1. Type questions into GoToTraining "chat" text box; they will be addressed during the Q&A after the presentation.

2. Consider joining CCSN (www.theccsn.com). It's free.

3. Read about member benefits:

http://www.theccsn.com/about/membership-benefits/

4. Contact the Network Administrator with additional questions: administrator@theccsn.com

5. Learn about upcoming webinars: http://www.theccsn.com/category/webinars/webinars-upcoming/

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  Brian Lamb School of Communication
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  - Pray for my prelims! ;-)

- Director
  Delaplane Initiative for Preaching Excellence
  Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis

- My LinkedIn

- Other talks from this research:

  - "Why Nuns Don't Have Midlife Crises"

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION

"DDC"

OUR (CRAZY AMBITIOUS) GOAL
GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE (NASCENT!) FIELD

DDC:
WHAT IS IT?

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
DEFINITIONS

- RSE: "An experience which [*sic*] points beyond normal, everyday life, and which has spiritual or religious significance for the person to whom it happens." (Rankin, 2008, p. 5)

- DC: "An experience that the recipient interprets to be a direct communication from God, be it mediated or unmediated by worldly entities (e.g., other people, objects, circumstances, etc.)." (Sigler, just now)

- DDC: "A <u>phenomenologically intense or unusual</u> experience that the recipient interprets <u>without a doubt</u> to be a direct communication from God, be it mediated or unmediated by worldly entities (e.g., other people, objects, circumstances, etc.)<u>, and regardless of whether the recipient understood/ understands the meaning of the message clearly.</u>" (Sigler, 2014, pp. 149–150)

RSE

DC

DDC
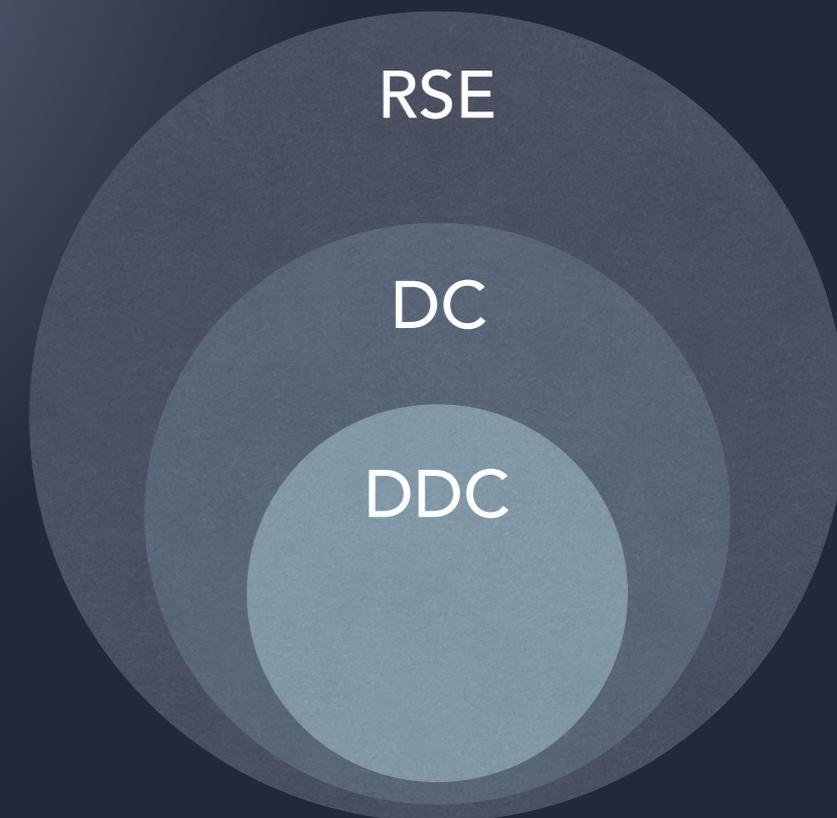
DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
TYPES & EXAMPLES

1. Auditory

    1.1. Internal locutions

    1.2. External locutions

    1.3. Audible voices

2. Visual

    2.1. Visions

    2.2. "Mental impressions"

3. Tactile (very rare)

4. Affective

    4.1. Ecstasy/rapture

    4.2. General affect

5. Olfactory (historically—DDC?)

6. Multisensory experiences

- NOT:

