



An Interview with Dr. Julie Beischel

by Michael E. Tymn

Co-founder and Director of Research at The Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential in Tucson, Arizona, Julie Beischel, PhD, is one of the leading consciousness researchers in the world today. Her focus has been on communication purportedly coming from discarnates through mediums.

Dr. Beischel received her doctorate in pharmacology and toxicology with a minor in microbiology and immunology from the University of Arizona. She is currently a member of the Parapsychological Association and the Society for Scientific Exploration and a member of the scientific advisory boards of the Rhine Research Center and Forever Family Foundation. Her academic training in several interdisciplinary scientific fields allows her to design and apply traditional research methods to investigating more unconventional topics of study. Her peer-reviewed articles have been published in a number of scientific journals.

According to its website (<http://www.windbridge.org>), the Windbridge Institute "is concerned with asking: What can we do with the potential that exists within our bodies, minds, and spirits? Can we heal each other? Ourselves? Can we affect events and physical reality with our thoughts? Can we know things before they happen? Are we connected to each other? To the planet? Can we communicate with our loved ones who have passed?"

I recently put some questions to Dr. Beischel by e-mail:

How did you become interested in psychical research and mediumship?

"Science has always been in my blood, but it was always the more traditional sciences. I didn't even know what a medium was until questions about the afterlife showed up in my backyard. When my mother committed suicide when I was 24, I turned to science for the answers to my questions. Through a series of interesting "coincidences," I was able to begin performing survival and mediumship research after I received my PhD in 2003 and I have been doing so ever since. I quickly discovered that

there was something interesting going on and a lot of research questions that still needed answers."

Where does the name Windbridge come from?

"When Mark Boccuzzi and I decided to start our own independent research institute almost three years ago, we wanted a name that referenced the dichotomy of human existence; one part intangible (mind, spirit, or soul) and one part material (body). Like spirit, one cannot hold, weigh, or see wind, but it is very powerful. And like the body, a bridge is quite substantial and allows us to connect with the rest of the world. 'Bridge' also makes reference to a medium's role as a bridge between this world and the next."



Julie Beischel

Your web site states that survival research is your primary focus. Would you mind summarizing your findings to date relative to survival?

"At this point, we can definitively state from the results of our proof-focused research that certain mediums are capable of what we call anomalous information reception (or AIR). That is, they can report accurate and specific information about deceased individuals (or discarnates) without any prior knowledge about the discarnates or sitters (the living people interested in hearing from the discarnates), without any feedback during the reading, and without using fraud or deception. The quintuple-blind protocol we use effectively eliminates all the explanations that a skeptic may claim are responsible for a medium's apparent accuracy: fraud, experimenter cueing, information so general it could apply to anyone, rater bias, and 'cold reading' (a situation in which a medium uses cues from a present sitter to fabricate an 'accurate' reading). The readings take place on the phone between a medium and a blinded experimenter; sitters do not hear the readings as they take place and they later score blinded transcripts.

"Though we can demonstrate AIR, we cannot determine the anomalous source of the mediums' information using proof-focused research. In ad-

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dition to survival of consciousness, the super psi and psychic reservoir theories are also supported by the data. To address that issue, we use process-focused research in which we systematically investigate the mediums' experiences. We have found that—though there are some similarities between mediums' experiences when receiving psychic information about the living and when communicating with the deceased—they report being able to differentiate between the two varied experiences. We are still conducting studies on this process-focused research front.

"In addition, we are very interested in applied mediumship research and determining how mediumship readings may be beneficial in society. Currently, this involves a research program investigating the therapeutic effects of readings from credentialed mediums in the treatment of grief. From the initial data we have collected, it appears that mediumship readings may indeed have several advantages over both traditional grief therapy and spontaneous personal after-death communication experiences. I am excited to start a larger study on this topic once we can locate funding for such a project."

The old researchers like Myers, Hodgson, Lodge, Hyslop, et al., at some point professed a belief in survival, but many of today's researchers seem to think that they must forever remain on the fence if they are to be perceived as "scientific." What is your position on that? If you find evidence strongly suggesting survival and publish that, do you suddenly become a propagandist rather than a scientist?

"It's a fine line around which I continue to tip-toe. Back in my traditional science days, no one would ever refer to me as a "believer" in the effect of a drug or a virus on the body, but if I were to announce that mediums can report accurate information about the deceased under blinded conditions (which I regularly do), I run the risk of being labeled a proponent or believer and viewed as some kind of zealot even though I am simply drawing the appropriate conclusion from the statistics performed on data collected using a properly designed protocol. It is a strange position in which scientists in other fields do not find themselves.

"However, I would like to point out that the modern mediumship research era differs considerably from the early days of the Society for Psychical Research in its use of technology (for example, digital recording, e-mail scoring, three-way phone calls, etc.) as well as the characteristics of the medium participants (for example, the Windbridge Certified Research Mediums do not enter a trance state during readings and do not associate their me-

diumship with a specific religious belief system such as Spiritualism), so grouping all the data together may not be appropriate. Thus, the new era is still in its infancy and I truly don't think enough data has been collected to make any firm conclusions about the source of mediums' information. I will say that taking into account only the proof- and process-focused mediumship data I have collected myself, I am certainly leaning toward survival and away from the alternative psi hypotheses."

What is the focus of your current research?

"Currently, to provide more evidence regarding anomalous information reception, we are collecting data to replicate and extend a previously published proof-focused study. We are also screening new prospective Windbridge Certified Research Mediums and collecting phenomenological data about mediums' experiences during communication which will allow us to determine if any specific dimensions of consciousness correlate with reading accuracy. We also recently completed an instrumental transcommunication (ITC) study of real-time communication using EVPMaker software and presented research on animal psi as well as photographic orbic artifacts at academic conferences. Perhaps most importantly, we are finishing up a paper proposing the positive therapeutic potential of mediumship readings in the treatment of grief. (More information about our presentations and papers can be found here: www.windbridge.org/publications.htm.)"

Has there been one medium or one case that has been particularly evidential to you?

"One medium or one reading can always be dismissed as a fluke. Therefore, at the Windbridge Institute, we are interested in collecting data from numerous mediums. That way, it is more evidential of a widespread phenomenon or ability.

"Personally, I think it is the compilation of all the readings and data I've collected together that provides the most evidence. It is witnessing over and over numerous mediums able to report accurate and specific information about the deceased under effectively blinded conditions and observing what seems to be communication with a volitional entity rather than the acquisition of information stored in some kind of etheric database."

What has been the biggest obstacle in your research?

"Without question: funding. Survival of consciousness is not an area of research funded by any government grants or by any but a handful of pri-

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