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DRAFT

Title: Terms and definitions for subjective information reception from discarnate beings: A systematic review

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Abstract

Background: Research on channeling and mediumship is small but growing. However, the terms used for these activities are varied; there is no accepted, coherent framework of terms or definitions for the process or the people involved in receiving information from nonmaterial sources.

Objective: To examine terms and definitions of channeling used across existing, peer-reviewed studies and collate the data into a coherent framework.

Methods: Lexscien databases and Google Scholar were searched for peer-reviewed studies examining information reception from purported discarnate beings of any type.

Results: 92 unique, peer-reviewed studies were included in which 29 unique terms describing the person or the process were identified, defined, and tabulated.

Conclusions: The terms and definitions have evolved over the past 150 years, with new terms being applied in recent decades. Often the same terms are applied to very different processes. Analysis of the processes suggests a possible framework for consideration by future researchers in describing their work.

Key Words: channeling, mediumship, automism, spiritist, spiritualism, after-death communication

Introduction

Although seeking information from and about deceased loved ones is an activity documented throughout human history, very little is known about the process, now typically called channeling and mediumship. Perhaps the most comprehensive review on the topic to date was written 30 years ago by Jon Klimo (Klimo, 1988). He defines channeling as:

... the communication of information *to* or *through* a physically embodied human being, from a source...that is said to exist on some other level or dimension of reality than the physical as we know it, and that is not from the normal mind (or self) of the channel (p. 2).

He goes on to distinguish several types of channeling processes, including:

- mental - intuitive, telepathy, clairaudience, clairvoyance, clairsentience
- automatism - includes kinesthetic expressions of automatic writing, Ouija board movement, or pendulum movement
- full-trance – disincarnate being incorporates into channel's body to communicate
- sleep and dream – channeling that occurs during sleep and channel recalls information (Klimo, 1988, 4-5)

Clearly, there is variation in how a person may receive information and in the type of information that is received. The person receiving the information may be called a medium, spiritist, or channel. They may receive information by simply being aware of a presence in the room, or may write without conscious volition, or may go into trance and begin to speak in the voice of another person, among other phenomena. The purported information source also may be varied. Deceased humans are the largest reported category of source information, but other sources reported include non-humans such as extra-terrestrial alien life forms, spirit beings,

angels, gods, archetypal energies, and the higher self or superconscious mind. The information being received is also varied, ranging from scientific and technical information to specifics about a deceased person or general guidance about how to maintain or achieve well-being.

In many parts of the world, activities such as channeling or mediumship have been illegal for most of the past several centuries. As a result, what we are calling “channeling” has only recently become socially and legally tolerable, and there are no established institutional definitions or descriptions (Radin, 2018). Many different terms have been used as the process has been recorded since humanity’s earliest years.

During the late 1800s the British and American Societies for Psychical Research settled on the term *medium* to describe people who were able to retrieve information from those who were deceased and share it with others.

At the same time, the Spiritualist or spiritist church was growing throughout Europe and the Americas, described as people who believe,

...as the basis of his or their religion, in the communication between this and the Spirit World by means of mediumship and who endeavors to mould his or their character and conduct in accordance with the highest teachings derived from such communication (National Spiritualist Association of Churches, 1914).

Spiritualists and spiritists have typically used the term *medium* or *spiritual medium* to describe the person who shares messages from the deceased during or after worship services, but in recent years sometimes use “intuitive” or “sensitive” as a descriptor.

Edgar Cayce was the first to use the term *channel* to describe his work. Often called “America’s Prophet”, Cayce was a devout Christian in the 1890s through the 1940s who, when hypnotized, he went into a full trance. He provided thousands of incontrovertible descriptions of

people, their illnesses, and results of prescribed actions, most of which were transcribed and are housed at the Association for Research and Enlightenment center in Virginia Beach. Over the years many books have been published based on those readings, with information ranging from diet to prescriptions for conditions, from past-life descriptions, to methods for accessing what he called the Higher Self. Cayce claimed that all of us are channeling the life force all the time and that some of us are able to access the information that life force holds more easily. He believed that when “channeling the Higher Self”, a part of the mind was able to travel across space and time and gather information (H. Reed, 1989; Henry Reed & Cayce, 2007).

Historically, such activities have been frowned upon in our culture. In Europe and the Americas, such activities were considered “witchcraft” and laws against them were put in place in the Middle Ages. Since the Enlightenment of the 1700s, an increasing cultural focus on the “left-brain” intellect as the only reliable source of information has made such laws seem unnecessary (though many have remained in place until very recently), but has also made intuition and other “right-brain” means of knowing less than desirable in the culture. Possibly in response to that pressure, during the late 1800s, the “Spiritualist” Christian church emerged in England and quickly developed in the Americas, with an emphasis on sharing loving messages from what were termed “spirit beings.” Then, during the 1920s-50s, a number of highly publicized efforts attempted to “debunk” mediums and mediumship, on the grounds that many people were preying on the bereaved. The popular press regularly ran feature stories on such cases, and the societies for Psychical Research on both sides of the Atlantic often addressed those stories in their journals and proceedings (Moore, 1970).

Only since the late-twentieth century have laws and customs changed so that people have been able to engage in these activities in any public fashion throughout most of Europe and the

United States. Biographies and memoirs about and by a few individual practitioners began to trickle into the public domain in the early 1960s and have increased exponentially since. These books are now a major part of what is usually called the “New Age” literature produced by such publishers as Hay House, Beyond Words/Atria, Bear, and Tarcher.

The shift occurred in part because the 1960s saw the largest generation of adolescents in the history of humanity, simultaneous with the arrival of many teachers of Buddhism and Hinduism in the U.S. and Europe, demonstrating human capabilities that were beyond the bounds of then-accepted science. The combination led to an explosion of explorations into nontraditional methods of learning and discovery, including an exponential increase in explorations of the occult, including life after death, psychic abilities, and extraterrestrial intelligences.

