

Bursary Final Scientific Progress Report
Project: 211/18

Duration:

2019.01.01 to 2020.12.31

Granting Organization:

Fundação Bial

Report Date:

January 25, 2021

Research Team:

Julie Beischel, PhD, Principal Investigator (PI)
Lisa Conboy, ScD, Co-PI

Host Entity:

Windbridge Research Center

Participating Institution:

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center at Harvard Medical School

Research Project Title:

Correlating accurate intuition with learning styles and sensory modality preferences

Aims

The aim of this study was to examine the accuracy of mediums' statements in response to specific questions about the deceased and how accuracy scores might be related to learning style or sensory modality preference.

The research questions the study addressed are as follows:

- Are there differences in the accuracy scoring of mediums' responses to specific questions about the deceased?
- Do relationships exist between the accuracy scores of those questions and the mediums' learning styles and/or sensory modality preferences?

Background

The project aimed to examine the learning styles and sensory modality preferences (LS/SMPs) of individuals (termed mediums) who experience regular communication with the deceased (termed discarnates) and how their LS/SMPs relate to the accuracy of their statements collected under blinded/masked conditions.

The findings from phenomenological research with contemporary mediums demonstrate that mediums' experiences are multi-modal and most often include seeing, hearing, and feeling. Contemporary mediumship research has also included accuracy testing mediums' statements under experimentally controlled conditions. Beischel, Boccuzzi, Biuso, and Rock (2015; project 34/08) employed methods that addressed conventional explanations for successful mediumship readings and supported the existence of anomalous information reception (AIR), the reporting by mediums of accurate and specific information about the deceased without prior knowledge about the discarnates or sitters, in the absence of any sensory feedback during or after the readings, and without using deceptive means. Item scoring data from this study was further analyzed in the current study (211/18).

Learning style has been defined as "a biologically and developmentally imposed set of personal characteristics" (Dunn, Beaudry, & Klavas, 2002, p. 75). LSs (also called learning patterns or dimensions) represent habitual and characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological preferences and behaviors that are "consistent over long periods of time and across many areas of activity" (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2001, p. 2). While research supporting the usefulness of learning style theories in educational settings may have limitations (e.g., Willingham, Hughes, & Dobolyi, 2015), learning style assessments are useful in categorizing individuals based on their inherent preferences as well as quantifying those preferences. LS/SMPs have not been widely examined by psi researchers/parapsychologists.

Because learning preferences are established during childhood, findings from LS/SMP questionnaires completed now can appropriately be associated with previously collected accuracy data. In addition, findings are related to true laboratory-controlled and documented AIR and not fraud, delusion, psychosis, or brain disorders, or simply to the mediums' beliefs that they are communicating with the deceased.

Method

The current study aimed to support a deep re-analysis of previously collected mediums' accuracy scores when asked specific questions about a deceased person by breaking them out by question and to compare results from LS/SMP questionnaire responses to those accuracy scores.

Participants. The mediums who participated in this study were 12 individuals credentialed as Windbridge Certified Research Mediums (WCRMs) who were previously screened and certified using published criteria (Beischel, 2007) and who have demonstrated the ability to report accurate and specific information about the deceased under various controlled laboratory conditions. WCRMs donate their time to laboratory research and agree to uphold specific standards of conduct. They are part of the research team. WCRMs have previously participated in five projects funded by the BIAL Foundation.

Accuracy Scores. Beischel, Boccuzzi, Biuso, and Rock (2015, Bial project 34/08) collected accuracy scores of 20 mediums during 58 readings of various formats and blinding levels. From the 'quintuple-blind' proxy-sitter phone readings for individual discarnates that were assessed during that study, usable scoring data from 21 readings performed by 12 mediums included item-by-item accuracy scores of mediums' responses to specific questions about the discarnate. A detailed examination of the item scores for the question types was outside the scope

of the original study (which grouped item scores for all questions together). The current project involves a deep re-analysis of the item scores by breaking them out by question. The questions asked of the mediums by the proxy-sitter/experimenter during the blinded phone readings were:

1. What did the discarnate look like in his/her physical life? Provide a physical description of the discarnate.
2. Describe the discarnate's personality.
3. What were the discarnate's hobbies or interests? How did she/he spend her/his time?
4. What was the discarnate's cause of death?

Sitters associated with the discarnates scored lists of individual formatted items in each of two readings: a target and a decoy. Each item received one of the following scores:

- 5: Obvious fit (used if the item is a direct or concrete hit that does not require interpretation to fit)
- 4: Fit requiring minimal interpretation (used if the item indirectly applies and needs minimal interpretation or symbolism to fit)
- 3: Fit requiring more than minimal interpretation (used if the item indirectly applies and needs a greater degree of 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—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)

Percentage accuracy was calculated by tallying the number of items that received scores of 4 or 5 and dividing that total by the total number of items minus the items scored as 0's ($[4's + 5's]/[total - 0's]$).

