RESEARCH ARTICLE

Testing Telepathy in the Medium/Proxy-Sitter Dyad: A Protocol Focusing on the Source-of-Psi Problem

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Abstract—Numerous mediumship studies (e.g., Beischel & Schwartz 2007, Kelly & Arcangel 2011, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014) have reported statistically significant results, thus suggesting that various contemporary mediums are able to demonstrate anomalous information reception (AIR) under laboratory conditions. Importantly, however, such studies are unable to address the source of mediums' AIR. Indeed, the source-of-psi problem (survival-psi and living agent psi [LAP] being the most likely contenders) cannot be resolved using current methodologies (Beischel 2012). However, innovative mediumship-testing techniques may produce results that indicate a convergence whereby sets of outcomes may evidentially favor one hypothesis over another (e.g., see Jamieson & Rock 2014 for a neurophenomenological approach). We present an innovative methodology focused on investigating whether mediums and well-rehearsed proxy-sitters, working under well-beyond double-blind conditions, create telepathic links that we refer to as *dyad-telepathy*, thereby producing response sets that indicate the psi source is more likely to be dyad-telepathy than a discarnate entity.

Keywords: dyad-telepathy—living agent psi—LAP—mediumship—source-of-psi problem—survival—telepathy

Introduction

Within the field of parapsychology, *psi* is a generic term used to refer to anomalistic cognition or *extra-sensory perception* (ESP) and anomalous motor action or *psychokinesis* (PK). The acronym ESP denotes three categories of psi communication: telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition (Rock, Storm, Irwin, & Beischel 2013). An additional category of psi is

concerned with survival and afterlife topics (e.g., apparitional experiences, near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, and reincarnation experiences). The survival topic referred to as mediumship is the focus of the present article. A medium may be defined as an individual who ostensibly communicates with a deceased person (Kelly & Arcangel 2011).

In a comprehensive historical review, Kelly (2010) traced the trajectory of mediumship research throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries. Kelly stated that

> The study of mediums was part of a larger program of psychical research, begun in the late 19th century, intended to examine specifically whether human personality survives bodily death. (Kelly 2010:247)

Indeed, an abundance of "proxy-sitter" research occurred during the 1920s and 1930s (e.g., Allison 1934, Saltmarsh 1929, Thomas 1937, Walker 1927) in which an individual (e.g., the experimenter) served as a "proxy" for the absent sitter.[1] However, research involving "cross-correspondences" [i.e. "correspondences between the messages received by different mediums" (Irwin & Watt 2007:140)] and "drop-in communicators" [i.e. "an apparently discarnate personality who uninvitedly drops in to a séance yet is not known to either the medium or sitter" (Irwin & Watt 2007: 139)] also occurred (see, for example, Saltmarsh 1938 and Myers 1903, respectively).

Numerous "proxy" studies (e.g., Walker 1935) yielded positive findings. Clearly, proxy sittings have the distinct methodological advantage of allowing the experimenter to safeguard against sensory leakage (e.g., subtle cueing of the medium by the real sitter). Nonetheless, proxy-sitting study protocols are not without critics. For example, Stevenson (1968) argued that a medium's drive to communicate with a deceased individual might be strengthened by the presence of the deceased's loved one. Though ostensibly facilitative, the presence of a deceased loved one creates the very problem we seek to resolve.

Kelly (2010) noted that

> the study of mediumship was almost completely abandoned during the latter half of the 20th century, primarily because of the impasse reached over whether the phenomena are best-interpreted as attributable to deceased agents or to living agents. (Kelly 2010:247)

This "impasse" is referred to as the *source-of-psi* problem and is discussed in the next subsection **Mediumship and the Source-of-Psi Problem**.

Beischel, Rock, and Krippner (2011) correctly observed that, "During the first decade of the new millennium, the scientific study of mediums

. . . underwent a major resurgence after considerable neglect" (p. 127). For example, several recent single-blind studies (Robertson & Roy 2001, Schwartz & Russek 2001, Schwartz, Russek, Nelson, & Barentsen 2001), double-blind studies (Jensen & Cardeña 2009, Kelly & Arcangel 2011, Roy & Robertson 2001, 2004, Schwartz, Russek, & Barentsen 2002), and triple-blind studies (Beischel & Schwartz 2007) have yielded positive results concerning mediums' accuracy. We also note that one double-blind study (O'Keeffe & Wiseman 2005) that failed to obtain positive results was published; however, the experimental protocol contained various methodological flaws (discussed in Beischel 2007).