In that environment, scientific investigation of such phenomena increased for the first time since the Cartesian split of the late 1600s, which separated academic research of the physical world from what was then considered the church’s purview: the mind and spirit. Today, however, academic research into mediumship, channeling, and related activities still remains limited, with much of it focused on activities in spiritualist churches where sharing information from departed loved ones is an integral part of regular services.

At the same time, popular media on such subjects continues to expand. A rapidly growing body of works exists in print and on the Internet about the idea of channeling, and large numbers of posts purportedly being channeled through hundreds of people from dozens of discarnate sources. Popular interest in the topic is evidenced by a simple search of the term “mediumship” on Google, yielding 1.86 million results. People in these online articles and videos, as well as published books, call themselves by a variety of names such as intuitives, channels, mediums,

sensitives, and more. Some talk about their processes but most are simply eager to share the insights and understandings they are experiencing.

The Problem

While popular anecdotal examples of channeling and mediumship are increasingly abundant, the scientific research on the subject is sparse. Few subjects have been tested for veracity, rigor of method, or consistency of voice or content. There is also no accepted, coherent framework for terms and definitions among those working in the field. This lack of framework may be hindering the growth of scientific study in the field because of the lack of a common language.

A significant challenge is the use of the same words for different meanings. For example, one scientist may use the term *channeling* and mean the connection to a deceased human (e.g., (Dureen J Hughes, 1992)) whereas another scientist may use channeling and mean receiving information from any purported source (e.g., (Brown, 1997; Helfrich, 2009)). In one study, the subject being studied is in a deep trance, unaware of what is being communicated (e.g., (D.J. Hughes & Melville, 1990; Oohashi et al., 2002)) while in another the subject is totally aware and is simply communicating what is being “heard” or “seen” while fully awake e.g., (Rubenstein et al., 2012).

We are not the first to consider various terms used in the parapsychology field (Alvarado, 1989). A bulletin of the Parapsychological Association was dedicated to the language of the field describing the same concerns we raise in this paper including the separation that disparate terms and definitions create within the field and in relationship to the public (Evard & Ventola, 2018). There is a growing case that having a consistent framework and set of agreed-upon terms and definitions would make research in the field more coherent and synergistic while improving

outsiders' perception of the work. In a first step in exploring this issue in channeling research, the objectives of this systematic review were to: 1) survey the different terms and definitions used for channeling and 2) collate the data into a coherent framework.

Method

Searching was conducted from August of 2016 through May of 2017 in current online journals, archived articles in databases, as well as popular literature. These results were reviewed and expanded in June-July, 2018. Few databases are available on this topic, and no accepted protocols exist. Using Lexscien (<http://www.lexscien.org>) and Google Scholar led to more journal citations, and back issues of these journals were searched as well. A total of 34 journals were searched, in fields of study ranging from anthropology to psychiatry, from paranormal and psychic studies to neurophysiology. (See Supplemental Data for list of journals accessed.) The initial search terms used were: *Channel, Channeling, Medium, Mediumship, Spiritualist/Spiritualism, spiritist/Spiritism, Trance channel/ing*. Then, based on initial results, the following search terms were added: *Anomalous Information Reception/Retrieval, Automatic writing, Inner Voice, Discarnate, and After-Death Communication*. The references of retrieved articles were also examined. To be included in this analysis, papers had to be in peer-reviewed journals and must examine the receiving of information from purported discarnate beings. All study types and reviews were included if they met the inclusion criteria. Articles in books and popular, non-peer-reviewed journals were excluded.

A parallel search online and in public and private libraries found books and other media in which self-identified channels, mediums, spiritists, spiritualists, intuitives, prophets, and other related receivers of information from nonphysical sources explain the process by which they came to experience the phenomenon, and the process by which they continue to do so. These led

to the identification of a number of terms which were not included in this study because they were not peer-reviewed, but are included in the Glossary (see Supplemental Data).

All relevant citations were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, where they were coded and inclusion/exclusion determined. The following data were collected from each paper: author, date, title, terms used and study type. Study types included 1) surveys defined as cross-sectional studies, 2) reviews defined as papers that did not include original research but were synthesizing or describing information from original research studies, and 3) laboratory studies described as original research studies where participants were brought into a laboratory for physiological and other measures (e.g. electroencephalography) and 4) papers discussing phenomenology of channeling. The terms used in each record were identified. The terms were then sorted and tabulated using the embedded Excel functions, resulting in the number of records in which the various terms were used. In addition, data was extracted about whether the terms used applied to a person, a process and the level of awareness during the channeling state if discussed in the paper. A glossary was created to distinguish between the terms and their usage across all the articles retrieved, whether they would be included in this study or not (see Supplemental Data).

Results

Our search yielded 1159 citations, of which 276 were duplicates. Of the remaining 883 citations, 712 were excluded as reference materials, guides to technologies or methodologies, descriptions of comparative studies or “personal stories” (see Supplemental Data for more information on the personal story records). Of the studies remaining, 13 focused on shamanism were excluded because they were addressing specific cases of shamanic practice; another 13 studies on possession were excluded because they referred to nonconsensual channeling practice,

while 2 studies with the term possession were included that referred to consensual trance channeling. An additional set of 4 studies dealing with electronics, either as Electronic Voice Phenomena or Instrumental Transcommunication were excluded as not contributing to an understanding of the human experience. Another 48 were excluded because they were published in books or reviews of a book rather than articles in peer-reviewed journals, and one was an *errata* report (Figure 1).