    - Affective *responses*

    - Gustatory
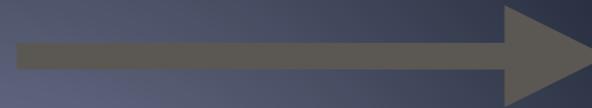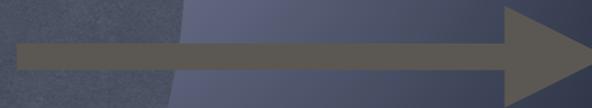
DDC:

HOW IS IT STUDIED?

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
STATE OF THE FIELD

Literature

- Research is spread across disciplines with very different approaches, assumptions, goals, etc.

- Everyone is using different definitions and terminology at present

- Everyone is bounding the concept differently

- Almost no empirical research on DDC

- Even less in communication

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THREE (EMPIRICAL) PARADIGMS

1. Hallucination Paradigm

- "The Sidgwick Report" (1894)

- West's (1948) small replication

- Davies, Griffin, & Vice (2001);
  Dein & Littlewood (2007)

- Luhrmann (2012)

2. Prayer Paradigm

- Baesler's ICPM & RPM (1997–)

- Poloma & Colleagues (1991–)

Religious Studies

3. Phenomenological Paradigm

- My work (2012–)

Religious Texts

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
STATE OF THE FIELD

Methodology

- DDC can't be studied "directly", but only via individuals' interpretations

- Text-based research is problematic for phenomenological/ epistemological/interpretative approaches

- Surveys have limited use

- Interviews and ethnography not ideal for quantitative comparisons, but good for depth

- Call me crazy, but… autoethnography is hands-down the best way— big qualifications here, though

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
STATE OF THE FIELD

Participants

- It can be very difficult to get participants

- Over-focus on "easy targets" has led to skewed research

- Cross-denomination/-religion comparisons are valuable but challenging

DDC:
CURRENT ISSUES

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CURRENT ISSUES

Seven main issues (so far):

1. How should we bound the term?

2. Is DDC like hallucination?

3. How do people identify a DDC?

4. Is DDC prayer?

5. Should DDC be studied in isolation?

6. How do people get from "worldly" to "other-worldly"?

7. Are there differences in how people experience/identify DDC?

Cross-Paradigm → Method (JCR, 2014)

Hallucination Paradigm → MACDDC (JCR, 2014)
MPCDDC (in review)

Prayer Paradigm → DDCM (JCR, 2015a)

