one is not) may influence one to accept rather more statements than one would otherwise."<sup>168</sup> This confirms that rater bias exists.

### **Issues in Researching Psi**

Despite the recent successes in laboratory research of mediums, significant issues still exist in designing studies for psi research, including, but not limited to, studies of mediums. This section explores several of the important issues that affect all psi researchers.

In 2003, Jane Burns, a physicist and founding editor of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, summarized the issues that prevent a wider acceptance of psi by non-psi scientists. "[A]lthough the existence of psi is not proved, there is sufficient evidence for it that if psi were any ordinary phenomenon, it would probably be provisionally accepted and non-controversial. That this is not the case appears to be due to (1) its elusive nature . . . (2) its major differences from known physical principles . . . and (3) the lack of any generally accepted theory which can account for those differences."<sup>169</sup> An in-depth discussion of Burns' second and third factors are better addressed by quantum physicists, consciousness researchers, and psi theorists, and are

beyond the scope of this dissertation document. The remainder of this section summarizes the key issues which confront all psi researchers due to the inherent elusive nature of psi, and then concludes with two issues unique to mediumship research.

## **Psi is Anomalous and Elusive**

The elusive nature of psi is well known to researchers. Hal Puthoff was a theoretical and experimental physicist and the founder and first director of the CIA/Defense Intelligence Agency project in remote viewing,<sup>170</sup> a form of psi where a person “sees” in their mind’s eye a location that is well outside their physical sight. In the following, he summarizes how much we still do not know, even after 20 years of experience with remote viewing. “The evidence is in—solidly in. But our ability to rely on remote viewing as an intelligence tool isn’t ready for prime-time TV and that’s a very real problem. We don’t know enough. The results produced by remote viewing have been truly impressive but they’re inconsistent, unpredictable, and we know very little about who’s good at it or why. That makes the findings easy to tear apart.”<sup>171</sup>

Because psi seems to work outside of known physical principles, researchers do not know how it works. No accepted theoretical underpinning has been developed for psi. As a consequence, in designing psi studies, researchers do not know “what variables are involved, much less how to control them.”<sup>172</sup> That makes the results of psi studies inconsistent and unpredictable. Dean Radin, a psi researcher for more than two decades, notes the recurring theme among researchers from William James to the present. “Real psi is profoundly important from a scientific point of view, and at first glance it doesn’t seem to be so complicated. Most psi experiments are ridiculously simple, at least in principle. . . . Then, after a few decades of

chipping away at the puzzle, the investigators . . . admit that they're convinced psi really does exist, but understanding . . . [it] remains an enigma."<sup>173</sup>

These inherent difficulties in researching psi lead scientists to a fairly obvious question. Is it even possible to prove psi using scientific methods?

## **Can Psi Be Proved using Scientific Methods?**

Freeman Dyson, a "theoretical physicist and mathematician, famous for his work in quantum field theory, solid-state physics, and nuclear engineering,"<sup>174</sup> has theorized that it may be impossible to test psychic phenomena with scientific methods.

I am suggesting that paranormal mental abilities and scientific method may be complementary. The word "complementary" is a technical term introduced into physics by Niels Bohr. It means that two descriptions of nature may both be valid but cannot be observed simultaneously. The classic example of complementarity is the dual nature of light. In one experiment light is seen to behave as a continuous wave, in another experiment it behaves as a swarm of particles, but we cannot see the wave and the particles in the same experiment. Complementarity in physics is an established fact. The extension of the idea of complementarity to mental phenomena is pure speculation. But I find it plausible that a world of mental phenomena should exist, too fluid and evanescent to be grasped with the cumbersome tools of science.<sup>175</sup>

Dyson believes that testing psi through controlled scientific experiments may be impossible.

However, he also states that substantial evidence exists for the presence of paranormal events.

"The hypothesis that paranormal phenomena are real but lie outside the limits of science is supported by a great mass of evidence. The evidence has been collected by the Society for Psychical Research [SPR] in Britain and by similar organizations in other countries. . . . The evidence is entirely anecdotal. It has nothing to do with science, since it cannot be reproduced under controlled conditions. But the evidence is there."<sup>176</sup> Notice that Dyson equates science with the ability to produce results under controlled conditions. That is not a universally accepted position, as will be discussed in the next section.

Dyson also describes the conditions under which paranormal events tend to occur, and why these occurrences are incompatible with scientific experiments. “One fact that emerges clearly from the stories is that paranormal events occur, if they occur at all, only when people are under stress and experiencing strong emotion. This fact would immediately explain why paranormal phenomena are not observable under the conditions of a well-controlled scientific experiment. Strong emotion and stress are inherently incompatible with controlled scientific procedures.”<sup>177</sup>

## **What Scientific Methods Should Be Used in Psi Research?**

### **Case Studies vs. Laboratory Tests**

Lawrence LeShan, a psychologist, educator, and author of books on psychotherapy, meditation, and the paranormal,<sup>178</sup> would agree with some of Dyson’s assertions and disagree with others. LeShan also criticizes psychic researchers’ focus on laboratory experiments, but for very different reasons than Dyson.

In his latest book, *A New Science of the Paranormal: The Promise of Psychological Research*, LeShan outlines his views of the important next steps in psychological research, and asserts that recent psi researchers are using the wrong methods. In this book, LeShan distinguishes between the term “parapsychology,” which he defines as the study of psychic phenomena produced in a lab, such as telepathic card guessing,<sup>179</sup> and “psychical research,” which he defines as the study of “the large meaningful events . . . [such as] deathbed apparitions, instances of precognition, poltergeist activity, and so forth.”<sup>180</sup> LeShan’s book is a call to arms to return to psychical research. He believes parapsychologists’ attempts to create and measure psychic phenomena in a

lab are misguided. In his view, because we do not have enough understanding of the mechanisms at work in psi, creating reproducible experiments is, at best, a crap shoot, and at worst, useless.<sup>181</sup>

LeShan's book is a call for psychical researchers to return to their roots and study the spontaneous phenomena that emerge. "These [phenomena] did not just occur at random. They had some meaning, even if we did not know exactly what it was. They let the observer know that something important and out of the ordinary had happened, something that had real meaning, even if we could not discover at the moment what that meaning was."<sup>182</sup>

LeShan's tone is quite emphatic and forceful in his list of suggestions for moving forward in psychical research:

1. Get over the idea that science is only a matter of controlled experiments done in a laboratory. Geology, astronomy, anthropology, and ethology gave up this belief, and they seem to be doing quite well. . . .
2. Get over the Enlightenment idea that all the universe is rational and that there is only one meaning to that word and that everything works on the same principles. . . .
3. Stop trying to prove the existence of psi and get on with studying its properties. If someone does not believe the proofs already published, he or she is not going to believe new ones. . . .
4. Stop trying to define psi, and start studying its relationships to other observables. Even if we cannot say what gravity *is*, we can explore its relationships to masses and distances. . . .
5. . . . Parapsychological researchers studying the large, meaningful cases should not be thrown off course when they hear the word *anecdotal*. . . . If the event is one that the person is comfortable with, he will call it a "case presentation" and refer to it approvingly from time to time. If not, he will dismiss it as "anecdotal." A datum . . . either occurred or did not occur, and labeling it is not going to change that fact. . . . [I]n science the theory must *always* bow to the fact.<sup>183</sup>

LeShan and Dyson agree that studying psychic events in scientific laboratories is not the most productive use of researchers' time. However, they disagree on whether other forms of study and research are, in fact, scientific. The crux of their disagreement concerns the definition of "scientific methods."

## Success in Laboratory Studies

Meanwhile, some studies do provide evidence disputing LeShan's and Dyson's assertions that laboratory experiments are ineffective. Psi researcher and author Dean Radin conducted a meta-analysis of meta-analyses of studies in dream psi, ganzfeld psi (described below), conscious and unconscious detection of being stared at, unconscious detection of distant intention, dice psychokinesis and random number generator psychokinesis.<sup>184</sup> Constituting over one thousand studies, the combined odds are  $10^{104}$  to 1 that the results were due to chance.<sup>185</sup> And, still more laboratory studies in other areas were not included in Radin's analysis.

The two types of studies that have been most successful in laboratories are the recent mediumship studies, described earlier in this chapter, and the ganzfeld studies. The mediumship studies, while still limited in number and sample size, are the precursors to this author's study. The following section summarizes a meta-analysis of the ganzfeld studies of telepathy, arguably the most successful laboratory-based studies of psi.

### *Ganzfeld Telepathy Studies—The “Gold Standard” for Laboratory Studies*

The ganzfeld studies were laboratory experiments that measured possible telepathy between two people, a sender and a receiver. In the protocol, the receiver was deprived of outside sensory stimuli, while the sender concentrated on telepathically sending a target image. During the session, the receiver thought “out loud, describing whatever images or thoughts came to mind.”<sup>186</sup> At the end of the session, the receiver was shown four images and ranked them. If the target image was given the top ranking, it was scored as a “hit.” Since the receiver was shown four possible images, the hit rate expected by chance is one in four, or 25%.<sup>187</sup>

The ganzfeld studies were numerous and successful. “From 1974 to 1997, some 2,549 ganzfeld sessions were reported in at least forty publications by researchers around the world.”<sup>188</sup> “From 1974 through 2004 a total of 88 ganzfeld experiments reporting 1,008 hits in 3,145 trials were conducted. The combined hit rate was 32% as compared to the chance-expected 25%. This 7% above-chance effect is associated with odds against chance of . . . 29 quintillion to 1.”<sup>189</sup>

The protocol was analyzed and improved. And, even more important, ganzfeld researcher Charles Honorton worked with scientist and psi skeptic Ray Hyman to combine their independent meta-analyses of ganzfeld studies. Together, they “came up with a single and shared conclusion: the patterns of correspondence between receivers’ imagery and images purportedly sent by senders didn’t appear random and couldn’t be explained by methodological flaws in the studies. . . . Honorton and Hyman went on to spell out the joint communiqué’s most powerful contribution, detailed guidelines for further experiments. . . . A number of investigators promptly produced new experiments adhering to the communiqué’s guidelines. . . . [These] experiments confirmed the results of earlier . . . studies and obtained the same overall hit rate of around 35 percent. . . . A gold standard for subsequent studies of anomalous cognition was slowly being established.”<sup>190</sup>

### **Issues with Laboratory Studies of Psi**

As discussed in the previous section, there has been success with laboratory studies of psi (in dream psi, ganzfeld psi, conscious and unconscious detection of being stared at, unconscious detection of distant intention, dice psychokinesis, random number generator psychokinesis, and mediums). However, this success has come in spite of the very significant issues which continue to confront psi researchers. This section highlights several key issues that arise when studying

psi: three issues unique to laboratory studies— replication, the “decline effect,” and the “experimenter effect,” then two additional issues confronting all psi researchers, whether in or out of the lab—the dearth of psi researchers and the lack of acceptance of psi research by the mainstream scientific community.

### *Issues with Replicability*

In a recent *Journal of Parapsychology* editorial, parapsychology researcher John Palmer summarized the current goal of laboratory studies—replicability. “In the old days, we attempted to make our case through fool-proof (and magician-proof) ‘crucial experiments.’ This approach never succeeded, although the alternative explanations critics proposed were sometimes at least as implausible as psi itself. . . . Nowadays, the replicability of good-quality, if not perfect, experiments has taken over as the criterion of success.”<sup>191</sup> Because of the anomalous nature of psi, replication presents significant issues. Rex Stanford, a psychologist and parapsychological researcher, listed the major issues confronting those who attempt to replicate prior studies. It is a rather daunting list.

Among, but not nearly exhausting, the potential causes of replication failure are the following: (a) Cross-studies inconsistency in situational variables may differentially affect psi-task performance; (b) sensorially mediated experimenter-expectancy effects may bias the outcome to falsely support the individual experimenter’s expectations; (c) psi-mediated experimenter effects may exist and may have similar consequences as (b) above; (d) different populations may be sampled, thus affecting the outcomes; (e) a replication study may invalidly operationalize a hypothetical construct that was validly operationalized in the original work; (f) an original finding may be a statistical fluke; and (g) the replication study may have an insufficient sample size to reach statistical significance.<sup>192</sup>

While many of the items Stanford lists are issues that can arise in attempting to replicate non-psi studies with human subjects (e.g., inconsistency in situational variables, experimenter-expectancy effects, different populations sampled), psi studies are even more sensitive to this

wide range of variables. Philosophy professor and survival researcher Stephen Braude has quite succinctly summarized the replication issues. “The history of psi research suggests strongly that psychic functioning, like most other cognitive capacities, is highly situation-sensitive, context-dependent, and susceptible to an enormous range of positive and negative influences, including mood, belief system, interpersonal relations, and even geophysical and celestial variables.”<sup>193</sup>

We do not yet understand how most of these variables operate, much less how to control them in laboratory experiments. One of the variables that has been independently studied, the experimenter effect, is discussed in the next section.