The current study used the accuracy scores the blinded sitters gave their own (target) readings for each medium participant, averaged if there were two. During Year 1, accuracy scores from the 21 readings performed by the 12 mediums were organized and analyzed. During Year 2, analyses comparing accuracy to those 12 mediums' LS/SMP were completed.

Instruments

The Index of Learning Styles© (ILS) and the VARK© inventory were originally chosen for this project. Other instruments may include assessments of student study practices that were not relevant for this project. In addition, we thought the established validity and reliability and low participant burden of both questionnaires would encourage replication by other researchers.

However, upon trying to obtain the VARK© inventory, it became clear that it was not an ideal instrument. Due to the controversies regarding the use of learning style instruments in educational settings, there are very few reliable instruments available. Thus, we decided to use the ILS (e.g., Felder & Spurlin, 2005; Livesay, et al., 2002) as originally proposed and replace the

VARK© inventory with two additional instruments: the Barsch Learning Style Inventory (BLSI; e.g., Khan, Arif, & Yousuf, 2019) and the Learning Channel Preference (LCP; O'Brien, 1989).

ILS. Based on the Felder and Silverman model (Felder & Silverman, 1988), the ILS (44 items) assesses four dichotomies: visual/verbal, active/reflective, sensing/intuitive, and sequential/global.

BLSI. The BLSI (24 items) asks respondents to categorize as Often, Sometimes, or Seldom how often specific statements apply to them such as, "I enjoy working with tools" and "I follow oral directions better than written ones." Totals for Visual, Auditory, and Tactual items are then calculated.

LCP. The LCP (30 items) was originally designed to develop one's awareness regarding their learning style. Respondents indicate how often a statement applies to them (often applies, sometimes applies, or never or almost never applies) in the categories of Visual ("When trying to remember someone's telephone number, it helps me to get a picture of it in my mind"), Auditory ("I remember things that I hear, rather than things that I see or read"), and Haptic ("I don't like to read directions; I'd rather just start doing").

For this project, the items from these three instruments were replicated in a private online survey on Formsite.com and completed by the participants. They were scored by the experimenters to ensure complete and accurate data collection.

Analyses

Accuracy scoring data. Descriptive statistics were used for each of the four questions and graphed data were used to assess if statistical comparisons for differences were required.

Correlating accuracy with learning style and sensory preference. Correlation analyses compared the accuracy scores for the four question types (continuous data, 0-100%) with ILS Active, Reflective, Sensory, Intuitive, Visual, Verbal, Sequential, and Global scores; BLSI Visual, Auditory, and Tactual Preference scores; and LCP Preferred Visual, Auditory, and Haptic Channel scores for each of the 12 participants.

Results and Discussion

All proposed and scheduled tasks were completed: Accuracy (Organization and analysis of accuracy scores, PS-6567), Instruments (Creation of online learning style and sensory modality preference instruments, PS-6568), Participants (Participant completion of instruments, PS-6569), Correlation (Analyses comparing accuracy to learning style and sensory preference, PS-6570), Conference (Conference preparation, submission, and presentation, PS-6572), and Article (Journal article writing and submission, PS-6573).

The means of the 21 accuracy scores for each of the four question types varied (physical description: 53.9% ± 5.2%; personality: 67.0% ± 7.1%; hobbies: 49.4% ± 5.5%; and cause of death: 41.3% ± 6.5%; Table 1) but overlapping interquartile ranges on box-and-whisker plots established that no differences requiring further statistical analysis existed (Fig. 1).

No significant correlations were found between accuracy and ILS Active, Reflective, Sensory, Intuitive, Visual, Verbal, Sequential, or Global scores; BLSI Visual, Auditory, or Tactual Preference scores; or LCP Preferred Visual, Auditory, or Haptic Channel scores.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Though this sample size was not large, it may be appropriate to conclude from the data collected that none of the four types of information requested (physical description, personality, hobbies, or cause of death) is more or less difficult to acquire or report during a mediumship reading than any other. Further, individual characteristics categorized as learning styles and sensory modality preferences may not impact mediumistic abilities. Correlation analyses do not indicate any relationship between mediums' LS/SMPs and their accuracy scores when any of the four types of information was requested.

This study is relevant and important because it has obtained novel data on the accuracy of types of mediumistic information as well as on the relationship of LS/SMPs to accuracy. Future research may wish to explore the relationship of LS/SMP to the acquisition of different types of psi information (i.e., telepathic, clairvoyant, precognitive).

