RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mediumship for Pets: A Pilot Study With a Triple-Blind Protocol

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Abstract

This study is the first to use a triple-blind protocol to test the mediumship for pets.

The information obtained by the six expert mediums included in the 20 readings was evaluated by the sitters for their overall accuracy, global score, and reading identification. With respect to the control readings, the intended readings obtained a high percentage of correct information, a high overall score, and a 63.1 percentage of correct identification. All three quantitative measures were similar to those observed in a study involving deceased humans.

This pilot study demonstrates the possibility of using mediumship for pets by applying an experimental protocol identical to that used for humans.

Introduction

Mediumship for humans is an ancient practice that has been investigated using experimental methods in the last 25 years[1][2][3][4].

This practice is based on the hypothesis that humans continue to exist after the death of their body and brain and can be contacted by persons with special mental skills defined as mediums.

If humans can continue to exist after their body death, many wonder if this possibility is available also for animals.

However, differently from mediumship for humans, there are no studies related to animals and pets. There are only some reports of encounters with their deceased pets from near-death experiencers as documented by Greyson[5], e.g:

> "..... Once I realized this, I felt myself being pulled into a tunnel that was horizontal.... At the end of the tunnel was a bright light.
>
> From the white light came two dogs of mine that had died. One was a collie named Mimi who had died three years

> *previously from an infection, and the other was a boxer named Sam who had died two years previously from being*
>
> *hit by a car. The dogs came running towards me and jumped on me and kissed my face with their tongues.*
>
> *Their tongues weren't wet, and I felt no weight when they jumped on me." (page 27).*

As far as we know, our study is the first empirical contribution to mediumship for animals.

Methods

Participants

Twenty participants were recruited by social media connected with our research groups with the following selection criteria: interest or simple curiosity about mediumship in general and interest in trying a mediumship related to one of their beloved deceased pets.

The number of participants was not preplanned and was determined only by their availability. Six mediums interested in this study were selected from those who took part in the mediumship studies with humans carried out by the authors[6][7].

All mediums were female with many years of mediumship experience.

Procedure

One research assistant, RA_A, contacted each participant by email requesting that they send their pet's name, for example, Pluto, Ofelia, Nana, etc., without any further information about his/her identity as an animal, that is, dog, cat, fish, etc.

The pet's name along with the name of the participant (sitter), for example, Alba, Francesca, etc., were passed to another research assistant, RA_B, who managed the contact with the medium, consisting in the planning of the session via Zoom, passing her the name of the pet and the sitter, e.g., "There is a request by Paola to contact her pet Pluto," recording all information retrieved by the medium and sending their transcriptions to RA_A by email.

The written information was formatted as a list of single information, excluding those inferred from the name, i.e. the pet's sex, and those not verifiable, e.g., "*It is very happy in this new existence*"; "*He manifests its joy for this contact with its beloved owner,*" etc. For example, the sentence, "*I see a cat with brown fur and white spots, playing with a red ball launched by the sitter*", was formatted in a list of four different pieces of information: I see a cat; - Its fur is brown with white spots; - He plays with a red ball; - The ball is launched by a young boy.

The list of information (reading) related to the intended (requested) pet was sent to the sitter with a second list of information that served as a control, related to another similar pet, that is, a dog, cat, etc., labelled Reading A and Reading B.

The sitter was requested to rate each piece of information in the two readings as: correct, scored as 1; partially correct, adding why, scored as.5; wrong, scored as -1; and not enough information for an assessment.

Furthermore, at the end of this rating, it was requested to choose which of the two readings referred to his/her pet, using the scale described by Beischel et al.[8]:

- 6 = The reading is excellent, it contains compelling evidence of authentic communication and effectively has no wrong information.
- 5 = The reading is good and contains very few incorrect points.
- 4 = The reading is good, but contains some incorrect information.
- 3 = The reading contains a mix of correct and wrong information, however it has enough correct information to indicate that there was indeed communication with the deceased.
- 2 = Some information was correct, but not enough to be certain of real communication with the deceased.
- 1 = The entire reading contains very little correct information.
- 0 = The reading contains absolutely incorrect information.