### *The “Experimenter” Effect*

For the past 40-plus years, psi researchers have noticed that there are some experimenters who “usually find statistically significant amounts of psi manifesting in their experiments, and others who usually get mostly chance results.”<sup>194</sup> Psi researcher Matthew Smith conducted a study to see if any relationship could be established between experimenters’ beliefs in psi and their track records of getting significant psi results in their own studies. After identifying 50 psi researchers, he asked each to answer six questions regarding their own beliefs in psi, as well as to rate each of the 50 researchers (including themselves) on a scale of psi-conducive to psi-inhibitory.<sup>195</sup> Forty researchers returned the questionnaires; their ratings of their fellow researchers “resulted in 41 psi-conducive researchers, 5 psi-inhibitory researchers, and 4 researchers classified as neither.”<sup>196</sup> Smith’s study showed a significant correlation between psi-conduciveness and three of the questions about psi beliefs: belief in one’s own ESP ability, belief that ESP is possible, and belief that ESP can be demonstrated in an experiment. While correlations do not show causality, some element of a self-fulfilling prophecy may be at work.

“A history of obtaining positive evidence for psi is likely to have a positive impact on one’s own attitudes towards psi, especially one’s thoughts about whether it is possible to demonstrate psi in an experimental study. Similarly, an experimenter who consistently does not obtain evidence for psi is likely to become less convinced of the reality of psi.”<sup>197</sup>

### *The “Decline” Effect*

Another interesting, and as yet unexplainable, issue with all psi studies, including the ganzfeld studies, is the “decline effect.” Dean Radin describes it this way: “[A] frequent observation in psi research is that when a new experiment is first conducted the outcomes are strikingly successful. Then, as others try to replicate the effects they begin to fade. Sometimes even the original investigators start to have problems replicating their own work.”<sup>198</sup> The results of the ganzfeld studies clearly show the decline effect. “When we compare the first 44 ganzfeld experiments (average year of publication was 1981) with the last 44 studies (average year 1998), we find that the former had 34.4% hit rate and the latter had a 30.3% hit rate.”<sup>199</sup>

Radin hypothesizes that the decline effect is caused, at least in part, by the changing goals of the studies and by the participants’ level of emotional connection to those goals. “Earlier, proof-oriented studies were focused purely on demonstrating psi. They tended to use simple designs and were exciting and motivating for both investigators and participants. By contrast, the goal of later, process-oriented studies was to understand how psi works. Those studies used more complicated designs and they tended to be less personally motivating.”<sup>200</sup> While not explaining this effect, Radin observes that similar decline effects occur in experiments in the biological sciences, studies which also involve complex systems where the numerous interactions among the many variables are unknown.

At least one observation by a skilled participant supports Radin's (and others') theory of the importance of being emotionally engaged in a psi study. "Eileen Garrett, New York's reigning queen of telepathy and clairvoyance in the 1930s . . . and one of the finest psychics the world had ever seen,"<sup>201</sup> participated in J. B. Rhine's card reading experiments. She was astonished to discover that she had no aptitude for the experiments, and finally concluded that she was bored. If the experiment had no sense of personal involvement and emotional connection, she received no information.<sup>202</sup>

The existence of the decline effect does support Freeman Dyson's contention that the occurrence of psi is dependent upon an emotional connection by the participants. While the successful laboratory studies of psi demonstrate that the decline effect can be overcome, it certainly contributes to the difficulties in measuring psi.

In addition to the problems unique to laboratory studies of psi, additional issues also create barriers for research progress in psi, for both laboratory-based studies and studies of spontaneous occurrences of psi. The two most significant barriers are the dearth of practicing researchers and the on-going stigma attached to research in psi and parapsychology. These two additional issues are summarized in the following two sections.

### *Few Psi Researchers*

In 2006, Radin estimated that there were "fewer than 50 conventionally trained doctoral-level scientists around the world engaged in full-time psi research."<sup>203</sup> Approximately twelve university-based parapsychology research centers are active around the world, with only two in the U.S., at the University of Arizona and University of Virginia.<sup>204</sup> For almost 30 years, Princeton University had a research program called the Princeton Engineering Anomalies

Research, but it closed in 2007.<sup>205</sup> Career information on the University of Virginia's Department of Perceptual Studies' website is not encouraging for those who want to join the field. "Opportunities for making a full-time career in parapsychology are very rare, since there are presently many more qualified people wishing to work in the field than there are funds for their support."<sup>206</sup> It is somewhat surprising to note the surplus of qualified people interested in working in psi research, when, as the next section highlights, this area is without widespread acceptance in much of the scientific community.

### *Negative Views of Psi Research within the Scientific Community*

Describing the mainstream scientific community's attitude toward psi research as lacking in acceptance is a bit of an understatement. It is probably more accurate to describe the attitude as either indifferent or actively hostile. While the general public is progressively more open to psychic phenomena,<sup>207</sup> no such progress has been made within the mainstream scientific community. Henry Sidgwick's comments to the Society of Psychical Research in 1882 are, unfortunately, still true today. "It is a scandal that the dispute as to the reality of these [psi] phenomena should still be going on, that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them, that so many others should be profoundly interested in having the question determined, and yet that the educated world, as a body, should still be simply in the attitude of incredulity."<sup>208</sup>

In fact, many psi studies are met with ridicule. The leading journal in the U.S. for skeptical reporting of paranormal studies is the *Skeptical Inquirer*, published by the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI), previously known as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP). CSICOP was founded in 1976 and changed its name

in 2006.<sup>209</sup> CSI is comprised of psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, science writers and other researchers from many well-known and well-respected universities (e.g., Harvard University, Yale University School of Medicine, Oxford University), publications (e.g., *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Scientific American*), and research and educational organizations (e.g., Center for Inquiry Office of Public Policy, NASA Ames Research Center, National Center for Science Education).

Elizabeth Mayer, a psychiatrist and clinician who wrote a book on psi research after a personal experience with an anomalous event, was amazed at the tone of most articles in this journal. “Reading the *Skeptical Inquirer* was like reading a fundamentalist religious tract. I found the journal dismayingly snide, regularly punctuated by sarcasm, self-congratulation, and nastiness, all parading as reverence for true science.”<sup>210</sup> To her credit, Mayer also acknowledges the unconscious elemental fear that is very likely underneath these contributors’ swaggering attitude. If someone really understands and accepts the implications of psi, “it shakes foundations. I think it may be as basic as any fear there is. . . . It reaches straight into the most deeply intimate, personal ways we’ve learned to trust the world and ourselves in it. In the face of fear like that, no wonder rational consideration of apparently anomalous experience is so elusive. No wonder the scientific establishment looks the other way, moves elsewhere as fast as it can.”<sup>211</sup> While this understanding does not excuse the condescending attitudes of many mainstream scientists, it does help to explain them.

Mayer’s perspective of CSICOP and its skeptics is echoed and reinforced by Marcello Truzzi, a sociology professor and co-founder of CSICOP, who left the committee within the first year because he found it to be too one-sided.<sup>212</sup> Himself a skeptic of psi, he summarizes how many mainstream scientists describe psi researchers, and then makes an important distinction

between “skeptic” and “scoffer.” [The following quote is lengthy, but is included in its entirety because it provides an excellent refutation of the “scoffers” techniques.]

As conservative science confronts the threat of anomalies, it may defend itself with excessive zeal. . . . [Psi researchers are] described as “cranks” . . . and as making “errors,” [or] openly called “crackpots” (crazy) and are accused of “fraud.” . . . [P]ejorative labels such as “pseudoscience” and “pathology” [are also] . . . ascribed to the claims and methods. . . .

Perhaps the most insidious rhetorical trick has been the misappropriation of the label “skeptic” to describe what are actually *scoffers*. . . .

A skeptic contends that “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” The scoffer, on the other hand, sees the failure of proponents as evidence that an anomaly claim has been *disproved*. . . . It is common to hear statements to the effect that “there is no evidence supporting a claim” when in fact it is merely *inadequate* evidence that has been presented. Evidence is always a matter of degree, some being extremely weak; but even weak evidence can mount up (as shown by meta-analysis) to produce a stronger case. Weak evidence (most commonly anecdotal rather than systematic and experimental evidence) is often discounted, however, by assertions that it falls below some threshold of what science should consider evidence at all. This, of course, eliminates the evidential basis for most of clinical medicine and the social sciences, but that seems to hold no terror for the scoffer who invokes such criteria.<sup>213</sup>

A feature article written by Paul Kurtz and published in the *Skeptical Inquirer* in 2000 provides a good example of the approach and tone of the *Skeptical Inquirer* reviewers. Kurtz, a co-founder of CSICOP, philosopher, and emeritus philosophy professor, begins with the assertion that the public’s belief in psi is a combination of media hype and “fringe sciences,” and that, as science advances, naturalistic explanations will be found to explain the phenomena. “There is great public fascination with a paranatural/paranormal conception of the universe, fed in large part by the mass media and encouraged by a number of ‘fringe sciences,’ which claim to support this outlook. . . . I disagree with the claims of the defenders of the para: I do not think that either the paranormal or paranatural exist outside of nature or that they constitute dimensions of reality that undermine naturalism. Para is a substitute for our ignorance at any one time in history.”<sup>214</sup> He then summarizes psi research over the last 150 years, including details of the studies of several fraudulent practitioners, and concludes with these statements:

After a quarter of a century in this field of research, I find that eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable, and that unless carefully controlled studies and standards are applied, people can deceive themselves and others into believing that almost anything is true and real—from past-life regression and extraterrestrial abductions to satanic infestations and near-death experiences. . . .

I realize that this flies in the face of what the preponderance of humans wish to believe, but science should deal as best it can with what is the case, not with what we would like it to be. Unfortunately, scientific objectivity today has an uphill battle in this area in the face of media hype and the enormous public fascination with paranormal and paranatural claims.<sup>215</sup>

It is interesting to observe how he combines the study of past-life regressions and near-death experiences, which have been studied extensively by credible psi researchers, with those of extraterrestrial abductions and satanic infestations, which are not typical psi research topics. His summary also exhibits a weary, paternalistic tone, as if he is tired of explaining the facts to those who are unable or unwilling to understand them. Montague Keen, a 50-year member of the SPR and a mediumship researcher,<sup>216</sup> wrote a detailed response reviewing the deficiencies in Kurtz's article, "in particular the areas which Kurtz either ignores entirely or misrepresents, notably in the extensive literature relating to early mediumistic communications whose paranormality has yet to be undermined by any objective examination, [and provides examples] of the unscientific manner in which skeptics seek to mislead readers."<sup>217</sup> Keen wanted to have his response published in the *Skeptical Inquirer*, but after first being told that both the editor and Kurtz welcomed his response, he was given "various pretexts . . . for delay over the following 18 months until finally it became clear that the Editor was reluctant to fulfill his earlier intention."<sup>218</sup> Keen's response was subsequently published in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* in 2003.

### *Unique Issues with Communications via Mediums*

While mediumship studies share all the issues with psi laboratory studies that were discussed in the prior sections, mediumship research also faces two additional difficulties. First,

mediums have the additional challenge of verbalizing information received in non-verbal forms, and second, if mediums are actually communicating with discarnates, they are dependent on the relative skills of the discarnates to communicate effectively with a human.

### **Verbalizing Non-verbal Information**

While a fair amount of anecdotal reporting of mediums' experiences has been collected, primarily in the biographies and autobiographies of individual mediums, little aggregated information explains the process mediums use to receive the information they communicate to sitters. The most extensive compilation of mediums' reports of their experiences was published in 2003 by two Spiritualist mediums, Charles and Penelope Emmons, who, through painstaking research and interviews with contemporary mediums, compiled summary data of the communication modalities mediums use to access or receive information. Their analysis includes 98 mediums, 38 contemporary interviewees and 60 from library sources.<sup>219</sup>

The Emmons defined three communications modalities: clairvoyance, clairaudience, and clairsentience. In their study, clairvoyance (literally “clear-seeing”) and clairaudience (literally “clear-hearing”) are defined as in Chapter 1 of this document. Clairsentience is defined very broadly to include body sensations, emotional feelings, and “just knowing” without any idea where the feelings or sensations arose. The authors admit that their classifications are imprecise due to the sketchiness of reports from library sources and the difficulties their interview subjects had in describing their own modalities.<sup>220</sup> Often, the mediums do not know the origin of the data.<sup>221</sup>

Nevertheless, the Emmons' data does provide some insights into mediums' processes for obtaining information. Eliminating mediums who said they used a modality very infrequently,

70% of mediums report that their information is from clairvoyance, 61% from clairaudience, and 40% clairsentience. While most mediums had difficulty choosing a dominant modality, those who did resulted in the same order with 10% dominantly clairvoyant, 3% dominantly clairaudient, and 2% dominantly clairsentient.<sup>222</sup>

The comments from the mediums interviewed give additional details on their processes to access or receive information. Clairvoyant information is variously described as seeing in the mind's eye one of the following: a black curtain opening followed by colors and faces, snapshots, images on a strip of film, dream images, and movies.<sup>223</sup> A number of mediums use clairaudience as a signal for the precise source of the data. "One man said that he was clairaudient usually when getting information from his guides. One woman said that she always hears the voice of her spirit guide first; this is her first input, and it verifies for her the accuracy of the information to follow. Another woman said that information from her spirit guides is typically clairaudient; the information from other spirits is clairvoyant."<sup>224</sup> Much of the reported clairsentient information is difficult to explain. "One medium says that she 'senses' but does not actually see colors. . . . Another . . . medium . . . says that she can tell whether a person is in spirit or alive by the 'feel or texture of the name.'<sup>225</sup>

Of all the information mediums receive, clairaudient information must be the easiest to verbalize. All other information—dream images, pictures, movies, feelings, body sensations—has to be translated by the medium into words, which must, at least some of the time, result in a loss of context, perspective, or intensity. Therefore, for some portion of the information received, a "translation effect" occurs as the medium attempts to use words to describe non-verbal information.