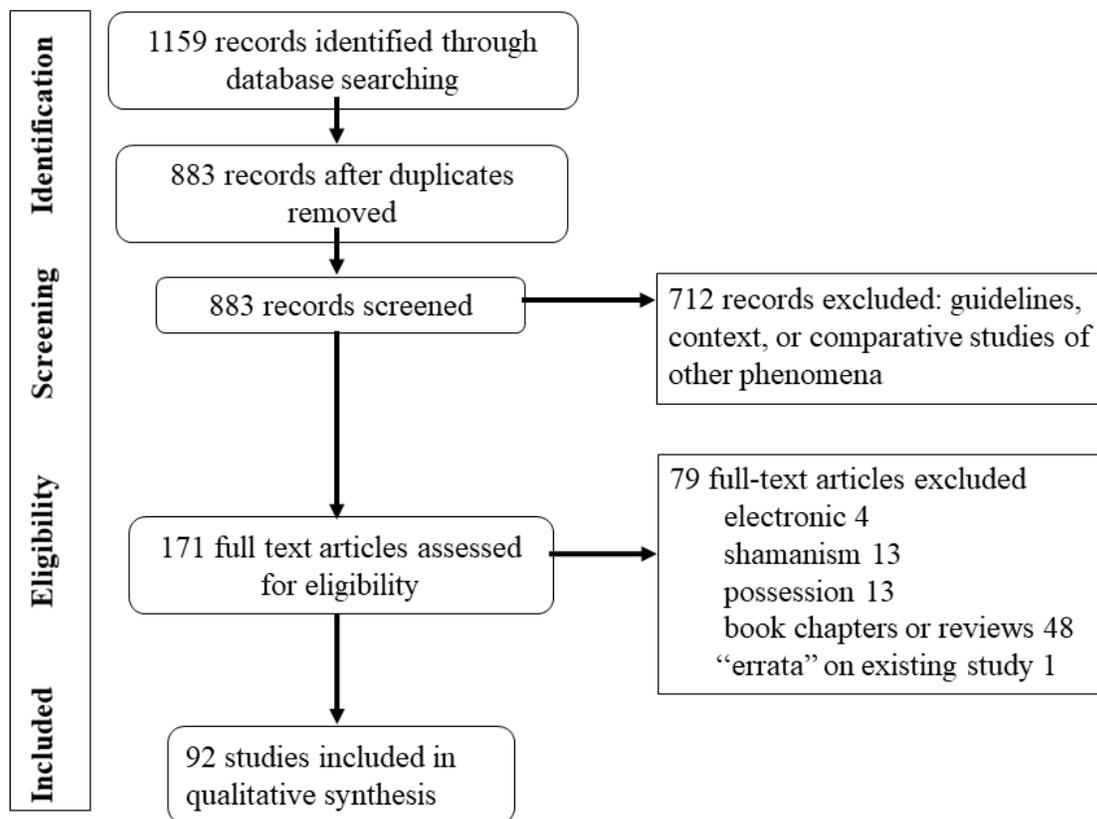


Figure 1. Inclusion and exclusion of retrieved studies.

The 92 studies included in this analysis were from peer-reviewed journals and were published between 1949 and 2018. All but one papers were in English. One was in Brazilian Portuguese and was translated to English for this review. Of the 92, 31 were laboratory studies,

three of which used EEG. Nine studies used phenomenological methods, 12 used surveys, and 40 were reviews of other studies. In the 31 laboratory studies, 16 addressed reliability of process and information received, and in 15 the person was being studied to discover what changes, if any, might be measured in the participant's physiological and psychological state during the process.

Table 1 – Included Articles, Listed Alphabetically by Terms Used

Author	Date	Type	Term
(Beischel, Boccuzzi, Biuso, & Rock, 2015)	2018	Lab	mediums
(Beischel & Schwartz, 2007)	2015	Lab	mediums
(Allan L Botkin, 2000)	2007	Lab	mediums
(Haraldsson & Stevenson, 1974)	2000	Lab	after-death communication
(D.J. Hughes & Melville, 1990)	1974	Lab	trance medium
(Jensen & Cardeña, 2009)	1990	Lab	trance channeling
(Laria, 2000)	2009	Lab	medium
(Maraldi, 2014)	2000	Lab	spiritist medium
(A. Moreira-Almeida, Lotufo Neto, & Greyson, 2007)	2014	Lab	medium
(Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Neto, & Cardeña, 2008)	2007	Lab	spiritist medium
(Negro Jr, Palladino-Negro, & Louzã, 2002)	2008	Lab	spiritist medium
(O'keeffe & Wiseman, 2005)	2002	Lab	mediumship
(Osis, 1966)	2005	Lab	mediumship

(Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Caixeta, Leao, & Newberg, 2012)	1966	Lab	mediums
(Robertson & Roy, 2001)	2013	Lab	mediumship
(Rocha, Parana, Freire, Lotufo Neto, & Moreira-Almeida, 2014)	2001	Lab	mediums
(A.J. Rock & Storm, 2015)	2014	Lab	automatic writing
(A. E. Roy & Robertson, 2004)	2015	Lab	medium
(Archie E Roy & Robertson, 2001)	2004	Lab	mediums
(Schwartz, Geoffrion, Jain, Lewis, & Russek, 2003)	2001	Lab	medium
(Schwartz et al., 1999)	2003	Lab	mediums
(Schwartz, Chopra, & Grenard)	1999	Lab	after-death communication medium
(G. E. Schwartz, L. G. Russek, & C. Barentsen, 2002)	2002	Lab	mediumship
(Schwartz, Russek, Nelson, & Barentsen, 2001)	2002	Lab	anomalous information retrieval
(G. E. R. Schwartz, L. G. S. Russek, & C. Barentsen, 2002)	2001	Lab	mediums
(Solfvin, Roll, & Kelly, 1977)	2002	Lab	anomalous information retrieval
(Wahbeh & Radin, 2017)	1977	Lab	mediumistic communicators
(Delorme, Pierce, Michel, & Radin, 2018)	2017	Lab	anomalous information reception