With this procedure, we implemented the triple-blind protocol, where the medium and RA_A and RA_B are kept blind about any information related to the pet, apart from its name and sex, and the sitter is kept blind about which reading is intended (related) to his/her pet.

With this protocol, we can quantitatively compare the three variables between the intended and control information. 1- The overall percentage of correct information, with respect to all rated pieces of information, that is excluding that rated as "Not enough information for an assessment"; 2- The global reading score, and 3- The identification of the intended reading.

The overall percentage of correct information was calculated by dividing the total score obtained by summing the scores assigned to correct and partially correct information with the amount of information listed in each reading minus those included in the category "Not enough information for an assessment."

The overall reading score was calculated by averaging the scores assigned to the intended and control readings separately.

The identification of intended readings was calculated as the percentage of reading in which the global score or overall accuracy of the intended reading was above the control reading, divided by the total number of readings.

Results

Data availability

The raw data are available open access at https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Mediumship/13311710 for independent controls and analyses.

Pets type

The pets requested by the sitters, were 6 cats, 13 dogs, and one squirrel.

Statistical comparisons

We thought it interesting not only to compare the results between the intended and the control readings, but also to compare them with the results of 100 readings related to humans obtained with the same experimental protocol, analyzed by Tressoldi et al.[6], Given the low number of data, only 20, a low statistical power to detect statistical differences between the intended and the control pet readings, and less precision in the parameter estimates, are expected.