References

- Beischel, J. (2007). Contemporary methods used in laboratory-based mediumship research. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 71, 37–68.
- Beischel, J., Boccuzzi, M., Biuso, M., & Rock, A. J. (2015). Anomalous information reception by research mediums under blinded conditions II: Replication and extension. *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science & Healing*, 11(2), 136–142. doi: 10.1016/j.explore.2015.01.001
- Dunn, R., Beaudry, J. S., & Klavas, A. (2002). Survey of research on learning styles. *California Journal of Science Education*, 2(2), 75–98.
- Felder, R. M., & Spurlin, J. (2005). Applications, reliability and validity of the Index of Learning Styles. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 21(1), 103–112.
- Felder, R.M., & Silverman, L.K. (1988). Learning and teaching styles in engineering education. *Engineering Education*, 78(7), 674–681.
- Khan, S. A., Arif, M. H., & Yousuf, M. I. (2019). A Study of Relationship between Learning Preferences and Academic Achievement. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 41(1), 17–32.
- Livesay, G., Dee, K., Felder, R., Hites, L., Nauman, E., & O'Neal, E. (2002). *Statistical evaluation of the index of learning styles* (session 2430). ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- O'Brien, L. (1989). Learning styles: Make the student aware. *NASSP Bulletin*, 73(519), 85–89.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. (2001). A capsule history of theory and research on styles. In R. J. Sternberg & L.-F. Zhang (Eds.), *Perspectives on thinking, learning, and cognitive styles* (pp. 1–21). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Willingham, D. T., Hughes, E. M., & Dobolyi, D. G. (2015). The scientific status of learning styles theories. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42(3), 266–271.

TABLE 1
**Descriptive Statistics of Mediums' Percent Accuracy Scores
 when asked Specific Questions about the Deceased**

	PHYS	PERS	HOBBIES	COD
Mean	53.88%	67.02%	49.41%	41.25%
Standard Error	5.22%	7.10%	5.50%	6.53%
Median	56.25%	75.00%	50.00%	42.86%
Range	83.33%	100.00%	85.71%	100.00%
Minimum	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Maximum	100.00%	100.00%	85.71%	100.00%
Count	21	21	21	21

PHYS = Physical description. PERS = Personality. COD = Cause of death.

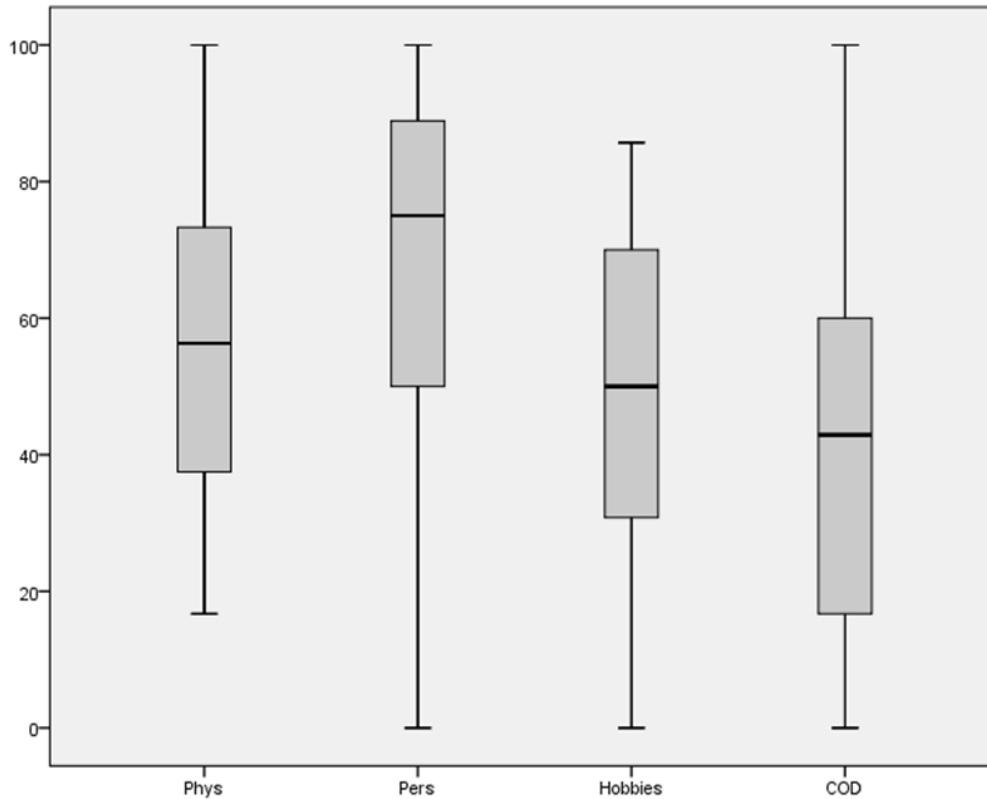


Figure 1. Comparison of mediums' percent accuracy scores by question type (box-and-whisker plot).

PHYS = Physical description. PERS = Personality. COD = Cause of death.