## **Problems with Discarnate to Medium Communication**

While the source of the information obtained by mediums is outside the scope of this study, it is worth noting that if the source is a discarnate, some situations or circumstances are likely to affect the quality of the communications. As Braude observed, “If survival is a fact, then the process of transition, or the postmortem state itself, might simply not be optimal for producing clear communications. . . . For example, it’s not difficult or preposterous to suppose that communicators might face great obstacles in getting their messages across.”<sup>226</sup> In that vein, Frederick W. Myers, a founder of SPR and survival researcher, while allegedly “communicating through medium Geraldine Cummins, famously spoke of the difficulties of making contact with the medium as rather like attempting to dictate through a frosted glass window to a rather obtuse secretary.”<sup>227</sup>

## **Summary of Contemporary Research with Mediums**

After approximately 50 years with little published research, mediumship studies reemerged in the mid 1990s. Unlike earlier studies in which mediums were observed and recorded as they worked in their normal environments, most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century studies were laboratory-based. In the past 15 years, the studies’ designs have included increased levels of participant blinding and more rigorous protocols.

While there have been relatively few studies completed with limited numbers of participants, the results are encouraging. The Beischel protocol, in particular, has provided a well-developed model for subsequent research. The protocol for this dissertation study, as defined in Chapter 3, uses the Beischel protocol as its foundation.

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## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

### Background

Julie Beischel, co-founder and Director of Research at the Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential, has designed the Beischel Quintuple-blind Protocol<sup>1</sup> (the “Beischel protocol”), the most current protocol for working with mediums. This protocol blinds the mediums, the sitters, and three researchers (hence the quintuple blinding), and uses a three-part reading design: 1) Discarnate-directed, 2) Life Questions, and 3) Reverse Question. The Discarnate-directed segment allows the discarnates to begin the reading by conveying information of their choosing. The Life Questions segment asks the discarnate for answers to four questions concerning the former physical life: 1) How would you describe your physical appearance? 2) How would you describe your personality? 3) What were your hobbies or favorite activities? 4) What was the cause of your death? The Reverse Question segment asks the discarnate for any specific questions, comments, or requests to be conveyed by the medium to the sitter.

It is worth noting that, in the first Schwartz-Russek study, the medium “was flooded with descriptive and dynamically interactive information of a personal and emotional nature”<sup>2</sup> from the discarnates, and the medium had difficulty getting the discarnate to focus on the information she requested. The experimenters hypothesized that if the discarnates had the opportunity to convey information that was most important to them first (in the Discarnate-directed segment), it might allow them to focus more fully on their answers to the Life Questions. Beischel’s experience, in her research to date, has indicated that “[a]n emotional aspect to the information

and a motivation to convey items that will be important to the sitter appear to be the necessary components of mediumship communication.”<sup>3</sup>

The design of this dissertation study was a modified version of the Beischel protocol. While the readings in this study used the same three parts as the Beischel protocol, for the purposes of streamlining and simplification, only the Life Questions segment was scored. The information from the Discarnate-directed and Reverse Question segments were provided to the sitter as supplemental information after the Life Questions scoring was completed. As another deviation from the Beischel protocol, this dissertation study included an “etheric advisory committee” from whom the PI requested support throughout the study. This support was supplemented by the PI’s meditations and visualizations to create a web of telepathic communications among the study’s sitters, mediums, discarnates, and researchers.

## **Study Design**

### **Overview of Study Design**

Sitters were recruited and selected through email communications. Each sitter chose a discarnate for potential communications—someone with whom the sitter had a close relationship. Sitters were paired based on the genders and ages of their discarnates, matching genders but, where possible, mismatching the ages at death. The readings were done over the telephone with the sitter absent, using a proxy sitter (the PI). The proxy sitter provided the medium with only the first name of a discarnate. The readings were recorded and transcribed by the proxy sitter/PI.

After the readings were completed, each sitter was given the formatted transcripts of the Life Questions segment from two readings, their own and the one for their paired sitter, without

knowing which was their intended reading and which was the control. The sitters completed two rating scales. First, each sitter gave each Life Questions reading a Numerical Score which quantified the correctness of the information using a 7-point scale. The scale was developed for this study, and is a slightly modified version of the scale used in the Beischel protocol.<sup>4</sup> Then, each sitter chose one of the two readings as most representative of his/her disincarnate, and rated the overall applicability of the selected reading on a 5-point scale, another slight modification of the rating scale used in the Beischel protocol.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Researchers' Roles**

Three researchers were involved in the study: a Principal Investigator (PI) and two Research Assistants (RA#1 and RA#2). The PI designed the study and all materials used in the study, recruited, selected, and trained the mediums in the specific protocol, recruited but did not select the sitters, and trained the Research Assistants. Also, the PI scheduled the readings with the mediums, was the proxy sitter in all readings, transcribed all readings, and analyzed the ratings and results at the end of the study. RA#1 screened, selected, and paired the sitters. RA#2 sent the Scoring Instructions and the formatted, blinded Life Questions readings to the sitters, and compiled the sitters' ratings. The tasks of the three researchers during the experimental portion of the study were designed to match the task-segregation for each researcher as specified in the Beischel protocol.<sup>6</sup>

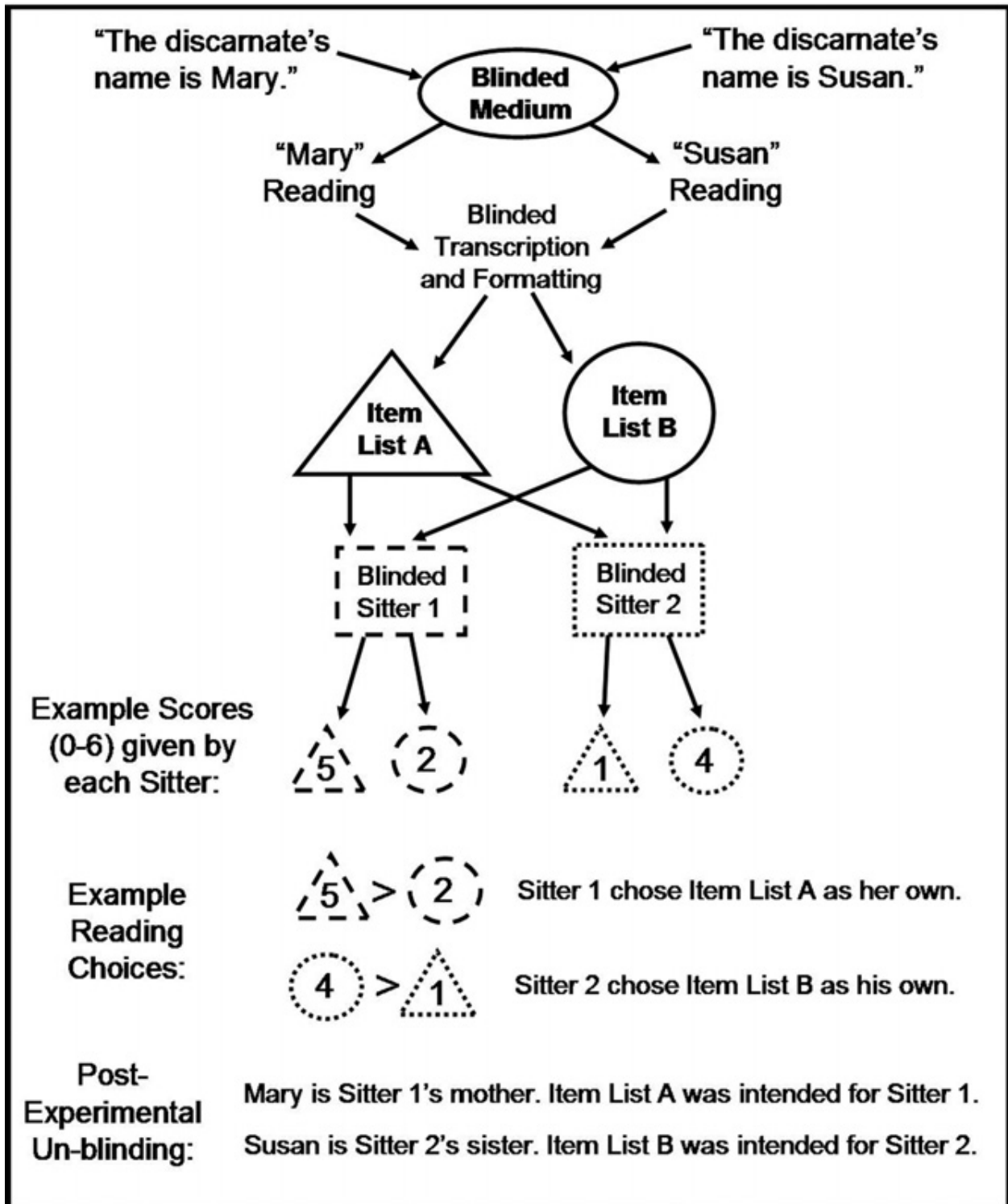
### **Blinding of Participants**

The study was quintuple blind, which refers to the number of blinded individuals associated with each reading: a sitter, a medium, and three researchers. Blinding is critical in

mediumship studies “in order to eliminate conventional factors (e.g., fraud, cold-reading, rater bias, unintentional cuing by the experimenter) as explanations for the accuracy of the information a medium provides.”<sup>7</sup> A summary of the blinding for each of the five participants is as follows: 1) The sitter did not know the identity of the medium, was not present when the reading was held, and did not know which of the two transcripts was the intended reading and which was the control. 2) The medium did not have any information about the sitter, and the sitter was absent when the reading was held. The medium was also blind to which sitters were paired, so did not know which readings would be paired as the intended and the control readings. The only information the medium had, for each reading, was the first name of a discarnate. 3) The PI, who was the proxy sitter and transcriber of the readings, had no information about the sitter, and had only the first name of a discarnate. 4) RA#1, who selected and paired the sitters, did not know the identity of any of the mediums, did not know when the readings were scheduled, did not have access to the readings or reading transcripts, and did not know which readings were intended for which sitters. 5) RA#2, who sent the scoring instructions and the transcribed, formatted readings to the sitters, did not know the identity of any of the mediums, did not know when the readings were scheduled, and did not know which reading was for which sitter.

Figure 1 shows an overview of the study design, and is reproduced from the Beischel-Schwartz triple-blind study. Appendix A.1 provides the detailed list of tasks and the information that is known and not known for each of the three researchers.

Figure 1: Overview of Study Design<sup>8</sup>



## **Summary of Pilot Study Design**

A pilot study was conducted in 2010 in two phases, March to May, and July to September. The objectives of the pilot study were two-fold: 1) to test whether the mediums could obtain accurate information in the controlled environment of the research protocol, and 2) to provide a dry run for the three researchers to implement the study's procedural steps.

Prior to the pilot study, the PI selected the mediums, using the website [www.bestpsychicdirectory.com](http://www.bestpsychicdirectory.com) as a starting point. This website was created and is maintained by Bob Olson, who is an author and researcher of mediums. The PI conducted email and telephone correspondences with potential mediums to provide information about the study, and to assess their interest and willingness to adhere to the study protocol. Appendix B.1 is a copy of the summary information provided to potential mediums via email. Appendix B.2 is a copy of the Medium Consent Form. Eleven mediums participated in the pilot study, and seven were selected for the dissertation study. A later section provides the pilot study results.

## **Two Procedural Differences Between Pilot and Dissertation Study**

The designs of the pilot study and the dissertation study were almost identical, although two procedural differences were put into place in the final study—the PI's preparations prior to each reading and the scheduling of the readings. The PI's preparations prior to the readings are described in a later section; the differences in scheduling of readings is discussed next.

After readings with eight of the pilot mediums were completed and the PI analyzed the data, she observed that a number of cases occurred where the sitter chose the control reading as more applicable and also gave it a high applicability score. In the pilot study, the PI had allowed the mediums to choose how many of their four readings they wanted to do during a single

telephone session. Some mediums chose to do two at once, others did all four. Given that scheduling, it seemed possible that some overlap could have occurred among the discarnates during a single session.

Julie Beischel, through an email consultation, recommended separating the readings into single sessions, and provided more details of her procedures. “We don't have mediums do more than one reading in one day because of the threat of ‘discarnate overlap’ and to prevent exhaustion (a lab reading is quite a bit more stressful than a 'regular' client reading). . . . [We also require] a washout period between sessions so the paired readings are at least one if not two weeks apart (there's also a control session and the order of the sessions is randomized so sometimes the control comes between the two readings). I would definitely recommend breaking them up and only do one reading per day.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, for the dissertation study, each medium did only one reading in a telephone session, and the readings were scheduled so that the medium did one or more “normal readings” between any two readings for the study.