Importantly, we note that the aforementioned studies (e.g., Beischel & Schwartz 2007) tested the *accuracy* of mediumship under laboratory conditions rather than the *source* of mediums' anomalous information reception (AIR). Indeed, recently Beischel (2012) asserted that, "The source of psi problem seems insurmountable . . . No amount of scoring data and no type of mediumship content can definitively distinguish between these two explanations [somatic psi and survival psi]" (p. 10).[2] However, Jamieson and Rock (2014) argued that, "even if there is no single test for the survival hypothesis, there may be series of tests capable of converging on one alternative or another" (Jamieson & Rock 2014:310; see also Rock 2014). The objective of this paper is to present an innovative methodology aimed at investigating whether mediums can produce response sets that indicate the psi source may not necessarily be a discarnate entity. That is, the methodology we propose may produce results that are contrary to what we would expect if discarnate (D) communication is operative (O), but which is what would be expected if dyad-telepathy (T) among living agents is operative (in ***Procedure Phase 2***, we will explain how we intend to control clairvoyance). This can be formalized in the following confirmation measure: $Pr(O \mid T) > (Pr(O \mid D)$, that is the probability (Pr) of O is greater given T than it is given D. This is a standard Likelihood measure for saying evidence favors/confirms one hypothesis over another. We also note that this confirmation measure should be distinguished from the claim that the outcomes would indicate the psi source is unlikely to be a discarnate entity. Specifically, we aim to show that our preferred outcomes are more likely to indicate dyad-telepathy than survival psi. However, before we present our experimental protocol it would be prudent to provide some background into the source-of-psi problem.

Mediumship and the Source-of-Psi Problem

A number of hypotheses have been proposed to explain mediums' ostensible AIR: the *survival* hypothesis, the *living agent psi* (LAP) hypothesis, the

super-ESP (also *super-psi*) hypothesis, and the *psychic reservoir* (also *cosmic psychic reservoir* and *cosmic reservoir*) hypothesis. The difficulty (philosophical, methodological) associated with delineating the source of mediumistic information is termed the *source-of-psi* problem. Each of the aforementioned sources will be briefly considered, in turn.

The survival hypothesis states that, "the existence of discarnate persons provides the best explanation of the data associated with physical and mental mediumship" (Sudduth 2009:167). One shortcoming of this hypothesis is that it arguably lacks parsimony relative to non-survivalist explanations on the grounds that it, of course, posits: (1) the existence of an afterlife and, therefore, a dimension, or perhaps dimensions, that are additional to Einsteinian space–time; and (2) entities that are ontologically distinct from the brains of embodied minds. It might be argued that the 'strength' or pervasiveness of survival belief seems to lie in its historical, religious, and phenomenological roots more than anything else.

Counter-advocates of the survival hypothesis (see Sudduth 2014) often invoke LAP and the super-ESP hypothesis as alternatives, and perhaps superior explanations of survival data. LAP quite simply refers to psi (ESP and PK) originating (consciously or unconsciously) from the living. Moreover, super-ESP may be defined as an

> expression possibly first used by Hornell Hart to refer to the hypothesis that since there are no known limits to the scope of psi, extrasensory percep-tion on the part of the living could in principle be used to produce such complex phenomena as ostensible spirit communication, and that there-fore the spirit hypothesis is unnecessary and unparsimonious. (Thalbourne 2003:121)

Thus, super-ESP is interpretable as a conceptual extension of the methodological challenge posed by LAP, which excludes personal agency (incarnate or discarnate) and postulates psi devoid of any known limits. However, while some scholars conceptualize super-ESP as LAP "pushed to its limits" (Gauld 1982:15), we acknowledge that others (e.g., Braude 2014, Sudduth 2014) do not appear to regard super-ESP as an extension of LAP, but instead propose that the term "super-psi hypothesis" be replaced "with the more accurate and neutral 'living agent psi hypothesis'" (see Braude 2014). Following Braude (2014) and Sudduth (2014), we will, for the remainder of this paper, replace the term "super-psi" with "living agent psi" (and its acronym: LAP).

Braude (2003) has noted that there appear to be two variants of the LAP hypothesis postulated by researchers. First, the *multiple-process* hypothesis

conceptualizes LAP "as an organized collection of refined psychic tasks" (Braude 2003:11). That is, this process is concerned with the medium's ability to negotiate successfully the task complexity associated with discarnate communication (e.g., ESP of sitter's thoughts, the thoughts of other pertinent individuals, or relevant physical objects or events). Second, the *magic-wand* hypothesis states that even the most detailed ESP occurs as merely a result of the percipient's wish or desire. Thus, this hypothesis deems irrelevant both the effort on the part of the percipient and task complexity (Braude 2003). Gauld (1982) articulated the central dilemma presented by the LAP hypothesis, as follows:

> If a piece of putative evidence for survival is to be of use, it must be verifi-able—we must be able to check by consulting records or surviving friends that the information given by the ostensible communicator is correct. But if the sources for checking are extant, they might in theory be telepathi-cally or clairvoyantly accessible to the medium or percipient. Since we do not know the limits of ESP we can never say for certain that ESP of the ex-traordinary extent that would be necessary . . . is actually impossible. (Gauld 1982:15)

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, it has been argued that the LAP hypothesis is untestable because "it postulates an omniscient and omnipotent capacity that cannot be falsified by the scientific method" (Martinez-Taboas 1983:58). However, we note that saying we do not know the limits of psi (e.g., Braude 2003) is not to affirm that psi is unlimited, but the former claim is sufficient to create problems for the survival hypothesis, that is, if the case for survival depends on ruling out some subset of counter-explanations.