(Delorme et al., 2013)	2018	Lab (EEG)	mediums mediumship
(Hageman, Krippner, & Wickramasekera II, 2011)	2013	Lab (EEG)	subjective communication
(Benjamin, 2007)	2011	Lab (EEG, EMG)	spiritists
(Klin-Oron, 2014)	2007	Phenomenology	mediumship
(Adam J Rock & Beischel, 2008)	2014	Phenomenology	channel
(Adam J Rock, Beischel, & Cott, 2009)	2008	Phenomenology	research medium
(Adam J Rock, Beischel, & Schwartz, 2008)	2009	Phenomenology	mediums
(Elizabeth C. Roxburgh & Roe, 2014)	2008	Phenomenology	research medium
(E. C. Roxburgh & Roe, 2013)	2014	Phenomenology	mediumship
(Stolovy, Lev-Wiesel, & Witztum, 2015)	2013	Phenomenology	mental mediumship, spiritist
(Alschuler, 1987)	2015	Phenomenology	channeling
(Alvarado, 1991)	1987	Review	inner voice
(Alvarado, 2014)	1991	Review	mediumship
(Bastos, Bastos, Goncalves, Osorio, & Lucchetti, 2015)	2014	Review	mediumship
(Beischel, 2014)	2015	Review	mediumship
(Beischel, 2007)	2014	Review	after-death communication
(Beischel, Mosher, & Boccuzzi, 2015)	2007	Review	mediumship
(Beischel & Rock, 2009)	2013	Review	after-death communication
(Blakemore, Oakley, & Frith, 2003)	2009	Review	mediumship
(Allan L Botkin, 2000)	2003	Review	alien control

(Braude, 1992)	2013	Review	after-death communication
(Castillo, 1994b)	1992	Review	mediums
(Castillo, 1994a)	1994	Review	spirit possession
(Cunningham, 2012)	1994	Review	possession
(Galletta, 2014)	2012	Review	mediumship
(Goodman, 1999)	2014	Review	channeling
(Graus, 2014)	1999	Review	trance
(Groisman, 2016)	2014	Review	mediumship
(Helfrich, 2009)	2016	Review	mediumship
(Kelly & Arcangel, 2011)	2009	Review	channeling
(Klimo, 1998)	2011	Review	mediums
(Maraldi, Regina Machado, & Zangari, 2010)	1988	Review	channeling
(Menezes Jr., Alminhana, & Moreira-Almeida, 2012)	2010	Review	mediumship
(Alexander Moreira-Almeida & Lotufo Neto, 2003)	2012	Review	spiritists
(Alexander Moreira-Almeida & Cardeña, 2011)	2004	Review	mediumship
(Osborne & Bacon, 2015)	2011	Review	spiritists
(Parra & Argibay, 2012)	2015	Review	medium mediumship
(Richeport, 1992)	2012	Review	psychic claimant
(Roll, 1960)	1992	Review	mediumship
(Schaffler, Cardena, Reijman, & Haluza, 2016)	1960	Review	mediumship
(Schmeidler, 1958)	2016	Review	possession

(A. Schouten, 1994)	1958	Review	proxy sessions
(Seligman, 2005)	1994	Review	mediums
(Sidduth, 2009)	2005	Review	mediumship
(Thomas, 1933)	2009	Review	mediumship
(Turner, 2006)	1932	Review	proxy sittings
(Tymn, 2002)	2006	Review	spirit communication
(Von Ludwiger & Nahm, 2016)	2002	Review	mediumship
(Wales, 2009)	2016	Review	medium
(West, 1949)	2009	Review	spiritual mediumship
(Wooffitt & Gilbert, 2008)	1949	Review	proxy sittings
(Claus, 1979)	2008	Review	mediumship
(Daggett, 2005)	1979	Survey	mediumship, spirit possession
(Emmons, 2001)	2005	Survey	after-death communication
(Gariglietti & Allison, 1997)	2000	Survey	spirit medium
(Heery, 1989)	1997	Survey	after-death communication
(Dureen J Hughes, 1991)	1989	Survey	inner voice
(Dureen J Hughes, 1992)	1991	Survey	channeling
(Reinsel, 2003)	1992	Survey	trance channeling
(Elizabeth C Roxburgh & Roe, 2011)	2003	Survey	mediums
(E. C. Roxburgh, 2011)	2011	Survey	spiritualist mental mediumship

(Wahbeh & Radin, 2017)	2011	Survey	spiritualist mental mediumship
(Wahbeh, Carpenter, & Radin, 2018)	2017	Survey	mediumship
(J. Beischel et al., 2015)	2018	Survey, Phenomenology	channeling

Twenty-nine different terms were used to describe the people and process of anomalous information reception from disincarnate beings, with some papers using more than one term. Of these terms, nine describe the process and 20 describe the person doing the process. In terms of level of awareness, 14 described being fully aware, 19 lightly aware, and 24 full unaware.

The terms *medium* or *mediums* were used most often to describe the person; they were used in 22 papers alone and in an additional seven papers modified by the terms *research*, *spiritist*, and *spirit*. The term *mediumship* was used to describe the process in 25 papers and an additional four papers modified by the terms *mental* or *spiritual*. The terms *full-trance*, and *anomalous information retrieval* were used in three papers. Channeling was only used in seven of the papers. The other terms were used are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of terms used.