## **Recruiting and Screening of Participants**

### **Recruiting of Mediums**

As described in a previous section, the PI recruited mediums from Bob Olson’s website ([www.bestpsychicmediums.com](http://www.bestpsychicmediums.com)), then each medium participated in the pilot study to gain familiarity with the research procedures, and to see if the medium could obtain information in the controlled environment specified by the protocol. Eleven mediums participated in the pilot study and seven were selected for the dissertation study. Of the eleven mediums in the pilot, four were men and seven were women. All are practicing professional mediums, except one who is an amateur medium and was recommended by one of the other participants. The amateur medium

was not selected for the dissertation study. After the pilot was completed, one of the seven mediums was diagnosed with a chronic illness and was unable to participate in the dissertation study. Of the six mediums participating in the dissertation study, two were men and four were women.

## **Recruiting of Sitters**

The PI used the same methodology to recruit sitters for both the pilot and the dissertation studies. Sitters were recruited through a combination of advertisements on websites (e.g., Craigslist, kijiji.com, U.S. Freeads, Jihoy.com, and backpage.com) and emails to individuals, known to the PI, who were willing to send the request for volunteers to other individuals in their address books. The single most effective recruiting ad was one placed by an instructor in a monthly publication of the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.). Well over one hundred people responded to the ads for the dissertation study, and more than 60 qualified as potential sitters.

## **Inclusion Criteria**

Sitters were screened by RA#1 using the information provided by the potential sitters on the completed questionnaire (shown in Appendix B.5). To be included in the study, the potential sitter had to be 25 years of age or older, and had to answer the following items from the questionnaire as shown in the Table below.

**Table 2: Screening Criteria for Sitters**

<b>Question #</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answers for Inclusion</b>
1	Do you believe consciousness survives death?	Yes or Unsure
3	Reason for wanting to be a sitter	Interested in communicating with discarnate
10	Do you know PI or either Research Assistant?	No
12d	How close was relationship with discarnate?	Close or Very Close
12f	Year of discarnate's passing	More than one year ago
12i	Do you feel guilt about discarnate's death?	No
12j	Rate level of grief or sadness (1 to 5)	3, 2, or 1
12n	Would discarnate want to participate in study?	Yes

### **Exclusion Criteria**

Potential sitters were excluded if they were younger than age 25, if they did not believe in post-mortem survival, if the deceased was not someone with whom they had a close emotional relationship, if the death occurred less than a year ago, if they felt guilt about the death of the deceased, if the potential sitter had more than a moderate level of grief about the deceased, if the potential sitter was not interested in communicating with the spirit of the deceased (the discarnate), if the potential sitter believed the discarnate would not want to participate in the study, or if the potential sitter knew the PI, RA#1, or RA#2.

### **Research Procedure**

The following 12 steps summarize the research procedure for the experimental portion of the study. For more details of the information communicated among the participants and the researchers at various steps in the procedure, see Appendix A.2.

1. Principal Investigator (PI) advertised for sitters, providing contact information for Research Assistant #1 (RA#1) to individuals interested in participating in the study. A copy of the advertisement for recruiting potential sitters is provided in Appendix B.3.

2. Sitters contacted RA#1 via email. RA#1 sent each potential sitter an email with a summary of the study (included as Appendix B.4) and a questionnaire (included as Appendix B.5). Using the sitters' information in the completed questionnaire, RA#1 screened the potential sitters, selected those to be included in the study, and paired each sitter with another sitter based on the gender and age of the two discarnates—matching genders and, where possible, mismatching the ages at death. The sitter pair was called a “group” and given a group number.
3. After creating a group, RA#1 notified the sitters they had been selected and provided different subsets of the information collected to the PI and to Research Assistant #2 (RA#2).
  - a. In the email notifying sitters they had been selected, RA#1 attached a Sitter Consent Form and instructions for the discarnates. The Discarnate Instructions document had two sections. The first provided text for the sitter to invite their target discarnate to the reading; the second section included a request to other discarnates who had close relationships with the sitter, asking them not to interfere in the reading. Providing instructions for the discarnates was included in the Beischel protocol as a way of honoring and acknowledging the importance of their participation.<sup>10</sup> The email used for confirming selection as a sitter, the Sitter Consent Form, and the Discarnate Instructions are included in Appendices B.6 – B.8.
  - b. RA#1 emailed the first names of the two discarnates, labeled Discarnate #1 and Discarnate #2, along with the Group # to the PI.

- c. RA#1 sent the email addresses for the two sitters, labeled Sitter #1 and Sitter #2, and the Group # to RA#2.
4. The PI scheduled reading times with mediums. All discarnate pairs were read by the same medium, but the PI mixed the scheduling of the discarnates of different groups, so the mediums did not know which discarnates were paired. The name of the discarnate was not given to the medium at this step; the PI entered the discarnate name only in her own schedule.
5. Fifteen to thirty minutes before the scheduled time of the reading, the PI meditated and asked for assistance from her etheric team, spirit guides, and spirit operators for smooth and clear communications between the discarnate and the medium.
6. At the appointed time, the PI called the medium on the telephone, provided the first name of a discarnate, and asked the medium to go through the three parts of the reading. The PI audiotaped each reading. During the reading, the PI focused on creating a sacred space for clear communication between the discarnate and the medium.
7. After a reading was completed, the PI transcribed and formatted the information, creating two documents: 1) the answers to the Life Questions segment, designated the “Life Questions Document” and 2) the information from the Discarnate-directed, Life Questions, and Reverse Question segments of the reading, designated the “Complete Reading.”
8. When both readings for a group had been completed, the PI emailed the two Life Questions Documents and the Group # to RA#2. The documents were labeled “Group # A” and “Group # B,” and the labels were randomly assigned by the PI for each group.

9. RA#2 knew, from step 3c, the email addresses for the two sitters in the Group, but did not know which reading was intended for which sitter. RA#2 emailed both Life Questions Documents to the two sitters (identified as Reading A and Reading B), along with a copy of the Scoring Instructions. If the sitters had questions on scoring, they contacted RA#2.
10. The sitters scored the Life Questions Documents and emailed their ratings to RA#2. Each sitter: (a) gave each Life Questions Document a Numerical Score, (b) chose which Life Questions Document was more applicable to the discarnate, and (c) gave the more applicable reading an Applicability Score. (A later section provides detail on the rating scales used by the sitters.)
11. After RA#2 recorded the two sitters' ratings, she notified the PI via email, and the PI emailed RA#2 the two Complete Readings, indicating which reading was for Sitter #1 and which for Sitter #2. If the reading contained specific details that, if accurate, the PI thought would be an interesting example of anecdotal data, she asked RA#2 to ask the sitter to rate the specific details for accuracy. RA#2 emailed each Complete Reading to the intended sitter, and, if applicable, asked the sitter for feedback on the accuracy of any specific items identified by the PI.
12. After all readings were completed, RA#2 provided the rating table with the scores for all sitter ratings to the PI.

## **PI Preparation Prior to Each Reading**

The PI created an etheric advisory committee comprised of these discarnates: the medium Eileen Garrett, who was very interested in mediumship research; Alan Vaughn, a colleague of Garrett's and a friend of Marcia Emery, the PI's dissertation chair; the medium Susy Smith, who

participated in numerous mediumship experiments; Elizabeth Mayer, the author of *Extraordinary Knowing*; the mother of a friend of the PI, who communicated her interest in supporting this project; the PI's great-aunt Lela, who was very interested in whether or not we survive physical death; and the PI's father. The PI asked this advisory committee for help and support, not only in the experimental portion of the dissertation project, but also in the preparation, analysis, and decision-making steps.

In the pilot study, prior to each reading, the PI meditated, asked her etheric advisory committee for support with the project, and then visualized energetic connections among all the participants. She imagined the sitters in a circle and the discarnates in another circle—connected in a cylinder formation with the “sitter circle” at the bottom and the “discarnate circle” at the top. The PI then visualized the three researchers and the mediums as connectors to facilitate communications between sitters and discarnates. She visualized the three researchers in the middle of the cylinder as a triangle, and the mediums in a third circle between the researchers and the discarnates. Connections went in every direction between all the participants and researchers. The PI shared this visual image with the research assistants, and they also visualized this image throughout the pilot study.

During the dissertation study, the PI adjusted her meditations and visualizations, wanting to ensure that the process was helpful and was not interfering with the mediums' ability to access information. After asking her etheric advisory group for support, and prior to visualizing any connections among the study participants, she focused on energetically clearing both her physical surroundings and her body, mind, and spirit. From that calm and clear space, she focused on creating a supportive space for the medium to do the work. Then, as in the pilot study, the PI visualized the connections among the participants. Finally, she asked spirit guides

and spirit operators to assist in bringing the discarnate and the medium together, while attempting to keep her own focus clear and neutral.

### **Detail for Sitter Ratings of Readings**

Each sitter was given two Life Questions Documents, the one from the reading with her/his discarnate (the intended reading) and the one from the reading for the paired sitter (the control reading). Each sitter gave each Document a Numerical Score, as modified from the Beischel protocol,<sup>11</sup> using the following scale:

- 6: All information is correct.
- 5: Most information is correct.
- 4: A mixture of correct and incorrect information, with more correct than incorrect.
- 3: An equal mixture of correct and incorrect information.
- 2: A mixture of correct and incorrect information, with more incorrect than correct.
- 1: Most information is incorrect.
- 0: All information is incorrect.

Then, each sitter chose the Life Questions Document that was more applicable to the discarnate. If both documents seemed equally applicable or non-applicable, the sitter was instructed to choose one. Finally, each sitter rated his/her choice, as compared to the other reading, on the following scale which is modified from the Beischel protocol.<sup>12</sup> This is designated the “Applicability Score.”

- 4: Clearly more applicable to deceased.
- 3: Moderately more applicable to deceased.
- 2: Only slightly more applicable to deceased.

1: Both seemed equally applicable to deceased.

0: Neither seemed applicable to deceased.

## **Quantitative Methods**

### ***t* Test on Global Scores**

Each sitter provided two Numerical Scores, one for the intended reading and one for the control reading. A one-tailed, related *t* test was used as the statistical analysis. A one-tailed test was used because the research hypothesis predicted that the mean for the intended readings would be higher than the mean for the control readings.

### **Chi-squared Test for Reading Selected**

Each sitter chose one of the two readings as more applicable. If the mediums were only guessing, we would assume that either reading could be seen as applicable to the sitter, and that, by chance, a sitter would choose the intended reading only half the time (and also would choose the control reading half the time). A one-sample chi-squared test was used to test whether the results of this forced choice are significant.

## **Validation and Ethical Considerations**

### **Validation**

After the completion of the study, RA#2 compiled all the email responses from all sitter participants, their scores and any comments from the sitters, and sent them to the PI. The PI verified that RA#2 had entered the sitters' scores correctly into the results table.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Confidentiality of the sitters and mediums was maintained throughout the study. The four detailed accounts of specific readings, shown in Appendix C, are included after receiving explicit permission from each of the four sitters.

No sitter reported any adverse reaction from information supplied by the mediums. In general, we received two types of reactions—excitement from the sitters whose reading seemed applicable to their discarnate, and disappointment from the sitters whose reading was not applicable.

## **Pilot Study Results**

The pilot study was held in two phases. The first phase was conducted in March through May 2010, and consisted of eight mediums, each of whom did four readings. The second phase was held to test additional mediums, because the PI's original goal was to have nine mediums participate in the dissertation study. Several mediums who initially expressed interest in the study were unable to participate in either pilot study due to other commitments. The second phase was held from July to September 2010, and consisted of three mediums, each of whom did four readings. The individual results for the 11 mediums who participated in the pilot study are shown in the Table below.

**Table 3: Individual Medium's Scores for Pilot Study**

<b>Medium</b>	<b>Average for Intended Readings</b>	<b>Average for Control Readings</b>	<b>Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen</b>	<b>Included in Actual Study</b>
A	3.6	1.3	4	100%	2.3	--	Yes
B	2.3	0.3	3	100%	1.3	--	Yes
C	3.3	0.5	3	75%	3.0	2.0	Illness
D	4.0	2.0	2	67%	3.0	3.0	Yes
E	3.1	2.5	2	50%	3.5	3.3	Yes
F	2.3	1.3	2	50%	3.5	0.5	Yes
H	2.0	1.5	2	50%	3.5	2.0	Yes
I	2.0	1.7	1	33%	3.0	1.5	No
J	2.9	3.6	1	25%	4.0	2.3	No
K	0.0	2.0	1	25%	0.0	2.3	No
L	2.3	3.3	0	0%	--	3.0	No

The mediums with the best results in the pilot studies all agreed to continue in the dissertation study. In general, the PI defined “best results” for the pilot study as 50% or more of the sitters choosing their intended reading. In retrospect, analyzing the other data more closely might have highlighted potential issues with some of the mediums. For example, Medium B has a relatively low score for the “Average of Intended Readings” and a very low score for “Average Applicability Score When Intended Reading Chosen.” In the results for the dissertation study, this medium’s scores ranked fifth out of six.

