Article

Is There Someone in the Hereafter? Mediumship Accuracy of 100 Readings Obtained with a Triple Level of Blinding Protocol

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Abstract

The accuracy of information obtained by 28 self-claimant mediums related to 100 readings obtained with a triple level of blinding was examined across three indices: percentage of correct reading identified by the sitters, global score of readings and percentage of difference between correct and incorrect information.

All three indices showed statistical differences of the intended versus the control readings: correct identification 65%; global score: intended readings, mean = 2.4, SD = 1.5; control readings, mean = 1.7, SD = 1.2; percentage difference between correct and incorrect information: intended readings, mean = −7.9%, SD = 38.7%; control readings, mean = −27.3%, SD = 38%.

Our results using a very large sample, confirm previous results, supporting the hypothesis that self-claimant mediums are able to retrieve correct information about deceased people without knowing and interacting with the sitters having access with only to the deceased persons' first name.

Keywords

mediumship, blinding, afterlife, consciousness survival

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Introduction

The critical issue in the scientific investigation of the mental mediumship is: "*from where do mediums draw their information about the deceased persons requested by the sitters?*"

The source of this information can be either the sitters, the only persons who knew the deceased persons, or the deceased persons themselves.

The scientific approach to this issue involves devising different variations of blinding of the communication between the medium and the sitter in order to rule this communication out as the source of information. If the medium is able to obtain correct information notwithstanding the impossibility of communicating with the sitters, the only remaining plausible source of this information is the deceased person.

In a meta-analysis by Sarraf et al. (2020), who retrieved all studies related to this issue published up to 2019, the levels of blinding ranged from two to five. In two-level of blinding, the medium cannot interact visually or auditorily with the sitter and the sitter is requested to identify between at least two anonymous readings, which one belongs to their deceased.

In the five-level of blinding, (i) the medium is blinded to information about the sitter and the discarnate before and during the reading; (ii) the sitter-raters are blinded to the origin of the readings during scoring; (iii) the experimenter who recruit and trains the sitter-raters (Experimenter 1) is blinded to which mediums read which sitters and which blinded readings were intended for which discarnates; (iv) the experimenter who interacts with the mediums during the phone readings and formats the readings into item lists (Experimenter 2) is blinded to any information about the sitters and the discarnates except the discarnates' first names; and (v) the experimenter who interacts with the sitters during scoring (i.e., e-mails and receives by email the blinded readings) (Experimenter 3) is blinded to all information about the discarnates, to which medium performed which readings, and to which readings were intended for which discarnates/sitters (from Beischel et al., 2015).

The main result of Sarraf et al. (2020) meta-analysis is that sitters identified the reading intended for their deceased, 18% above the chance level of 50% and that the level of blinding didn't affect this result.

Our contribution to this topic is the application of a three-level blinding, that is (i) the medium is blinded to information about the sitter and the discarnate apart from the first name before and during the reading; (ii) the experimenter who acts as a proxy-sitter and interacts with the mediums during the phone readings and formats the readings into item lists, is blinded to any information about the sitters and the discarnates except the discarnates' first names; (iii) the sitters are blind with respect to the intended versus the control reading.

In the classical procedure described by (Beischel, 2007), the two readings are paired with a first name of the same sex, but with differences between the discarnates' in five categories, age at passing, physical description, personality, hobbies, and cause of

death, facilitating each rater's ability to discriminate between the intended and control readings during scoring.

With our protocol, we made this pairing more difficult by matching the two readings only for the sex, male or female, allowing all other characteristics to be random. It is also important to specify that most Italian names do not convey any information about age or ethnicity.

We analyzed the accuracy of information by using three indices: (1) proportion of intended readings identified; (2) overall score by using the scale described by Beischel (2007), which ranges from 0 = No correct information or communication up to 6 = Excellent reading, including strong aspects of communication, and with essentially no incorrect information, and (3) percentage difference between correct and incorrect information.

Preliminary results obtained with the same protocol, related to 38 readings obtained by nine different mediums were presented by Tressoldi, Liberale and Sinesio (2022a).

Method

Mediums

Self-claimant mediums were invited by email to voluntarily participate in our study after reading the procedure of our protocol. Their main aim was to obtain a declaration of their skills in the case of achievement of the following level of accuracy in at least two readings: at least 55% correct information with a minimum difference of 25% between correct and incorrect information (e.g., 55% correct and 30% incorrect, or 60% correct and 35% incorrect, etc.); if the difference between correct and incorrect information is less than 25% (e.g. 55% correct and 40% incorrect), get an overall evaluation higher than 3 (scale 0–6).

