

ADVANCES IN MEDIUMSHIP RESEARCH

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Abstracts of
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ANSWERING SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS WITH GROUP CHANNELING

Objective: The objectives of this study were to conduct comparisons between 1) each participants' channeled vs. non-channeled answers; 2) participants' responses to the questions (e.g., for content similarity during channeling); and 3) participants' responses to the questions (e.g., for content similarity accuracy) pre-channeling.

Methods: Participants were self-reported adult mediums or channelers who had extensive channeling experience - ideally with channeling scientific information, can initiate channeling connection at will, speak English fluently, and video conference and correspond by email. Multiple Zoom video sessions were held in which participants answered ten scientific questions in a non-channeling and channeling state and submitted their answers in writing through the chat function or an audio recording. Three judges rated the correspondence between channeled and non-channeled responses for each question and channeler. The judges' scores were averaged across questions, within channelers, and across

channelers. Judges also rated each channeler pair's correspondence, and scores averaged for each channeler pair and then within each question.

Results: Forty-Three volunteers responded to the recruitment advertisement. Fifteen volunteers were invited to participate in the Zoom session whom each had at least 11 mediumistic sessions (two people had 11-50 sessions, 13 had more than 50 sessions) and rated their comfort with channeling scientific information as high (90 ± 17 , on a scale of 0-to 100, with 100 representing the most comfort).

Conclusions: These research results are relevant to the veracity and efficacy of channeling as a practice and a possible research protocol for other researchers. The next steps include a qualitative thematic analysis of the answers.



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MEDIUMSHIP ACCURACY

A Quantitative and Qualitative Study with a Triple-Blind Protocol

Objective: This study represents an additional contribution to the scientific study of mediumship, its main aim being to identify the source of the information given out by a medium.

Methods: In this study, nine mediums produced 38 pairs of results for readings related to 38 deceased individuals chosen by 36 sitters using a triple-blind protocol with no direct interaction with the sitters themselves. In this protocol, the medium was only provided with the deceased's name by the interviewer, the latter having no further knowledge about the deceased. In each session, the medium was asked to provide information about each deceased person. This information, excluding generic details, was entered into two anonymous lists. The information of these two readings were sent to the research assistant charged with maintaining contact with the sitters. Each sitter was asked to assign a value to each piece of information listed on a four-point Lik-

ert scale from 'totally wrong' to 'totally correct', and to provide a global score for each reading result.

Results: Quantitative data indicate that the sitters correctly recognized the results pertaining to their deceased loved one 65.8% of the time. Furthermore, results that were correctly identified had, on average, 29.5% more correct information than the results judged as wrong.

Qualitative data indicate that mediums attain information both passively and actively, as if they were directly interacting with the deceased.

Conclusions: This study provides further evidence that some mediums are able to obtain accurate information about deceased people from only knowing the deceased's name, and with no interaction with sitters. It also supports the hypothesis that in some cases the sources of the information are the deceased themselves.



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He has a long-term interest in psi phenomena and began experimentation in the early 2000s, exploring the presentiment response and making notable progress in developing new methodologies. More recently, he has designed novel experiments to investigate psychokinetic influences. He has also reviewed the presentiment and implicit precognition literature.

A Controlled Semi-Naturalistic Method to Investigate Anomalous Information Reception in Mediumship

Introduction: Recently, there has been a resurgence of research on mediumship, including investigating anomalous information reception by mediums. In the last two decades, research has been carried out using blind and controlled methods, with conflicting results. However, the use of controls that are too artificial can impair the manifestation of genuine skills. One of the main current methodological challenges has been the creation of ecologically valid protocols, but which also allow adequate control against fraud and information leakage to the medium. This paper describes and presents the results of a semi-naturalistic methodological proposal combining ecological validity and control (of fraud or information leakage) to evaluate information produced in psychographed letters allegedly written by deceased people.