Overall percentage of correct information

The overall percentage of correct information for intended and control reading is presented in Figure 1, compared with that observed in humans.
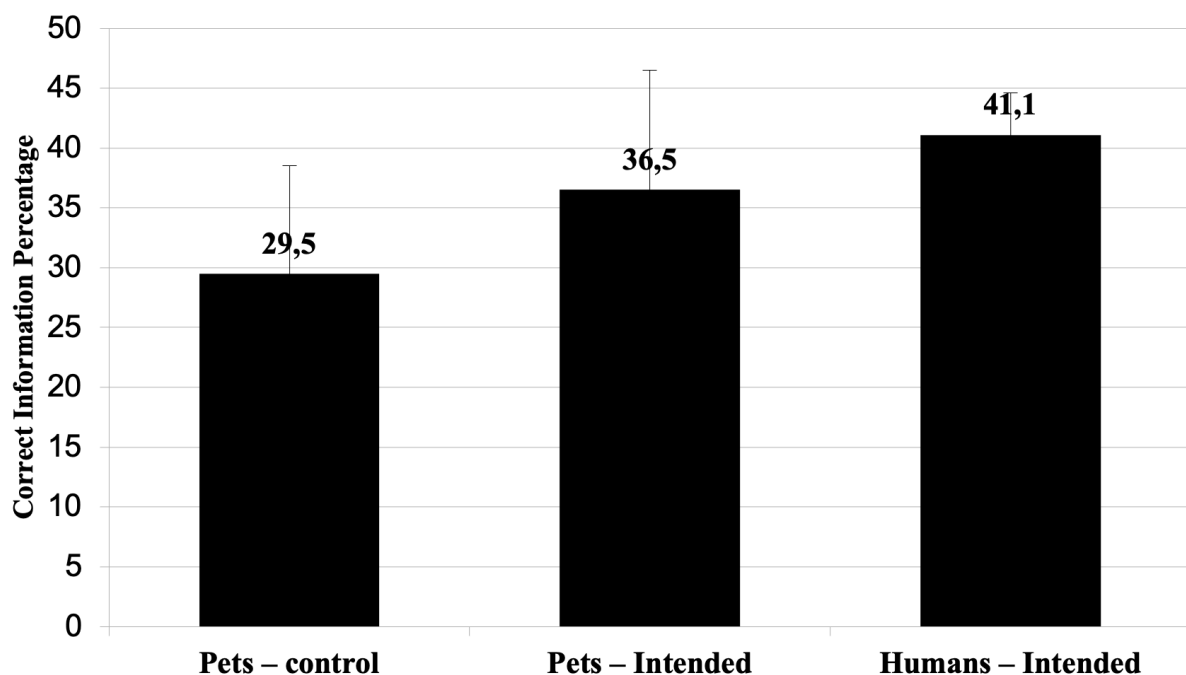
Figure 1. Means and corresponding 95% confidence intervals of percentages of correct information of pets intended, pets control readings and intended readings for humans.
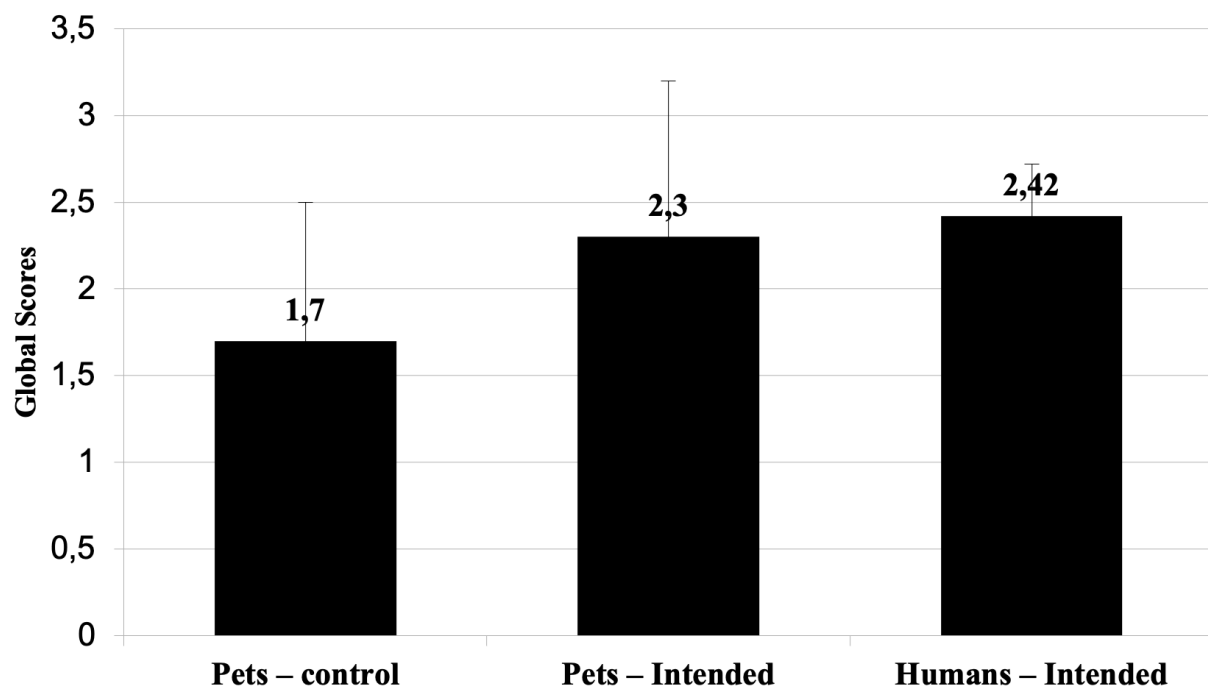
The statistical comparison between the intended and the control readings with a Wilcoxon test, resulted in a $p =$.11 (one-tailed).

The comparison between the human and the pets intended reading with an independent t-test, yielded the following results: t(118) = 1.09; $p =$.13 (one-tailed). Differently, the comparison between the human intended readings and the pets

control readings, yielded a t(188)= 2.6; *p* =.01 (one-tailed), supporting the hypothesis that there are no statistical differences between the pets and the human intended readings, whereas there is a statistical differences between the pets control and the human intended readings.

Global readings score

The global readings scores of intended and control reading are presented in Figure 2 compared with that observed with humans.

Figure 2. Means and corresponding 95% confidence intervals of global reading scores of pets intended, control readings, and intended readings for humans.

The statistical comparison between the intended and the control readings with a Wilcoxon test, resulted in a *p* =.076 (one-tailed).

The comparison between the human and the pets' intended reading with an independent t-test yielded the following results: t(118) =.17; p =.43 (one-tailed). In contrast, the comparison between the human-intended readings and the pets control readings yielded a t(188)= 1.6; p =.047 (one-tailed), supporting the hypothesis that there are no statistical differences between the pets and the human-intended readings, whereas there was a statistical difference between the pets control and the human-intended readings.