Scholars seeking to demonstrate that the survival hypothesis is untestable often invoke the LAP hypothesis. For example, Irwin (2002) reviewed séance phenomena, NDEs, OBEs, poltergeist and apparitional experiences, and reincarnation experiences and concluded that "the operation of such processes" as LAP are "impossible to exclude" and, thus, the aforementioned phenomena "cannot be conclusive for the survival hypothesis" (Irwin 2002:20). We note, however, that others (e.g., Keen 2003) have suggested that the survival hypothesis has more explanatory power than the LAP hypothesis:

> I accept that the evidence from mediumistic communications for survival of consciousness is not conclusive; but it is the only viable alternative to [a LAP explanation] which for most informed observers would be considered less persuasive. (Keen 2003:38)

Unfortunately, Keen made little attempt to justify why he considered the survival-of-consciousness explanation to be superior to the LAP explanation in the case of ostensible mediumistic communication. Keen briefly cited three cases, which he stated are all

> . . . in theory susceptible to an explanation which confines a psychic faculty to the living mind, but only by postulating the most improbable, speculative and evidentially unsupported extensions of psi. (Keen 2003:38)

However, Keen did not elaborate on these "most improbable, speculative and evidentially unsupported extensions of psi" (Keen 2003:38), nor did he explain why survival was more probable, less speculative, and evidentially superior to the LAP alternative.

Braude (2003) has attempted to address the survival versus LAP stalemate via his *Argument from Crippling Complexity* (see Braude 2003:86–95). Braude argued that the crippling complexity of the *psychic traffic* produced by the totality of embodied minds might serve as an obstacle to LAP in the context of the medium–sitter interaction. This contention appears to provide indirect support for the survival hypothesis. However, Braude (2003) concluded that there is no persuasive reason to suppose that the complexity of the causal nexus underlying mediumship–sitter interaction is fundamentally different from the causal network associated with mediumship–discarnate interaction:

> . . . it should be as difficult for communicator and medium to create (say) a consistent, long-term impersonation as it would be for the medium to accomplish the same thing through clairvoyance and telepathy with the living. Both tasks would encounter inevitable obstacles from the bustling underlying nexus of psychic activity, and that underlying causal network would have to include attempts by the deceased to gather information and influence the living. (Braude 2003:93)

Thus, it appears that the Argument from Crippling Complexity applies equally to the LAP and survival hypotheses (Braude 2003). It is noteworthy that Braude (2003) has suggested that the survival hypothesis is more parsimonious than the LAP hypothesis because it posits a *single* source of mediumistic information (i.e. a discarnate entity).[3] In contrast, the LAP hypothesis considers *multiple sources* (e.g., the medium telepathically scanning the mind of the sitter or other living people, clairvoyantly accessing pertinent objects such as photos). Thus, it might be appropriate to grant "an explanatory edge to the survivalist, at least on the grounds of parsimony" (Braude 2003:93). But, as Storm (2014) points out, ". . . the human mental

agility implied in one theory [super-ESP] is as equally challenging to the emotions and the intellect as the multi-dimensionality implied in the other [i.e. survival]" (Storm 2014:1–2).

A further alternative to the survivalistic explanation is the psychic reservoir hypothesis. This hypothesis states "that all information since the beginning of time is stored somehow and somewhere in the universe and mediums are accessing that cosmic store rather than communicating with the deceased" (Beischel & Rock 2009:72). Fontana (2005) asserted that the psychic reservoir explanation is weaker than the LAP hypothesis because, while there exists laboratory evidence supportive of telepathy and clairvoyance (see, for example, Radin 1997), there is no scientific evidence indicative of a cosmic store of information. Moreover, Fontana (2005) stated that, in addition to the fact that it cannot be falsified,[4] there are numerous practical objections to this hypothesis. For example, "What is the organizing principle or intelligence behind the cosmic psychic reservoir?" (Fontana 2005:114). We note that the psychic reservoir explanation is arguably useful insofar as it allows one to distinguish further between the concepts of non-agentive (e.g., a cosmic store of information) versus agentive (e.g., the mind of the sitter) sources of anomalous information. However, this hypothesis rests on what some claim is an unintelligible notion of (meaningful) information as something that can be stored in a structure, independent of any context.

