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# Methodological Advances in Laboratory-Based Mediumship Research

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## Abstract

As with the study of any natural phenomenon, bringing mediumship into the regulated environment of the laboratory allows for the controlled and repeated examination of anomalous information reception by mediums. It also lends statistically analyzed support to the survival of consciousness hypothesis and addresses the relationship between consciousness and brain. Optimally, laboratory-based mediumship research includes two equally important factors: a) a research environment that optimizes the mediumship process for both the medium and the hypothesized discarnate and b) research methods that maximize the experimental blinding of the medium, the rater, and the experimenter, in order to eliminate all conventional explanations for the information and its accuracy and specificity. The VERITAS Research Program utilizes several methods that build upon historical as well as modern mediumship investigations in order to meet these two research goals. The research methods discussed here include: the thorough screening of all research subjects (mediums, sitters/raters, and discarnates); research reading protocols; reading pairing and formatting; experimental blinding; and the scoring of readings by raters. Current data collected and published using these techniques is also briefly summarized.

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## INTRODUCTION

The analysis of information conveyed by mediums (individuals who report experiencing communication with the deceased) is important for several reasons:

- Investigating the phenomenon of anomalous information reception by mediums is essential in understanding the mind's processing of non-local, non-sensory information.
- The survival of consciousness (that is, the continuation of life after death) is a vital issue to many people. The general public's deep concern with survival and mediumship is illustrated by the recent rise of these topics in popular television shows, books, and movies.
- Providing empirical evidence on a topic historically linked with religious faith (the afterlife) may impact modern society. For example, research in Terror Management Theory has found that belief in an afterlife may liberate us from "the compulsion to continually prove our value and the correctness of our beliefs" (Dechesne *et al* 2003), an impulse that can manifest in the extreme as radical nationalism (which provides the individual with the psychological comfort of symbolic immortality). However, evidence for survival of consciousness may also have negative consequences (*e.g.*, possible increased justification for terrorism or suicide).
- There may be socially useful tasks that mediums can perform (*e.g.*, finding missing persons, participating in criminal investigations) that require an extensive understanding of the information they report in order for it to be sensibly utilized.
- Finally, survival and mediumship studies provide unique evidence for an issue central to consciousness science: the relationship between the mind/consciousness and the brain. That is, is consciousness a product of the brain as theorized by contemporary neuroscience or is the brain an antenna-receiver for consciousness as hypothesized by William James? In addition, research investigating the survival of non-human consciousnesses may help us better define exactly what consciousness is.

As with the study of any natural phenomenon, bringing mediumship into the regulated environment of the laboratory allows for the controlled and repeated examination of anomalous information reception by mediums.

Several comprehensive reviews of more than a century of mediumship research findings exist (Braude 2003, Fontana 2005, Gauld 1983). In addition, the methods used during this time to evaluate the information reported by mediums (and psychics) have also been reviewed (Fontana 2005, Schouten 1994, Burdick & Kelly 1977, Scott 1972), though only Fontana's review includes research performed since 2001, albeit briefly (p. 221). The contemporary findings generally confirm and extend early observations (*e.g.*, the systematic assessment of individual mediums or the examination of spontaneous cases) that certain mediums can report accurate and specific information about the deceased loved ones of living people (termed sitters) even without any prior knowledge about the sitters or the deceased (termed discarnates) and in the complete absence of any sensory sitter feedback. Moreover, the information reported by these mediums cannot be explained as a result of fraud or "cold reading" (a set of techniques used by psychic entertainers in which visual and auditory cues from the sitter are used to fabricate

“accurate” readings; described extensively by Rowland 2001 and Hyman 1989, p. 404) on the part of the mediums or rater bias on the part of the sitters.

However, although “the concept of survival was basic for the beginning and development of such key moments in the history of parapsychology as the early work of the Society for Psychical Research and the work of J.B. Rhine and his associates at Duke University” (Alvarado 2003, p. 68), progress in the quantitative evaluation of the information provided by mediums “has been slow compared to developments in other areas of parapsychological research” (Schouten 1994, p. 223). “Since interest shifted towards psychic abilities such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition in the 1930s, scientific research into mediumship has steadily declined” (Fontana 2005, p. 226). Furthermore, several authors have commented that historical mediumship research lacked the proper research design, statistical power, and elimination of potential sources of error for current researchers to value even “positive” studies (Lester 2005, p. 210; Schouten 1994, p. 245; Scott 1972, p. 88).

### ***History***

The VERITAS Research Program at the University of Arizona has its own brief research history that is important to review before any methodological advances can be discussed. The first exploratory stage of research by what is now the VERITAS Research Program asked if mediumship research could be practically investigated by our laboratory. This stage, performed by investigators familiar with historical mediumship investigations, was determined by funding availability and spontaneous opportunities to answer basic research questions and employed both single- and double-blind designs (Russek *et al* 1999, Schwartz *et al* 1999). This stage should not be viewed as “re-inventing the wheel” but rather as verification that it was indeed possible to turn the wheel in a specific laboratory. (In fact, the more controversial the wheel, the more imperative this verification step becomes.)

The second stage (which occurred concomitantly with similar research performed by Archie E. Roy and T.J. Robertson) included more formal protocols that were palatable to late 20<sup>th</sup> century mediums (Schwartz *et al* 2001, Schwartz & Russek 2001b, Schwartz *et al* 2002, reviewed in Schwartz with Simon 2002). The research performed at this stage was also determined by limitations in funding as well as specific opportunities to work with talented mediums and motivated discarnates (Schwartz & Russek 2001a).

The third and current stage of research (also limited by funding issues) involves the integration and combination of previous research methods and knowledge gained during earlier studies and observations (Beischel & Schwartz 2007). The current research also includes methods of a technological nature that were not readily available during prior studies (*e.g.*, e-mail readings, internet subject recruitment, and digitally-recorded three-way phone readings).

It is important to note that the research performed in our laboratory was designed to take into account the grieving nature of the sitter subjects and their experiences during the experiments and that these issues as well as the *process* of the mediums, sitters, and possibly the discarnates during the readings were continuously contemplated as part of protocol design. The current investigators find this position essential due to their histories as a clinical psychologist and a laboratory scientist grieving a personal loss

(GES and JB, respectively). Our intention was to investigate mediumship in its “natural state” (with the necessary “unnatural” experimental controls added); that is, where the process is driven by the motivations of the sitters and the mediums do what they do during “normal” readings. We intentionally refer to the phenomenon as anomalous information *reception* (vs. *retrieval*) to better describe the medium’s experience. In addition, we generally strive to include research methods that represent the best of both traditional empirical analyses and a postmodern worldview (Krippner 1995).

### ***Current Research***

The VERITAS Research Program employs several methods that build upon historical (reviewed by Schouten 1994) as well as modern single-blind (Robertson & Roy 2001, Schwartz *et al* 2001, Schwartz & Russek 2001b) and double-blind (O’Keefe & Wiseman 2005, Roy & Robertson 2001 and 2004, Schwartz *et al* 2002) mediumship investigations and provide additional evidence for anomalous information reception by certain mediums (Beischel & Schwartz 2007). It is important to note that the Program is also engaged in research regarding the survival of consciousness hypothesis but that the scope of this paper is limited to research that addresses the mediumship hypothesis (*i.e.*, mediums are able to provide accurate and specific information gained by anomalous information reception).

Ideally, contemporary laboratory-based mediumship research should include two equally important factors: a) a research environment that optimizes the mediumship process for both the medium and the hypothesized discarnate, and b) research methods that maximize the experimental blinding of the medium, the rater, and the experimenter, in order to eliminate all conventional explanations for the information and its accuracy and specificity. In order to meet these two research goals, the VERITAS Research Program employs the following research methods:

1. the thorough screening of all research subjects including mediums, sitters/raters, and discarnates;
2. specific research reading protocols including deceased-directed and asking questions sections;
3. the pairing and formatting of research readings;
4. experimental blinding including five levels of blinding; and
5. a specific scoring method used by raters that includes both item-by-item and whole reading scores.

These methods as well as examples of the current data collected and published using these techniques are discussed.

## **SUBJECT SCREENING**

### ***Sitters***

In order to optimize sitter/rater motivation and thus accurate and reliable scoring and discarnate participation, sitter subjects are chosen from a volunteer sitter pool. Subjects from all over the country signed-up to participate through the VERITAS

Research Program website (<http://veritas.arizona.edu>). Sitter subjects are initially chosen based on their affirmative answers to questions regarding their beliefs about mediumship, their knowledge about the discarnates they have lost, and their willingness and ability to participate in readings and scoring as well as their reasons for wanting to participate. The motivation of the sitter and, in turn, the discarnate is considered during this initial screening. For example, the motivation for a discarnate to communicate during a reading with a sitter who strongly believes that all mediums are con-artists or frauds may in some cases be low; thus, choosing this sitter would not optimize the mediumship process. The issue of sitter/discarnate motivation during initial screening is often moot since individuals who do not entertain mediumship as a realistic possibility rarely volunteer to participate in studies. A full list of questions used during initial screening can be found in Appendix A. Sitters passing initial screening then participate in a secondary screening phone call with an experimenter.

During the screening phone call, the first name of the discarnate the sitter most wishes to hear from and his/her relationship to the sitter is noted. Sitters are further screened using questions about their beliefs, the nature of their relationship with the specific discarnate, the likelihood the discarnate will participate in a research reading, and the estimated risk that other discarnates known to the sitter will attempt to “drop-in” during an experiment.

Additionally, data are collected during the screening steps about the sitters’ age, gender, prior readings with mediums and/or psychics, religious affiliations, and the effect religion has on their beliefs about mediumship. Prospective sitters are also asked about their prior experiences with any personal after-death communications. And finally, sitters are asked about their computer proficiency in order to optimize the rater training and scoring which take place over e-mail. The specific questions used during the screening phone call can also be found in Appendix A. Based on the answers to these questions as well as the discarnate pairing method described in a later section, sitters are chosen to participate in research readings.

It is appropriate to mention here that during the first and second stages of mediumship research in our laboratory, only adult sitters (usually over 40 years old) were used. During the initial portions of the current third stage, an opportunity to perform research with undergraduate student sitters and answer the question “can young people act as sitters, too?” arose. Eight students from a pool of approximately 1,600 were chosen to participate in scoring two pairs of blinded readings each (Beischel & Schwartz 2007). During that study, it was often difficult to get some of the students to arrive at the scheduled times, follow scoring instructions, or remain objective during scoring. For example, a 19-year-old male student rejected the reading intended for his deceased peer as his own, even though it contained numerous accurate statements, because the medium, who was in her 40’s, described him as a “kid.” He instead chose the reading, full of statements that did not apply to his peer, in which the discarnate was described as a “man.” (It is important to note that even with these limitations, the results of that student study reached statistical significance and replicability.) It became apparent during the study and its comparison to previous experiments that adult sitters (at least 30 years old) are more appropriate to use in mediumship studies due to the complex, rigorous, and detailed nature of the readings and scoring.

