Mediumship information: retrieved from a repository or by an interaction with the deceased?

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Abstract

The correct information identified in 100 readings obtained by 28 self-claimant mediums, applying a triple level blind protocol, were classified into two categories: information that the medium declared to be received interacting with the deceased and information without such interaction.

Among the 1295 correct information identified in the 100 readings, 164 (12.6%) included statements related to a purported interaction with the deceased.

Even if a small percentage of all correct information, such a type of information suggests that mediums seem to retrieve their information interacting with the deceased and not only retrieving them by searching in a sort of universal memory of the deceased persons experiences.

Keywords: mediumship; consciousness; survival; death; deceased

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Introduction

Mediumship information can be obtained from three sources: the persons who have known the deceased, usually the sitters, a universal memory storage of all human experiences, such as the Akashic records (Nash, 2020), or interacting with the deceased (discarnate) persons.

To exclude the possibility that information could be passed on by sitters, researchers devised experimental designs with different levels of blinding. The minimum level of blinding is one, with the sitters blind about which of the two or more readings information is referred to their deceased.

The maximum level of blinding, five, was applied by Beischel, Boccuzzi, Biuso, & Rock, (2015). In this case, (1) the medium was blinded to information about the sitter and the discarnate before and during the reading; (2) the sitter-raters were blinded to the origin of the readings during scoring; (3) the experimenter who recruited and trained the sitter-raters (Experimenter 1) was blinded to which mediums read which sitters and which blinded readings were intended for which discarnates; (4) the experimenter who interacts with the mediums during the phone readings and formats the readings into item lists (Experimenter 2) was blinded to any information about the sitters and the discarnates except the discarnates' first names; and (5) the experimenter who interacts with the sitters during scoring (i.e., e-mails and receives by e-mail the blinded readings) (Experimenter 3) was blinded to all information about the discarnates, to which medium performed which readings, and to which readings were intended for which discarnates/sitters.

From the meta-analyses of all experimental studies carried out from 2001 to 2021, the most used level of blinding was two and three (Sarraf, Woodley of Menie, & Tressoldi, 2020). However, these differences did not reveal any differences in the mediumship accuracy.

If the sitters as the source of mediumship information can be excluded by applying different levels of blinding, it remains to be explored if it derives from the mediums' exceptional telepathical skills, known as Living Agent or Somatic Psi theory, or from sources in the afterlife, known as the Survival hypothesis (Beischel, Rock, Pekala, & Boccuzzi, 2021; Rock & Storm, 2015).

As to the investigation of the Living Agent or Somatic Psi theory, up today no one has investigated the purported telepathic skills of mediums. However, in a series of studies, Beischel, Mosher, and Boccuzzi (2017), Beischel et al. (2021), Rock and Beischel (2008), and Rock et al. (2009, 2014) found that mediums' phenomenology differs depending on whether information is received from the deceased or received telepathically from sitters.

This study is related to the so-called survival hypothesis. Its aim is to investigate whether mediums retrieve information from a direct interaction with the deceased or from a universal storage of all human experiences, as has been postulated for Akashic records.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 28 self-claimant mediums that were recruited by our team using a national advertisement. They were all female, with chronological ages ranging from 21 to 68 years.

Participation in the study was voluntary. The only incentive was to declare their level of information accuracy.

Sitters

The authors contacted the people they knew to find sitters and offered them free mediumship consultations. They were selected based on their overt interest in the subject matter and their intimate familiarity with the departed people from whom they requested the readings.

Ethical approval

This study was approved by the Ethical Committee of Psychological Research of the Padova University, Prot. no. 3670. Both mediums and sitters will be requested to read and confirm orally the protocol as informed consent.

Procedure

The mediums were interviewed using a triple-level blinding protocol. With this protocol, mediums were given only the deceased first name without the surname by a research assistant who acted as a proxy sitter. Both were blind about the deceased identity. The name of the deceased was obtained by a second research assistant who was in contact with the sitters. The sitters received two anonymous readings: one related to their requested deceased and the other related to another deceased of the same sex.

Sitters were required to assess each piece of information as correct, partially correct with clarifications, or wrong. Furthermore, they were requested to rate each of the two readings globally using an ordinal scale ranging from 0= information totally wrong to 6= excellent: effectively free of errors and containing compelling evidence of authentic communication, identical to the scale used by Beischel (2007).