As previously stated, numerous mediumship studies (e.g., Beischel & Schwartz 2007, Kelly & Arcangel 2011, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014, see also Rock, Thorsteinsson, & Tressoldi, in press) have reported statistically significant results, and thus suggest that numerous contemporary mediums are able to demonstrate AIR under laboratory conditions. Importantly, however, such studies are unable to address the source of mediums' AIR. Indeed, the source-of-psi problem (survival-psi and LAP being the most likely contenders) cannot be resolved using current methodologies (Beischel 2012). However, innovative mediumship-testing techniques may produce results that indicate a convergence toward one alternative or another (Jamieson & Rock 2014). Below we present an innovative methodology focused on investigating whether mediums engage with proxy-sitters in a form of psi we call *dyad-telepathy* (explained next).

The Protocol

Objective

Our proposal describes the procedure for a study on the hypothesized telepathic link in the medium/proxy-sitter dyad. We aim to show that mediums create telepathic links with proxy-sitters only, thus producing

response sets that indicate the psi source is less likely to be a discarnate entity than a proxy-sitter (we also aim to show that we can control clairvoyance). For convenience, we refer to this specific psychic link as 'dyad-telepathy'.

The typical response set in a conventional mediumship study consists of free-response items to questions such as "What did the discarnate look like in his/her physical life?" and "Describe the personality of the discarnate. What were the discarnate's hobbies, activities, or interests?" (Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014:186). However, in our design, the response set consists mainly of two types of item stimulus on a proxy-sitter's list (in the form of a questionnaire), so that responses to those item-stimuli take two forms: (i) counts of Yes (i.e. True) responses to Facts about a discarnate entity, and (ii) counts of Yes (i.e. True) responses to so-called 'Counterfactuals' about a discarnate entity. Counts on both lists are independently tested using One-Sample *t* tests, and both response sets are compared using the Independent-Samples *t* test.

Hypotheses

We propose the following hypotheses concerning the medium/proxy-sitter dyad (all tests are one-tailed):

H1:   In the medium/proxy-sitter dyad, mediums report facts correctly.[5]
H2:   In the medium/proxy-sitter dyad, mediums do not correct false statements (i.e. they do not correct counterfactuals).[6]
H3:   In the medium/proxy-sitter dyad, mediums report counterfactuals *verbatim* more often than they correctly report facts.[7]

In Table 1, we have modeled all preferred hypothetical outcomes, and indicate how certain outcomes *pertinent to our design* may ameliorate the source-of-psi impasse. In our best-case scenario, an independently nonsignificant count of correct facts and an independently significant count of correct counterfactuals evidentially favors dyad-telepathy over discarnate communication, especially if there is a significant difference between number of facts and number of counterfactuals. This outcome would disconfirm in terms of a lower Likelihood the notion of discarnate communication based on the assumption that a deceased relative: (a) would assist the medium in correctly reporting a majority of facts, and (b) would unlikely be in error (i.e. if the medium is channeling a discarnate entity, we expect facts to be endorsed, and counterfactuals to be refuted or denied). It might be argued that we are

TABLE 1
Source-of-Psi Problem Modeled for Hypothetical Outcomes Most
Supportive of Medium/Proxy-Sitter Telepathy (i.e. Dyad Telepathy)

Hypothesis	H1 (Facts)	H2 (Counter-factuals)	H3 (Difference in Hypothesized Direction)	Findings and Conclusion	Support for Dyad Telepathy*
Outcome 1	not significant	significant	significant	Medium performs at chance identifying facts (H1); identifies most (or all) counterfactuals *verbatim* (H2); performance gap in favor of counterfactuals (H3); likely source = proxy-sitter.	**Strong**: Facts performance rules psi-sources beyond the dyad as unlikely; counterfactuals not corrected, rules psi-sources beyond the dyad as unlikely; performance gap is indicated. Most likely to be dyad-telepathy.
Outcome 2	not significant	significant	not significant	Medium performs at chance identifying facts (H1); identifies most (or all) counterfactuals *verbatim* (H2); but no significant performance gap in favor of counterfactuals; possible source = proxy-sitter.	**Moderate**: Facts performance rules psi-sources beyond the dyad as unlikely; counterfactuals not corrected, rules psi-sources beyond the dyad as unlikely; However, performance gap is not indicated. Possibly dyad-telepathy.
Outcome 3	significant	significant	significant	Medium correctly identifies sufficient number of facts (H1); identifies most (or all) counterfactuals *verbatim* (H2); performance gap in favor of counterfactuals (H3); possible source = proxy-sitter.	**Weak-to-Moderate**: Facts performance does not rule out psi-sources beyond the dyad; counterfactuals not corrected, rules psi-sources beyond the dyad as unlikely; performance gap is indicated. Dyad-telepathy partially indicated.
Outcome 4	significant	significant	not significant	Medium correctly identifies sufficient number of facts (H1); identifies most (or all) counterfactuals *verbatim* (H2); but performance gap is not in favor of counterfactuals; possible source = proxy-sitter.	**Weak**: Facts performance does not rule out psi-sources beyond the dyad; counterfactuals not corrected, rules psi-sources beyond the dyad as unlikely; performance gap is not indicated. Dyad-telepathy partially indicated.