In summary, for current research, each adult sitter chosen to participate had a close relationship with at least one deceased person whose personality was consistent with wanting to volunteer for mediumship research. Additionally, each sitter values discovering the truth about mediumship and the survival of consciousness hypothesis and has experienced some form of after-death communication from the target discarnate. Before the research readings take place, each sitter is trained in the scoring method used by the VERITAS Research Program (described below).

When the number of sitter volunteers became too large to manage in June of 2006, subject recruitment was closed with close to 300 sitters signed up. To date, over 120 sitters have been consented, close to 100 have been screened, 40 have been paired (described below), and six have participated in formal readings and scoring. (These numbers do not reflect the eight student sitters described above or the sitters participating in the test readings used during the screening of prospective mediums described below.)

### *Discarnates*

It is important to keep in mind throughout protocol development that during a mediumship reading, there are three people potentially participating: medium, sitter, and discarnate. And although internal review boards do not require informed consent from hypothesized discarnate subjects (for obvious theoretical and practical reasons), investigators should take into account factors such as motivation, fatigue, and communication abilities when choosing hypothesized discarnate participants and designing research protocols. For example, to honor the participation of the discarnates, we write instructions for each experiment directed to them along with those for the mediums and sitters.

For official experiments, the VERITAS Research Program chooses discarnates based on the discarnate pairing method described below. However, since data cannot be collected about the accuracy of a mediumship reading without a sitter/rater, the sitters associated with the discarnates must also fulfill the sitter qualifications described above. In addition, during the test readings used to screen prospective mediums, discarnates are chosen only if the sitters indicate that, in their opinion, the hypothesized discarnate has successfully communicated with a medium before. This ensures that during test readings, any failure to produce accurate information can be potentially attributed to the prospective medium rather than to a hypothesized “naïve” discarnate not familiar with communicating with a medium.

### *Mediums*

In addition to optimal experimental conditions, and well-chosen sitter and purported discarnate participants, the quality of the medium subjects is of paramount importance for a successful mediumship study. Fontana (2005) emphasizes the “obvious necessity to have trial runs with mediums when developing experimental methodologies” and then to “work only with those mediums who appear to perform well under these methodologies” (p. 224). Also, this is one factor that may have been responsible for the negative results of one recent mediumship study (O’Keefe & Wiseman 2005). The medium participants in that study “were recruited via a list of certified mediums provided

by the Spiritualists Nationalist Union” with no apparent trial runs to ensure that the mediums could perform under the stringent conditions of the experiment. To ensure that this is not an issue in our studies, we have developed a rigorous screening protocol for medium participants. In addition, we prefer to replicate results across numerous skilled mediums rather than use repeated trials with one “star” medium as was often the case in historical research.

Before participating in mediumship research with the VERITAS Research Program, each prospective medium is screened over several months using a unique and intensive nine-step screening procedure. Upon successful completion of the nine steps, the medium is termed an Integrative Research Medium (IRM) and each IRM agrees to donate a minimum four hours per month to assist in various aspects of the research.

In addition to the nine screening steps, each prospective medium agrees to uphold a code of spiritual ethics as well as embrace a strong commitment to the values of scientific mediumship research. As part of our university-approved human subjects’ consenting process, each medium agrees to abide by the contents of a document titled “Integrative Mediumship Research: Scientific and Spiritual Opportunities and Guidelines for Mediums and Researchers.” This document states that “IRMs are ethically responsible and follow certain standards of conduct in their personal and professional lives. IRMs are also scientifically responsible, by valuing the scientific method and the importance of university laboratory obligations. They are thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded scientists and mediums to advance the science of survival of consciousness and the profession of mediums, and behave with grace and humility in the on-going research.” IRMs endorse that they are honest, open, ethical, responsible, compassionate, respectful, humble, and gracious and that they value truth, science, ethics, responsibility, compassion, healing, health, evolution, and growth. The document also specifies a code of conduct and describes the specific nine screening steps as well as the responsibilities that come with being an IRM.

To date, 50 mediums were consented and have begun the screening steps, nine have completed all nine steps, and 250 more signed up to participate before recruitment was closed in June 2006. It is also important to note that the IRM screening was developed after the completion of the triple-blind study recently published (Beischel & Schwartz 2007); thus, the mediums that participated in that study were not IRMs.

The nine steps are listed here and described in detail below:

Step 1: Written Questionnaire

Step 2: Personality/Psychological Tests

Step 3: Phone Interview (with an existing IRM)

Step 4: Phone Interview (with a VERITAS Investigator)

Step 5: Two Blinded E-mail and Two Blinded Phone Readings

Step 6: Mediumship Research Training

Step 7: Human Research Subjects Training

Step 8: Grief Training

Step 9: Autobiographical Statement

All researchers working with the VERITAS Research Program also complete Steps 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

To begin, each prospective medium completes a brief, written questionnaire about factors including family history, medical history, culture, education, personal

experiences, and training (Step 1). It has been suggested that mediums (and psychics) may share common life experiences such as a difficult youth (Schouten 1994, p. 248). To date, 43 mediums have completed the questionnaire and their answers to the following question were analyzed: "Please describe, in as much detail as possible, how you personally experience receiving communication from a discarnate. How do you receive the information (hear, see, feel)? Describe each of your five senses during a reading." The results of a phenomenological analysis of the nine IRMs' answers will be presented in April 2007 at the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness annual meeting and are also described in a manuscript currently being completed with co-author Adam Rock, PhD, of Deakin University.

In short, the medium's purported experience of communicating with a discarnate was found to consist of multi-modal "sensory" impressions about the discarnate. Visual images of the discarnate are "seen" in the medium's "mind's eye" and information from the discarnate is "heard" in the medium's "mind's ear." The medium feels the discarnates' ailments/causes of death and fragrances and/or tastes associated with the discarnate prior to his or her bodily death are also experienced. The medium also feels empathy towards the discarnate and experiences alterations in affect.

After finishing the questionnaire, prospective IRMs then complete four standard personality tests (Step 2): the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Tellegen Absorption Scale, and the Openness to Spiritual Beliefs and Experiences Scale. By collecting detailed historical data during Step 1 and personality data during Step 2 from all mediums and comparing them to test reading data (Step 5), the specific characteristics correlated with exceptional mediumship skill can be determined. This examination of possible predictors of mediumship ability is similar in principle to research involving predictors of psi performance (reviewed by Palmer 1977). Like studies examining the predictors of psi, this analysis of potential predictors of mediumship ability increases the yield of information gained during the experiments/screening without requiring any disturbance "of the delicate interface with the respondent" (Burdick & Kelly 1977). To date, 25 mediums have completed the Step 2 tests and analysis on the results is just beginning.

Prospective mediums then participate in a phone interview with one or more existing Integrative Research Mediums (Step 3) using questions written by the IRMs and approved by the VERITAS researchers and the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program. A second interview (Step 4) then takes place with a researcher about their experiences as mediums, how they experience communication with discarnates, and factors that affect such communication. Fourteen mediums have completed these two interviews.

The test-reading portion of the screening process (Step 5) is completed to ensure each prospective medium is able to report relatively specific, accurate, consistent, and scorable information under various experimental conditions. The test readings also ensure a medium is able to convey accurate information while following specific experimental instructions and that s/he accurately conveys her/his experiences during the reading with little editing or under- or over-statement.

The test readings consist of two identically formatted readings with two different sitters chosen from the prospective sitter pool as described above. The pairing of the two sitters/discarnates is described in detail below; in short, two discarnates of the same



gender are paired to optimize each sitter's ability to distinguish their readings when blinded to the origin of the readings. Both sitters are provided with both paired readings for scoring and blinded to which reading was intended for which discarnate; thus, each reading acts as a control for the other reading during scoring.

For the first portion of each test reading, the prospective medium is e-mailed the first name of the discarnate the sitter wishes to contact. The medium is instructed to send the investigators a brief e-mail, within one week, with information about the named discarnate as well as the answers to five questions about the discarnate's physical and personality traits, hobbies or activities, cause of death, and comments for the sitter. The ample time provided to the medium allows him/her to perform the reading at a convenient time using his/her individual mediumship process rather than on the investigators' schedules and/or within the intimidating environment of the laboratory. Because the medium is only given the first name of the discarnate and no information about the sitter, blinding is in no way compromised by this procedure. The e-mail readings are given both global and item-by-item scores (described in the Scoring section).

The second portion of each test reading consists of an audio-recorded three-way phone reading with an experimenter, the prospective medium, and the sitter, and includes two main sections. The phone readings take place after each of the two sitters score the blinded e-mail readings. In the first sitter-silent section (*i.e.*, the sitter can hear the reading and takes notes, but gives no feedback), the medium reports any new information about the named discarnate that s/he is receiving. In the second section, the sitter is introduced to the medium by first name and a reading in which the sitter can give feedback to the medium using yes-or-no questions takes place. During the reading, the sitter records both a global score and an estimated percent accuracy for each of the two sections. The phone reading is hypothesized to provide motivation for the discarnate to participate in the e-mail portion of the test readings as well as for the sitter to complete the scoring of the e-mail readings accurately and in a timely fashion.

To be considered for research, a medium must a) be given an average global score of 3.5 or higher (on a 0-6 scale described below in the Scoring section) over the two readings (phone and e-mail) by the intended sitter for their own reading with a difference of 1.5 or more over the score given to that reading by the other sitter, b) be given average item-by-item fit scores of 50% or more for the e-mail reading, and c) be given an average estimated accuracy score of 50% or more for the phone portions. These numbers are based on the results of a pilot study utilizing triple-blind phone readings completed by skilled, experienced research mediums (Beischel & Schwartz 2007) but are currently being revised as new data are collected to better reflect the extreme conditions of triple-blind e-mail readings.

In addition, differences in individual mediumship processes, the ability of different deceased individuals to communicate, and the ability of different raters to accurately score the readings are examined before final decisions are made about the medium's performance. For example, an experimenter may note the following: discrepancies in either direction between the percentage of statements scored as accurate by the sitter and the global score given by that sitter to the e-mail reading, identical statements scored differently in each of the two readings, a sitter's tendency during the phone reading to accept statements that are not true or to reject statements that are, and/or scores for the intended readings that may not reach the passing criteria but that are

considerably higher than the associated control scores. This subjective yet process-focused analysis step is necessary to help ensure that truly talented mediums are not erroneously rejected based on the limited data from two rigorously controlled readings scored by first-time raters (see Table 1). It also helps ensure that mediums who are unable to perform under the controlled portions of the readings but who receive high scores from sitters during the portions in which they receive sitter feedback (*i.e.*, those who may be using cold reading) are not erroneously accepted based on skewed scoring averages.

To date, twelve mediums have completed the Step 5 test readings and nine have been “passed.” Table 1 contains the average scoring data for the first seven mediums that completed the test readings before revisions on the criteria began to be viewed as necessary.