Term	No. use	% of Total	Person	Process	Fully Aware	Light Trance	Fully Unaware
Mediumship	25	27.2%		X		X	X
Mediums	13	14.1%	X			X	X
Medium	9	9.8%	X		X	X	X
After-Death Communication	8	8.7%		X	X	X	X

Channeling	7	7.6%		X		X	X
Anomalous Information							
Recep/Retrieval	4	4.3%		X	X	X	X
Spiritists	4	4.3%	X		X	X	X
Spiritualists	4	4.3%	X		X	X	X
Mental Mediumship	3	3.3%		X	X		
Spiritist Medium	3	3.3%	X		X	X	X
Trance Channeling	3	3.3%		X			X
Inner Voice	2	2.2%		X			
Possession	2	2.2%		X			X
Proxy Sittings	2	2.2%		X			X
Spirit Possession	2	2.2%		X			X
Subjective Communication	2	2.2%		X	X	X	X
Alien Control	1	1.1%		X			X
Automatic Writing	1	1.1%		X		X	
Channel	1	1.1%	X			X	X
Consulting Spirit	1	1.1%		X			
Mediumistic Communicators	1	1.1%		X	X	X	X
Proxy Sessions	1	1.1%		X			X
Psychic Claimant	1	1.1%	X		X	X	X
Research Medium	1	1.1%	X		X	X	X
Spirit	1	1.1%		X			
Spirit Communication	1	1.1%		X	X	X	X

Spirit Medium	1	1.1%	X		X	X	X
Spiritual Mediumship	1	1.1%		X	X	X	X
Trance	1	1.1%		X		X	X
Total			9	20	14	19	24

Across the studies, the term *medium* was consistently used as “one who communicates with discarnate or deceased personalities on a regular basis” (Bastos et al., 2016). This was true regardless of the process the person used for that communication. The term *mediumship* referred to the collective activity of such people.

The terms *spiritist*, and *spiritist medium* were also used to describe people who did this kind of communication, within the context of the spiritist religious movement in Brazil (Hageman et al., 2011). The terms *spiritualist* and *spirit medium* are used in England and the US, equivalent to the Brazilian term *spiritist* – all of them referring to members of a church which includes messages from spirit guides and deceased loved ones alongside a regular Christian liturgy (See Supplemental Data for a glossary of terms).

The term *after-death communication* appears to have been used primarily by Bolton and Beischel in the journal articles and, although it was used in a paper in 1997 (Gariglietti & Allison, 1997), appears to derive from a book called *Hello from Heaven* by Bill and Julie Guggenheim originally published in 1995 with a re-release in 2012 (Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 2012) that describes individual experiences of contact with the deceased.

Some terms used in the included papers, notably *psi*, *psychic*, and *clairvoyance*, *clairaudience*, etc., describe the ways information may be received, not necessarily from discarnate beings, but in other kinds of paranormal experiences, and so were not included in our

list of terms. Another term for information received from disincarnate beings is *anomalous information retrieval or reception*, which appears to have been used primarily by Schwartz, Beischel and their colleagues in their studies of research mediums (J. Beischel et al., 2015; Beischel & Schwartz, 2007).

Of all the terms used in all the papers, the terms *spiritist* and *medium* have the greatest longevity, having been introduced into the literature over 100 years ago. The term *medium* was adopted by the British and American Societies for Psychical Research and so appears in many of the older articles in the US and the UK. The introduction of other terms, and their geographic use occurred as follows (Figure 2):

Figure 2. Year and location terms were introduced.

Term	Year Introduced							Study Location
	1850-1900	1900-1920	1920-1940	1940-1960	1960-1980	1980-2000	2000-2017	
Spiritist/s	1857							Brazil, U.K.
Medium/s	1861							U.S., U.K.
Spiritualist/s		1907						U.K., U.S.
Channeling			1937					U.S.
Automatic Writing		1918						U.K.
Mediumship		1919						U.K.
Proxy sitting/session				1949				U.K.
Possession					1968			U.S., Brazil
Trance channel/ing						1989		U.S.
Anomalous Information Retrieval							2001	U.S.

Discussion

Clearly, to understand the field effectively requires discovering the full range of terms being used and defining them consistently. Based on a simple tabulation, the terms most commonly used in the retrieved articles are variations on *medium*. The frequency of appearance for these terms is likely a function of their age and may be partly related to the search process, which began with the search terms *medium*, *mediumship*, and *channeling*. Other terms (e.g.,

spiritualist, spiritist, transcommunication) were searched as they came up and, although most were duplicate citations, the terms did lead to several new studies.

Two historical shifts may at least partially account for the changing use pattern among terms. The popularity of the spiritualist movement and subsequent formation of the Societies for Psychical Research in the US and UK during the late 1800s made the term *medium* familiar and well-understood across the English-speaking world. Then, highly publicized efforts to debunk mediums in the early 20th century, along with enforcement of long-existing laws prohibiting such activities, made the term less acceptable, particularly among those who considered themselves serious researchers of human consciousness and mental abilities.

The other shift occurred in the late 20th century, in the sources of information being retrieved. The followers of Edgar Cayce and many people publishing in the 21st century have retrieved information from a much broader range of discarnate sources than early mediums. So, following Cayce's terminology, these practitioners called themselves channels to make the distinction from the mediumistic traditions. As a result, most of the popular literature of the past 50+ years has used the term *channel* to describe both the process and the person.

Later researchers of psi phenomena, exploring Remote Viewing, Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Clairaudience, Clairsentience, and Clairscience, have used these more generic terms for much the same reason. Beischel's use of the term *anomalous information retrieval* is an example of researchers' attempt to separate themselves further from historical traditions and include a broader definition of channeling than just receiving information from disincarnate beings (Beischel, 2007; J. Beischel et al., 2015).

Describing the general process. In an attempt to understand these terms and their relationships, we propose this map to describe their interrelations. We propose that Channeling

be used as a general term referring to receiving various types of information from any source that occupies other dimensional spaces. Mediumship would then be a subcategory of channeling referring to the reception of information, often as guidance and solace, from purported deceased human beings. Channeling, in its popular use especially, appears to apply almost entirely to receiving information from any form of being outside our normal awareness. Mediumship is further refined as receiving information from, most often, a purported deceased human being.

Describing the Specific Process. Several different terms describe the specific methods by which the information is received. They fall into the categories listed below, in order of their degree of personal unconsciousness:

- While these papers were not included in the review, *Instrumental Transcommunication* or *Electronic Voice*, refers to detection and/or recording the sounds made by purported discarnate beings sharing information through equipment.
- *Automatic Writing*, in which words are written without conscious volition (usually with consent, conscious/unconscious varies; some control of body by the discarnate entity)
- *Mental Mediumship*, in which information is intentionally received through the medium's awake mind and is then relayed to the listener
- *Trance Channeling*, in which the disincarnate entity uses the medium's body to directly communicate information through voice, physical movements, etc.
- *Possession*, in which a discarnate source expresses itself through the mind and body of the medium who is usually unaware of the environment and the process. Possession papers were not included in this review.