* Assumes medium is not interacting with a trickster or delusional discarnate, or simply falsely attributing the anomalous information to a particular discarnate. There are other possible outcomes, but these may indicate extra-dyadic ESP or chance.

assuming, perhaps unjustifiably, that deceased communicators suffer no
or little postmortem confusion, despite many communications suggesting
precisely that (from a survivalist point of view), or that communicators are
in a kind of dream-like 'spacy' state. (S. E. Braude, personal communication,
August, 2015; see also Braude 2003)

However, we argue that any hypothesized confusion or dream-like states
in either the hypothesized discarnate entity, and indeed for that matter the
medium, might be as much responsible for hits as for misses, so that such
states (rare or common) would, in a statistical sense, have minimal overall
influence on our results. In the main, that is why we depend on statistical
outcomes. Later, in the section **Analysis of Design**, we make a related
point, that a number of possible statistical outcomes, each in their own way,
provide limited support for the argument that a discarnate entity (or anyone
else for that matter) has helped the medium. That kind of support will be an
advance on conventional mediumship research.

Procedure Phase 1: Participant Recruitment and Screening

Participation in the proposed study will involve claimant mediums and
'sitters-in-absentia' (each medium will read two pairs of sitters-in-absentia
who will also serve as sitter-raters). We define sitters-in-absentia as living
participants interested in hearing from their deceased loved-ones during
mediumship readings but who will not be present at the reading. Sitters-in-
absentia will be recruited via email lists.

The aim of the screening is to maximize the likelihood that each claimant
medium is able to: (1) report relatively specific, accurate, consistent, and
scoreable information under various experimental conditions; and (2) convey
accurate information while following specific experimental instructions
(Beischel 2007, Rock, Beischel, & Schwartz 2008; we acknowledge that
much of Phase 1 has its origins in procedures designed by Julie Beischel).

Each sitter-in-absentia reads a Plain-Language Statement (PLS), which
is information about the study, and signs a Consent Form before they can
participate in the study. They will then be instructed by Experimenter #1 to
complete an online pre-screening questionnaire including items in which
one discarnate related to the sitter-in-absentia is chosen and is described
in terms of personality and physical traits, favorite activities, and cause of
death (Beischel 2007). Discarnates will be paired based on an established
pairing system (Beischel 2007). Briefly, as a way of maximizing differences
between pairs of discarnates and thus increasing effect size, the information
about each discarnate provided by the associated sitter-in-absentia will be
used to identify pairs of discarnates of the same gender that are most distinct

in age, physical description (e.g., hair color, build, height), personality description (e.g., extraverted or introverted, rational or emotional), favorite activities (e.g., indoor or outdoor, group or solitary), and cause of death (e.g., part of the body affected, sudden or prolonged) (Beischel 2007). This pairing process maximizes sitter-rater blinding and optimizes each blinded rater's ability during scoring to distinguish between two readings (Beischel 2007, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014).

During the test readings (there will be two independent readings performed by each medium), for each reading the medium will be given the first name of the discarnate and then asked several questions about the discarnate's physical life (Beischel 2007).[8] Each reading will be transcribed by Experimenter #2, formatted into a list of individual items, and blinded to remove any reference to the discarnates' names in both trials (Beischel 2007, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014).

Each of the two formatted readings will be scored for accuracy (or "fit") by each of the two associated blinded sitter-raters; each sitter-rater will score their own reading as well as the reading intended for the other sitter without knowing which was which. Thus, each sitter will serve as a control rater for the other sitter's reading (Beischel 2007). Each sitter-rater will provide a numeric score for the overall reading, estimating the percentage of items he or she feels are accurate, and choosing which of the two readings he or she believes was intended for him or her. Sitters will be provided with the readings for scoring and return their scores by e-mail to Experimenter #1, who will enter data into a database so mediums can be rated (Beischel 2007, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014).

To summarize, the screening process for the claimant mediums will consist of two identically formatted scheduled phone readings for two paired discarnates and their respective sitters-in-absentia (Beischel 2007). The test-reading protocol will involve a beyond–double-blinded[9] (Beischel 2007, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014) phone reading, in which only the medium and a proxy-sitter (i.e. proxy for the sitter-in-absentia) will be on the phone. Beyond–double-blinded readings include five levels of blinding: (1) the medium is blinded to information about both the sitter-in-absentia and the discarnate before and during the reading; (2) sitters-in-absentia who also score the readings for accuracy (i.e. sitter-raters) are blinded to the origin of the readings during scoring; (3) the experimenter (Experimenter #1) who consents and trains the sitters-in-absentia/sitter-raters is blinded to which mediums read which sitters-in-absentia and which blinded readings were intended for which discarnates; (4) the proxy-sitter who interacts with the mediums during the phone readings and formats the readings into item lists is blinded to any information about the sitter-in-

absentia and the discarnates beyond the discarnates' first names; and (5) the experimenter (Experimenter #2) who interacts with the sitters-raters (i.e. receives by e-mail the readings-scores) is blinded to all information about the discarnates, to which medium performed which readings, and to which readings were intended for which discarnates/sitters-in-absentia (Beischel 2007, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014).