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Table 1. Average scoring results for the first seven mediums who attempted the Step 5 e-mail and phone test readings by result. Scoring data listed as “intended” were given by blinded sitters for readings intended for them and “control” data were given by the blinded sitters for readings intended for the other sitters in the pairs. “Scores” are on a 0-6 scale. Please note: one of the 14 readings was thrown out during analysis due to the sitter’s repeated failure to follow the scoring instructions; therefore, the data are based on a total of 13 readings (nine for “passed” mediums and four for “eliminated” mediums).

Step 5 Test Reading End Result	n	E-mail Score - Intended	E-mail Score - Control	Item Accuracy - Intended	Item Accuracy - Control	Percent of sitters that chose their reading as their own	Sitter-silent Phone Score	Sitter-silent Estimated Accuracy	Interaction Phone Score	Interaction Estimated Accuracy	Average E-mail + Phone Scores
Passed	5	3.5	2.1	59.8%	37.7%	88.9%	4.6	79.9%	5.1	88.8%	4.4
Eliminated	2	1.5	4.0	26.2%	54.4%	0%	2.8	41.3%	4.0	73.8%	2.8

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To continue the next portion of the screening process, prospective IRMs are required to read *The Afterlife Experiments* (Schwartz with Simon 2002) and complete a simple but thoughtful take-home examination about the book (Step 6). The purpose is to educate mediums about the early history of the research conducted in our laboratory, some of the key research questions, and the implications of evidence for survival of consciousness after death. In the process, prospective mediums are invited to ask the researchers questions that might lead to future experiments in the laboratory. IRMs then sustain their awareness of mediumship research by reading current research reports as they are published. The Step 6 exam questions can be found in Appendix B.

Before becoming official IRMs, prospective mediums complete a portion of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)'s online "Course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects" (Step 7). Because IRMs work with human subjects (sitters) during research experiments and are themselves research participants, gaining an awareness of and appreciation for the legal and ethical constraints of doing research in a university setting is essential training. Additionally, the credibility and evolution of mediumship research is enhanced by Integrative Research Mediums becoming credentialed in this arena.

Along these lines, it is also beneficial for Integrative Research Mediums to be aware of the psychological aspects of the grieving process that each sitter is experiencing. To gain some basic understanding on this topic, prospective mediums are required to read one of the following texts: *The Grief Recovery Handbook* (James & Friedman 1998); *The Journey Through Grief* (Wolfelt 2003); *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy* (Worden 2001); or *Life After Loss* (Moody & Arcangel 2002). Mediums can also recommend that a book not listed be added to the list and can read that text for completion of this step. The prospective medium then writes a brief (1-2 page) summary of his/her chosen text and a description of what s/he found most interesting and helpful about it (Step 8).

The final step a prospective medium takes before becoming an official Integrative Research Mediums is to write a short (1-2 paragraphs) autobiographical statement (Step 9) for distribution to the VERITAS Research Program investigators, current IRMs, and for publication on the VERITAS Research Program website (the last only upon the medium's written request). This statement may include descriptions of how long the medium has been experiencing communication with discarnates, how the medium experiences the information (*i.e.*, as visions, images in the mind's eye, sounds, feelings, etc.), the part of the country where s/he is located, and any comments about her/his mediumship. In addition, this statement may include information about the medium's age, family, hobbies, clients, goals, publications, etc. To date, eight IRMs' biographies are listed on our website ([http://veritas.arizona.edu/v\\_mediums.htm](http://veritas.arizona.edu/v_mediums.htm)).

The extensive screening of prospective mediums helps ensure a subject population that is reliable, skilled, trained, dedicated, ethical, and professional. This brings a new level of credibility to the field of mediumship research as well as to laboratory mediums themselves.

## RESEARCH READINGS

Over the past four years, the research reading protocols used by the VERITAS Research Program have evolved along with subject screening, experimental blinding, and scoring methodologies. In that time, the research has included non-blinded as well as single-, double-, triple-, and even quintuple-blind designs (discussed below) and has employed various specific reading formats. These formats changed over time based on the knowledge about the discarnate communication process that was gained during the use of each consecutive protocol. In order to obtain the most objective and replicable information, we attempted protocols that were more and more specific at each step. It is important to note again at this point that although several of these reading formats were used throughout the history of mediumship research, it was necessary to examine their practicality in our laboratory with present-day mediums.

The first methodological question we attempted asked if the sitter was a necessary component of an accurate reading. During these readings, an experimenter acted as a proxy sitter who sat in for the actual absent sitter during in-person readings with a medium. The use of proxy sitters during mediumship readings is nearly as old as mediumship research itself; the work of C. Drayton Thomas in the 1930's and of D.J. West (1949) and Gertrude Schmeidler (1958) in the following decades serve as important examples (also reviewed by Kelly *in press*).

Proxy sitters are used to (a) mimic the reading practices with which mediums feel comfortable (*i.e.*, with a sitter present or on the phone) in order to optimize the reading conditions while (b) blinding the medium to cues from the sitter and, in some cases, (c) blinding the absent sitter to the reading until scoring. Based on initial pilot work in our laboratory, it was concluded that a skilled present-day medium could report accurate information about discarnates without the sitter present, a replication and extension of the historical research.

The next step tested the hypothesis that a specific discarnate could be “asked for” during a reading as this (a) mimics what is often the format of a “natural” reading between a client and a medium, (b) serves to focus the medium, and (c) allows for the production of similar one-discarnate readings across a study. When the mediums were given the first name of a discarnate and sometimes his or her relationship to the absent sitter, they were again able to provide accurate information during these “deceased-directed” sections. The obvious criticism of this method is that the names themselves provide information to the medium which s/he can use for a type of cold reading. This does not appear to be the case. In a recent study in which each medium read for a pair of discarnates, the names in each pair (given to the mediums one at a time at the beginning of each phone reading) included: Ron and Brandon, Pamela and Ariel, and Cindy and Joan (Beischel & Schwartz 2007). (One pair containing two rather unique names is not included here to maintain confidentiality.) Furthermore, the discarnate pairs in the most current Step 5 e-mail test readings of prospective mediums are named Daniel and Larry, Vicki and Eleanor, Leola and Debra, Cliff and Harry, and Nick and David. Because the mediums are asked to provide specific information about the physical lives of each discarnate, it seems unlikely that they could obtain the necessary information solely from these names.

The ability to obtain information about a specific discarnate led to the hypothesis that specific pieces of information could be obtained about the discarnate through the asking of specific questions. The use of questions during a reading increases the probability of obtaining information related to the identification of the discarnate. In addition, the questions further focus the medium. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this question-answer format emulates normal human communication. The asking questions paradigm is also important during data analysis: instead of calculating the probability of the medium's potentially general statements being accurate (for example, Saltmarsh & Soal 1930), the medium is simply asked to provide specific information.

The exploratory "asking questions" readings contained three sections: "life questions," "afterlife questions," and a "reverse question." The life questions included items about the discarnates' physical lives and contained questions asking for information often found in non-laboratory mediumship readings (*e.g.*, physical and personality descriptions and cause of death) as well as questions requesting information that most mediums and/or discarnates are unable to provide (*e.g.*, specific dates of birth and death, names of family members, etc.). We found that several of the questions were repeatedly answered accurately and we continue to use the life questions format in our current research and during the test readings used to screen prospective mediums.

If a medium can report information about a discarnate's physical life, the next logical question asks if s/he can also report information about the discarnate's current life; that is, what is it like to be dead? Until recently, a few of these questions were asked during a qualitative data collection segment of the IRM test phone readings. However, due to time limitations and the observation that the answers to the afterlife questions may be linked to the mediums' own ideas and beliefs about the afterlife, these questions are not used in our current protocols. Both the Life and Afterlife Questions are listed in Appendix C.

The reverse question section is included in all question-based protocols to ensure discarnate and sitter motivation and to show respect and compassion for the discarnate and the sitter. The reverse question asks, "Does the discarnate have any questions, comments, or requests for the sitter?" This allows for information and messages ubiquitous in non-laboratory mediumship readings to be conveyed to the sitter during highly controlled laboratory experiments. Deceased-directed, life questions, and reverse question sections are all included in the readings used to test prospective mediums. Additionally, a formal study containing these reading formats and achieving positive results was recently published (Beischel & Schwartz 2007).

The conditions for our research readings have also evolved beyond historical mediumship studies due to technological advances such as digital recording devices and the Internet. As stated above, the proxy-sitter question was answered during in-person readings as were some preliminary asking questions sections. However, the majority of the readings done by the VERITAS Research Program, including the published study described above, have taken place over the phone with an experimenter acting as a proxy for the absent, blinded sitter. This optimizes the mediumship process by allowing the medium to perform the readings in a comfortable location of his/her choice, an issue Dutch parapsychologist Hendricus Boerenkamp also found important while investigating psychics (reviewed by Schouten 1994, pp. 242-4). Furthermore, the readings in our current study as well as the prospective medium test readings all take place over e-mail

with no sitter present at all but still allowing the medium to perform them in a location and at a time of his/her choosing. When the name is sent to the medium, the sitter is notified and asked to make a request to the target discarnate (like a wish or a prayer) that s/he participate in the reading, and one to other discarnates known to the sitter that they not interrupt the reading. We also have a policy of “open” follow-up phone readings; that is, if a discarnate other than the target needs to communicate something important to the sitter, they are requested to wait until the phone reading to do so. From the data collected to date, it appears that a skilled medium can report accurate and specific information about a named discarnate in the absence of a sitter and without any feedback (Table 1 and Beischel & Schwartz 2007).

## **PAIRING AND FORMATTING RESEARCH READINGS**

### ***Pairing***

In order to maximize rater/sitter blinding, research readings performed in the VERITAS Research Program are paired and each associated paired rater scores two readings – one that was intended for him/her and one that was intended for the other rater – without knowing which is which, that is, blinded to the origin of the readings. The paired readings are for discarnates of the same gender to prevent any obvious gender-based clues to the blinded rater during scoring. Having control raters evaluate the information in a reading intended for someone else is a useful test of the generality/specificity of the statements and has been used throughout the history of mediumship research; two temporally extreme examples are the work of Saltmarsh (1929) and that of O’Keefe and Wiseman (2005). After item-by-item and whole-reading scoring (described below), each rater is asked to choose which reading s/he believes was intended for him/her, that is, “which of the two readings was for your discarnate?” This forced-choice method is a common end-point in mediumship studies as well as other parapsychological tests (discussed in Burdick & Kelly 1977).