Phenom Paradigm → Difference (JCR, 2015b)
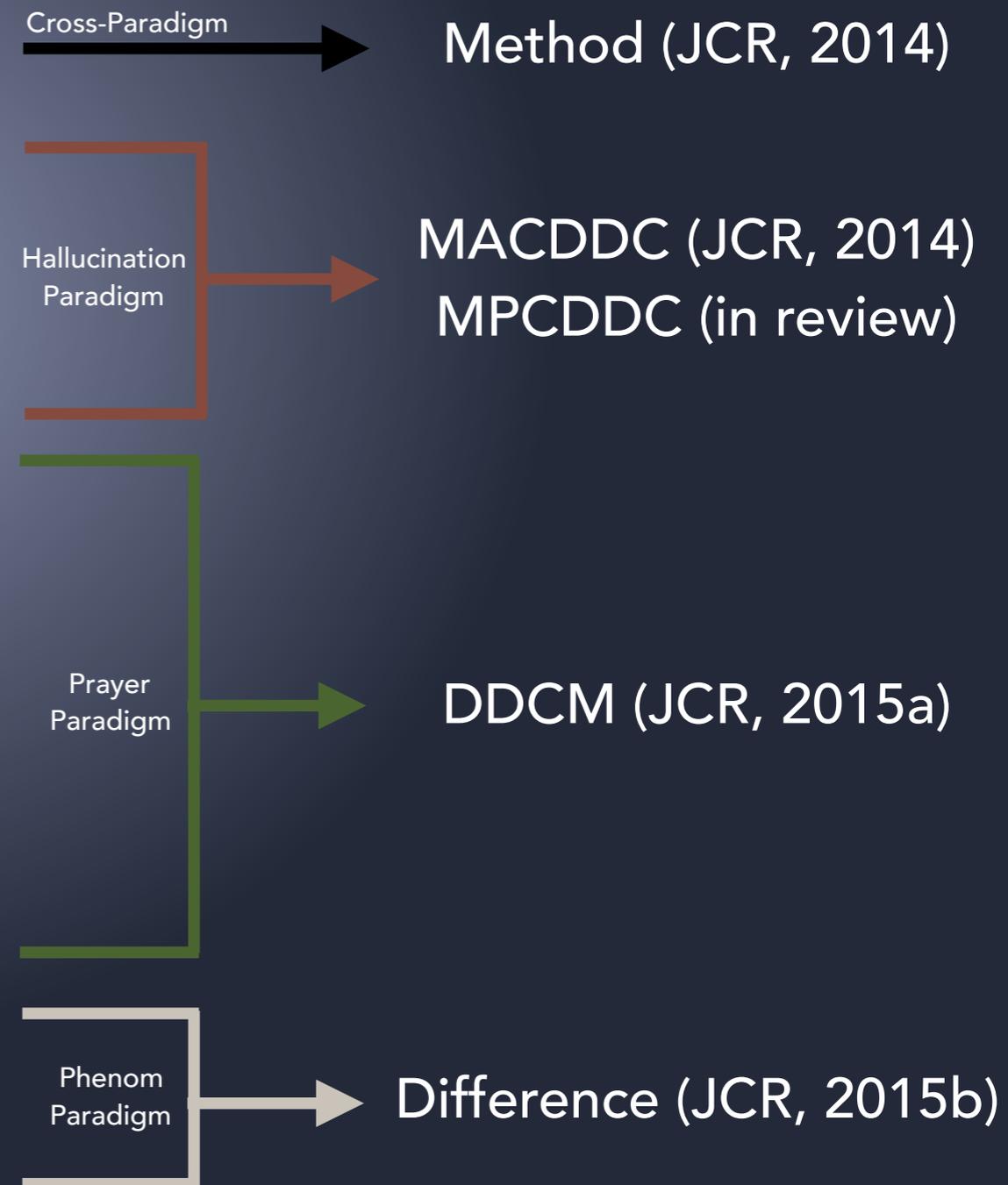
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QUESTIONS?

THE CROSS-PARADIGM ISSUE:

BOUNDING THE TERM

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BOUNDING THE TERM

- Luhrmann (2012): "sensory override" + 4 *post hoc* rules

- Sigler (2014):

	Category A	Category B
1	Clear as DDC in the moment	Not clear in the moment
2	Undoubtedly from God	There could be a doubt
3	Identified using experience-internal criteria	Identified using experience-external (*post hoc*) rules
4	Identified using specific criteria	Identified using "I just knew"

ISSUES IN THE HALLUCINATION PARADIGM

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
MODEL OF ACADEMIC CRITERIA FOR DDC (MACDDC)

Is DDC like hallucination?
(JCR, 2014)

Hallucination: "A sensory perception that has the compelling sense of reality of a true perception but that occurs without external stimulation of the relevant sensory organ." (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 767)

Eight Criteria of the Model of Academic Criteria for Direct Divine Communication (MACDDC)

Criteria	Used Primarily to Distinguish DDCs from Hallucinations?
Rare	Yes
Brief	Yes
Not distressing	Yes
Not compelling	Yes
"More emotionally potent"	Yes
"Stronger"/"Louder"	No
Noetic	No
Spontaneous	No

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
MODEL OF ACADEMIC CRITERIA FOR DDC (MACDDC)

Is DDC like hallucination? (JCR, 2014)

Four problems:

1. Fixates on sensory perception

    1.1. Sensory perception is not phenomenological experience

    1.2. Affect confounds: always response, never intrinsic

2. Assumes hallucination as comparison point for DDCs

    2.1. By sensory scholars? Okay.

    2.2. By actual experiencers of DDC? Not likely.

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
MODEL OF ACADEMIC CRITERIA FOR DDC (MACDDC)

Is DDC like hallucination? (JCR, 2014)

Four problems:

3. Faulty inference to "how they knew"

    3.1. Gather accounts of DDC >> look for similarities >> infer criteria

    3.2. Similarities may not (always?) be the criteria used

4. Over-reliance on evangelical Protestants

    4.1. Skews the research on which the MACDDC is built

    4.2. Makes pinpointing MACDDC's weaknesses difficult

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
SUMMARY

DDC *is* like hallucination, but:

1. only from a strictly sensory perspective, and

2. there are problems even with that (like affect), and

3. this perspective isn't good for much, and

4. once you start getting into "how people knew", this perspective is really misleading.