Method

Selection: Three Brazilian mediums with extensive and regular experience in the production of psychographed letters, allegedly attributed to deceased people to recently-bereaved people, were selected. Only two of the researchers performed medium selection and were aware of their identity. Sitters were invited to meetings designed to support mourners in Spiritist centers in the city where the research took place (Juiz de Fora - MG - Brazil) and through the researchers' contact network. These regular meetings are open to the public and usually involve several dozen mourners. Sitters should be at least 18 years old, available to be present at psychography sessions, be literate, and have a loved one who has died for a maximum of ten years (ideally in the last two years). Those who had contact with any of the research mediums would be excluded, a condition that did not occur.



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Procedures: We avoided too much artificial control that could inhibit the mediums, compromising their abilities. In agreement with the mediums, they proceeded in their usual manner, provided that the control requirements were met. The sessions were held in Spiritist centers. On the day of the session, arriving at the site, the sitters filled out the Reception Form, similar to the ones that the mediums habitually used. This contained: names of the sitter and the deceased loved one, degree of kinship (or if he was a friend), date of birth and death of the loved one. They also filled out questionnaires and scales to check their profile, motivation and beliefs. Control strategies to minimize fraud and information leakage were: sitters were received by the part of the team that, until then, was not aware of the mediums' identity; sitters were accommodated in the hall; mediums and sitters were blinded to each other until the moment of the psychography session; mediums were unaware of the Spiritist center where the research would take place (the city has 45 Spiritist centers); the interval between the arrival of the medium and the beginning of the session was as short as possible (usually a few hours); the medium was taken by a researcher to the Spiritist center and, without interaction with anyone, was taken to a private room, where he remained during his preparation, reading of the Reception Forms and individual interviews with the sitters (usually lasting less than one minute). At the end of these, they went directly to the hall (where the sitters were) to carry out the psychography; they left cell phones with research coordinators prior to entering the Spiritist center until the end of the session. They were permanently accompanied by at least one researcher and were constantly filmed. The psychographies took place on a table in front of everyone with no possibility of immediate feedback on what was being written, as the letters were psychographed continuously and without the sitters knowing who they were addressed to, only discovering them during the reading at the end. The material for psychography (paper, pen or pencil) was provided by the research team. After the psychography was over, the medium read aloud each letter, starting with the name of the communicant (the person who signed the letter). After, the sitter received the letter and was interviewed separately by a researcher, registering the initial impressions regarding the letter's veracity through open-ended questions and the Global Evaluation Scale, a four-point Likert-type scale for the sitter to score how much the letter could be attributed to their deceased relative. A few months later, these sitters were visited to present documentation and evidence that corroborated errors and correctness of the information, filled again the Global Evaluation Scale and scales to score each letter's potentially verifiable item of information that had not been transmitted to medium

at the form nor during the interview (Fit Scale to rate the accuracy and Leak Scale to estimated likelihood of medium's access to the information via ordinary means i.e., information "leakage").

Results: The three mediums selected (A, B and C) lived more than 600 km from the city of realization. Of the 174 bereaved sitters invited to participate in all psychography sessions, there were 189 attendances (more than the total due to the possibility of attending more than one meeting) and 22 received letters. Twenty-Seven letters (four sitters received letters from two mediums) were produced, with one of the participants giving up, resulting in the analysis of 26 letters from 21 sitters. Medium A performed two sessions, producing 19 letters, and mediums B and C performed one session each, producing 4 letters each. Mediums said they felt comfortable with the protocol and most of the sitters were sure that the letter was from their deceased loved one. The majority (82.6%) of the 155 items of information received a maximum fit score (totally correct information). Regarding leak scale, 45% of the items of information were considered "intimate information", 25% "intimate information known only to you" and 5.5% "specific information unknown by the sitter". Thus, with the use of the method proposed here, the mediums felt comfortable and there was a high level of validation of the letters by the sitters. However, as we did not have a control group, it is not possible to exclude bias from respondents. In addition, when analyzing the results on information accuracy, it is necessary to take into account the medium's access to information through the form and the interview conducted before the psychography. Such analysis will be carried out in later articles with the analysis of each letter separately. These preliminary results suggest that the proposed method was efficient and replicable, constituting a complement to approaches such as the triple blind method. Psychography does not allow immediate feedback, making cold reading difficult. In addition, the mediums had no prior knowledge of the sitters and vice versa, all contact that they had in the sessions was controlled and recorded. On the day of the session, the totality of the letters was considered as certainly or very likely from the loved one. This certainty diminished a little during the follow-up visit a few months later, which may be due to an analysis less emotionally involved by the session environment. Subsequent analyzes will objectively investigate the degree of accuracy and possibility of leakage of this information.