However, to maximize each rater’s ability to discriminate between the two readings, the gender-matched discarnates in our studies are paired before the readings to optimize their recognizable differences while still maintaining rater blinding. This is in stark contrast to studies such as those performed by Saltmarsh (1929) in which discarnates that are similar (in age and cause of death in this example) are paired, but is similar in principle to choosing specifically varied target sets in telepathy research (for example, Honorton 1975). Therefore, in our studies, when a medium describes a blonde, humorous, outgoing father who passed from a sudden heart attack in one reading and a dark-haired, serious, quiet son who was the victim of a drunk driver in the other, having each associated sitter choose which reading was intended for him/her is a much more objective and revealing process than giving two randomly-paired raters two readings both describing short, plump grandmothers who enjoyed reading and sewing, and asking each rater to choose which reading was intended for him/her. The latter scenario does not optimally test a medium’s ability to report specific information using a forced-choice end-point.

In their review of statistical methods used in parapsychology, Burdick and Kelly (1977) describe, in reference to the forced-choice method, how “unless the correspondences between responses and their targets were very striking (which they often were not), all-or-none judgements would tend to become insensitive” (p. 111). Historically, preferential ranking of the readings was often used to avoid this issue. However, the pairing of optimally dissimilar discarnates prior to the readings allows for the appearance of the “very striking correspondence” between responses (*i.e.*, readings) and their targets (*i.e.*, discarnates).

Pairing begins during sitter screening. The sitter is asked several questions about the specific discarnate. Using the sitter’s descriptions, an experimenter assigns codes to the discarnate. There are five main categories (age at passing, personality, cause of death, physical description, and hobbies), the latter four each having subcategories. The screening questions asked of each sitter about the targeted discarnate are listed in Appendix D.

The age of the discarnate at their passing is coded as one of six categories: <20, 20-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65-79, and >79. The coding for the personality (introverted/extroverted, serious/playful, and rational/emotional) and physical descriptions (hair color, build, and height) of the discarnate are based directly on the sitter’s responses to the questions listed. The cause of death is coded by the primary body part affected, whether the death was considered natural (*e.g.*, disease) or unnatural (*e.g.*, accident), and whether it was quick or slow. And finally, hobbies are coded as being generally more outdoors or indoors, more solitary or more social, and more athletic or non-athletic. The specific codes used are also listed in Appendix D.

Once the discarnates are coded in each category, they can be paired using the specific criteria listed in Appendix D. In short, discarnates are paired to optimize their differences in the five categories listed above. Pairing decisions also include a final subjective step in which the sitters’ original answers are reviewed to ensure proper pairing in all categories and review the practicality of the pair. For example, we once found and had to reject a pair meeting all the criteria because both discarnates shared the same first name. Only pairs that follow all of the criteria are used even if this limits the possible study size. The criteria used are the most stringent collection attempted that still allowed for a practical study size. We have found that it is usually necessary to gather the screening information from four to seven sitters in order to find one pair using these criteria. Gender-matched paired discarnates are read by the same medium in order to obtain similar readings and each reading is formatted as described in the next section.

### ***Formatting***

Just as pairing optimizes a rater’s ability to discriminate between readings, formatting the readings optimizes the rater’s capacity to score the items objectively. During formatting, an experimenter removes all references to the discarnate’s name and assigns a number to each reading in order to ensure rater blinding; she then organizes the items into single, direct statements. Specifically, the formatting experimenter:

- Creates a numbered list in which every item is a single, scorable statement.
- Inserts headings describing the section of the reading to the rater.
- Replaces any weak or uncertain associations with clear statements.

- Removes phrases referencing the manner in which the discarnate provides the information to the medium. The exception is any direct quote from the discarnate.
- Replaces statements referring to the medium's sensory experience of the items.
- Replaces specifics about the discarnate that would jeopardize blinding but must be included for proper scoring with "[the deceased]" or "[s/he]" in the item list.
- Removes any reference to the medium's history or opinions.
- Inserts explanations for "medium-speak."
- Groups information that is repeated into one item containing the different ways the item was stated and in the most appropriate section of the reading, taking care not to disrupt the meaning of the information.
- Removes any items that are obviously or overtly emotionally or psychologically painful for a sitter to read. This includes detailed descriptions of a physically painful manner of passing (in this case, verifiable items such as body parts affected and the existence of pain are included while pain descriptors are removed) and negative emotions attributed to the discarnate directed at the sitter. Though the readings are performed for the purpose of data collection and the sitters are notified during consent about potential risks of emotionally painful reactions, mediums are not 100% accurate and the inclusion of potentially traumatic information is neither statistically necessary nor ethically responsible.

Full formatting tasks including specific examples can be found in Appendix E. This appendix also includes a comparison of the formatting of a specific reading by O'Keefe and Wiseman (2005) and how the same reading would have been formatted in our laboratory.

It is important to note that the items are in no way randomized during formatting in our laboratory. The interdependence of scorable statements in a reading is a commonly referenced "limitation" of the scoring of mediums' statements (Scott 1972, Schouten 1994). However, the context and the flow of the content during a reading contain information potentially relevant to the rater that would be removed were the statements to be randomized. The interdependence of statements is a necessary component of the processing of information that occurs during normal human communication. In the same way one should not lose the forest for the trees, one should not lose the paragraph for the sentences.

We have found that formatting mediumship readings using the tasks listed above ensures rater blinding, optimizes the clarity of the items for scoring, and unifies the quality of the information across readings and between mediums.

## **BLINDING**

Numerous non-paranormal psychological processes are at work during readings in which a medium or psychic can receive immediate and non-regulated feedback from the client or sitter (reviewed by Schouten 1994). These normal processes can be solely responsible for a "successful" reading. Therefore, the blinding of the medium to feedback from the sitter was one of the first controls imposed on the mediumship process during investigation of the phenomenon (for example, Saltmarsh 1929). In addition,



blinding the rater to the origin of the readings (*i.e.*, “mine” or “not mine”) is important in preventing bias in the rater during scoring.

Although some elements of rater blinding occur during reading pairing and formatting, the majority of experimental blinding in the VERITAS Research Program is established during protocol design. In previous research in our laboratory, non-blinded, single-blind (Schwartz *et al* 2001, Schwartz & Russek 2001), double-blind (Schwartz *et al* 2002), and triple-blind (Beischel & Schwartz 2007) protocols were employed, and currently, a quintuple-blind study is underway. It is important to remember that these terms are not directly correlated with the similar terms used in medical treatment testing. The blinding described here refers to the number of blinded individuals participating in the mediumship reading procedure and thus the levels of blinding ensuring the controlled environment of the reading. Blinding is essential in order to eliminate both conventional factors (*e.g.*, fraud, cold-reading, rater bias, unintentional cueing by the experimenter) and parapsychological issues [*e.g.*, telepathy (Bem & Honorton 1994) with the sitter or experimenter] as explanations for the accuracy of the information a medium provides.

During single-blind readings, only the medium is blinded: all information about the sitter and the discarnate (save for the discarnate’s first name) is kept from her/him before and during the reading to eliminate cold-reading and fraud as explanations for the accuracy of the information. In a single-blind scenario, the rater is given just one reading to score and is aware that the reading was intended for him/her; in addition, the rater may or may not provide the medium with feedback through a proxy during the reading and may or may not have heard the reading as it took place.

During double-blind conditions, the medium is blind to information and feedback before and during the reading and the rater is blind to the origin of the readings during scoring to prevent rater bias. Because more than one reading is necessary to blind the rater, the pairing of discarnates/readings discussed above is tremendously beneficial in this scenario.

In a triple-blind setting, the medium and the rater are blinded as in the previous conditions, but additionally, the experimenter interacting with the rater during scoring and with the medium during the readings is blinded to information about the rater and his/her associated discarnate to further remove fraud as well as eliminating experimenter cueing and telepathy with the experimenter/proxy as explanations for the results.

In our current quintuple-blind study, 1) the medium is blinded to information about the sitter and the discarnate before and during the reading, 2) the raters are blinded to the origin of the readings during scoring, 3) the experimenter who interacts with the mediums (*i.e.*, sends the discarnates’ first names and receives the completed readings) and formats the readings into item lists (Experimenter 1) is blinded to any information about the sitters and the discarnates beyond the discarnates’ first names, 4) the experimenter who interacts with the sitters during scoring (*i.e.*, sends and receives the blinded and paired readings during scoring) (Experimenter 2) is blinded to all information about the discarnates, to which medium performed which readings, and to which readings were intended for which discarnates/sitters, and 5) the experimenter who consents, screens, pairs, and trains the sitters/raters (Experimenter 3) is blinded to which mediums read which sitter pairs and which blinded readings were intended for which discarnates.

As a further precaution, the order the pairs of sitters participate, which pairs are read by which medium, and the order in which the discarnate names are provided to the

medium are all randomized. In addition, one rater in each pair receives their own reading to score first and one rater receives the control reading to score first. This entire scenario eliminates fraud, cold-reading, rater bias, experimenter error, and telepathy of the experimenter interacting with the mediums as plausible explanations for the accuracy and specificity of the information provided during the readings.

The specific tasks assigned to Experimenters 1, 2, and 3 as well as the information to which each has access and to which each is blinded during a quintuple-blind study can be found in Appendix F. Both the triple- and quintuple-blind designs reflect significant methodological and conceptual innovations beyond previous single-blind (Robertson & Roy 2001, Schwartz *et al* 2001, Schwartz & Russek 2001) and double-blind (O’Keefe & Wiseman 2005, Roy & Robertson 2001 and 2004, Schwartz *et al* 2002) mediumship experiments.

## SCORING

One of the major challenges facing research regarding information obtained from mediums concerns the scoring of transcripts obtained during the readings. It is essential to recognize that the requirements for scoring are more advanced and sophisticated when the research focuses on the *process* of mediumship compared with research that focuses on *proving* the reality of mediumship. *Process-focused* research is more comprehensive, inclusive, and detailed; *proof-focused* research is more conservative, exclusive, and limiting. The Arizona Mediumship-Process Scoring System (AMPSS) was designed to examine and quantify the process of mediumship. However, when AMPSS is employed in a more restrictive manner, it can be used to examine and quantify proof-focused data as well.

Challenges involved in scoring a medium’s reading come from two sources: (a) the process(es) by which the information comes to and is reported by the medium and (b) the process(es) by which the rater perceives and judges the information. Scoring challenges concerning the mediums’ process include the following issues:

- The information is often complex.
- The utterances from the mediums are often incomplete – subjects, verbs, and/or objects may be missing.
- The information comes through in uncontrolled packets of different lengths and they do not typically express a discernable logic or flow.
- The information is often indirect if not symbolic.
- The information includes perceptions and experiences of the mediums as well as interpretations of the impressions they receive.
- The information often comes in quick bursts that may be transient, unclear, and/or incomplete to the medium.

Some of these issues are addressed during reading formatting.

Scoring challenges concerning the process of the rater are also intricate:

- The rater’s knowledge and memory of the deceased is limited.
- The rater’s understanding of the scoring instructions may be limited.

- The rater's personal biases (belief or disbelief in survival; liberal or conservative in making judgments) will influence the judging.
- The rater's expectations will color the judging.
- The rater's ability to derive rational interpretations and draw connections within complex information may be limited.
- The rater's emotions will influence scoring.