Within these methods, there are numerous variables at play that contribute to the current variability in terms used. Some of them include the perceived source of information (e.g., superconsciousness or higher self versus purported disincarnate beings), how the information is being received (e.g., mental mediumship versus full-trance), how the information is being expressed (e.g., automatic writing, instrumental transcommunication), and consent of the receiver (e.g., possession versus channeling). Then within these broad variations are even more refined variations between different receivers. The subjective experience among different mediums may be quite different, even though they all claim themselves to be mental mediums.

The first spectrum of variability refers to the state of the medium's consciousness during the experience, ranging from Fully Conscious to Unconscious, with Fully Conscious mediums being aware and observant as the information is being received and shared, able to describe clearly afterward what has happened, whereas Unconscious mediums emerge from the experience with no recollection of what has just occurred. The second spectrum would be the consent of the medium, whereby the medium is at choice and giving conscious permission for the channeling to occur or, at the opposite extreme, experiencing what may be called possession or spirit attachment, where no permission has been granted. The final spectrum describes the perceived incorporation into the medium's body, ranging from mental mediumship where a medium may hear a message and relay it to the listener, to a gentle guiding of one's attention or language, to trance/possession where a full-trance medium's full body, including the voice, is being directed by a disincarnate being. Each practitioner may subjectively experience different levels on each of these axes. They may therefore help us classify the subjective experience of the phenomenon (Figure 3).

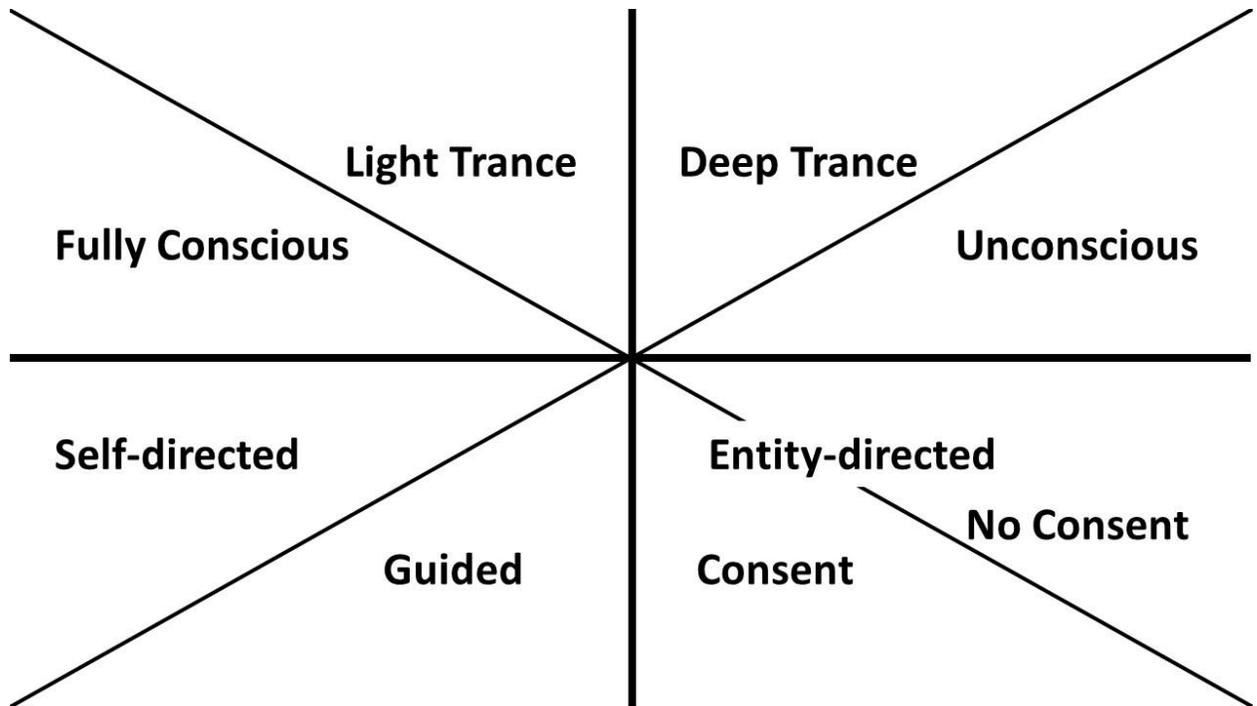


Figure 3. Types of experience/process being used.

Applying this framework to describe popular figures (see Supplemental Data for a list), John of God, Edgar Cayce, Esther Hicks, or Jane Roberts might be described as “Unconscious, Entity-directed, with consent;” Sylvia Browne or James Van Praagh might be described as “Fully Conscious, Self-Directed”. A Spiritualist minister offering messages to congregants in a Spiritualist church service would be “Fully Conscious, Guided”. Someone practicing automatic writing would usually be “Light Trance, Guided.” In using this framework, a research subject might shade sections of the graph, indicating their experience, while the researcher shades an indication of what was observed. Others have also developed models or frameworks for describing parapsychological experiences such as the First Sight model developed by James Carpenter at the Rhine Research Center (Carpenter, 2018).

Conclusion

There are limitations of this review that should be considered. The search strategy likely did not include all papers on this topic. We were unable to conduct a thorough search of non-digitized journals that likely had additional papers. Our study also did not extract the exact definitions of each term in each paper and compare them to the other papers. This could be a next step in this line of research to more fully explicate definitions and terms.