Twenty-eight mediums, all females, took part in this study. Their chronological age ranges from 21 to 68 years. Most of them were not professional mediums.

Sitters

Sitters were recruited by email among people known by the authors' friends and colleagues, offering them free consultations. The only selection criteria were their overt interest in the study and a direct knowledge of the deceased persons from whom they requested the readings.

Ethical approval

This study has been approved by the Comitato etico della ricerca psicologica (Ethical Committee of Psychological Research) of Padova University (Protocol no. 3670). Both mediums and sitters will be requested to read and confirm orally the protocol as informed consent.

Procedure

The sitters who were interested in having a free consultation for a deceased loved one were asked to provide only his/her first name. This information was kept by one of the co-authors, who will be called 'research assistant B' (raB).

The mediums were contacted for the consultation by research assistant A (raA) who acted as proxy-sitter. On the day of the consultation, raA contacted the medium via either Skype or WhatsApp and gave her only the deceased's first name (without the surname) as sent by raB. Italian first names did not convey any information about age and ethnicity.

The medium was required to provide oral information relative to the deceased, related to physical description of the person during life, any other information pertinent to the deceased's identification by the sitter, and anything the deceased wished to communicate to the sitter. At the conclusion of the reading, raA electronically recorded each detail into a column, excluding generic information, for example "*I love you*" or "*Don't worry about me*", "*I'm well*", etc., and sent them to raB.

In a session, each medium was always asked to contribute two readings of pairs of deceased individuals of the same gender, male or female as the only common characteristic.

Once raB had received the two reading outcomes from raA, the information was written on two different lists for evaluation of each of them and for a global evaluation (see the examples in the Appendix). Afterwards, both readings were sent anonymously to the requesting sitters by raB, providing assistance to them if needed for the evaluation procedure.

The sitters were asked to rate each piece of information from the pair of readings as correct, partially correct or wrong. They were also asked to give a global evaluation for each of them, using a scale from 0 (the information is totally wrong) to 6 (excellent: effectively free of errors and contains compelling evidence of authentic communication), identical to the scale used in Beischel, (2007). When both outcomes were given identical scores, the sitter was nevertheless asked to choose one which was considered closer to his/her own deceased person.

In summary, the research protocol involved three levels of blindness for the deceased's identity: the mediums, the raA, and the sitters. See Figure 1.

Results

Number of readings

One hundred readings were obtained from the mediums and evaluated by the sitters up to end of September 2022.
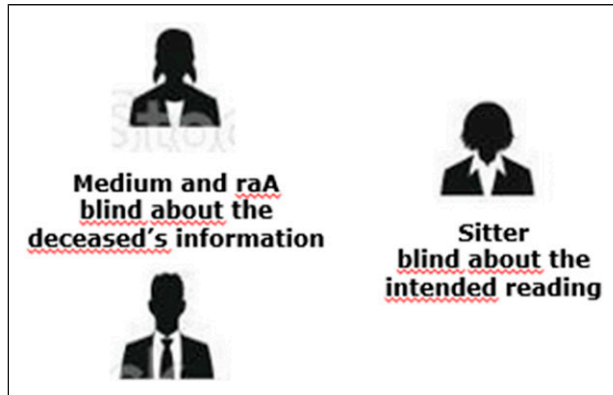
Figure 1. Protocols' levels of blindness.

Evaluation of Readings Information

Each bit of information from the two reading lists evaluated by the sitters was given the following scores: "perfectly correct" = 1; "somewhat correct" = 0.5; "clearly wrong" = −1.

Subsequently, excluding information marked as "I don't have information for evaluation", the percentages of this information were calculated (see database available at https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13311710). These differences could range from −100% if all information was rated as wrong, to 100% if all information was rated as perfectly correct.

Proportion of Intended Reading Identification

Intended readings were correctly identified 65/100 times.

Overall Score

Intended readings: M = 2.4, SD = 1.5; Control readings: M = 1.74, SD = 1.3.

The paired mean difference between Control and Intended readings is .68 [95.0% CI = .37–1]. The p value of the two-sided permutation with 5000 bootstrap samples t-test using Ho et al. algorithm (Ho et al., 2019) is 0.000048. See Figure 2.