Conclusion: The semi-naturalistic method used proved to be feasible, well accepted, and promising, opening space for the renewal of research in this field.

A Controlled Semi-Naturalistic Method to Investigate Anomalous Information Reception in Mediumship (Report of Two Cases)

Introduction: One of the main challenges for the investigation of anomalous information reception (AIR) in mediumship is to find a balance between fraud control and information leakage and ecological validity, that is, that the conditions of the experiment get as close as possible to mediumship as it is usually practiced. Psychography (when the medium claims to write under the influence of a deceased), common in Brazil, is a promising phenomenon for study, as there is no feedback from consultants while the letter is written, making cold reading techniques difficult. This research investigated the occurrence of AIR in a mediumistic experiment using a controlled semi-naturalistic method that sought this balance. This paper presents two letters psychographed by two mediums to two sitters.

Method: Two Brazilian mediums with extensive experience in the production of psychographed letters were investigated, both of whom reside hundreds of miles from the research site (Juiz de Fora – MG, Brazil). The mediums (on different days) were taken to the research site exclusively for the study. Sitters were bereaved volunteers residing at the research site. Both the medium and the participants were blinded to each other until the experiment. Researchers controlled all the information transmitted to the medium, but maintained an environment similar to the usual mediumistic practice. From his arrival at the study site, a Spiritist Center, until the end of the session, the medium was filmed and accompanied by a researcher.

Sitters filled out a form with the sitter's name, name, degree of kinship, date of birth and death of the deceased loved one. Kept in another room, the medium received the forms and could call, when he felt the need, consultants for a brief individual filmed interview (case 1 lasted 30 seconds, case 2 without an interview). After the interviews, the medium was taken to the room where the consultants were (35 in the first case, 58 in the second) and psychographed all the letters of the session without interruption. At the end, the medium read all the letters aloud. The consultants who received letters were interviewed at two times for investigation regarding potentially verifiable items of information (IOI) in the letter and whether that information had been revealed to the medium. The first interview took place immediately after receiving the letter, and the second months later. In this second one, consultants were also asked to present objects or documents that corroborate the IOI.

Subsequently, researchers analyzed the video recordings and the forms filled out by the consultants to identify which information (by speech, writing, gestures or clothing) was transmitted to the medium. A retired expert from Federal Police of Brazil is currently performing a detailed handwriting examination comparing signatures at the psychographed letters with signatures made by the alleged communicating personality while alive.