Chapter 4 provides the results from the dissertation study.

### Chapter 3 Endnotes:

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1. There are two published version of this protocol. The former is more concise; the latter provides important details for the readings and for the tasks of the researchers. Julie Beischel, "Contemporary methods used in laboratory-based mediumship research," *Journal of Parapsychology* 71 (Spring/Fall 2007), pub. August 2008 (2007/2008): 37-68; Julie Beischel and Gary E. Schwartz, "Methodological Advances in Laboratory-Based Mediumship Research," presented at the Rhine Research Conference: "Consciousness Today," March 23-25, 2007.
2. Gary E. R. Schwartz, Linda G. S. Russek, Donald E. Watson, Laurie Campbell, Susy Smith, Elizabeth H. Smith (hyp), William James (hyp), Henry I. Russek (hyp), and Howard Schwartz (hyp), "Potential Medium to Departed to Medium Communication of Pictorial Information: Exploratory Evidence Consistent with Psi and Survival of Consciousness," *The Noetic Journal* 2, no. 3 (July 1999), <http://www.enformy.com/mediums.htm>.
3. Beischel, "Contemporary methods in mediumship research," 62.
4. Ibid., 59.
5. Ibid., 60.
6. Beischel and Schwartz, "Methodological Advances in Mediumship Research," 42-43.
7. Beischel, "Contemporary methods in mediumship research," 47.
8. Julie Beischel and Gary Schwartz, "Anomalous Information Reception by Research Mediums Demonstrated using a Novel Triple-Blind Protocol," *Explore* 3, no. 1 (2007): 25.
9. Beischel, email communication to author, May 11, 2010.
10. Beischel, "Contemporary methods in mediumship research," 50.
11. Ibid., 59.
12. Ibid., 60.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Summary Results**

The dissertation study was comprised of 24 readings, with six mediums each providing four readings. All 24 sitters scored their readings and returned results. In the Table below, the Intended Reading is the reading with the sitter's selected discarnate, and the Control Reading is the reading with the other discarnate in the sitter-discarnate pair.

**Table 4: Summary Results for 24 Readings**

<b>Total Readings Scored</b>	<b>Average for Intended Readings</b>	<b>Average for Control Readings</b>	<b>Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen</b>
24	2.3	1.9	16	67%	2.5	3.4

#### **t-Test Comparing Averages for Intended Readings and Control Readings**

The "Average for the Intended Readings" is slightly higher than the "Average for the Control Readings." A one-tailed t-test was used to compare the two averages to see if the difference between them is statistically significant, and it is not significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level ( $p=0.1749$ ).

#### **Chi-squared Test for Number of Sitters Who Chose the Intended Reading**

The second statistical measure, a one-sample chi-squared test, was used to determine if the forced choice the sitter made between the intended reading and the control reading was

significant when compared to chance. Since there are only two choices for each sitter, the Yates correction for discontinuity<sup>1</sup> was used in the chi-squared test.

As Table 4 shows, 16 of the 24 sitters chose their intended reading. If the selection was based on chance alone, 12 sitters would be expected to select their intended reading. The corrected chi-square value, when comparing the actual number of sitters who chose their intended reading to the expected number, is 2.04, which is less than the value of 3.84 needed for a 0.05 level of significance and one degree of freedom.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the results are not statistically significant as compared to chance.

## Detailed Results

While acknowledging that four readings may not be sufficient to assess a medium's accuracy (even though that is the number of readings that were used to screen mediums in the pilot), the PI calculated individual averages for each medium to see the range of differences among them. The individual results for each of the six mediums are shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Individual Results for Six Mediums**

Medium	Average for Intended Readings	Average for Control Readings	Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading	% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading	Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen	Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen
1	4.5	2.0	4	100%	3.8	--
2	2.8	1.0	4	100%	2.5	--
3	2.3	1.3	3	75%	2.7	3.0
4	1.3	1.8	3	75%	0.7	4.0
5	1.5	1.8	2	50%	2.5	3.0
6	1.8	3.5	0	0%	--	2.8

## Statistical Results for a Subset of the Readings

Since the individual detail shows quite a bit of difference among the mediums, statistical results were calculated with a subset of the readings. Using the results for the first five mediums in Table 5 and eliminating the results for Medium 6, the summary results are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Summary Results for 20 Readings from Five Mediums**

<b>Total Readings Scored</b>	<b>Average for Intended Readings</b>	<b>Average for Control Readings</b>	<b>Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen</b>
20	2.5	1.6	16	80%	2.5	3.3

### t-Test for Readings from Five Mediums

With these subset results, the difference between the “Average for Intended Readings” and the “Average for Control Readings” is greater than the difference using all mediums’ results. A one-tailed t-test was used to compare the two averages, and the result is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level ( $p=0.04$ ).

### Chi-squared Test for Readings Sitters Chose

A one-sample chi-squared test was used to determine if the forced choice between the intended reading and the control reading was significant. Sixteen of the 20 sitters chose their intended reading, compared to an expected number of 10 based on chance alone. Again, the Yates correction for discontinuity<sup>3</sup> was used, and the corrected chi-square value is 6.05, which is greater than the value of 3.84 needed for a 0.05 level of significance and one degree of freedom.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the subset results are statistically significant as compared to chance.

Chapter 4 Endnotes:

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1. Perry R. Hinton, *Statistics Explained*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 258.
  2. *Ibid.*, 370.
  3. *Ibid.*, 258.
  4. *Ibid.*, 370.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS**

*“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”  
— Albert Einstein*

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to contribute to mediumship research by assessing the accuracy of information communicated by mediums, under conditions that prevent the mediums from: 1) obtaining the information by using their senses (i.e., seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, speaking, or touching), 2) employing any fraudulent activities, or 3) using any “cold reading” techniques. The results of this research do not support the proposed directional hypothesis: If, during a quintuple-blind session, a medium acquires accurate, specific information about a discarnate, as rated by a blind, absent sitter, it validates that mediums are not guessing but are tapping into an anomalous source of information. This chapter summarizes the findings of the study, provides the results from the pilot study, discusses various factors that could affect the results, and provides suggestions for future research.

### **Discussion**

#### **The Null Hypothesis**

While it is possible that mediums are guessing or fabricating some information, because the subset results for the five most successful mediums are statistically significant, it indicates that some mediums, at least some of the time, can obtain accurate, specific information. The anecdotal data, a selected subset of which is included in Appendix C, also support this conclusion.

## Validity of t-Test

The t-test assumes that the sampling distribution is normal, particularly when the sample size is 30 or more.<sup>1</sup> The PI had intended to have a sample size of 28, but when one medium became ill, the sample dropped to 24. Additional readings would have been useful.

## Results from Pilot Study

Before further analyzing the study results, the results from the pilot study are presented. In the pilot study, 11 mediums were tested and seven were selected to participate in the dissertation study. One medium withdrew from the dissertation study before her readings were scheduled, due to illness. The pilot results for the seven mediums who were selected for the dissertation study are shown in Table 7 below. The Table shows the combined scores from 26 readings by seven mediums. While 28 readings were done, two were not scored properly and were eliminated.

**Table 7: Summary Results from Pilot Study for Mediums Selected for Dissertation Study**

<b>Total Readings Scored</b>	<b>Average for Intended Readings</b>	<b>Average for Control Readings</b>	<b>Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen</b>
26	2.9	1.3	18	69%	2.7	2.2

The averages for the intended and control readings are somewhat better than either of these results in the dissertation study with six mediums or the subset of the results in the dissertation study with five mediums. The difference between the averages is statistically significant, using a one-tailed t-test, at the  $< 0.05$  significance level ( $p=0.00066$ ). Using a chi-

squared test to compare the number of sitters who chose their dissertation reading (18) to the number expected by chance (13), the result is not significant. It is interesting to note that the results would have been significant if one more sitter had chosen the intended reading.

Definite variations can be seen in a medium's results when compared to the others, and when a medium's pilot study results are compared with that medium's results from the dissertation study. The pilot results for the mediums who participated in the dissertation study are shown in Table 8 below, ordered according to successful results. All mediums did four readings; however, Mediums #3 and #5 each have only three readings represented, because one sitter for each did not return their scores. Note that the order is quite different than the individual results for the dissertation study.

**Table 8: Individual Results for Six Mediums -- Pilot Study**

<b>Medium*</b>	<b>Average for Intended Readings</b>	<b>Average for Control Readings</b>	<b>Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen</b>
6	3.6	1.3	4	100%	2.3	--
5	2.3	0.3	3	100%	1.3	--
3	4.0	2.0	2	67%	3.0	3.0
2	2.3	1.3	2	50%	3.5	0.5
1	2.0	1.5	2	50%	3.5	2.0
4	3.1	2.5	2	50%	3.5	3.3

\* Medium numbers are the same as those used in Table 5 in Chapter 4.

### **Individual Results from Pilot and Dissertation Studies Combined**

While the pilot and dissertation studies were conducted with one key difference (i.e., in the pilot, the mediums did more than one reading in a single session), it is instructive to combine the individual results from the two studies. With the combined studies, the data for Mediums #3

and #5 include seven readings each; the data for the other four mediums are the average of eight readings. The three mediums with the best results in the dissertation study also had the best results when combining the pilot and dissertation studies.

**Table 9: Individual Results for Six Mediums -- Pilot and Dissertation Studies Combined**

<b>Medium*</b>	<b>Average for Intended Readings</b>	<b>Average for Control Readings</b>	<b>Number Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>% Sitters Who Chose Intended Reading</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Intended Chosen</b>	<b>Average Applicable Score when Control Chosen</b>
1	3.3	1.8	6	75%	3.7	2.0
2	2.6	1.2	6	75%	2.8	0.5
3	3.0	1.6	5	71%	2.8	3.0
5	1.9	1.1	5	71%	1.8	3.0
4	2.2	2.2	5	63%	1.8	3.5
6	2.7	2.4	4	50%	2.3	2.8

\* Medium numbers are the same as those used in Table 5 in Chapter 4.

Several factors could account for the differences among the individual results for the six mediums:

- Some mediums might be able to work under the strict confines of this protocol more easily than other mediums, so are able to obtain more accurate results.
- If mediums are receiving information from discarnates, it is possible that some discarnates are more skillful at sending information than other discarnates.
- If mediums are not receiving information from discarnates but from some other sources, it is possible that some mediums are more adept at that process than others.
- Only the Life Questions portion of the reading was scored by the sitters. It is possible that the discarnates associated with the more successful readings were more interested in

conveying the Life Question information, so were more vigilant about making it complete, understandable, and easily identifiable by the sitter.

- The sitters for the more successful mediums might have scored their readings more favorably than the sitters for the less successful mediums.
- The timing of or the environment for the readings might have been more beneficial for the more successful mediums than for the less successful ones (e.g., the readings were held at times when the medium's abilities were particularly strong; the medium felt more comfortable with the PI, who was the proxy sitter).
- It is also possible that the more successful mediums in this study are simply better mediums in all environments than the less successful ones, even though all mediums in the studies are successful, professional mediums, with the exception of one amateur. The professionals have been tested in their normal working environment by Bob Olson, a psychic medium researcher, and have passed his 15-point test. The one amateur medium participated in the pilot and was not successful, so was not included in the dissertation study.
- Since we do not understand the process through which mediums obtain their information, or all the factors that contribute to a successful or unsuccessful reading, other factors that are yet to be discovered may have influenced the results.

### **Possible Introduction of Errors When Readings Transcribed and Interpreted**

In this study, due to the blinding of participants, three different translations occurred. First, as discussed in the section titled "Issues in Researching Psi" in Chapter 2, a majority of the information received by mediums must be translated from non-verbal information into words,

which can result in a degradation of the information (i.e., “A picture is worth a thousand words.”). Then, a second translation takes place when the PI listens to the audiotape of the reading and transcribes it. While the PI attempted to transcribe all of what was said, and only what was said, there certainly were opportunities for introducing errors. Since four Life Questions were asked of each discarnate, the PI organized the information from the reading into one of those four topics in the transcript. In some readings, this re-organization of the information may have created false linkages or eliminated ones that were important for context.

A third translation takes place when the sitter reads the transcript and interprets whether it is accurate for the discarnate. If, as many mediums suggest, some of the information may be symbolic (as in a dream) rather than literal, the sitter may or may not interpret it correctly. For example, in one reading, the medium said, “He’s showing me a violin. I don’t know what that means – he might have played a violin, or he might have liked classical music, or the violin could be related to the sitter.” The transcript said, “He showed a violin. He might have played the violin, or he might have liked classical music, or the violin could be related to the sitter.” If the violin did, in fact, mean something to either the discarnate or the sitter, it could be a different meaning than those stated and the sitter may or may not realize the meaning.

### **Scoring Only Life Questions May Have Skewed Results**

In the study protocol, the sitters were given the Life Questions portion of the intended and control readings to score. After returning their ratings, they were emailed their complete reading, which included the Discarnate-directed section (which was blank in the majority of the readings) and the Reverse Questions segments. Two sitters wrote that the Reverse Questions segment was more evocative of their discarnate than the Life Questions, so they would have

changed their ratings of the two readings if they had been given the complete readings to score. In one of these cases, the sitter picked the intended reading but gave it a low applicability score, and in the other case, the sitter chose the control reading as more applicable.