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
MODEL OF PARTICIPANTS' CRITERIA FOR DDC (MPCDDC)

How do people identify a DDC?
(in review)

1. No *a priori* sensory limit

2. No *a priori* comparison point

3. Hear account of DDC >> ask how they knew >> interpret and list criteria

4. Catholics

Criteria Participants Used to Distinguish an Experience as a DDC

Criteria	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
Rare	2	4%
Spontaneous	25	54%
"Stronger"/"Louder"	8	17%
"More emotionally potent"	26	57%
Noetic	25	54%
Distressing	9	20%
Compelling	3	7%
Lack of agency	16	35%
Linguistic/content cues	3	7%

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
MODEL OF PARTICIPANTS' CRITERIA FOR DDC (MPCDDC)

How do people identify a DDC? (in review)

Comparison of Criteria Used by Scholars and Participants to Distinguish DDCs

Criteria	Scholars	Participants	Opposites Used
Not distressing*	Yes	No →	"Distressing"
Not compelling*	Yes	No →	"Compelling"
Brief*	Yes	No	
Rare*	Yes	Infrequently	
"More emotionally potent"*	Yes	Yes	
"Stronger"/"Louder"	Yes	Only for locutions	
Noetic	Yes	Yes	
Spontaneous	Yes	Yes	
Lack of agency	No	Yes	
Linguistic/content cues	No	Infrequently	

Note: Asterisks indicate criteria used by scholars primarily to distinguish DDCs from psychotic hallucinations. Cf. Sigler, 2014.

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
SUMMARY

People identify DDC in some of, but not all of, the same ways the MACDDC posits.

1. Hallucination-based criteria seem particularly weak.

2. In some cases, "opposite" criteria to those in the MACDDC were used.

3. Apparent semantic opposites (e.g., compelling, not compelling) in the MACDDC and MPCDDC are not actually opposite.

4. Further refinement of medium limitations (e.g., "only locutions") and of the relationships between criteria are needed.

ISSUES IN THE PRAYER PARADIGM

https://angelicpsalter.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/chambers_our_lady_of_fatima.jpg

Is DDC prayer? (JCR, 2015a)

- Baesler and Poloma+ position DDC as a prayer phenomenon

  - God doesn't communicate like we do

  - We don't normally say "God prayed to me"

  - DDC can happen outside of prayer (e.g.: St. Paul on the Road to Damascus, St. Augustine's conversion)

→ MDDC positions DDC as an independent (but prayer-related) phenomenon, avoiding (1) inaccuracy, (2) misleading of readers/participants, and (3) ignoring of relevant data

**Should DDC be studied in isolation?** (JCR, 2015a)

- Poloma+ focus heavily on process/context

  - Good idea, but…

  - We should learn more about DDC itself first

  - Logistically, we can't study *every* element of process/context (e.g., Poloma+'s own work)

➡ MDDC zooms in on DDC, backgrounding process/context to limit it only to what's relevant

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
## MODEL OF DDC (MDDC)

How do people get from "worldly" to "other-worldly"? (JCR, 2015a)

• Basically: phenomenological features (the criteria; e.g., St. Paul on the Road to Damascus)