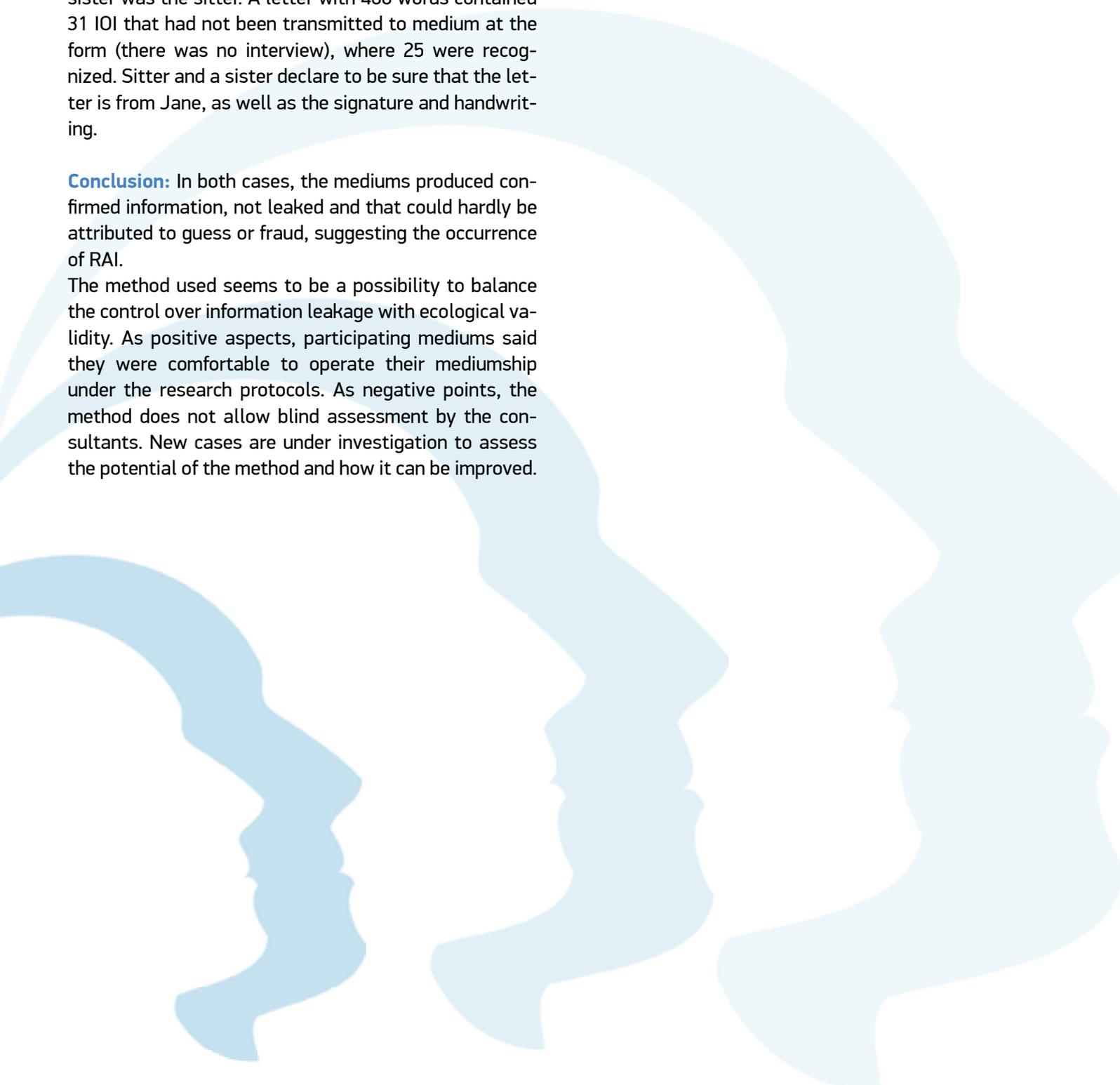
Results

Case 1: Peter, died four months ago, at 18years old, of cerebral aneurysm. His mother was the sitter. A letter with 484 words contained 15 IOI that had not been transmitted to the medium at the form nor during the interview, of which 12 were recognized by the consultant, in addition to the signature. Four items were classified as intimate information and one known only to the sitter. Parents declare to be sure that the letter and signature are from their child.

Case 2: Jane, died one year ago, at 52 years old, after 30 years of a degenerative neurological disease. Her twin sister was the sitter. A letter with 400 words contained 31 IOI that had not been transmitted to medium at the form (there was no interview), where 25 were recognized. Sitter and a sister declare to be sure that the letter is from Jane, as well as the signature and handwriting.