If the mediums are indeed communicating with discarnates, it is possible that the discarnates are more interested in conveying the open-ended information in the Reverse Questions segment of the reading, so it may be equally or even more important than their answers to the Life Questions.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

### **Testing Mediums in the Protocol**

Based on the variability of the individual medium's results in the pilot and dissertation studies, it is likely that the four readings in the pilot study were insufficient for testing a medium's ability to generate accurate results using this protocol. For future studies, additional pilot readings for mediums new to this protocol would be advisable.

### **Replication of This Study with the Three Most Successful Mediums**

Table 5 shows that Mediums #1, 2, and 3 had the best overall results. A replication study, using this study's protocol, would be very important to determine if the three most successful mediums from this study can repeat their results.

As a secondary consideration, and to further investigate the experimenter effect, it would be interesting to do two replication studies with these three mediums, one with the PI and another with a new investigator. Because the PI contributed to this study by meditating just prior to each reading with the positive intention of energetically clearing the environment and calling

on spirit guides and helpers to facilitate the connection between a medium and a discarnate, it could also be useful to see if those activities appear to make a difference in the results.

### **Include More Detailed Scoring by Sitters**

In this study, sitters gave only overall scores for their intended reading and the control reading. However, when the reading contained a particularly specific or unusual description, the sitter was asked to provide a detailed assessment of the specific item(s) after completing the scoring of intended and control readings. From these responses, it is clear that significant additional information can be gained from more detailed evaluations of the readings. First, it would be useful to evaluate the level of specificity of the accurate statements compared to the inaccurate statements. Moreover, additional statistical measures could be used to evaluate the more detailed scores.

Second, several sitters told us that some of the information in their readings applied to other relatives who had died. For example, with her father as the chosen discarnate, one sitter said that the cause of death was wrong for him, but correct for her brother. (The transcript said: “He was in his 60s when he died. He had a heart attack. His death was very quick. His death was unexpected.”) It would be useful to know if having multiple discarnates, all associated with the sitter, is a common occurrence, and if it helps to explain some of the incorrect information. In non-laboratory readings, multiple discarnates are the norm. Mediums sometimes talk about the need to exercise “crowd control” when many discarnates appear and talk all at once. The protocol for this study attempts to select a single discarnate for communication, but, as with all protocols concerning discarnates, there is no assurance of adherence and no way to monitor

compliance. With detailed scoring, the sitters could be instructed to evaluate the incorrect statements regarding the chosen discarnate for other discarnates who are close to them.

Third, when questioned about a particularly detailed segment of the reading, several sitters acknowledged that they did not know the discarnate's perspective on the subject. For example, the Personality section of one reading included these sentences: "She [the discarnate] showed herself with a significant other, a man. There were issues between them and they had arguments, but she didn't leave him. She said, 'I just took it.' She indicated verbal abuse from this man." In response to this, the sitter wrote, "Her [the discarnate's] relationship with her husband included heated verbal slinging on both their part. I never considered her bullied by him (it may have been the other way around). But I can't speak to how she may have actually felt. She would have hid any hurt feelings from us." It would be useful for sitters to identify such statements.

Finally, detailed ratings would assist researchers in comparing the perspectives or procedures that various sitters used to rate their readings. After one of the study sitters provided more detailed information on her reading, she acknowledged that she had been greatly influenced by one incorrect statement in the intended reading which had caused her to select the control reading as more accurate. After she evaluated each individual statement in her intended reading, she realized that it contained more correct statements than she had remembered. Some sitters may do a better job of selecting which reading is more applicable if they have first evaluated the individual statements in both readings for accuracy and inaccuracy.

## **Adjusting Protocol to Send Sitters the Complete Reading**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, some of the sitters reported that the Reverse Questions segment of the reading was more evocative of the discarnate than the Life Questions segment that was scored. Therefore, the scoring for the readings might have differed if the sitters had been given the complete reading to score. The PI had been told to expect a 25% drop-out rate from the sitters (i.e., 25% would not return their scores), so she thought that having them score only part of the reading, with the promise of receiving the entire reading after returning their scores, would improve the return rate. As it turned out, the sitters as a group were very motivated, with many of them querying the research assistants regularly to find out when their reading would be available and almost every sitter returned their scores in a timely manner. For future studies, it would be advisable for the sitters to score the complete reading.

## **New Study Design Comparing Mediums to a Control Group**

Ray Hyman, an emeritus psychology professor, one of the pre-eminent critics and skeptics of parapsychological research, and a specialist in the techniques of cold reading,<sup>2</sup> has hypothesized that mediums, given the same task as a control group, would not perform better.<sup>3</sup> It would be interesting to modify the protocol of this study, recruiting psi skeptics to be a control group and assigning them the same task as the mediums (i.e., each psi skeptic would be given the first name of a discarnate and they would then supply information). With this design, sitters would not need to be paired. Rather, each sitter would receive two transcripts, one from a medium who purportedly received information from the discarnate and the other from the skeptic who created or guessed at the information. This design is another approach to answering the question of whether mediums are simply guessing when they convey information to a sitter.

Additional modifications to this design include recruiting true psi skeptics (not scoffers) as the control group, or recruiting people who are neutral in their beliefs about psi and mediums. Contrasting and comparing the results from the various control groups might lead to interesting results.

Chapter 5 Endnotes:

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1. 1. Perry R. Hinton, *Statistics Explained*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 67.
  2. Ray Hyman, “How *Not* to Test Mediums: Critiquing the Afterlife Experiments,” *Skeptical Inquirer* 27, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2003), [http://www.csicop.org/si/show/how\\_not\\_to\\_test\\_mediums\\_critiquing\\_the\\_afterlife\\_experiments](http://www.csicop.org/si/show/how_not_to_test_mediums_critiquing_the_afterlife_experiments).
  3. Ibid.

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## APPENDIX A: BLINDING OF RESEARCHERS

### Appendix A.1: Description of Researcher Blinding<sup>1</sup>

#### Principal Investigator:

*Tasks:* contacting, consenting, and training of mediums; providing targeted discarnate first names to mediums; formatting readings for scoring (blind to sitters, to sitter and discarnate info, and to which discarnate goes with which sitter)

*Knowledge of Information:*

- Which discarnates are in which group (group → discarnates)
- Which medium is reading which group/discarnates (medium → group → discarnates)
- Which readings are for which discarnates (reading → discarnate → group)
- Which readings are from which medium (reading → medium)

*Blind to Information:*

- Any sitter or discarnate information
- Any contact with sitters

#### Research Assistant #1:

*Tasks:* database entry of prospective sitter information; contacting, consenting, screening, and training of prospective sitters; final sitter selection; discarnate pairing (blind to mediums and to origin of readings during scoring)

*Knowledge of Information:*

- Which discarnates go with which sitters (discarnate → sitter)
- Which sitters/discarnates are in which groups (group → sitters/discarnates)
- Sitter contact information
- Discarnate information (relationship to sitter)

*Blind to Information:*

- Which mediums performed which readings (reading ≠ medium)
- Which readings were intended for which sitters/discarnates (reading ≠ sitter)
- Which readings were for which groups (reading ≠ group)

## **Research Assistant #2:**

*Tasks:* providing formatted and blinded readings to sitters (blind to mediums, to sitter and discarnate info, and to origin of readings during scoring)

### *Knowledge of Information:*

- Which sitters are in which groups (group → sitters)
- Which readings are for which group (reading → group → sitters)
- Sitter contact information

### --After completion of readings:

- Discarnate names
- Which discarnate goes with which sitter (discarnate → sitter)

### *Blind to Information:*

- Which mediums performed which readings (reading ≠ medium)
- Which readings were intended for which sitters/discarnates (reading ≠ sitter)

- Notes:** 1) A “group” is the two paired sitters and their associated discarnates.  
2) In the Beischel Protocol, the Principal Investigator is Experimenter 1, Research Assistant #1 is Experimenter 3, and Research Assistant #2 is Experimenter 2.

## Appendix A.2: Information Communicated Among Participants and Researchers in Experimental Portion of the Study

1. RA#1 screens and selects the sitters, and then pairs the sitters based on the gender and age of their discarnate--matching gender with another discarnate and, where possible, mismatching the two discarnates' ages at death. The paired sitters are called a "group."

2. RA#1 creates:

Group #	Sitter #1 Contact Info	Discarnate #1 First Name	Sitter #2 Contact Info	Discarnate #2 First Name

3. RA#1 emails to PI:

Group #	Discarnate #1 First Name	Discarnate #2 First Name

4. RA#1 emails to RA#2:

Group #	Sitter #1 Contact Info	Sitter #1 First Name	Sitter #2 Contact Info	Sitter #2 First Name

5. PI schedules times for a medium to conduct the readings, mixing the scheduling of the discarnates from this group with discarnates from other groups, so that the medium does not know which discarnates are paired. The name of the discarnate is not given to the medium at this time; the medium only schedules a time for a telephone reading, without knowing any other information.

6. From #3 and #5 data, PI creates:

Group #	Discarnate #1 First Name	Discarnate #1 Reading #	Discarnate #2 First Name	Discarnate #2 Reading #	Medium's Name

7. For each reading with a medium, the PI is the proxy sitter, providing the first name of a discarnate at the beginning of the session. During the reading, the PI focuses on creating a sacred space for clear communication. All sessions are audio recorded.
8. After the reading is completed, the PI transcribes and formats the information, creating two documents: 1) the answers to the Life Questions, designated the "Life Questions Document," and 2) the information from the Discarnate-directed, Life Questions, and the Reverse Question parts of the reading, designated the "Complete Reading."

9. When both readings for a group have been completed, the PI emails the two Life Questions Documents to RA#2, along with the Group #.
10. RA#2 uses the data from #4 to send the two Life Questions Documents to the two sitters. At this point, RA#2 does not know which reading is intended for which sitter.
11. Each sitter scores the two Life Questions Documents, and emails the results to RA#2. (Each sitter gives each Life Questions Document a Global Score, chooses which Life Questions Document is more applicable to his/her discarnate, and gives the more applicable Document an Applicability Score.)

12. RA#2 records the sitters' ratings as follows:

Group #	Sitter Contact Info	Global Score for First Reading #	Global Score for Second Reading #	Which Reading # was most applicable?	Applicability Score for Reading # Selected
	Sitter #1				
	Sitter #2				

13. After receiving the ratings from both sitters in a group, RA#2 requests the Complete Readings from PI. The PI sends both Complete Readings to RA#2, and indicates which reading was intended for Sitter #1 and which for Sitter #2. If there were detailed specific items in either Complete Reading, the PI asks RA#2 to ask the intended sitter to comment on the accuracy of such items.
14. RA#2 emails the Complete Reading to the intended sitter, and, if applicable, asks for the sitter's comments on items identified by the PI.

**Legend:**

Principal Investigator = PI  
 Research Assistant #1 = RA#1  
 Research Assistant #2 = RA#2

## **APPENDIX B: COMMUNICATIONS WITH STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

### **Appendix B.1: Summary of Karla Curtis' Research Study for Potential**

#### **Mediums**

For my dissertation, I'm conducting a study on the accuracy of information obtained by mediums. The protocol for the study was created by Dr. Julie Beischel, director of the Windbridge Institute, who is the main researcher currently working with mediums. I'm conducting a study in parallel with her study. (One of the important factors in scientific studies is to see if more than one researcher can duplicate results.) Because, throughout history, there have been fraudulent mediums, current studies with mediums are rigorously designed to prevent any possibility of potential fraud – i.e., the medium finding out the identity of either the sitter or the discarnate (the spirit whom the sitter wishes to contact) in advance of the reading and researching information, or the medium using information about the appearance of the discarnate to “guess” information. The design of my study includes two assistant researchers. During the study, none of us (the medium, the sitter, or the three researchers) know the identity of everyone participating in the study. For example, I will be the proxy sitter for all readings. You, as the medium, will not know anything about the sitter. And, the sitter will not know when the reading is being done or who the medium is. I'm including this information, so you know that the protocol for the study is already in place, and cannot be changed. I'm looking for mediums who will be able to get good results using the protocol as it is defined. Also, because the protocol has a number of steps, I need to conduct a pilot study (essentially a “dry run” to make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities) prior to the actual study. I'll summarize the protocol next.

#### **Summary of Research Protocol**

1. There will be 36 sitters and six (6) mediums. Each medium will do six (6) telephone readings with a proxy sitter (me). I'm assuming each reading will be approximately 15 – 20 minutes. Some could be shorter.
2. Each sitter will choose a discarnate – the spirit whom the sitter wishes to contact, and someone with whom the sitter had a close relationship. The sitter will invite the

discarnate to participate (through a meditation or a prayer) and will ask other potential discarnates not to interfere in the reading.