Although the scoring of the mediumship readings is the last event to take place during a study, it is obviously the most important step from a data-collection viewpoint. However, the scoring collected is meaningless unless the other issues discussed above have been designed and carried out thoroughly and accurately. As with those other issues, the scoring procedure used by the VERITAS Research Program underwent numerous revisions.

In order to facilitate the accurate scoring of various types of mediumship readings by diverse types of raters and for different types of scoring information, four versions of AMPSS were developed for the scoring of accuracy and emotional significance. It is important to note that each version of AMPSS was developed by upgrading and/or reformatting the previous version based on what was learned during each version's use. In addition, several non-process-focused scoring systems were attempted before the AMPSS was developed.

Two of the versions of AMPSS also implement a whole reading and choice system, the Arizona Whole Reading Scoring System (AWRSS), to test for specificity. In addition, a fifth experimenter version of AMPSS (AMPSS-E) was developed for use in characterizing the information provided by the medium which is similar to the method used by Boerenkamp (reviewed by Schouten 1994). In AMPSS-E, an experimenter rates the type (*e.g.*, place, name, date, etc.) and form (*e.g.*, complete or incomplete statement) of the information as well as how the medium conveyed it (*e.g.*, experience, interpretation, etc.) for each item in a reading. The experimenter also notes any items by which the medium seemed confused or surprised. It is important to note that AMPSS-E can only be used during in-person or phone readings because several of the ratings are dependent on the manner in which the information was reported by the medium.

A set of instructions, plus scoring forms or worksheets, are used to implement the various rater versions of AMPSS. In order to appeal to the *process* by which a rater determines the applicability of the medium's statements, the instructions include a decision-making tree (Fig. 1, scores described below).

An on-line AMPSS scoring form in which the rater scores each item in a web-based format is planned for use in the future. This version would also provide immediate electronic storage and organization of the data from each rater. Currently, paper forms for in-person scoring and electronic forms for e-mail scoring are used. For AMPSS-1, the readings are presented to the rater in clusters of related information as both a direct transcript of the medium's statements and an itemized list for scoring. For AMPSS-2, -3, and -4, only the itemized lists are provided.

The scope of this paper will only discuss the version of the scoring method used by current raters, AMPSS-4. However, it is important to note that the other versions may be more appropriate for use during certain types of readings or analyses. For AMPSS-4, each item in two gender-matched and blinded readings is scored for accuracy and

AWRSS is used to score the whole readings and choose the more applicable one (details below). AMPSS-4 is used during the current on-going quintuple-blind e-mail study as well as the current Step 5 prospective medium test readings. The previous version, AMPSS-3, included an additional rating for the emotional significance of each item (a qualitative measure) and was used during the first Step 5 test readings and a recent triple-blind study.

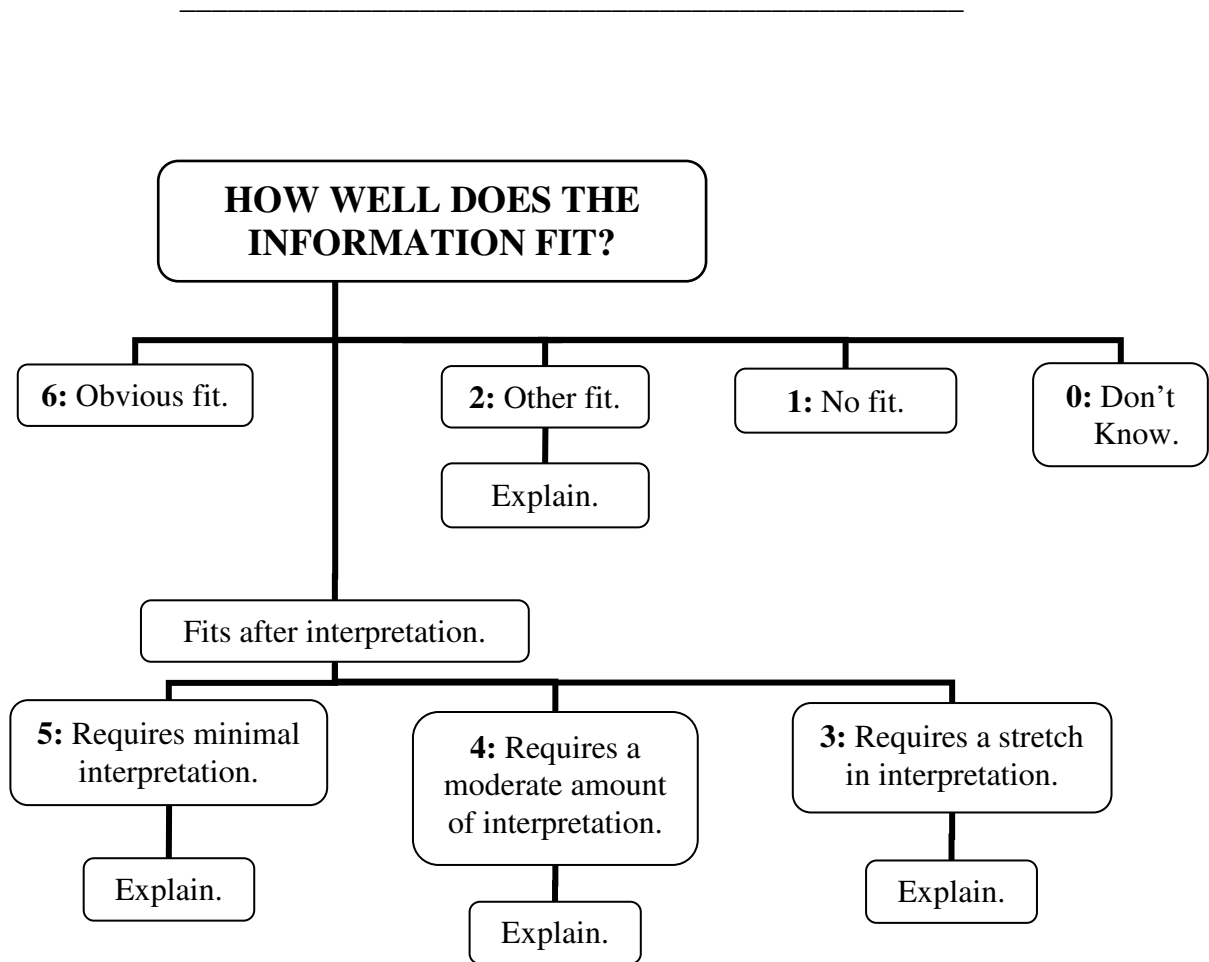


Figure 1. The decision-making tree provided to raters during AMPSS scoring of mediumship readings. (Please note: the actual tree is color-coded for ease in viewing and use.)

In AMPSS-4, each reading is blinded and formatted as described above. Prior to the readings, each rater is provided with extensive instructions including examples and “hints for understanding mediumship readings” (Appendix G) and is trained using the scoring system with short “practice” readings. During scoring, each sitter in a pair acts as a matched control for the other sitter in the pair: each sitter scores the reading intended for him/her as well as the reading of the control sitter while remaining blinded to the origin of the readings. Sitters score each item for accuracy by contemplating the question “How well does the piece of information fit?” and choosing one of the following six options:

- 6:** “Obvious fit” – used if the item is a direct or concrete hit that does not require interpretation to fit.
- 5:** “Fit after minimal interpretation” – used if the item indirectly applies (is close to a hit) and needs minimal interpretation or symbolism to fit.
- 4:** “Fit after moderate interpretation” – used if the item indirectly applies and needs a moderate amount of interpretation or symbolism to fit.
- 3:** “Fit after a stretch in interpretation” – used if the item indirectly applies and needs a stretch in interpretation or symbolism to fit.
- 2:** “Other fit” – used if the item does not fit the named discarnate or the rater, but does fit someone else that the rater is/was close to and that is likely to be the subject of the statement.
- 1:** “No fit” – used if the information is a concrete miss (it is clearly wrong) or if it is information for which there is no reasonable interpretation.
- 0:** “Don’t know” – used if the rater does not understand the item or does not have enough information to judge its accuracy.

For scores of 2, 3, 4, and 5, the rater also provides a written explanation. It is important to note that although these scores seem to have numerical value, they are not weighted and are simply counted up individually during analysis. Previous versions listed the scores in the reverse numerical order (*e.g.*, 1 = obvious fit) and the scores referred here as 5, 4, and 3 were listed as 2a, 2b, and 2c, respectively. The seven separate numbers are used for improved rater understanding and ease in data analysis. Weighted scores, such as those used by Saltmarsh (1929), Schmeidler (1958), or Robertson and Roy (2004), are not used because they presuppose a scale of importance based on specificity that may not reflect the “scale” of importance used by the sitter—the individual for whom the information was intended.

Sitters also give each full list of items a summary/global numerical score (0-6) using AWRRS [based on scoring scales developed for remote viewing studies (Targ *et al* 1995)]:

- 6:** Excellent reading, including strong aspects of communication, and with essentially no incorrect information.
- 5:** Good reading with relatively little incorrect information.
- 4:** Good reading with some incorrect information.
- 3:** Mixture of correct and incorrect information, but enough correct information to indicate that communication with the deceased occurred.

- 2:** Some correct information, but not enough to suggest beyond chance that communication occurred.
- 1:** Little correct information or communication.
- 0:** No correct information or communication.

After summary scoring is complete for both readings in a pair, the sitters are asked to “Pick the reading which seems to be more applicable to you. Even if they both seem equally applicable or non-applicable, pick one.” They are then asked to rate their choice compared to the other reading according to the following scale:

- a. clearly more applicable to me
- b. moderately more applicable to me
- c. only slightly more applicable to me
- d. both seemed applicable to me and to the same extent
- e. neither seemed applicable to me

Finally, raters are asked, “Please explain what led you to pick the reading you did, and any problems you had in making the decision, giving references to the relevant items.”

Once scored, data from raters for whom the reading was intended can be compared with data from control raters using a t-test analysis as well as higher level statistical analyses. The statistic  $p_{rep}$  is used in addition to traditional null-hypothesis testing to determine replicability (Killeen 2005).

For proof-focused research, only the highest category of accuracy scores (“obvious fit”) are counted as hits and described in relation to the total number of items scored. For process-focused research, the upper two categories (“obvious fit” and “fit with mild interpretation”) are counted as hits in relation to the total items minus the items scored as “don’t know.” This latter method is used during Step 5 prospective medium test readings. Further analysis using correlation statistics can be done concerning the effect of classification or form of the items on the scoring of fit as well as the effect of the emotional significance of an item on this scoring if the more extensive and experimenter versions of AMPSS are used. In summary, we believe that the AMPSS brings clarity, reliability, and validity to the scoring of information obtained during the process of mediumship.