Procedure Phase 2: The Six-Step Experimental Protocol

The claimant mediums who pass the screening procedure (see Beischel 2007 for details regarding passing criteria) will participate in our six-step experimental protocol outlined below. The medium, proxy-sitter, and sitter-in-absentia must never be encouraged to meet as far as is humanly possible, because if the medium ever meets the sitter-in-absentia later and reads his/her mind, then they could, for example, retrocausally send back the correct information and use it in the present during the running of the experiment. The medium must not know that there is a sitter-in-absentia and a proxy-sitter. The proxy-sitter will make contact only once with his/her designated medium in order to administer the stimulus set, and the proxy must never reveal that they are a proxy.

Step 1: Sitters-in-absentia (i.e. sitters who will never be present during the medium's reading), the proxy-sitter, and the medium are briefed separately about their roles in the experiment. All will read a PLS and sign a Consent Form before they can participate in the study.

Step 2: Experimenter #1 will liaise individually with each sitter-in-absentia to create a list of 30 facts about a deceased relative. Subsequently, Experimenter #1 will (i) randomly convert 12 of the facts into counterfactuals (i.e. "what is not the case"; facts NOT about the discarnate entity) by a simple grammatical negation of the truth status of those 12 items (e.g., adding "not" in the appropriate place, syntactically speaking, in the item), and (ii) randomly convert 6 of the remaining 18 facts into factoids by grammatically 'fuzzying' them up (i.e. making them non-specific). Factoids function as a 'fuzzy' subset of decoys that have only 'degrees' of correctness—they are neither true, nor false. Factoids are trivial but unreliable items of information that are so often repeated that they become accepted as facts). Factoids function as decoys mainly to inhibit the medium from directly identifying the counterfactuals,[10] thus dissuading attempts to engage in LAP telepathy beyond the proxy-sitter to the sitter-in-absentia (i.e. psi sources beyond the dyad).[11]

The remaining 12 items will be untouched facts. We note that a medium's outright confirmation of a fact about the discarnate entity does not eliminate the discarnate entity's involvement, but a genuine discarnate entity would

not repeatedly verify counterfactuals (indeed, a discarnate entity may not see the need for factoids in a stimulus set, but for the purposes of a LAP telepathy test their presence is a necessary control condition that is 'grist for the mill' for the medium). We need to be able to limit the medium to the stimulus set by controlling for responses from sources beyond the dyad. That is why we need, in our stimulus set, a range of facts, factoids, and counterfactuals, all of which are well-rehearsed by the proxy-sitter.

Step 3: The 'blind' proxy-sitter is contacted through email by Experimenter #1 and given two weeks to rehearse the list of 30 items, so as to think (believe) that all the items are true. It is crucial that the items be embedded in memory to optimize the LAP telepathic process, given the nature of telepathy as a form of paranormal mind-reading. At a later date, the proxy-sitter is contacted by email and asked if he/she feels confident that he/she knows the list by heart; then a day, time, and location are arranged for a drill through Skype to confirm the proxy's knowledge of the items. The proxy-sitter is required to recite the list via Skype wearing a light-proof mask over the eyes to ensure that the list is not covertly being read. All lists and working documentss (except the question sheet) are then destroyed by burning to disenable clairvoyance during the sitting.

Step 4: Having passed the drill, the proxy-sitter is asked to phone a randomly assigned medium—the medium is given a specific day and time. However, the medium will think the call is from a sitter, not a proxy-sitter.

Step 5: At the proxy-sitting sessions, the proxy-sitter will elicit YES/NO (or TRUE/FALSE, where TRUE = YES; FALSE = NO) responses from the medium. These Y/N (or T/F) responses are recorded on the question sheet. Y/T = hit; N/F = miss. As explained in **Step 3**, we cannot have the naïve proxy-sitter poorly rehearsed (i.e. empty-headed) and uncertain about the items in the stimulus set as that may encourage the medium to use LAP beyond dyad-telepathy. Thus, our test will constitute a direct test of dyad-telepathy (i.e. telepathic scanning by the medium of the proxy-sitter's naïve mental set)—we expect the naïve medium to vouch that all items are true (even the counterfactuals). The proxy-sitter will not reject correspondences that go beyond mere affirmations and negatory responses (i.e. mentation) so that a qualitative analysis of any mentation can be performed as a post hoc analysis to determine whether the quantitative findings are supported by the mentation.

Step 6: The proxy-sitter scans the question sheet, which also contains the responses from the medium, and emails it to Experimenter #1, who enters the data into an SPSS datafile for statistical analysis (NB: data entry is only done after responses on the question sheet are cross-checked with the sitter-in-absentia since all other lists were destroyed).