• But also: message features, context…

• And maybe: epistemological limitations, stuff I haven't considered yet…

➡ MDDC provides a preliminary explanation of this, using world-class computer graphics
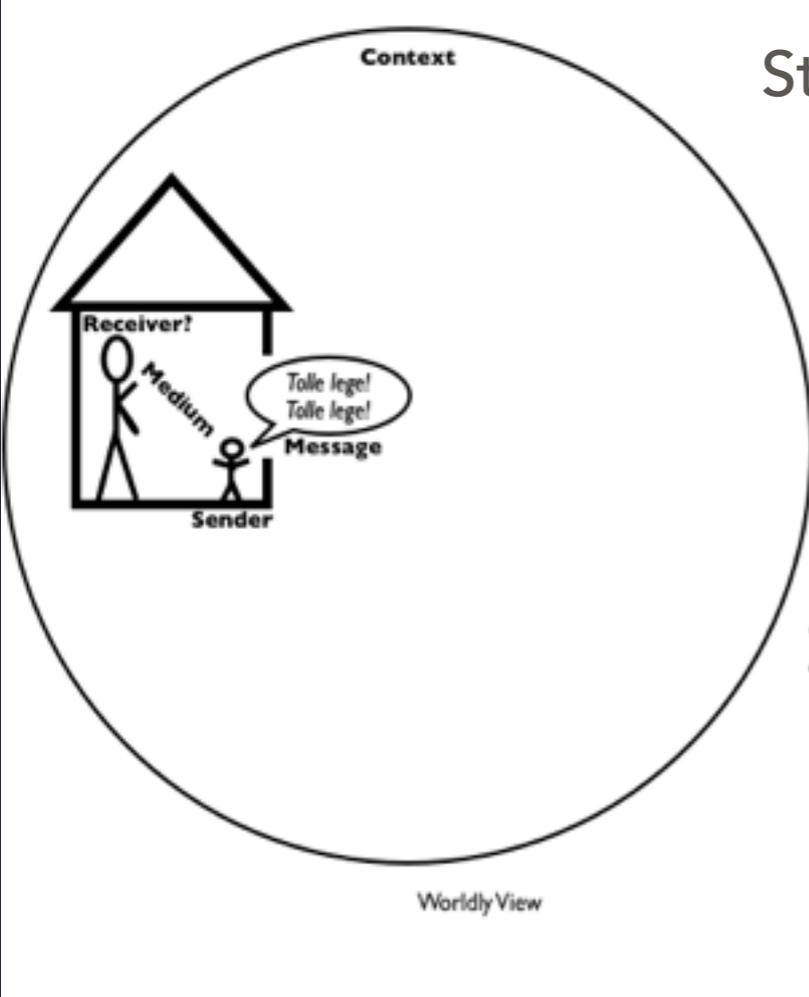
St. Augustine's 1st locution
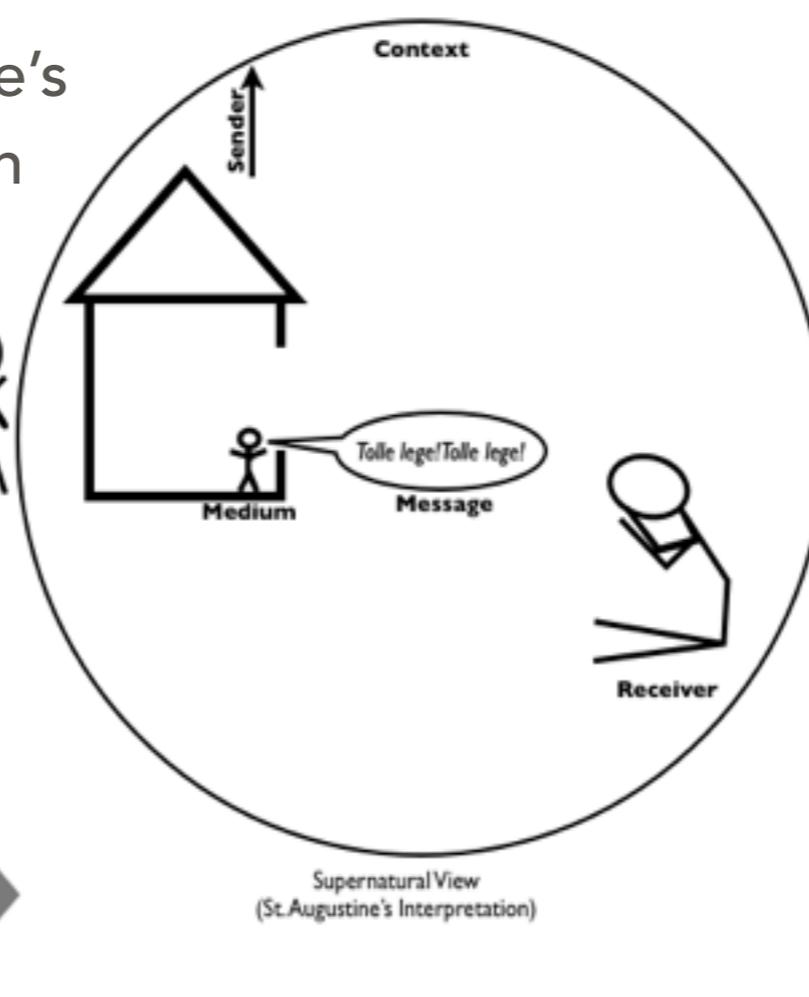
"Worldly View"
↓
Transmissionist Elements
+
Constructivist Interpretation