Conclusion: In both cases, the mediums produced confirmed information, not leaked and that could hardly be attributed to guess or fraud, suggesting the occurrence of RAI.

The method used seems to be a possibility to balance the control over information leakage with ecological validity. As positive aspects, participating mediums said they were comfortable to operate their mediumship under the research protocols. As negative points, the method does not allow blind assessment by the consultants. New cases are under investigation to assess the potential of the method and how it can be improved.



The Contribution of Literary Studies of Mediumistic Writings as Evidence to Survival of Consciousness

Objective: The aim of this study is to investigate the stylistic fit of literary texts under different genres, produced by supposed spiritual authors, obtained while under mediumistic trance.

Methods: In order to obtain results that contribute to advances in mediumship research, we have investigated stylistic characteristics in three mediumistic literary works, comparing the features present in the texts produced by the authors “in vitam” and the features identified in the texts supposedly written by the same authors “postmortem” through mediums: i) Poems allegedly produced by five authors, published in *Parnaso do Além-Túmulo*, through the medium Chico Xavier: João de Deus, Antero de Quental and Guerra Junqueiro (from Portugal) and Cruz e Sousa and Augusto dos Anjos (from Brazil); ii) Texts from Brazilian author Humberto de Campos, produced also through the mediumship of Chico Xavier; iii) Three novels from alleged spiritual authorship of Be-

zerra de Menezes, produced by the medium Yvonne do Amaral Pereira: *A Tragédia de Santa Maria*, *Dramas da Obsessão* and *Uma História Triste*.

Results: Our investigation has detected the following: i) In relation to the poets who have written the texts in *Parnaso do Além-Túmulo*, some similarities between the poems produced “in vitam” and the mediumistic texts were identified, with the following characteristics: similarities in the distribution of metric syllables; the recurring use of some literary images; similarities in punctuation, secondary accents, rhymes, figures of language; identities in the vocabular level; the presence of symbolization. ii) In relation to Humberto de Campos, it was identified a large intertextuality between the texts that this author wrote “in vitam”, the texts signed by “Irmão X” (a pseudonym of the spiritual author that supposedly dictated these texts to the medium Chico Xavier) and the lectures that Humberto de Campos made during his



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life. iii) In relation to the three novels empirically produced by the medium Yvonne do Amaral Pereira (whose spiritual author is Bezerra de Menezes), a significant stylistic similarity between the mediumistic texts and texts produced “in vitam” by Bezerra de Menezes was identified, considering the following features: the use of the most frequent words, occurrence of clusters, presence of pronominal combinations, use of foreign words and the presence of the interpolation of the negation.

Conclusion: We can affirm that literary texts are a potential source of investigation for the possibility of the continuity of the human mind as an instance that manifests itself in texts via mediumistic activity.



Accuracy and Neural Correlates of Blinded Mediumship Compared to Controls on Image Classification Task

Objective: In a standard mediumship “reading,” a client (called a “sitter”) asks questions about a friend or relative who has passed away. The medium purports to communicate with the deceased individual and reports any received information to the sitter. Mediums are often eager to provide verifiable information to demonstrate to the sitters that they are indeed communicating with their deceased relative or friend. Proper double and triple blinding experimental protocols offer the opportunity to verify if the information delivered by a medium is accurate. A suitable experimental design also provides the opportunity to measure physiological effects associated with retrieval or accurate information.

Methods: In a classification task, participants were asked to look at facial photographs of deceased people and guess the cause of death from three possible choices: “heart attack”, “death by firearm”, or “car accident.” Electroencephalogram (EEG) and electrocardiogram

(ECG) data were simultaneously collected during the task. The participants were professionals who claimed psychic/medium abilities and controls who claimed no special ability. The facial photographs were a balanced pool of 201 black and white photographs, where the cause of death was known in each case. The participants were naive to the photographs before the experiment.