Once received the sitters' evaluation, we classified each piece of correct information given by the medium as either "direct interaction with the deceased" or "without apparent interaction with the deceased". Information in the first category included direct communication between the medium and the deceased; for example, "*He/She is showing me. .*", "*He/She tells me . . ..*". The second category included all other information, e.g., "*I see that. . .,*" "*I feel that. . .,*" etc.

A total of 100 readings were analyzed. Raw scores related to information accuracy and category are available open access at: https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13311710 for independent analyses.
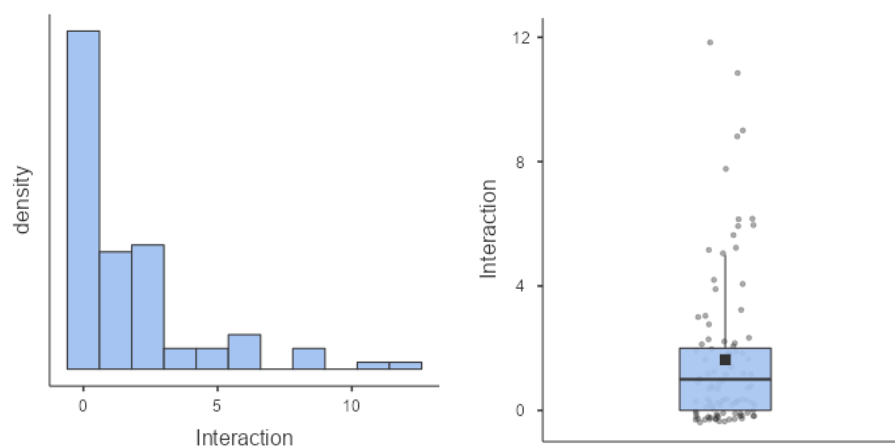
Results

Information accuracy

Accuracy of information is reported in detail by Tressoldi, Liberale and Sinesio (2022). Reading correct identification was 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%.

Information category

Fifty-one readings included at least one piece of information related to purported interaction with the deceased. In contrast, all readings included at least one piece of information without referring to such interactions. Their frequency distributions and box plots are presented in Figure 1 and their descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.
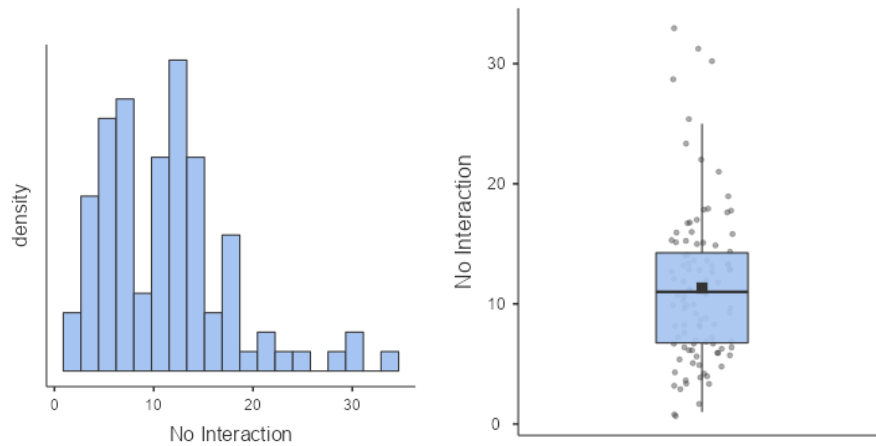
Figure 1: frequencies distributions and boxplots related to the interaction and no interaction information categories.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the two categories of information

	Mean (SD)	Range	Sum
Interaction	1.64 (2.5)	0 - 12	164
No interaction	11.31 (6.4)	1 - 33	1131

Comment

Table 1 shows the superiority of correct information related to a lack of interaction with the deceased. Information suggesting an interaction with the deceased represented 12.6% of all information.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate whether correct information obtained by mediums applying a triple-level blinding design suggested an interaction or a lack of it with the deceased.

Among the 1295 correct information identified in 100 readings obtained by 28 self-claimant mediums, 164 (12.6%) included statements related to a purported interaction with the deceased, e.g. "*He says he saw his mother again*", "*He shows me dark work shoes*".

Even if a small percentage of all correct information, such a type of information suggests that mediums seem to retrieve their information interacting with the deceased and not only retrieving them by searching in a sort of universal memory of the deceased persons experiences.

Although this is the first study specifically aimed at investigating whether mediums can retrieve their information by direct interaction with the deceased, we think that the results suggest the possibility that the deceased maintain their identity and will, a quite different picture with respect to the hypothesis of a dissolution of individuality after death, as claimed by some philosophies (Nichols et al., 2018).

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