Overall Conclusions. In this study, we examined current and past research studies and reviews to determine what is, or could be, appropriate terminology for research addressing the retrieval of information from discarnate beings. In the process we learned that there is, in fact, a way to use the terms within a coherent framework. Is it possible to set aside previous notions of which terms should be used and why and come to a consensus of terms and definitions? This paper by no means expects to define the field, but rather attempts to shed light on the similarities and discrepancies of the terms and definitions used. Only with a clear eye on the situation can we consciously examine and choose how we want the field to move forward. We do believe an established set of standards moving forward would be beneficial for the field. Perhaps inherent in this paper is a call to the structured organizations within paranormal and psychical research to come together and establish guidelines for terms and definitions, whether they be the ones suggested above or some other agreed-upon set of terms and definitions.

Supplemental Data

Glossary

[Note: these terms were taken from the full range of literature retrieved, including excluded studies, personal stories, and reviews.]

Absorption hypothesis describes the association of marked increases in focused attention with concomitant decreases in self-awareness (Bastos et al., 2016).

ADC: After-Death Communication includes experiences when someone is contacted directly and spontaneously by a relative or friend who has died. Approximately 90% of the experiences occur within 24 hours of death, half within one year and three quarters before the end of the fourth year.

(http://www.paranormalresearchgroup.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=490)

AIR: Anomalous Information Reception describes the acquisition of information from a source which is not normally observed or measured through physical means (Beischel & Rock, 2009; Wahbeh & Radin, 2017) in the context of data science and informatics, the term refers to the anomalous states in which information is requested or retrieved (Belkin, 2014; Ellis, 1989).

Automatic Writing is the process of allowing the non-dominant hand to move across the page while in a less than fully aware state, such that words are written without conscious volition (Rocha et al., 2014).

Automism includes kinesthetic expressions such as automatic writing, Ouija board movement, or pendulum movement.

Autonomous trance in which there are no controls, but in which the sensitive herself remains always in control of their own organism.

Big Four describes the four of the major parapsychologic categories telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis.

Certified research mediums (CRMs) participants screened over several months using an intensive multi-step screening and testing procedure. They remain conscious and aware during readings, and their abilities to report accurate and specific information have been repeatedly demonstrated under controlled conditions in the laboratory. CRMs have the ability to differentiate between ostensible discarnate communication and their use of somatic psi during psychic readings (Beischel, 2007).

Channeling is the reproduction by words or sounds of concepts not generated within one's own conscious mind but transmitted from the subconscious mind or through the subconscious mind into the conscious mind from an impersonal or nonpersonal entity or principle (Rueckert, 1987).

Clairaudience is hearing sounds or information that others can't hear with their normal senses.

Clairscience is "just knowing" information that others can't access with their normal senses.

Clairsentience is feeling or touching shapes, textures, or other forms of information that others can't feel with their normal senses.

Clairvoyance is seeing forms, images, people, or information that others can't see with their normal senses.

Control trance is also called possession, in which the body and voice of a medium is possessed by a discarnate being, often habitually the same being and known by name (not to be confused by the use of a Control group in an experiment, whose experience is used to compare against.)

Cryptaesthesia is a hidden mode of perception. We may divide most of the phenomena of cryptaesthesia into three main groups, in the first place, *clairvoyance*, covering all those cases in which a material object is perceived (otherwise than through the five senses); in

the second place, *prevision* and *retrocognition* of events which are to come or are already past; and in the third place, *telepathy*, the perception of ideas, etc., in another's mind, or the transmission of ideas from one mind to another (Barnard, 1933).

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association, provides distinct characteristics of diagnosable psychiatric disorders.

Direct Voice Medium is the independent voice which speaks from space. It does not issue from the mouth of the medium—who may, and often does—speak simultaneously with it—a fact which enables any suggestion of ventriloquism to be dismissed (Bradley, 1929).

Discarnates are purportedly intelligent beings who are not in material form, not biologically alive.

Dissociation is widely accepted as a sort of built-in defense mechanism that allows individuals to shield psychologically themselves from extreme emotions and arousal triggered by a traumatic event. However, while some degree of dissociation may be considered adaptive in the short-term, prolonged and/or intense dissociative responses are deemed maladaptive (*e.g.*, dissociative identity disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder).

Nevertheless, in some contexts, dissociation is not related to trauma at all, and therefore it likely has very different functional implications⁴. The question of whether pathological and non-pathological dissociation share a common pattern of neural activation and of physiological responses remains open (Bastos et al., 2016).

Dissociative experiences have been thought to exist on a continuum, ranging from non-pathological absorption through hypnosis, to more profound and prolonged experiences

that include dissociative amnesia and alterations in identity (*e.g.*, Dissociative Identity Disorder) (Bastos et al., 2016).

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) may include: amnesic periods, “taking on” the personality and mannerisms of another being, or experiencing two or more distinct identities or personality states.

Empathy describes the awareness by one person of another’s feelings; an ability to “feel with” another.

EVP-Electronic Voice Phenomenon uses electronic recording devices to pick up sounds from discarnate entities that the normal ear can’t hear unaided.

Hypnosis can be defined as a state of focused attention, concentration and inner absorption with a relative suspension of peripheral awareness. Hypnosis has three main components: absorption, dissociation and suggestibility.... highly hypnotizable individuals usually have greater cortical coherence, although some investigators report decreases in frontoposterior synchrony during hypnosis (Bastos et al., 2016).

Full-trance channeling involves shutting down awareness so that disincarnate being incorporates into channel’s body to communicate.

IADC-Induced After Death Communication A therapy used by psychologists to reduce trauma, stress and grief surrounding death (Allan L Botkin, 2000; Allan L. Botkin & Hannah, 2013).

Inner Voice is an awareness of information using words and tones that are not part of one’s normal thinking or speaking but not coming from outside, not heard through the ears.

Inner Teacher is a source of guidance and information received in images or words during meditation or contemplation that offers insights and understandings beyond the knowledge or experience of the normal thinking mind.