Results: Pooled data from all participants showed accurate guesses for the cause of death (partial $\eta^2=0.13$; $p=0.003$). Control subjects were primarily responsible for this effect (partial $\eta^2=0.15$; $p=0.001$). EEG and ECG activity differences were found between professional mediums and controls. Control participants had larger amplitude event-related potentials following photograph presentation than the medium participants, between 80 and 110 ms and between 200 and 350 ms, which could be interpreted as reflecting greater attention and less response inhibition by controls as com-



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pared to the mediums. Control participants also had lower heart rate than medium participants, possibly indicating less stress during the task.

Conclusion: As a whole, participants were capable of categorizing the type of death above chance expectation and there were differences in EEG in how mediums and controls processed face photographs. These results need to be investigated in a larger and more diverse pool of participants. The anonymized behavioral and EEG data are available to the scientific community (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3600490). The images, presentation and data analysis scripts used in our study are available upon request. To help minimize performance anxiety, future studies will investigate mediums under conditions that more closely match what they do as part of their professional work.



Can Children Experience Mediumship?

Exploring Research Possibilities on Mediumship in Childhood

Introduction: The case of the Fox sisters, linked to the emergence of Spiritism, the story of the boy Cole Sear, the protagonist of “The Sixth Sense,” and the cases of two well-known Brazilian mediums, Chico Xavier and Divaldo Franco, illustrate mediumship in childhood. Also, Flournoy (1900) writes that during H el ene Smith’s childhood and adolescence she expressed some spontaneous phenomena, indicative of a latent mediumship to be developed later in her life when initiated into Spiritism. Despite research on past life memories, where children are much more studied, at a first sight, mediumship phenomena are under-researched.

Objectives: To search for and analyze research about mediumistic phenomena lived by children.

Method: For a literature review and analyses of the data, a systematic search was done using the expressions “child* AND mediumship” and “child* AND spirit possession”. The reason for using “mediumship” and “spirit possession” is that the literature uses them in-

terchangeably, despite their differences and peculiarities. Both basically refer to the alleged manifestation of spirits or spiritual agencies or forces through people. The data was taken from the Web of Science, PsycInfo, PubMed, Scopus and Scielo databases. During the extraction and selection of articles, the period of publication was not restricted and repeated articles, works outside of the topic, with an inconclusive title, a poorly formulated abstract, and those whose full text could not be accessed by any electronic means were excluded. For the analysis, the profile of the researcher (namely, researcher’s theoretical presuppositions, academic training, study objectives, methods and conclusions), the phenomenology, and the relevance of the experiences for the subjects were mainly considered.

Results and Discussion: The total of ten studies were found. For the term “mediumship” two empirical studies were found and eight studies for “spirit possession”. Of these, six are empirical and two are literature reviews. Of the total, six were addressed to directly investi-



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gate children and four accessed adult's childhood data through life stories reports. The studies done by Sharp (1990) and Trangkasombat (et al., 1995), understand that the experiences of spiritual possession are due to trauma, stress and somatic disorders. Despite this, Sharp (1990) considers that these experiences can promote the search for meaning, for the resolution of conflicts and the internal chaos of children. Trangkasombat (et al., 1995) studied dissociative experiences related to a "spirit possession epidemic" in Thai girls, understanding them as hysteria. This position reflects the tradition of studying dissociation exclusively as pathological (Trull & Durrett, 2005), which has not been sustained in recent research that relates dissociation with artistic (Cardeña, Iribas & Reijman, 2012) and religious expression (Martínez-Taboas, 2001; Alvarado, 2005; Maraldi et al., 2020).