↓
"Supernatural View"
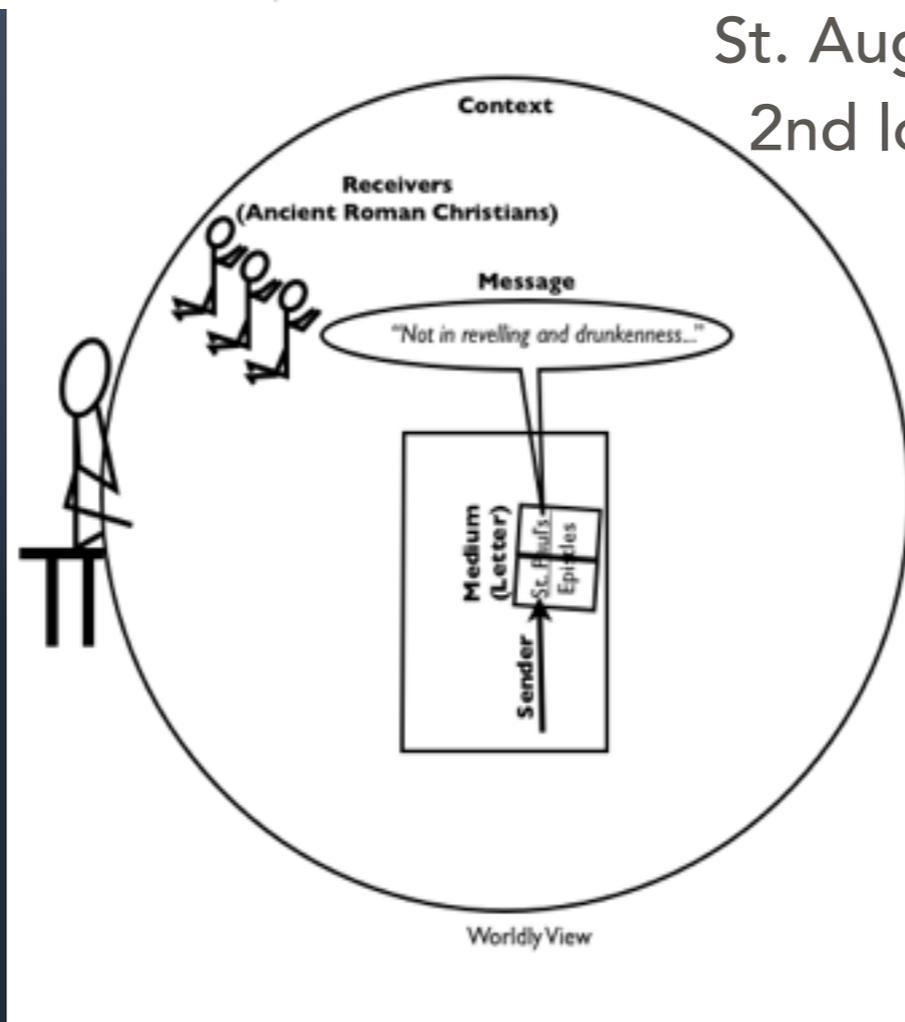
St. Augustine's 2nd locution
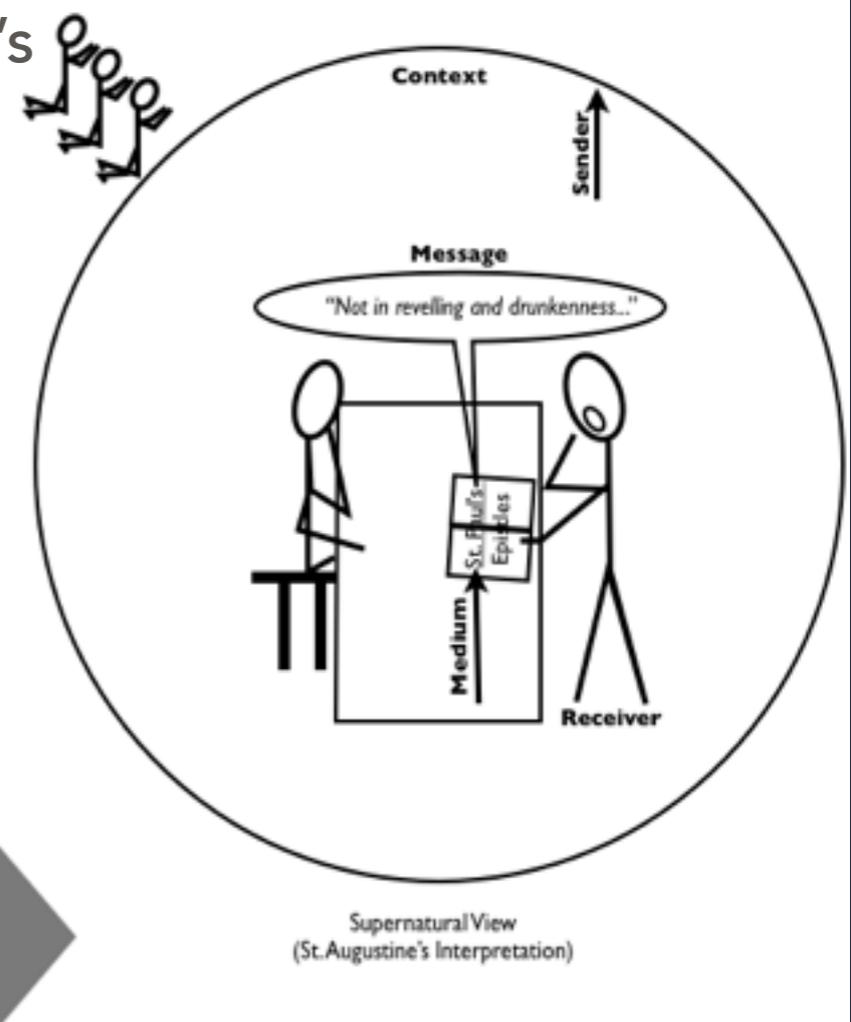
DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION

SUMMARY

Is DDC prayer?

1. I do not consider DDC a strictly prayer phenomenon, hence I believe it should be studied in isolation.

2. If you do consider DDC prayer, then it makes sense not to study it in isolation.

How do people get from a "worldly" interpretation of an event to an "other-worldly" interpretation?

- It's complicated, and we're not really sure yet!

ISSUES IN

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL PARADIGM

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/identify DDC? (JCR, 2015b)

Two ways to study this:

1. Quantitatively (i.e., propensity to experience DDC, lifelong or particular life stages, etc.)

2. Qualitatively (e.g., propensity to experience DDC via particular modes, "spectacularness" of DDCs, etc.)

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/identify DDC? (JCR, 2015b)

Four levels of analysis:

1. Individual

2. Within denominational groups: e.g., charismatics *versus* mainlines, traditionals *versus* reformeds, Franciscans *versus* Dominicans, etc.

3. Across denominations:

   3.1. Alleged difference in primary mode (visual *versus* auditory)

   3.2. Difference in willingness to report

   3.3. Difference in willingness to express doubt

4. Across religions: no research yet

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/identify DDC?
(JCR, 2015b)

- 32 interviews with Catholic sisters

- 45 DDCs from 16 sisters

Basic breakdown of DDCs recorded:

16 internal locutions
2 internal conversations
5 external locutions
2 audible voices
3 mental impressions
7 physical–emotional
1 tactile
3 multi-sensory
4 circumstantial
2 experiences of ecstasy

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/ identify DDC?
(JCR, 2015b)

- 32 interviews with Catholic sisters

- 45 DDCs from 16 sisters

➡ Definite auditory bias

Reported DDCs, Grouped by Sensory Function

Sensory Function	DDC Categories Included	Total Number
Auditory	Internal Locution Internal Conversation External Locution Audible Voice	25
Visual	Mental Impression	3
Tactile	Tactile	1
Multi-sensory	Multi-sensory	3
Other	Physical-emotional Circumstantial Ecstasy	13

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/identify DDC?
(JCR, 2015b)

- 32 interviews with Catholic sisters

- 45 DDCs from 16 sisters

➡ No discernible individual differences (variety?)

Breakdown of Individuals' Experiences of DDC

Sister	Order	Experiences
Mary Agnes	TOR	2 internal locutions, 1 multi-sensory
Barbara of Damiano	TOR	2 multi-sensory, 2 external locutions, 1 internal locution
Maria Felicitas	TOR	1 internal locution
Judith	PCC	3 physical–emotional, 1 internal locution, 1 external locution
Fatimah	PCC	2 experiences of ecstasy, 1 internal locution
Esther	PCC	1 external locution
Teresa	PCC	1 physical–emotional, 1 internal locution
Ruth	PCC	1 internal locution
Mary	PCC	1 mental impression, 1 internal locution
Madonna	PCC	2 internal locutions, 1 external locution
Mary Anna	CP	3 circumstantial, 1 internal locution
Mary Collette	CP	2 internal locutions
Mary Ignatius	CP	2 internal conversations, 2 mental impressions
Mary John the Baptist	CP	3 physical–emotional, 2 internal locutions
Patricia of Loreto	CDS	1 circumstantial
Clara	CDS	2 audible voices, 1 tactile, 1 diabolic internal locution

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/ identify DDC?
(JCR, 2015b)

- **32 interviews with Catholic sisters**

- **45 DDCs from 16 sisters**

Number of Sisters who Experienced/Did Not Experience DDC, by Order

Order	DDC	No DDC
TOR (Franciscan active–contemplative)	3	0
PCC (Franciscan cloistered contemplative)	7	1
CP (Passionist cloistered contemplative)	4	3
CDS (American active)	2	12

➡ Definite quantitative difference by order

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
INDIVIDUAL & GROUP DIFFERENCES

Are there differences in how people experience/ identify DDC?
(JCR, 2015b)

- 32 interviews with Catholic sisters

- 45 DDCs from 16 sisters

DDC Experience Types/Variety, by Order

Order	Experiences
TOR	4 internal locutions, 3 multi-sensory, 2 external locutions
PCC	7 internal locutions, 4 physical–emotional, 3 external locutions, 2 experiences of ecstasy, 1 mental impression
CP	5 internal locutions, 3 physical–emotional, 3 circumstantial, 2 internal conversations, 2 mental impressions
CDS	2 audible voices, 1 tactile, 1 circumstantial, 1 diabolic internal locution

➡ No apparent qualitative difference by order, but…

Are there differences in how people experience/identify DDC?
(JCR, 2015b)

- Short answer: Yes, absolutely.

- Individual differences: None detected, but more (and better) research may uncover some.

- Within denominational groups:

  - In quantity, yes.

  - In quality, cautiously: as regards "spectacularness," yes.

- Across denominations: None detected.

DIRECT DIVINE COMMUNICATION
RESEARCH NEEDED IN THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL PARADIGM

Tons of (fascinating!) stuff:

- Agree on assumptions, boundaries, definitions, terminology, methods (across disciplines?)

- Refinement of the MPCDDC

  - Boundaries of criteria, relationships between criteria, extension of criteria

  - Cross-denomination/-religion comparisons of criteria usage (requires cooperation, co-authorship)

- How do people determine the *meaning* of a DDC?

  - This is NOT the same question as "How do people determine that an experience WAS a DDC (in the first place)?"

    - Epistemological status of the experience >> criteria (MPCDDC)

    - Personal "meaning of the message" >> context, message features, etc. (MDDC)

- Refinement of the MDDC: What *is* the relationship between phenomenological features, context, and interpretation as a DDC?

DDC:
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DDC REFERENCES

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