## CONCLUSIONS

The current use of the specific subject screening techniques and the reading protocol, pairing, formatting, blinding, and scoring practices employed by the VERITAS Research Program during its investigation of the anomalous information reception experienced by mediums reflect significant methodological and conceptual innovations beyond both historical mediumship research and modern published studies, both those performed within our laboratory (Schwartz *et al* 2001, Schwartz & Russek 2001, Schwartz *et al* 2004) and by other groups (O’Keefe & Wiseman 2005, Robertson & Roy 2001, Roy & Robertson 2001 and 2004). Specifically:

- The extensive screening of mediums helps ensure that suitable subjects are used during hypothesis testing and also provides the Program with a reliable and ethical subject pool with which to work.
- The screening of sitters and discarnates helps ensure a motivated and skilled group of raters.
- Using reading protocols that focus the medium on one discarnate and then ask specific questions about that discarnate provides similar types of information in each reading for a more objective rating procedure.
- The pairing of readings for discarnates that are optimally different but gender-matched optimizes rater blinding as well as the ability of raters to recognize identifying descriptions in each transcript during scoring.
- The formatting of the readings into item lists allows for the objective and repeatable scoring of clear, concise statements.
- The use of triple- and quintuple-blind conditions eliminates all conventional rationalizations as well as telepathy with the sitter or experimenter as plausible explanations for the findings.
- The use of item-by-item scores in addition to a global rating scale provides an additional measure of data quality regarding the hypothesis of anomalous information reception by mediums.

Figure 2 illustrates how these methods can come together during mediumship research and a recently published study illustrates how the methods can provide positive and significant data (Beischel & Schwartz 2007). Specifically, in this triple-blind phone study, the findings included significantly higher whole-reading scores for readings intended for the sitter versus readings intended for the paired control rater ( $p = 0.007$ , effect size = 0.5,  $p_{\text{rep}} = 0.96$ ) and significant forced-choice results when the raters were asked to choose which readings were intended for them ( $p = 0.01$ ). The resulting medium effect size (the magnitude of the effect independent of sample size) and high  $p_{\text{rep}}$  value (the probability of replicating the effect) indicate that under stringent triple-blind conditions, utilizing a summary/global rating scale used by blind raters, evidence for anomalous information reception can be obtained (Beischel & Schwartz 2007).

Through these methods, we are attempting to bridge the gap between the qualitative aspects of a more postmodern, feminist, and human science (Krippner 1995, White 1991, reviewed by White 1990, Irwin 1999) and more traditional quantitative parapsychological methods. Historically, “holistic” methods (*e.g.*, assigning a global or summary score to a reading) and “atomistic” methods (*e.g.*, item-by-item scoring) evolved somewhat independently over the course of research regarding the objective analysis of verbal statements (Burdick & Kelly 1977, p. 110). We find it important to include both methods during the analysis of each reading.

In addition, the future goals of our research attempt to address the claims of discarnate communication that mediums make and, in turn, the survival of consciousness hypothesis as well as the determination of whether or not conventional/non-paranormal factors are responsible for the information mediums provide. The survival question and methods to address it were challenges in historical mediumship research and continue to be difficult in modern studies, including ours.

Furthermore, we believe it is important to address here the theoretical experiments that have historically been suggested as “ideal” in the testing of mediums. These include

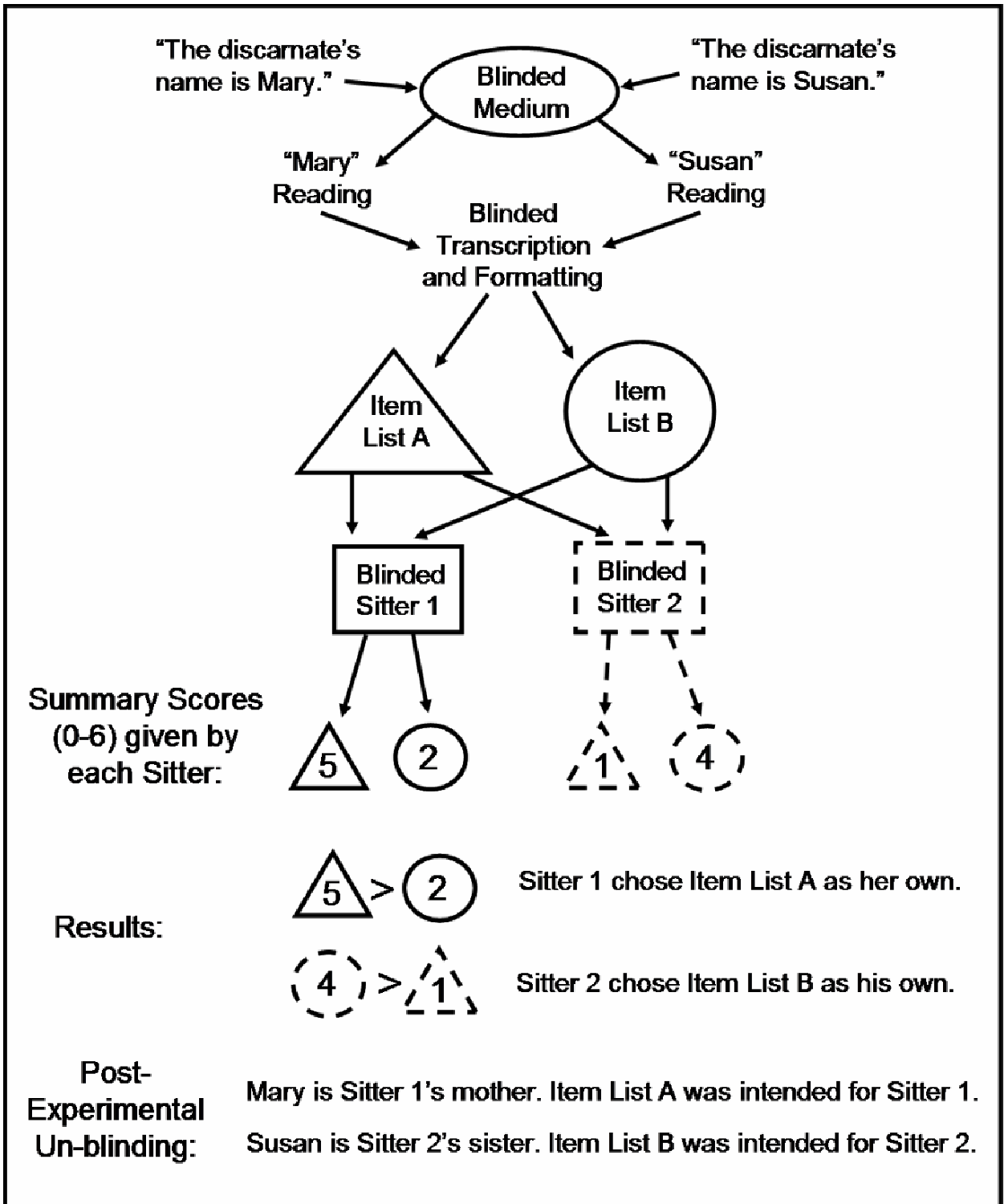
the retrieval of the combination to a lock (or other code) during a reading that only the discarnate knew; asking the medium to respond to a language (in that language) that the discarnate spoke but that the medium does not (xenoglossy); asking the medium to perform a complicated intellectual task using skills and expertise that the discarnate possessed but that the medium does not (*e.g.*, solving a difficult mathematical proof); obtaining information during a reading from a discarnate unknown to the sitter, medium, or experimenter (*i.e.*, drop-in communicators); and acquiring information that cannot be fully understood until information from another reading is obtained (*i.e.*, cross-correspondence) (Irwin 1999 pp. 175-9, Braude 2003 pp. 283-8). These suggestions contain several serious errors.

First, several of the proposed experiments involve pervasive and unsupported assumptions about the capability and the motivation of the discarnate to communicate specific information and about the medium's ability to receive and convey it. For instance, perhaps the discarnate no longer wishes to speak French, play competitive chess, or write a concerto. Maybe without a body constrained by "earthly" physics, the combination to the lock holds no interest or has been forgotten. Perhaps not all types of stored memories are retained after death. Maybe the medium's consciousness filters out information for which s/he does not have a personal reference. An emotional aspect to the information and a motivation to convey information that will be important to the sitter appear to be the necessary components of mediumship communication based the readings we have collected to date. There is no way, at this time, for us to know if the above examples represent the reality of being dead and basing experiments on un-supported assumptions is not, to say the least, ideal.

Second, several of the suggestions involve phenomena that usually only occur spontaneously, therefore creating difficulty in designing repeatable experiments addressing them. Although drop-in communicators can be "asked for" (*e.g.*, "during this segment of the reading, we are open to drop-ins"), would their appearance then provide the support suggested by this phenomenon? The same issue surrounds the appearance of cross-correspondence. Because these phenomena, although impressive and evidential, cannot be easily or repeatedly tested, they fail to meet the standard for "ideal" empirical research.

Finally, even if the suggested studies were possible and practical, the data that they would provide may still not differentiate between survival and, for example, super-psi or psychic reservoir explanations (reviewed in Fontana 2005 p. 103 and p. 113, respectively) since the possible "limits" of telepathy are not fully understood at this time. Their conclusions may simply support what is already established: that certain mediums are capable of anomalous information reception. Through this discussion, it is evident that the search for the ideal survival study continues.





**Fig. 2.** Schematic diagram of experimental methodology and example results.  
 [Reproduced from Beischel J and Schwartz GE. Anomalous information reception by research mediums demonstrated using a novel triple-blind protocol. *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science & Healing*, 2007; 3(1): 23-27.]

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A. Sitter screening questions.

#### Questions included in initial Sitter subject questionnaire:

- Please rate your belief in mediumship, or the ability to communicate with individuals who have died: Believer, Agnostic (not sure), or Non-believer.
- What is your reason for wanting to be a sitter?
- Have you witnessed a reading before? On TV? Have you been a sitter before? If yes, please list the names and cities of the mediums that have read you.
- Please list all the deceased individuals with whom you shared a close relationship. Include the first name of the deceased, his/her gender, his/her relationship to you, cause of death, and the approximate year of his/her passing.
- Are you familiar enough with the above individuals' lives to answer questions about them prior to a reading (*i.e.*, date of birth, parents and siblings names, types of pets, clothing or food preferences, etc.)?
- Are you willing and able to participate in e-mail readings?
- Are you willing and able to participate in phone readings?
- Are you willing and able to score the items from a reading for accuracy, meaningfulness, relevance, and/or specificity once instructions have been provided to you? (As scoring is the only way to retrieve data from a reading, only sitters willing to do scoring will be chosen to participate.)
- Are you willing and able to score readings from other sitters as experimental controls once instructions have been provided to you?