3. Each sitter will be paired with another sitter. Pairings are done based on gender and approximate age of discarnate. Pairings allow sitters to rate the readings without knowing which is intended for them.
4. At the beginning of each reading, I will give the medium only the first name of a discarnate.
5. Each reading will have three parts: 1) Discarnate-directed, 2) Life Questions, and 3) Reverse Questions.
  - a. The Discarnate-directed part allows the discarnates to begin by saying anything they want.
  - b. In the Life Questions part, the medium asks the discarnate for answers to four specific questions concerning the former physical life: 1) How would you describe your physical appearance? 2) How would you describe your personality? 3) What were your hobbies or favorite activities? 4) What was the cause of your death?
  - c. The Reverse Question segment asks the discarnate for any specific questions, comments, or requests that he/she would like the medium to provide to the sitter.
6. I will transcribe the readings. Only the Life Questions part will be scored by the sitter. The other two parts (Discarnate-directed and Reverse Questions) will be provided to the sitter as supplemental information once the scoring of the Life Questions is completed.
7. Each sitter will get the Life Questions part of the reading from their discarnate and from the discarnate of their paired sitter. (That means that each sitter gets two Life Questions readings, one that is from their discarnate and one from another discarnate of the same gender and approximately the same age. There is nothing that indicates which reading is theirs.) Each sitter scores both readings on a 7-point scale, which quantifies the correctness of the information. Then, the sitter chooses one of the two readings – choosing the one that they believe came from their discarnate.

### **What I Need from Mediums**

- Interest in supporting research on mediumship.
- Ability to get good information when given only first name of discarnate.
- Willingness to provide your expertise pro-bono. (I cannot afford to compensate you).
- Willingness to do six, structured telephone readings (three-part readings as described above) for my actual study.
- Willingness to participate in a pilot study (four or five readings, same format as described above for each reading).

### **Potential Benefit for You**

In addition to my dissertation (which will be published on the university website), I expect that my results will be accepted for publication in a scientific journal. Because of confidentiality requirements, no sitter or medium would be identified in the study results. However, assuming the results are positive, you could use them as part of your marketing or advertising. I will be happy to provide the results in whatever format is useful to you, and to supply a testimonial for your work. With your permission, I can also separate your results from those of the other mediums, and compile them separately. So, in addition to the satisfaction of participating in a study (that hopefully provides evidence of mediums receiving accurate information), you could also have a very credible marketing piece to use as you wish.

### **Are You Still Interested?**

I'm very excited about this study. I am an amateur medium, so I believe in the mediumship process as a way of contacting and communicating with discarnate spirits. As a graduate student in spiritual healing, I would like to contribute to our understanding of mediums. In the first half of the 1900s, several well-known mediums (Leonora Piper, Gladys Osborne Leonard, Eileen Garrett) were studied extensively. Then, there was a long, dry spell, where parapsychologists studied near-death experiences, past lives, telepathy, and other psychic phenomena, but not mediums. There have been four studies with mediums published since 2001, each one building on the former ones. I've attached the most recent study, published in 2007. That study implemented the same three-part reading protocol, and the mediums were given only the first name of the discarnate. The study had significantly positive results – 81% of the sitters

chose their own reading (rather than choosing the one for their paired sitter). I'm attempting to build on those results.

If you're interested but aren't sure whether you can work under this protocol, we could do a very quick test. I will supply you with the first names of two or three discarnates. Then, you can contact each one of them, on your own schedule, using the three-part protocol provided above, recording the information you receive. I would then give the information to the "test sitter," and we'd see how it matched the discarnate.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please let me know. I'm assuming that the mediums who are right for the study will emerge when the time is right. I trust that you will decide whether or not to participate based on what is right for you. Namaste.

## **Appendix B.2: Medium Consent Form**

Holos University ([www.holosuniversity.org](http://www.holosuniversity.org)) supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study as a medium.

The principal researcher, Karla Curtis, is interested in exploring communications from mediums (individuals who can communicate with the spirits of deceased people). Karla will be assisted in this study by two additional researchers, Marilyn McGehee and Judith Royer. If you decide to participate in the study, you agree to conduct from four to six structured readings via telephone, using the protocol designed for this study. Each reading will have three parts: 1) “Deceased-Directed,” where you provide whatever information you receive, after being given the first name of the discarnate; 2) “Life Questions,” where the proxy sitter will ask four specific questions about the named discarnate’s physical appearance, personality, hobbies, and cause of death; and 3) “Reverse Question,” where the proxy sitter will ask, “Does the discarnate have any comments, questions, or requests for the sitter?” The four Life Questions are: 1) How would you describe your physical appearance? 2) How would you describe your personality? 3) What were your hobbies or favorite activities? 4) What was the cause of your death?

Karla will be the proxy sitter and will audio tape each reading. At the beginning of each reading, she will give you the first name of a discarnate. You will have no information about the sitter. The sitter will not know when the reading is scheduled; although the sitter will have invited the discarnate to participate in a reading. After the reading, Karla will transcribe the reading, divide it into two parts (Discarnate-directed and Reverse Question segments as one part, and the Life Questions segment as the second part), and will format the Life Questions segment for scoring. Each sitter will be given two Life Questions transcripts, the one from his/her reading

and a second from the reading of another person participating in the study. Each sitter will score both transcripts without knowing which transcript is from his/her reading. After each sitter has scored the two Life Questions transcripts, the information from the Discarnate-directed and Reverse Question segments of the reading will be provided to the sitter, as supplemental information.

Your participation in this study and any detailed information generated by the study will be held in strict confidence. None of the sitters will know that you are providing readings as part of this study. The audio tape and transcript of each reading will be identified by a code number. Results of the study may be reported in scientific presentations or publications, but you will not be identified. If the results of the study are published, you may use such results (with appropriate attribution) for marketing your services. If not included in published results, Karla will provide you with the results from the readings you conducted, as a comparison to the overall results. There is no financial benefit for you to participate in this study. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary.

Because there is documented evidence of fraudulence in communications from some mediums (e.g., prior knowledge of the sitter or the deceased; “lucky guessing” based on the sitter’s age, relationship with the deceased, or sitter’s appearance; using the sitter’s reactions to refine the reading; and asking questions, and then using the sitter’s answers to tailor generic statements to more closely fit the sitter), this study has been designed to eliminate all known types of fraudulent communications. Therefore, during the study, you must communicate only with Karla Curtis (the principal researcher), and you must not communicate with the other two researchers or with any of the other mediums. You will not know the identity of any of the sitters.

**If you would like additional information concerning this study, its purpose, procedures, or (after completion) its results, please contact Karla by phone or email.** During or after the study, if you have any concerns or questions about the conduct of this study, please contact Karla's faculty supervisor Marcia Emery, Ph.D. via email at [PowerHunch@aol.com](mailto:PowerHunch@aol.com).

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Dean of Academic Affairs for Holos University Graduate Seminary, via mail at P.O. Box 297, Bolivar, MO 65613, via email at [AcademicsDean@HolosUniversity.org](mailto:AcademicsDean@HolosUniversity.org), or via telephone at (888) 272-6109.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

**Principal Researcher:**

Karla Curtis

karlacurtis@verizon.net

804-598-1312

By typing my name below, I affirm that I agree to take full personal responsibility for my participation in the protocol described above. I am 25 years of age or older and I have received a copy of this Consent Form to keep.

---

Full Legal Name of Person Agreeing to Participate \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B.3: Advertisement for Potential Sitters

### Research Study on Communications between Mediums and Deceased Persons

Volunteers are needed for a study investigating communications between mediums (individuals who communicate with deceased people) and specific deceased people (called “discarnates”). We’re recruiting research participants (called “sitters”) who have experienced the loss of a close friend or family member. These “sitters” will score information supplied by the medium for accuracy.

You may be eligible to be a “sitter” if you:

- Are age 25 or older
- Have experienced the loss of a close friend or family member **over one year ago**
- Are familiar with the details of the discarnate’s life
- Are willing and able to score statements made by a medium as accurate or relevant (once given instructions on the scoring)
- Have an email address, and are knowledgeable about sending and receiving email attachments

All communications between you and the researchers will be done via email. **If you are interested or would like more information, contact Marilyn McGehee at [MJ.McGehee7@gmail.com](mailto:MJ.McGehee7@gmail.com) .**

This is a study for a doctoral dissertation at Holos University ([www.holosuniversity.org](http://www.holosuniversity.org)).

## **Appendix B.4: Information Emailed to Potential Sitters**

### **Information on Research Study with Mediums**

A doctoral candidate at Holos University ([www.holosuniversity.org](http://www.holosuniversity.org)) is looking for volunteers for a study exploring communications from mediums (individuals who communicate with deceased people). Volunteers (called “sitters”) must be age 25 or older, had a close relationship with someone who died a year or more ago, and have an interest in communicating with the deceased person via a medium.

The study will require you to complete an initial questionnaire (attached) and return it via email. Completing this questionnaire will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes. If you are selected to participate in the study, a medium will communicate with one of the deceased persons you described in the questionnaire. The information the medium receives during that communication is called your “reading.” You will not be present (either in person or on the telephone) for the reading, you will not know when the reading is scheduled, and you will not know the identity of the medium.

After the reading, you will be sent transcripts from parts of two readings via email, along with scoring instructions. One of the transcripts will be a part of your reading, and the other will be a part of a reading intended for another person participating in the study. You will be required to rate both transcripts, without knowing which was intended for you. Your rating of these two transcripts will take about 30 minutes.

After you have returned your ratings of the two partial transcripts to the researchers, we will email you the remaining information from your reading. You will not be required to score or rate any of this additional information.

**If you are interesting in participating, please answer all the questions in the document titled “Questions for Potential Sitters” (attached), and email it to Marilyn McGehee at MJ.McGehee7@gmail.com. If you would like more information, contact Marilyn via email.**

## Appendix B.5: Questionnaire for Potential Sitters<sup>2</sup>

1. Do you believe that the consciousness or identity of a person survives even after their physical body dies (*i.e.*, do you believe there is an afterlife)? (Yes / No / Unsure)
2. Do you believe that certain people (called mediums) can communicate directly with people who have died? (Yes / No / Unsure)
3. What is your reason for wanting to be a sitter?
4. Have you been a sitter before? (Yes/No) If yes, please list the names and cities of the mediums that have read you.
5. Have you ever experienced any after-death communications (other than through a medium) from any individuals who have died? (Yes/No)  
If yes, was your experience:
  - a. Visual (saw something)? (Yes/No)
  - b. Auditory (heard something)? (Yes/No)
  - c. Physically sensory (physically felt something)? (Yes/No)
  - d. Emotionally sensory (felt a presence)? (Yes/No)
  - e. Olfactory (smelled something)? (Yes/No)
  - f. Communication during a dream? (Yes/No)
  - g. External (*e.g.*, objects moving)? (Yes/No)
  - h. An unexplainable coincidence? (Yes/No)Were any of these experiences comforting or healing? (Yes/No)  
Were any of these experiences frightening or disturbing? (Yes/No)
6. Are you willing and able to score the items from a reading for accuracy, meaningfulness, relevance, and/or specificity once instructions have been provided to you? (Yes/No)  
(As scoring is the only way to retrieve data from a reading, only sitters willing to do scoring will be chosen to participate.)
7. Are you willing and able to score readings from other sitters as experimental controls once instructions have been provided to you? (Yes/No)
8. Are you familiar with opening and sending attached files using an e-mail program? (Yes/No)
9. Do you know someone that can help you if you have trouble with the attachment or other computer problems? (Yes/No)
10. Do you know Karla Curtis (the Principal Investigator for this study), Marilyn McGehee or Judith Royer, the study's Research Assistants? (Yes/No)

11. Please list the deceased individuals with whom you shared a close relationship and with whom you would like a medium to communicate. List at least one person, but no more than three.
  
12. For each deceased individual, provided the following information:
  - a. First name of the deceased
  - b. His/her gender
  - c. His/her relationship to you (e.g., husband, mother, grandfather, son, friend)
  - d. How close was your relationship? (Not Close / Close / Very Close)
  - e. What was the cause of his/her death?
  - f. What is the approximate year of his/her passing?
  - g. About how old were they?
  - h. Do you feel like you have unfinished business with them or that things were left unsaid? (Yes/No)
  - i. Do you feel any guilt about this person's death or your relationship with them? (Yes/No)
  - j. Try to rate the level of your grief or sadness about this death right now. (scale of 1-5, where 1 is none and 5 is a lot)
  - k. Try to rate how much you miss this person. (scale of 1-5, where 1 is none and 5 is a lot)
  - l. Do you think this person would want to contact you? (Yes/No) Why or why not?
  - m. Do you think this person has communicated with a medium before now? (Yes/No)
  - n. Do you think this person would want to participate in this study? (Yes/No)

## **Appendix B.6: Email Confirming Selection as a Sitter**

Congratulations, [Sitter's first name]. You have been selected to participate in the research study exploring communications between mediums and people who have died. For this study, the deceased person with whom the medium will communicate is [discarnate's first name], your [relationship with discarnate]. The remainder of this email summarizes the research process and gives instructions for what we need you to do now. If, for some reason, you have decided not to participate in the study, please notify me immediately by replying to this email.