Percentage of Correct Information Minus Percentage of Incorrect One

Intended readings: M = −7.9%, SD = 38.6%; Control readings: M = −27.2%, SD = 38%.
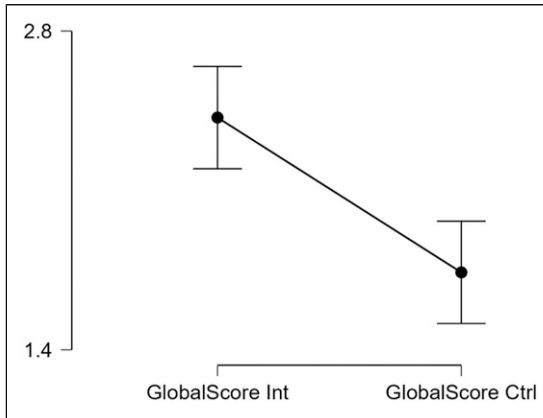
Figure 2. Overall scores assigned to control and intended readings.

The paired mean difference between Control and Intended readings is -19.3% [95.0% CI 28.2%- - 10.7]. The p value of the two-sided permutation with 5000 bootstrap samples t-test using the Ho et al. (2019) algorithm, is 0.000046. See Figure 3.

General Discussion

Our results are very similar to the overall results of Sarraf et al.'s, (2020) meta-analysis, that intended readings were identified 18% (95% C.I. = 11–25) above chance level of 50%. Furthermore, both the global scores and the percentage difference between correct and incorrect information are very similar to those reported by Tressoldi et al. (2022) using the same protocol, but without the category "somewhat wrong" we considered ambiguous and partially overlapped with the category "somewhat correct" for the evaluation of each bit of information.

The levels of blinding and the way of pairing of the readings adopted in our protocols exclude with certainty that information could be obtained through conventional means in particular from the sitters.

Our protocols also exclude that this information can be accessed by way of incredible telepathic connections with the sitters. Even if direct telepathic tasks with mediums could further clarify this interpretation, the available evidence related to telepathic communication summarized by Tressoldi and Storm (2021a, 2021b), does not support the possibility of such a level of efficiency even with expert participants.

Notwithstanding we devised a sort of "impossible task" for the mediums and considering the unconventional setting adopted with our protocols, overall, our mediums were able to retrieve correct information about the intended deceased persons.

The only plausible explanation of our results is that the deceased themselves participated actively in the task that for them was quite simple, that is to interact with the mediums when they were asked to retrieve information about them.
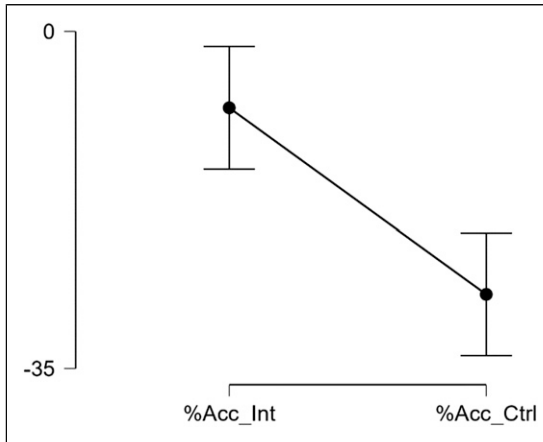
Figure 3. Mean percentage differences between correct and incorrect information related to control and intended readings.

Support for this interpretation derives from the type of information retrieved by the mediums. In all readings, information was of the "passive observation" type, e.g., "*I see...*", "*I hear...*" and in 51% of the "interactive information", type, e.g., "*He/she (referring to the deceased person), is showing me...*" "*He/She tells me...*", etc. (see more details in Tressoldi, Liberale, & Sinesio, 2022).

If our interpretation is correct, we can exclude or at least consider as incomplete the hypothesis that mediums retrieve their information from a sort of "cosmic memory" of all human experiences also termed "Akashic records" (Nash, 2020).

Conclusions

Our results add further support to the hypothesis that some self-claimant mediums can retrieve correct information about deceased persons without any possibility to use conventional means and suggest the hypothesis that deceased persons monitor when their sitters request information about them and decide if and when to contact the medium, doing their best to pass on their information.

The main limitation of this study is that our results cannot be generalized to the whole population of self-claimant mediums, but are limited to only our sample.

Obviously, the skills of the mediums are not irrelevant. Our results were obtained by self-claimant mediums. However, Beischel et al. (2015) obtained the identical percentage of correct readings identification (65.5%) with their sample of certified mediums.

In any case, future investigations should investigate more deeply their individual differences.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors devised the study. FS and LL collected the data; LL, secured the funds for the study; PT analyzed the data, and wrote the paper. FS and LL revised the paper and approved the final version.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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