#### Questions asked of the sitter during the screening phone call:

- Do you believe that the consciousness or identity of a person survives even after their physical body dies (*i.e.*, do you believe there is an afterlife)? (Yes / No / Unsure)
- Do you believe that certain people (called mediums) can communicate directly with people who have died? (Yes / No / Unsure)
- How close was your relationship? (Not Close / Close / Very Close)
- When did this person pass away? How long ago was it?
- How old were you?
- About how old were they?
- Do you feel like you have unfinished business with them or that things were left unsaid?
- Do you feel any guilt about this person's death or your relationship with them?
- Briefly describe your relationship with this person.
- How often did you spend time with this person?
- Try to rate the level of your grief or sadness about this death right now. (scale of 1-5)
- Try to rate how much you miss this person. (scale of 1-5)
- Do you think this person would want to contact you? Why or why not?
- Do you think this person would want to participate in this experiment?
- Would you expect other people to try to communicate with you during this experiment?
- If so, who?
- Do you foresee them interrupting a reading for your \_\_\_\_\_?

- Have you ever experienced any after-death communications from any individuals who have died? (Yes/No)
- If yes, was your experience (Yes/No):
  - Visual (saw something)?
  - Auditory (heard something)?
  - Physically sensory (physically felt something)?
  - Emotionally sensory (felt a presence)?
  - Olfactory (smelled something)?
  - Communication during a dream?
  - External (*e.g.*, objects moving)?
  - An unexplainable coincidence?
- Were any of these experiences comforting or healing? (Yes/No)
- Were any of these experiences frightening or disturbing? (Yes/No)
  
- Do you have experience filling out detailed forms, questionnaires, or tests?
- Do you feel comfortable following written instructions containing numerous steps?
- Do you feel you can objectively score the accuracy of mediumship readings?
- Is there someone else who knew the deceased well that could provide assistance or feedback during your scoring of a reading if needed?
- Are you familiar with opening and sending attached files using an e-mail program?
- Do you know someone that can help you if you have trouble with the attachment or other computer issues?

**APPEDIX B. Step 6 exam questions about *The Afterlife Experiments* used during medium screening.**

1. Charlatans performing “cold readings” use which of the following techniques?
  - a) providing general information that could apply to many people
  - b) following non-verbal cues from the sitter
  - c) ignoring incorrect statements
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
  
2. Besides the University of Arizona, what other universities have supported programs researching paranormal phenomena?
  - a) Duke University
  - b) University of Virginia
  - c) University of Edinburgh
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
  
3. Why is it accurate to compare highly talented mediums to highly talented basketball player Michael Jordan?
  - a) talented mediums are tall
  - b) talented mediums are accurate 95-100% of the time
  - c) talented mediums make “dazzle shots,” have bad days, and are accurate about 50% of the time
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
  
4. Why is it important to take selective memory into account when analyzing mediumship readings?
  - a) strong believers may remember more hits than existed in a reading
  - b) strong disbelievers may remember more misses than existed in a reading
  - c) all of the above
  - d) none of the above
  
5. What is the importance of using multiple mediums during a mediumship study?
  - a) mediums get along well with each other
  - b) the replication of experimental results
  - c) more than one medium is available if one gets sick
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
  
6. How did the design of the Miraval experiment (Chapter 9) improve on the design of the earlier HBO study?
  - a) the sitter was silent during the first portion of the reading
  - b) during interaction with the medium, the sitter only provided yes’s or no’s
  - c) the sitters were chosen to vary in age, gender, beliefs, and location



- d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
7. A properly designed mediumship experiment rules out which of the following?
- a) deception/fraud
  - b) cues from the sitter during the reading
  - c) errors in the scoring method
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
8. How did the design of the Canyon Ranch experiment (Chapter 13) improve on the design of the earlier Miraval experiment?
- a) the sitters were silent throughout the readings
  - b) the sitters were research-oriented and scoring-minded
  - c) each sitter scored his/her own readings along with four “control” readings intended for the other sitters
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
9. The reason why some “professional skeptics” continue to report that all paranormal claims are due to deception/fraud even in the face of strong evidence supporting such claims may be:
- a) their roles as public skeptics make money/provide them with a livelihood
  - b) they have built reputations on being “skeptical”
  - c) negative psychological conditioning (they were educated to believe that fraud is always behind such claims)
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
10. The purpose of science and research is to:
- a) confirm what we’ve always believed
  - b) prove what we’d like to believe
  - c) reveal what is real
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
11. What makes a mediumship reading double-blind?
- a) when the sitters score readings without knowing which reading was intended for them AND the experimenter is blind-folded during the reading (blind sitter + blind experimenter)
  - b) when the sitters score readings without knowing which reading was intended for them AND the medium does not receive feedback during the reading (blind sitter + blind medium)
  - c) when the medium has never met the experimenter AND one of the experimenters has no say in the development of the protocol (blind medium + blind experimenter)
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above

12. What is the criticism of single-blind readings?
- a) the medium may read cues from the sitter
  - b) the sitter may provide information directly to the medium
  - c) the sitter may be biased to score a reading differently if s/he knows it was intended for him/her
  - d) all of the above
  - e) none of the above
13. If the survival of consciousness hypothesis became widely accepted as true, how might we expect life to change?
- a) increases in compassion and kindness; decreases in deceit and cruelty
  - b) the deceased victims of crimes could testify during court trials
  - c) children's spiritual experiences may be accepted and cultivated
  - d) without proper public education, suicide rates may increase
  - e) fewer people may be diagnosed as delusional
  - f) the deceased may play roles in healthcare diagnostic procedures and therapies
  - g) death may be viewed as a more peaceful transition by healthcare professionals and families
  - h) all of the above
  - i) none of the above

## **APPENDIX C. Possible questions used during research reading protocols.**

### **Life Questions:**

1. What was your date of birth?
2. What were your parents' names?
3. What were your siblings' names?
4. What was your cause of death?
5. What were your hobbies or activities?
6. What was your occupation?
7. What was your favorite (or least favorite) food?
8. Who were your best friends?
9. What were your pets' names (or what kind were they)?
10. Give a physical description of yourself in life.
11. What were your phobias?
12. Where was your favorite place?
13. What was your date of death?
14. Describe your personality.
15. What type of clothing did you wear at home?
16. What type of clothing did you wear at work?
17. Describe where you lived.
18. Describe where you worked.

### **Afterlife Questions:**

1. Where are you? Describe what it's like.
2. What do you do "everyday"?
3. Who is with you?
4. What emotions do you feel?
5. How do you perceive us? Describe how we appear to you.
6. Is there gender?
7. What regulates your contact with us?
8. What senses do you have?
9. Can you travel freely?
10. How do you get here?
11. Are there rules there governing your behavior? Are there punishments?
12. How have you communicated with your loved ones since you died?
13. Do you influence our thoughts?
14. Does it fatigue you to come through?
15. Can other life forms see you?
16. What techniques/instruments can we use to communicate with you?
17. What does it look like there?
18. Do you eat?
19. Do you sleep?
20. Do you breathe?
21. Do you have trouble understanding us the way we do you?
22. Do you have a sense of time?

23. How has the sitter's life changed since you died?
24. Are there souls/beings there that have never been embodied on Earth?
25. Is it easier for you to see loved ones than strangers?
26. Have you met new people there/made new friends?
27. How is the weather?
28. Is there music there?
29. Have you seen angels/the source/guardians?
30. Do you engage in sexual behavior? What forms does this take?
31. What type of "body" do you have?
  - a. How is it constructed?
  - b. What is it made of?
  - c. What organs does it have?
  - d. How does it differ from the biological body?
  - e. Is it created and modifiable in form by personal choice?
  - f. How is this done?
32. Are there groupings there, such as religious, ethnic, or social groups?
33. Are you emotionally attached to your physical body after death? Is it upsetting to be cremated/buried/autopsied/etc.?
34. Can you give information that is not known by the sitter, experimenter, or medium but can be verified?
35. Do you have any advice for humanity?
36. Does your physical life affect your experience of the afterlife? Do your actions here affect how you experience your life there?

### **Reverse Question**

Does the discarnate have any comments, questions, or requests for the sitter?



How tall was he/she?

\_\_\_\_\_ Short: 5'7" or shorter for men; 5'2" or shorter for women

\_\_\_\_\_ Average

\_\_\_\_\_ Tall: 5'11" or taller for men; 5'6" or taller for women

What were your \_\_\_\_\_'s hobbies or activities? What did he/she enjoy doing?

**Codes used to rate information about the discarnate:**

**1 – AGE (in years)**

- 1 = <20
- 2 = 20-34
- 3 = 35-49
- 4 = 50-64
- 5 = 65-79
- 6 = >79

**2 – PERSONALITY**

Introvert/Extrovert (I/E)

- 1 = very I
- 2 = mod I
- 3 = I and E
- 4 = mod E
- 5 = very E

Serious/Playful (S/P)

- 1 = very S
- 2 = mod S
- 3 = S and P
- 4 = mod P
- 5 = very P

Rational/Emotional (R/E)

- 1 = very R
- 2 = mod R
- 3 = R and E
- 4 = mod E
- 5 = very E

**3 – CAUSE OF DEATH**

- Slow/Quick
- 1 = Slow
- 2 = Quick

Primary Body Part

- 1 = Brain/Head
- 2 = Throat/Neck
- 3 = Chest/Lungs
- 4 = Heart
- 5 = Gut
- 6 = Pelvis
- 7 = Spine/Back
- 8 = Arms
- 9 = Legs
- 10 = Systemic/Whole Body/Multiple Areas

Natural/Unnatural

- 1 = Natural
- 2 = Unnatural

**4 – PHYSICAL**

Hair Color

- 1 = White/Gray
- 2 = White/Blonde
- 3 = Blonde
- 4 = Red/Blonde
- 5 = Blonde/Brown
- 6 = Red

7 = Red/Brown

8 = Brown

9 = Brown/Black

10 = Black

11 = Salt/Pepper

Build

- 1 = Thin
- 2 = Ave
- 3 = Heavy

Height

- 1 = Short
- 2 = Ave
- 3 = Tall

**5 – HOBBIES**

Indoors/Outdoors

- 1 = In
- 2 = Out

Alone/Group

- 1 = Alone/Solitary
- 2 = Group/Pair/Social

Athletic/Non-athletic

- 1 = Athletic
- 2 = Non-athletic

### **Criteria used for pairing discarnates:**

Discarnates are two or more categories apart in **Age**.

For the **Personality** sub-categories (Introvert/Extrovert, Serious/Playful, and Rational/Emotional), discarnates are two or more levels apart in two out of the three sub-categories except if they are rated as 3s which only need to be one or more level apart (*i.e.*, a 3 can be paired with a 1, 2, 4, or 5).

Under the **Cause of Death** category, Primary Body Part cannot be the same value and at least one of the other sub-categories (Slow/Quick and Natural/Unnatural) cannot be the same value (*i.e.*, two of the three subcategories must be different, one of the two being Primary Body Part).

In the **Physical** category, Hair Color is two or more levels apart in a circular manner (*e.g.*, 11 cannot be paired with 10 or 1) and at least one of the other sub-categories (Build and Height) cannot be the same value (*i.e.*, two of the three subcategories must be different, one of the two being Hair Color).