Analysis of Design

We have described a procedure for a study on the hypothesized telepathic link in the medium/proxy-sitter dyad that limits the likelihood of psi sources outside the dyad. We propose that it can be demonstrated that mediums can limit themselves to dyad-telepathy (i.e. exclusive telepathic links with well-rehearsed but 'blind' proxy-sitters). We argue that our methodology can produce response sets that evidentially favor dyad-telepathy over discarnate communication, especially when responses to the stimulus set include verbatim reports of counterfactuals (i.e. "what is not the case," which are modified facts that are *not* true of the discarnate entity).

The task requires identification of a rich assortment of facts, counterfactuals (as foils), and factoids (as decoys). We state that if all the information needed to answer the proxy-sitter's questions is available strictly in the context of the medium/proxy-sitter dyad only, recourse by the medium to psi sources beyond the dyad are unnecessary.

It may be argued that we are not justified in our presumption that what would be difficult in a non-psychic task is likewise difficult in a psychic task. However, we appeal to an old concept that "ESP is voluntary in its *dirigibility*" (Rhine, Pratt, Stuart, Smith, & Greenwood 1940/1966:319), of which most psi researchers have a tacit understanding. In other words, the medium has some degree of volition over ESP and can guide and give the ESP process "definite direction" (psi experimentation would be impossible without that); but the medium's mental state and psychological set can be changed in order to undermine (or strengthen) the psi process. Psychologists can put up all sorts of blocks to impair or 'canalize' a medium's progress. A considerable number of psychological correlates of parapsychological processes exist, and, given the evidence that psi is very much like many other human functions, we are at liberty to assume that interventions that 'foil' or facilitate psi processes are possible. For example, there is evidence that psi can be made weaker (Storm, Ertel, & Rock 2013, Storm & Rock 2014) or stronger (Storm, Tressoldi, & Di Risio 2010) purely through psychological manipulations. Thus, we provide, through manipulation at the proxy-sitter priming phase and, as a consequence, during dyad-telepathy, all the information the medium will ever need for our purposes so that the medium would not need access to multiple obscure information sources. The 'dirigibility' hypothesis permits that assumption.

Another problem that may be raised here is that the medium cannot be deceived; how do we prevent the deception from being discovered psychically? To put it another way, someone connected with the experiment would know which facts have been converted to counterfactuals, and since

we are hypothesizing that a form of psi, namely dyad-telepathy, is being shown in this study, how can the application of truth-disclosing telepathy beyond the dyad be ruled out?

Naturally, if a medium corrected a sufficient number of counterfactuals so that the count of counterfactuals reported verbatim was significantly low, *and* the medium identified a significantly high number of facts, *and* the difference was significant, then the experiment fails—we could not abandon the argument for telepathy beyond the dyad. However, that is not the only possible arrangement of three binomial outcomes (again, see Table 1). While support for one hypothesis (i.e. a significant *p* value) on its own is meaningless (test results on all three hypotheses must be taken collectively), we can say, generally speaking, that our first priority is to find a significant number of counterfactuals reported *verbatim*, thus indicating *limited* support for the argument that the discarnate entity (or anyone else for that matter) has helped the medium.

As is shown in Table 1, we have modeled the four outcomes that support our theory. Naturally, some outcomes are more persuasive than others. Essentially, however, our preferred outcome (Outcome 1) disconfirms in terms of a lower Likelihood the notion of discarnate communication, based on the opposing premise that *if* mediums channel discarnate entities, *then* we may expect that facts about the discarnate entity would be endorsed by said entity and appropriately channeled by the medium, whereas counterfactuals would be refuted or denied by the discarnate entity and accordingly relayed as such by the medium. And we would also expect a performance gap. If our study yields our preferred outcome, then mediums are either working mind-to-mind with (a) a proxy-sitter only (or a *disinterested* or *confused* deceased relative or loved-one, which is perhaps unlikely), or (b) a malevolent entity (a problem in all medium research).

Conclusion

Despite contentions that the source-of-psi problem appears insoluble (e.g., Beischel 2012), we contend that, "even if there is no single test for the survival hypothesis, there may be series of tests capable of converging on one alternative or another" (Jamieson & Rock 2014:310). In agreement with Jamieson and Rock, one such test would involve the protocol described for the first time in this paper. We argued that using facts only is a 'diffuse' test of AIR (i.e. not a test of AIR with an attempt to identify the source), whereas our relatively more 'concise' test draws in, focuses, and aims to limit AIR to so-called dyad-telepathy, while simultaneously restricting or even excluding the hypothesized presence of a 'responsive' discarnate

entity because a discarnate entity would not make so many personal errors originating in the 'counterfactuals' relevant to the Likelihoods. Thus, this experimental protocol is one of the few to focus on identifying the source of mediums' AIR rather than merely testing for the occurrence of AIR. We plan, in a subsequent paper, to present the results of an experiment featuring that design.