Readings identification

One reading obtained an identical global score and overall accuracy. Hence, this was considered a tie. Of the remaining

19 readings, 12 of the intended ones, 63.1%, obtained a global or an overall accuracy above the control ones, see Figure 3.
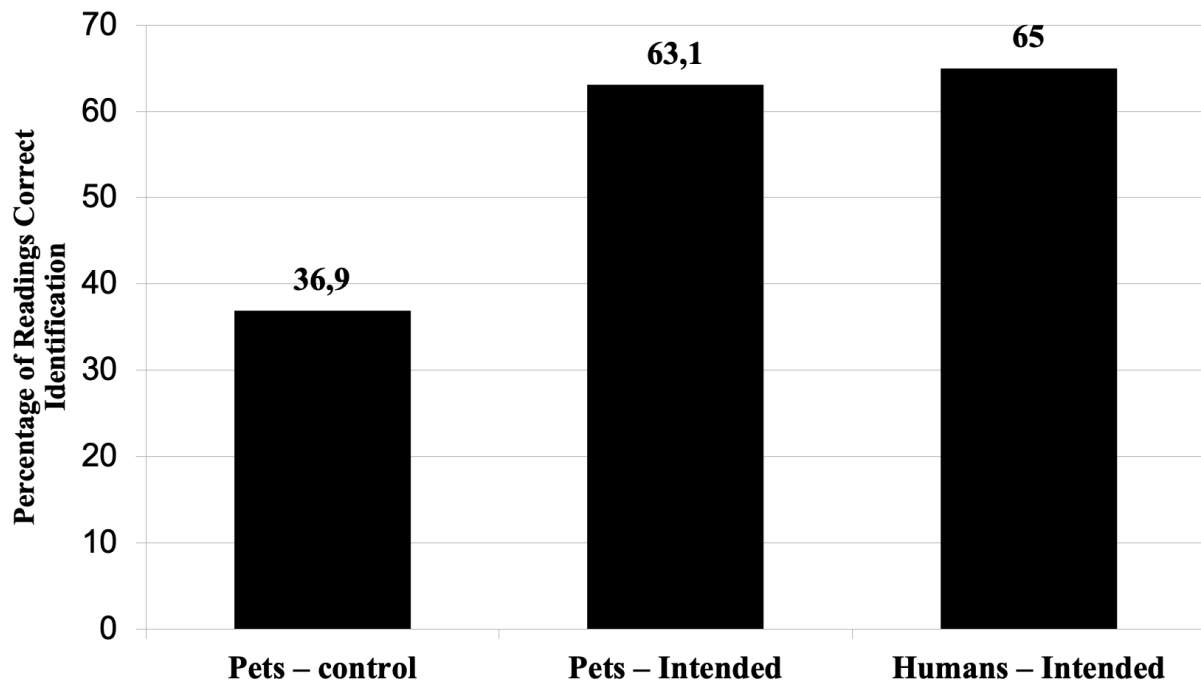

Figure 3. Percentage of readings correct identification.

The percentage of correct pets and human reading identification is very similar.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to apply an experimental protocol to investigate mediumship in humans, to mediumship for animals.

The experimental triple-blind protocol used in this study allowed the quantitative analysis of the overall percentage of correct information, global reading scores, and percentage of intended reading identification.

All values of the intended reading showed higher values with respect to the control ones, even if only the global scores reached a statistical difference, given the low statistical power.

However, a statistical comparison with the data observed with humans showed similar results for intended reading for pets and humans, and differences in the comparison between pets' control and intended human readings.

Study limitations

The main limitation is the low number of readings due to the limited availability of participants, which is a factor limiting statistical power.

As for all studies on this topic, it is recommended that the results not be generalized to other participants, given the high individual differences of both sitters and mediums.

Conclusions

With this pilot study, we demonstrated the possibility of studying animal mediumship using experimental protocols used to investigate human mediumship.

Our preliminary results suggest that animal mediumship may share similarities with human mediumship, warranting further investigation of the potential survival of animal consciousness beyond physical death.

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