At least one out of the three **Hobbies** sub-categories (Indoors/Outdoors, Alone/Group, and Athletic/Non-athletic) is different, but final pairing decisions are based on the other four categories (above) and the actual hobbies listed by the sitters.

## APPENDIX E. Tasks completed by an experimenter during reading formatting.

- Creates a numbered list in which every item is a single, scorable statement. For example, “she was a loving mother and wife” is listed as two items: “she was a loving mother” and “she was a loving wife.” To retain the wording that the medium used, the items may be listed like this: “1. she was a loving mother, 2. and wife.”
- Inserts headings describing the section of the reading to the sitter (*e.g.*, “Deceased-directed: The medium is e-mailed the first name of the deceased person that the sitter wants to contact and is instructed to receive and report any information from or about the discarnate”).
- Replaces any weak or uncertain associations with clear statements. For example, phrases such as “I think...,” “it’s probably that...,” “it appears that...,” “it seems to be that...,” and “which might mean...” are removed. Thus, “I think she might have had red hair but I’m not sure” is replaced with “she had red hair.”
- Removes phrases like “she is showing me...” that reference the manner in which the discarnate provided the information to the medium. For example, “she is showing me problems in the chest as the cause of death” is listed as “problems in the chest as the cause of death.” However, references to items that the medium reports as being direct quotes of the discarnate are left to differentiate those items from the opinion of the medium. For example, “she says it’s beautiful where she is” vs. “it’s beautiful where she is.” Alternatively, quotation marks may be used to signify a quote from the discarnate.
- Replaces statements referring to the medium’s experience with scorable items:
  - “I smell cigarettes” to “the smell of cigarettes”
  - “I see a red rose in front of a sunset” to “the image of a red rose in front of a sunset”
  - “I feel ‘cranky’ with him” to “the feeling of ‘cranky’ with him”
  - “I feel like I can’t breathe” to “the feeling of not being able to breathe”
- If specifics about the discarnate that would jeopardize blinding must be included for proper scoring, the experimenter uses “[the deceased]” or “[s/he]” in the item list.
- Removes any reference to the medium. For example, “she reminds me of my sister.”
- Inserts explanations for “medium-speak.” For example, “there are a boy and girl below her” would be listed as “there are a boy and girl below her [*i.e.*, in a younger generation]” and “in the physical” would be listed as “in the physical [*i.e.*, living].”
- Groups repeated items into one item containing the different ways the item was stated. For example, “The chest area, upper area, upper respiratory area” would be one item. If items are repeated over different sections, the items are listed only once in the most appropriate section taking care not to disrupt the meaning of things. For example, descriptions of the location of a scar the discarnate had that are located in both deceased-directed and physical description sections would all be moved to the physical description section.
- Removes any items that are obviously or overtly emotionally or psychologically painful for a sitter to read. This includes detailed descriptions of a physically painful manner of passing (in this case, verifiable items such as body parts affected and the existence of pain are included while pain descriptors are removed) and negative emotions attributed to the discarnate directed at the sitter.



**Comparison of formatting by O’Keefe and Wiseman (2005) and the formatting of the same reading using the methods described in this paper.**

Original reading by the medium:

I think there is a lady in the room. Who are you? Mother? Yes, mother. About 5 foot 4. I can see a pot, a cooking pot, a brass cooking pot. That’s a rather large pot, isn’t it? It’s got a lid. You [*spirit*] worked in cooking, dinner cooking. You [*spirit*] worked in a shop selling pots and pans. You had something to do with a shop, pots and pans. Did you have a favourite piece in your shop? Ah, yes, I can see it now. Is it a long pan for cooking fish or something? That’s very nice indeed. It looks like a fish cooker to me. You’re English, aren’t you? Yes (*refers to Mother*).

O’Keefe and Wiseman formatting:

S1: I think there is a lady in the room. Who are you? Mother? Yes, mother. About 5 foot 4.

S2: I can see a pot, a cooking pot, a brass cooking pot. That’s a rather large pot, isn’t it? It’s got a lid.

S3: You [*spirit*] worked in cooking, dinner cooking.

S4: You [*spirit*] worked in a shop selling pots and pans. You had something to do with a shop, pots and pans.

S5: Did you have a favourite piece in your shop? Ah, yes, I can see it now. Is it a long pan for cooking fish or something? That’s very nice indeed. It looks like a fish cooker to me.

S6: You’re English, aren’t you? Yes (*refers to Mother*).

VERITAS Research Program formatting:

1. A female discarnate.
2. She is a mother.
3. She is about 5’4”.
4. The image of a large brass cooking pot with a lid.
5. The discarnate worked in dinner cooking.
6. The discarnate worked in or had something to do with a shop selling pots and pans.
7. The discarnate’s favorite piece was a long pan, perhaps for cooking fish.
8. The discarnate was English.

**APPENDIX F. Control of information by the three experimenters in a quintuple blind study. (The remaining two levels of blinding occur for the rater and the medium.)**

**Experimenter 1:**

Tasks: contacting, consenting, and training of mediums; providing targeted discarnate first names to mediums; formatting readings for scoring (blind to sitters and to sitter and discarnate info)

Knowledge of Information:

- Which Discarnates are in which Group (Group → Discarnates)
- Which Medium is reading which Group/Discarnates (Medium → Group → Discarnates)
- Which Readings are for which Discarnates (Reading → Discarnate → Group)
- Which Readings are from which Medium (Reading → Medium)

Blind to Information:

- Any sitter or discarnate information
- Any contact with sitters (until phone readings)

**Experimenter 2:**

Tasks: providing formatted and blinded readings to sitters (blind to mediums, to sitter and discarnate info, and to origin of readings during scoring)

Knowledge of Information:

- Which Sitters are in which Groups (Group → Sitters)
- Which Readings are for which Group (Reading → Group → Sitters)
- Sitter contact information
- After completion of e-mail readings:
  - Discarnate names
  - Which Discarnate goes with which Sitter (Discarnate → Sitter)

Blind to Information:

- Which Mediums performed which Readings (Reading ≠> Medium)
- Which Readings were intended for which Sitters/Discarnates (Reading ≠> Discarnate)

**Experimenter 3:**

Tasks: database entry of prospective sitter information; contacting, consenting, screening, and training of prospective sitters; final sitter selection; discarnate pairing (blind to mediums and to origin of readings during scoring)

Knowledge of Information:

- Which Discarnates go with which Sitters (Discarnate → Sitter)

- Which Sitters/Discarnates are in which Groups (Group → Sitters, Discarnates)
- Sitter contact information
- Discarnate information

Blind to Information:

- Which Mediums performed which Readings (Reading ≠> Medium)
- Which Readings were intended for which Sitters/Discarnates (Reading ≠> Discarnate)
- Which Readings were for which Groups (Reading ≠> Group)

## APPENDIX G. Tools used during rater training in AMPSS accuracy scoring.

### Hints for Understanding a Mediumship Reading:

The information conveyed by a medium during a reading is unique in its content, language, and flow. Each medium receives and reports the information differently. When scoring a reading, please keep the following in mind:

- The information is often experienced by the medium in pieces or as symbols. S/he does *not* usually experience the information as a regular conversation (*i.e.*, like a phone conversation). Thus, the information is often filtered by the medium.
- The medium cannot always control who the information comes from or for whom it is intended. No offense should be taken if the reading does not seem to be from or for the person you expected. The information conveyed is done so to provide the most comfort and for the highest or greatest good.
- The rater should try to be open to the content of the reading even if it does not contain information about the person and/or the topic wanted or expected by the rater.
- The reading often contains information that is identifying of or for a deceased person rather than information that is life-altering. For example, “She had black hair” or “She had a nickname that sounds like ‘Baby’ or ‘Bubbie’” vs. “The will is hidden in a cigar box in the basement” or “You will meet your future husband next Friday.”
- The primary importance of the information conveyed during a reading is often to let the sitter know that the discarnate is still around.
- The verb tenses a medium uses are not usually important. Sometimes a medium will say, “She is...” and sometimes s/he will say “She was...”
- When scoring a reading, please remember that the medium may have reported the information based on how it *sounded* to him/her, not necessarily how it *is/was spelled*. Therefore, “Ann” may be the same as “Anne” just as “Kathy” may be the same as “Cathy.” The medium will often emphasize the spelling if s/he experienced it that way or if s/he feels it is important.
- Numbers conveyed during a reading may mean a variety of things. For example, “4” may mean one of four children; the fourth child; a birth/death/anniversary/etc. in April or on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, or 24<sup>th</sup> day of the month; or four days/weeks/months/etc. from diagnosis to passing. However, a medium will normally give his/her interpretation for a number.
- During a reading, information is often provided that is unknown to the sitter, but can be verified by another family member or friend. For items you are unable to score, please ask others who may be able to comment on the content and then report back their information to the investigators.

**Examples of items spoken by a research medium and the associated AMPSS scores.**

<b>MEDIUM'S STATEMENT</b>	<b>REALITY</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
She was a seamstress as her occupation.	She was a seamstress.	Obvious fit.
She was a seamstress as her occupation.	She made all the clothes for the family.	Fit with mild interpretation.
She was a seamstress as her occupation.	She sewed as a hobby.	Fit with moderate interpretation.
She was a seamstress as her occupation.	She was an ER nurse who gave patients stitches as her main task.	Fit with a stretch in interpretation.
She was a seamstress as her occupation.	Another member of the family was a seamstress.	Other fit.
She was a seamstress as her occupation.	She was a lawyer and didn't own a sewing machine or even a needle and thread.	No fit.
The cause of death was drowning.	The cause of death was drowning.	Obvious fit.
The cause of death was drowning.	The cause of death was pulmonary edema, pneumonia, emphysema, etc.	Fit with mild interpretation.
The cause of death was drowning.	The deceased died in the bathtub, but not from drowning.	Fit with moderate interpretation.
The cause of death was drowning.	The cause of death was an indirect result of a terrible rain storm.	Fit with a stretch in interpretation.
The cause of death was drowning.	A close friend, but not the named discarnate, drowned.	Other fit.
The cause of death was drowning.	The cause of death was lymphoma.	No fit.
The deceased is the sitter's mother.	The deceased is the sitter's biological or adoptive mother.	Obvious fit.
The deceased is the sitter's mother.	The deceased is the sitter's aunt, step-mother, or grandmother who raised her like her own child.	Fit with mild interpretation.
The deceased is the sitter's mother.	The deceased is the mother-in-law of the sitter.	Fit with moderate interpretation.
The deceased is the sitter's mother.	The deceased is an older female friend, aunt, or grandmother who was very close to the sitter and "mothered" her sometimes.	Fit with a stretch in interpretation.
The deceased is the sitter's mother.	The deceased is the mother of a close friend of the sitter.	Other fit.
The deceased is the sitter's mother.	The deceased was the sitter's brother.	No fit.