Notes

[1] A proxy-sitter may be defined as "a living person who is present for the reading but is not the person for whom the information reported during a reading is intended. A proxy-sitter may or may not have knowledge about the absent sitter or the deceased persons contacted during the reading" (Beischel & Rock 2009:71).

[2] Beischel and Rock (2009) used "the term 'somatic psi' to describe telepathy with living persons, clairvoyance (including of a psychic reservoir), and precognition on the part of the medium" (p. 73). In addition, "the term somatic is used in reference to the physical body of the living client in psychic readings as well as the 'body' of information described by the psychic reservoir hypothesis" (p. 73). In contrast, Sudduth (2009) defined survival-psi as a process whereby

> the medium acquires her knowledge of discarnate minds by telepathically scanning their minds or . . . the discarnate person is telepathically sending information to a medium's mind. In either case, living agent telepathy is operative. (Sudduth 2009:177)

Sudduth (2009) described survival-psi as "a highly refined and efficacious sort of psi functioning . . . indistinguishable from the degree or kind of psi required by the super-psi hypothesis" (p. 184).

[3] However, Sudduth (2009, 2014) asserted that the survival hypothesis must posit multiple sources when it comes to discarnate persons acquiring states of affairs in the physical world.

[4] We, of course, note that it has been argued that the survival hypothesis and the LAP or super-ESP hypothesis are not falsifiable (see Irwin 2002, Braude 2003, respectively). However, we note that this does not mean that nothing can count against these hypotheses. Various theoretical and pragmatic considerations (e.g., systematicity, conceptual cost, predictive fecundity, explanatory simplicity) can reasonably be taken as rendering one of them more plausible than the other (see Braude 2003).

[5] Operationalized as: The number of facts reported by the medium and confirmed as correct ('Yes'/'True') is *above* MCE (one-tailed).

[6] Operationalized as: The number of counterfactuals reported by the medium verbatim ('Yes'/'True') is *above* MCE (one-tailed).

[7] Operationalized as: The number of counterfactuals reported by the medium ('Yes'/'True') is *higher* than the number of facts reported and confirmed as correct ('Yes'/'True') (one-tailed).

[8] We acknowledge that a sitter asking a medium specific questions is typically inconsistent with a real-life reading whereby sitters are more passive and the medium simply provides information about the discarnate. We note, however, that numerous studies (e.g., Beischel & Schwartz 2007, Beischel, Boccuzzi, Biuso, & Rock 2015, Rock, Beischel, Boccuzzi, & Biuso 2014) have demonstrated that certain mediums are able to answer correctly specific questions from sitters about discarnates. Indeed, Beischel (2007) asserted that:

> The ability to obtain information about a specific discarnate led to the hypothesis that specific pieces of information about the discarnate could be obtained through the asking of specific questions. The use of questions during a reading (a) increases the probability of obtaining information related to the identification of the discarnate, (b) further focuses the medium, and perhaps most importantly (c) emulates normal human communication. The asking-questions paradigm is also important during data analysis: Instead of estimating the probability of the medium's potentially general statements being accurate (for example, Saltmarsh & Soal 1930), the medium is simply asked to provide specific information. (Beischel 2007:42)

[9] By using multiple levels of 'blinding', we maximally eliminate from the psychological set (though not necessarily from the parapsychological set) as many sensory sources as possible that may explain artifacts, thus undermining the psi hypothesis. The other advantage of 'blinding' is that we have to make sure our designs are as operationally superior as possible in order that they meet conventional standards. As for 'Phase 2' (see the section **Procedure Phase 2: The Six-Step Experimental Protocol**), we are claiming that our results can tell us that psi has been restricted to the dyad as telepathy, thereby undermining claims of psi sources outside that dyad.

[10] We are aware of the possibility that the medium may engage in 'extra-dyadic' telepathy or even clairvoyance. Therefore, we need to minimize suspicion in the medium. We theorize that the medium will not have a need to differentiate counterfactuals from factoids because the latter are not overtly false and therefore do not warrant 'correction' per se. If we did not have factoids, the counterfactuals may be more readily evident among the facts. In a sense we create in the laboratory a 'smoke and

mirrors' scenario—what Braude describes as "inevitable obstacles from the bustling underlying nexus of psychic activity" (Braude 2003:93).

[11] It might be asked what justifies our apparent assumption that these potential psi agents would be so well-behaved unconsciously or subconsciously? That is, does our protocol provide anything more than merely apparent control of the situation? Though this control condition may initially appear to be only 'apparent', we argue that it will be validated over a series of studies, given replication of the desired test result (see especially Outcome 1 in Table 1). Our test results can delineate the two different types of responses (see, again, Table 1). We argue that mediums, not being 'front-loaded' (i.e. not primed that there are facts, factoids, and counterfactuals in the set), will not know, and *not seek to know*, the difference, thus theoretically limiting psi to the dyad.

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