ITC - Instrumental Trans-communication uses radios to access information from discarnate beings – a form of Electronic Voice Reception (EVP).

Medium one who communicates with discarnate or deceased personalities on a regular basis (Bastos et al., 2016).

Mediumship is the alleged ability to communicate with discarnate or deceased personalities on a regular basis... it can manifest itself in various forms, *e.g.*, hearing or seeing spirits, spiritual possession, or talking and writing under the influence of spirits, among others (Bastos et al., 2016).

Mental mediums receive information in the form of auditory, visual, or somatic perceptions that are not available to others. This information ostensibly derives from deceased persons and therefore is purported to demonstrate evidence of survival after death... mental mediums generally remain in a focused and waking state throughout mediumship demonstrations, they “may be in a slightly dissociated state” (Gauld, 1982: p. 25) and they may also report the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states in the form of spirit guides or controls.

Multimodal may use any or all means of awareness: visual, auditory, tactile, and “just knowing”.

Partial “merging” is a state of full-trance channeling in which the medium maintains limited awareness of what is happening while allowing another entity to speak or act using the medium’s body; in contrast with full-trance channeling.

Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory (PCI) is a questionnaire designed to quantify different phenomenological elements associated with exposure to a particular stimulus condition (Pekala, 1991).

Possession is a more developed form of motor automatism in which the automatist's own personality does for a time altogether disappear, while there is a more or less complete *substitution* of personality; . . . speech being given by a spirit through the entranced organism" (Myers, 1903: p. 345).

Precognition is awareness of an event or potential event prior to its occurrence; an essential aspect of the psychic reading experience.

Psychic readings Somatic psi (i.e., telepathy, clairvoyance, and/or precognition) is used to gather information tending to pertain primarily to the individual client; the reader uses telepathy to acquire information from the living client's mind, as well as precognition (Beischel & Rock, 2009).

Psychokinesis is moving or changing material objects with the mind.

Sitters are people who come to a channel or medium seeking information from or about discarnates.

Skilled mediums are able to report accurate and specific information about the deceased loved ones (termed discarnates) of living people (termed sitters) during anomalous information reception (AIR); that is, without any prior knowledge about the discarnates or sitters, in the absence of sensory feedback, and without using deceptive means (Beischel & Rock, 2009).

Sensitive is a person who is able to receive information without using the physical senses.

Sleep and dream channeling occurs during sleep and channel recalls information.

Spiritism, spiritist popular in Brazil, is a religious tradition that emphasizes mediumship (Bastos et al., 2016).

Spiritualism, Spiritualist is a religious movement popular in Britain and the U.S. in the late 1800s with continued adherents today; Essentially Christian in focus, with the addition of mediums and their messages as part of Sunday services, and some further explorations during the week.

Stroop test or color-word interference test is cognitive task where a conflict is created between an incongruent color and word (*e.g.*, the word “blue” in font-color red) and, when the person is asked to name the color, the response time is slower than when the font-color matches the word (*interference*). It has been shown that the slower response time in the former case occurs because it requires more attention to monitor salient information, to suppress irrelevant information and to select appropriate responses.

Super-psi is receiving information through multiple psi processes: telepathically from the mind of the sitter (even though the latter may not be consciously thinking about the information at the time), telepathically from the minds of people elsewhere, clairvoyantly from the environment, or even precognitively from the future moment (Fontana, 2005: p. 104).

Survival is the ongoing consciousness of an individual after the body has been declared dead.

Telepathy is thought-transference or sensing what another person is thinking or feeling.

Trance channeling is characterized by individuals experiencing, in a trance state, an independent intelligence speaking to or through their mind and body.

Trance mediumship, which has been described as an “advanced form of mental mediumship” (Gauld, 1982: p. 29), involves mediums entering a deep trance state in which they may

lose awareness of their surroundings, experience amnesic periods, and speak for or “take on” the personality and mannerisms of a communicating spirit.

Supplemental Data:

Journals with articles about channeling and mediumship

Archives of Clinical Psychology

Anthropology of Consciousness

Australian Journal of Parapsychology

Clinical Neurophysiology

European Journal of Parapsychology

Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing

Frontiers of Psychology

Gnosis

Journal of Holistic Nursing

Journal of Individual Psychology

Journal of Integral Theory and Practice

Journal of Near Death Studies

Journal of Nervous & Mental Disorders

Journal of Parapsychology

Journal of Personal and Interpersonal Loss

Journal of Religion & Psychical Research

Journal of Science & Healing

Journal of Scientific Exploration

Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research

Journal of the Society for Psychical Research (British)

Journal of Transpersonal Psychology

Mortality

New Eyes: The Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Applied Intuition

Neuropsychologia

NeuroQuantology

North American Journal of Psychology

Omega Journal of Death & Dying

Parapsychology Review

Proceedings of the Parapsychological Association

Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research

Psychotherapy & Psychosomatics

Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria

Revista de Psiquiatria Clinica (Brazil)

Transpersonal Psychology Review

Popular Literature

There were 19 personal stories, from articles and book chapters by people who are mediums or channels well-known to the public, describing their process, Specifically, they were

descriptions of how the individuals had begun to receive information from discarnate sources, what their physiological and psychological experiences were, and how they continue the process – paralleling the phenomenological research in the journal articles in content and in structure.

The authors/channels who emerged through the popular literature search include:

Bradley, H.D.

Burley, P

Browne, Sylvia

Carey, Ken

Cayce, Edgar

Davidson, G. A.

Garrett, E. J.

Hicks, Esther

Knight, J. Z.

Leonard, G. O.

Myss, Carolyn

Nahm, M.

Roberts, Jane

Roman, S.

Rubenstein, I D.

Rueckert, C

Ryerson, Ken

Smith, H.T.

Van Praagh, James

White, Stuart Edward (describing his wife, Betty)

The terms in the popular literature search include:

channel/ing

medium/s/ship

automatic writing

inner teacher

inner voice

trance channeling

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