Reis (2013), from a cross-cultural psychiatric perspective, perceives the possession of children in Africa as a resource for healing group conflicts. The same notion is followed by Chartonas & Bose (2015), when they understand possession as a way to resolve emotional conflicts caused by migration, in the case of the eight-year-old girl studied. Briggs & Whittaker (2018), from a social work background, explored the spiritual possession phenomena, concerned about the role of social workers on providing appropriate care for migrant children abused in religious contexts through witchcraft and spirit possession practices in UK. Although they are not concerned with parapsychological issues, no less important, they approach mental health issues and its care. They consider that some faith leader's behaviors may be harmful to children and more research is needed to differentiate trauma behaviors from spirit possession experiences. The more positive bias presented in the studies highlights that possession is seen as an expected and encouraged practice for certain individuals in a certain group.

Everist (2015) and Cardeña & Schaffler (2018) describe the processes of developing experiences of spiritual possession in relation to personal growth, development of social roles and the identity of North American mediums (Everist, 2015) and Marcos, a Voodoo Priest in the Dominican Republic. The experiences of Marcos and of part of the mediums studied by Everist (2015) started in childhood, in an unbalanced and sudden way, which were related to problems of behavior and social adaptation. The case of Dona Sara, a Mother of Saint, was studied by Delmonte (et al., 2016) to assess the DSM-V's ability to differentiate religious (non-pathological) possession from dissociative identity disorder and examine the development of possession experiences over time, from the age of seven to adulthood. From the description and

analysis of the case, it was noticed that the experiences developed from an uncontrollable/ involuntary nature to a better control and awareness of its occurrences. Initially, experiences such as intrusive thoughts and states of possession were intermittent, spontaneous and uncontrolled, which caused fear, dejection and anxiety. Her traditional Catholic family rejected the experiences, however, over time, she started attending Umbanda and Candomblé, receiving education to deal with their manifestations. They were accepted, signified and interpreted in the new religious framework. Then, the medium started to have greater autonomy and better mental health.

In a survey about the sociodemographic profile and anomalous experiences of people who sought help in Spiritist centers to deal with them, Menezes Jr. (et al., 2012) found that 65.2% of 115 people stated that their experiences with mediumship characteristics started in childhood. The experiences interpreted as mediumistic were spiritual clairvoyance (63.5%), spiritual hearing (59.3%), spiritual perception (53%), anomalous dreams (37.7%), out-of-body experience (31.3%), foreboding (20.9%), inexplicable loss of energy (20%), incorporation (19.1%), intuition (18.3%), spiritual perception of smells (15, 7%), the physical effects of a spiritual cause (9.6%), automatic writing (8.7%), telepathy (6.1%) and spiritual healing (4.3%). For most of the subjects, the experiences did not bring any socio-occupational damage and were episodic, of short duration and considered beneficial. However, emotional distress and lack of control over them were reported.

By its turn, Wabeh & Radin (2018) investigated the relationship between dissociative symptoms and mediumship, in the United States. 42% of the subjects surveyed claimed to have already had some mediumistic experience. Of these, 81% stated that these experiences started as children. People who reported mediumistic experiences scored more on dissociation than those who did not claim mediumship. However, the score for non-pathological dissociation was lower in this group. The authors conclude that, in addition to dissociative experiences, individuals' functional impairments, such as performance and performance in daily activities, such as at work, at school and in social relationships should be investigated, as these may be factors related to mental health.

Conclusion: Mediumship and spirit possession, in its vast phenomenology, occurs in childhood. Most of the studies are based on the hypothesis of trauma, the same spread in dissociation's research. In general, traditional anthropological and psychiatric studies maintain only this bias. More recent studies tend to consider sociocul-

tural influences and mental health benefits of these experiences, as they impact the experiencers. The findings open possibilities for future empirical research, such as the sociocultural roles, the origins and developments of the experiences, personality traits, mental health, and phenomenology, among others. Furthermore, regarding research with children as subjects, a non-adulthood centered methodological approach should be kept in mind, that is, when studying children, researchers need to adapt the methods, their comprehension, language and points of view to better investigate the intended phenomena according to children's own expressions and developmental stage.

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