### **Summary of the Research Process**

One of the researchers will schedule a time for a medium to communicate with [discarnate's first name]. The medium will conduct the reading over the telephone with the researcher, who will audio tape the reading. After the reading is completed, Researcher Judith Royer will send you a formatted transcript of the reading, via email, in two separate parts. The first part will be a transcript of the medium's report of [discarnate's first name] answers to these four questions: 1) How would you describe your physical appearance? 2) How would you describe your personality? 3) What were your hobbies or favorite activities? 4) What was the cause of your death?

You will get this first transcript and a transcript of another deceased person's answers to these questions at the same time. We will not identify which transcript is from [discarnate's first name] and which is from someone else. You will be required to rate each of the transcripts for accuracy based on what you know about [discarnate's first name]. This rating should take you approximately 30 minutes or less. You will send your ratings back to Judith via email (judejoy@aol.com).

After she receives your ratings on the two transcripts, Judith will send you the remaining part of the medium's reading with [discarnate's first name]. You will not be required to rate this part of the reading.

If a second medium communicates with [discarnate's first name], you will be sent two additional readings via email, and you will score these two readings using the same methodology that you used for the first two readings. Your rating of these two transcripts will take you 30 minutes or less.

There are two attachments to this email. One is a Consent Form, which you must read, acknowledge by typing your full name on the last line of the form, and then return to me. The other attachment contains Instructions that we would like you to communicate to [discarnate's first name].

### **Complete These Three Steps Now**

Please complete the following three steps now:

1. Read the attached Consent Form and type your name and date on the last line of the Form. Return it to me by replying to this email.
2. Communicate the first section of the attached Instructions to [discarnate first name]. You can read the Instructions either out loud or silently. Either way, read them as if they are a heartfelt wish or a benevolent request.
3. Communicate the second section of the attached Instructions to any other deceased persons who might try to communicate with you via the medium. By asking others to not interfere with this reading, it can help the communications between the medium and [discarnate's first name] to be clearer.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at MJ.McGehee7@gmail.com .**

We appreciate your willingness to participate in our study and look forward to working with you.

## **Appendix B.7: Sitter Consent Form**

(This Consent Form will be an attachment to the Confirmation Email sent to each sitter.)

Holos University ([www.holosuniversity.org](http://www.holosuniversity.org)) supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The principal researcher, Karla Curtis, is interested exploring communications between mediums (individuals who communicate with deceased people). Karla will be assisted in this study by two additional researchers, Marilyn McGehee and Judith Royer. If you decide to participate in the study, a medium will attempt to communicate with a deceased person you have identified. (If you have identified more than one deceased person with whom the medium might communicate, the researchers will select one, and will tell you which person was selected.) The information the medium receives is called a “reading.” You will not be present (either in person or on the telephone) for the reading, you will not know when the reading is scheduled, and you will not know the identity of the medium.

After the reading, you will be sent transcripts from parts of two readings via email, along with scoring instructions. One of the transcripts will be a part of your reading, and the other will be a part of a reading intended for another person participating in the study. You will be required to rate both transcripts, without knowing which was intended for you, and email your ratings to a researcher. Your rating of these two transcripts will take you 30 minutes or less.

After you have returned your ratings of the two partial transcripts to the researchers, we will email you the remaining information from your reading. You will not be required to score or rate any of this additional information.

Your participation in this study and any detailed information generated by the study will be held in strict confidence. We assure you that your name and the name of the deceased person will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Your contact information and the information from the communications with the deceased will be identified only by code numbers. Results of the study may be reported in scientific presentation or publications, but you or the deceased will not be identified. There is no financial cost to you to participate in this study. Your personal beliefs about the existence of life after death are not part of this study. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary.

Because there is documented evidence of fraudulence in communications from some mediums (e.g., prior knowledge of you or the deceased; “lucky guessing” based on your age, your relationship with the deceased, or your appearance; using your reactions to refine the reading; and asking questions, and then using your answers to tailor generic statements to more closely fit your situation), this study has been designed to eliminate all known types of fraudulent communications. Therefore, during the study, you cannot communicate with Karla Curtis (the Principal Investigator), and you will not know the identity of any of the mediums or any of the other participants.

**If you would like additional information concerning this study, its purpose, or its procedures, please contact Marilyn McGehee at MJ.McGehee7@gmail.com.** After your reading is complete, Judith Royer will contact you via email, attaching the two transcripts for you to score. If you have questions about the scoring, you will contact Judith via email. After the study is completed and the results have been compiled, Karla will contact you via email to provide a summary of the results. She will also be available (by email and telephone) after the study to answer any questions or to address any concerns you might have. During or after the

study, if you have any concerns or questions about the conduct of the three researchers Marilyn, Judith, or Karla), please contact Karla's faculty supervisor Marcia Emery, Ph.D., via email at [PowerHunch@aol.com](mailto:PowerHunch@aol.com).

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Dean of Academic Affairs for Holos University Graduate Seminary, via mail at P.O. Box 297, Bolivar, MO 65613, via email at [AcademicsDean@HolosUniversity.org](mailto:AcademicsDean@HolosUniversity.org), or via telephone at (888) 272-6109.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

By typing my name below, I affirm that I agree to take full personal responsibility for my participation in the protocol described above. I am 25 years of age or older and I have received a copy of this Consent Form to keep.

---

Full Legal Name of Person Agreeing to Participate

---

Date

## Appendix B.8: Instructions for Discarnates

(This document was an attachment to the Confirmation Email sent to each sitter.)

**In the following two sections, when you see [*deceased name*], put in the name of the deceased person with whom the medium will communicate.**

### First Section

[*deceased name*], I have volunteered to be a “sitter” in a study for a graduate dissertation that is exploring communications between “mediums” and people who have died. (Mediums are individuals who can communicate with people who have died.) The study is designed to maximize the possibility that the information received by the medium is coming from you – so I won’t be with the medium during the reading with you. In fact, I won’t even know when it is scheduled. I would like to hear from you, so I’m asking you to make contact with the medium at the time the reading is scheduled. The medium will be on the telephone with one of the study researchers, who will give your first name to the medium, and then will audio tape the reading.

The reading will be in three parts. First, the medium will ask you to give her any information that you would like to communicate. You can say as much or as little as you want. Then, the medium will ask you four questions about your physical life when you and I were here together. The four questions are: 1) How would you describe your physical appearance? 2) How would you describe your personality? 3) What were your hobbies or favorite activities? 4) What was the cause of your death? Finally, the medium will ask you if you have any questions, comments, or requests for me. That will give you a chance to say something to me, through the medium. [*If there are some specific things that you want the deceased to talk about in the reading, add them here.*]

I hope that you will agree to participate in this study. It's one way that those of us here can get information from our loved ones who have died. I will get a transcript of the reading in two parts. First, I'll get a transcript of the medium's report of your answers to the four questions and I'll rate the medium's report for accuracy. This is the part of the reading that the researchers will compile and analyze for the dissertation. After I rate that transcript, the researchers will send me the medium's report of the other two parts of the reading.

*[Insert here any other thoughts or feelings that you would like to communicate to the deceased.]*

## **Second Section**

*[Say the the names of other deceased person who might want to communicate with you through a medium]*, I have volunteered to be a "sitter" in a study for a graduate dissertation that is exploring communications between mediums and the spirits of people who have died. For the study, I could only ask for communications with one person. I [or the researchers and I] chose *[deceased name]*. The communications between *[deceased name]* and the medium will be clearer if there are not other people who also try to come into the reading and communicate with me through the medium. Would you please not interfere with this reading? Thank you. I would really appreciate it.

## APPENDIX C: SELECTED ANECDOTAL STUDY RESULTS

(Used with written permission of the sitters)

### Reading A: Female Discarnate, Sitter Was Her Brother

Reading Transcript Item	Sitter Response
<b>Cause of Death</b>	
She (the discarnate) showed herself losing her hair.	Accurate
There were some issues with an IV. Something went wrong with fluids that went into her body via IV, either a missed injection or an infection.	EXACTLY accurate
Her veins looked very blue.	Accurate
She showed the top, left section of her body. There was deterioration in her chest area on the left side – either in the breast or lung.	She died of lung cancer.
She was about 34 years old when she died.	She was 38.
She showed a scene from the hospital. It was nighttime, dark, and very quiet in the hospital. She showed her sister sitting in a chair at the end of the bed, with her feet propped up on the bed. The discarnate says, “That’s all I wanted; that’s all I wanted.” She (the discarnate) was indicating that, at the end of her life, all she wanted was to have her sister sitting next to her. The discarnate had a lot of other relationships that were difficult, but her relationship with her sister was different from those. She wants to say thank you to her sister.	My living sister says this hospital scene is EXACTLY accurate.

## Reading B: Female Discarnate, Sitter Was Her Daughter

Reading Transcript Item	Sitter Comment
<b>Hobbies or favorite activities</b>	
<p>Food was a big thing in their house. She showed ice cream sundaes and other desserts. Food was connected to celebrations and get-togethers. The ice cream sundaes were in tall glasses and had cherries on top.</p>	<p>Not sundaes but banana splits in authentic banana split dishes for special occasions, complete with whipped cream and cherries on top. She was a wonderful cook and food was a big deal at all celebrations.</p>
<b>Reverse Questions</b>	
<p>She has a little bit of regret around her perfectionism, particularly with regard to her kids. She said that this trait came from her mother. It's a family trait.</p>	<p>I would not really refer to her as a perfectionist, but she was very hard on herself and always felt she was too hard on my brother when she was raising him. She really beat herself up about that; she had lots of guilt and regret.</p>
<p>She showed her sister and said that the two of them were competitive. Referring to her sister, she says (jokingly), "She was always better." She showed someone playing tennis. The discarnate wants to give this compliment to her sister.</p>	<p>She does have a sister who is still alive. They were very close but competitive. My mother would often joke that her sister was always better. They did not compete at sports but academically. They were both extremely gifted. My aunt insists that my mother was the more gifted of the two, but my mother would say that it was the other way round.</p>
<p>One of her children has some special abilities, and the discarnate says that it was part of her contract to nurture this child (a girl)."</p>	<p>I have no doubt that I am the child – the girl – with special abilities. I never thought I was special but my mother definitely did and put an enormous amount of energy into making a great life for me. In some ways, she seemed to be trying to make up for what she felt were mistakes with my brother.</p>

## Reading C: Female Discarnate, Sitter Was Her Daughter

Reading Transcript Item	Sitter Comment
<b>Discarnate-directed</b>	
She began by mentioning a woman who name is Ann or Anna.	I'm her daughter and my name is Annie.
<b>Personality</b>	
She was a person who got very quiet when she was upset.	True
She didn't always tell people when she was angry. She had some TMJ and teeth issues from holding in her anger and clenching her teeth.	The first part yes, I was unaware of any TMJ or teeth issues.
She worried a lot.	True.
Even when she was upset, people would often perceive her as "not upset."	True - she was a people pleaser.
She was "matter-of-fact."	Yes she was.
<b>Hobbies or favorite activities</b>	
She was in a position where she helped people. It could have been social service oriented, or she could have volunteered frequently. Her job was to assist people in need. Either this was her profession or she spent a lot of time doing it (as a volunteer).	She was a nurse in WWII and then when she and my Dad married she did volunteer a lot (blood bank, PTA, etc).
She was a social worker.	No, but nurse is close and she was very, very caring.
She showed airplanes, pilots, and then the Blue Angels (the Navy flight demonstration squadron that's based in Florida).	She was a nurse in the Navy (during WWII).
<b>Cause of Death</b>	
She died from something that was totally throughout her body. It was like her body was toxic. It could have been cancer, or anything else that may have flooded her entire system.	She died of an aneurysm. Also, she was on kidney dialysis.
She was sick for awhile before she died.	For years.
<b>Reverse Questions</b>	
There was some confusion about flowers. Someone didn't know what flowers to get. The discarnate showed roses, then she showed a yellow flower, then she settled on daisies.	This made me tear up when I read it- her favorite flowers were daisies.
She's happy because she has no more pain. She's doing fine. She said, "I can run as fast as I want now."	You will never know how comforting that is to hear.

## Reading D: Male Discarnate, Sitter Was His Daughter

Reading Transcript Item	Sitter Response
<b>Discarnate-directed</b>	
<p>There was a younger female who came through first. She was 20 or 21 and was college-bound. She was surprised that she died. The fact that she died and the way she died was a big surprise. She has some shame associated with her death. It was ridiculously weird for her to have done what she was doing when she died.</p>	<p>Accurate; this is my niece.</p>
<p>There was a traumatic car accident in the 1970s or 1980s.</p>	<p>Accurate; my brother-in-law died in an accident in this time period.</p>
<b>Personality</b>	
<p>He grew up in a family where there were chickens running around in the backyard. When it was time to eat dinner, someone went out and grabbed a chicken and lopped its head off. He wanted something different for his family, so he made money however he could.</p>	<p>Accurate</p>

Appendices Endnotes:

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1. Reproduced (with formatting modifications only) from Julie Beischel and Gary E. Schwartz, "Methodological Advances in Laboratory-Based Mediumship Research," presented at the Rhine Research Conference: "Consciousness Today," March 23-25, 2007, 42-3.
  2. Adapted from Beischel and Schwartz, "Methodological Advances in Mediumship Research," 30-31.