

Free Verbal Response Experiments with Lalsingh Harribance

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ABSTRACT: Two series of free verbal response readings to concealed target persons (TPs) were carried out with a sensitive, Lalsingh Harribance (L.H.). Ten males comprised one series; ten females comprised the other. An undeveloped and concealed photograph of each TP was given to L.H. as a token object. L.H.'s statements for each TP picture were taped and transcribed. Each TP was then shown all ten sets of statements and asked to pick out the one most relevant to him. The results for females were significant ($P < .02$), as were the overall results ($P < .02$).

The TPs were also asked to rate individual statements drawn from all ten protocols. A content analysis showed significant results for both sexes on Physical Description statements. Statements about Love Life for female TPs and Family Life for males were also significant. A weighting procedure developed by Burdick and Roll was applied to the content analysis data and was found to augment the results.

INTRODUCTION

When Lalsingh Harribance (L.H.) began work at the Psychical Research Foundation, we concentrated on informal free verbal response (FVR) experiments. The tests were attempts to examine experimentally the type of "readings" he was accustomed to giving people in his West Indies home of Trinidad. During such readings he would tell people about themselves and advise them about their problems. In the preliminary experiments in Durham, we found that L.H. occasionally had vivid impressions of deceased relatives or friends of the target persons. L.H., however, was reluctant to pursue this aspect of his abilities and we, in turn, first wanted to provide reliable evidence of ESP under FVR conditions before we looked into the question of especial interest to us, whether L.H.'s impressions of deceased individuals had a bearing on the survival issue. In most of the early FVR tests, many of which were conducted by John Stump, L.H. was persuaded to respond to photographs of target persons (TPs) in opaque envelopes since this condition was similar to the card-calling tests in which he was so successful. L.H. soon became convinced he could succeed in this task. Since it is easier to exclude sensory cues under this condition than with the TP present in the experimental area, we used con-

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cealed photographs of TPs in most of our exploratory FVR tests with L.H. One concession was made; L.H. requested to know the sex of the person in the photograph, claiming that he organized his entire reading around this piece of information and that he felt more confident of success if he did not have to worry about whether or not his initial impression of the TP's sex was correct. This concession could be made without disrupting the design of a study so long as all photographs in a given series were of persons of the same sex. The results of these early tests, however, were not as good as had been expected. On several occasions, L.H. gave a detailed description which a TP recognized afterward as applying to his circumstances, but which was made to a photograph of another TP in the group.

W.G.R. speculated on the basis of his psi field theory (3) that one possible reason for these apparent displacements was that object ("psychometric") associations might have been established among the pictures or envelopes by our keeping these together prior to the trials and by running the tests in close succession. The experiment reported below was designed to reduce such hypothetical contaminations.

PROCEDURE

Two series were carried out, one using ten male TPs (Series A) and one using ten females (Series B). These series were done simultaneously, one TP a day, male one day and female the next. The experiments were conducted from October 31, 1969, to December 6, 1969. All TPs were college age or adults, living in the Durham-Chapel Hill area. They were drawn from a larger pool of potential TPs, one at a time, by a secretary not concerned with any other aspect of the experiment. Each TP was selected only after the preceding TP of the same sex had been run. It was hoped that separation of the subjects to this extent would aid in minimizing the possible displacement effects mentioned before.

There were two experimenters in each session. We thought it might help L.H. to focus on the TP if the other persons in the experimental situation were of a different sex, since this was apparently such an important aspect for him. Thus, when the TP was a female, two male experimenters (W.G.R. and R.L.M.) conducted the tests; and when the TP was a male the two experimenters were females (J.K. and M.R.).

L.H. did not know any of the TPs and the experimenter who was with L.H. did not know which TP was taking part in any given session.

Free Verbal Response Experiments

The TPs were scheduled to arrive at 10:00 A.M. on each day of the experiment at the PRF library building. The library building is separate from the laboratory building where the tests were to be conducted.

At 9:45 A.M., fifteen minutes before the scheduled arrival of the TP, one of the two experimenters designated as recorders (either M.R. or R.L.M., designated henceforth as the recording experimenter) closeted himself with L.H. in a rear room of the laboratory building of the PRF (Room 1 of the floor plan found on page 105 in a previous issue of this *Journal* [5]). Room 1 has no windows facing the street or the library building, and all doors in the building were closed. When each TP arrived at the PRF library building for the reading, he or she was met by the other experimenter, either J.K. or W.G.R. (the TP experimenter). At this time the TP experimenter signaled the recording experimenter and L.H. that the TP had arrived by buzzing the laboratory building once on the telephone intercom. L.H. had requested to know of the TP's arrival so that he would not have to prepare himself for the test (he usually spends several minutes in relaxation and prayer before an experiment) in case the TP did not turn up. The TP experimenter then took a black and white Polaroid picture of the TP and obtained a few strands of his hair. The photograph was not developed but was left in its original black opaque casing. It was sealed by an added layer of Scotch tape around the edges. Following this the TP wrote a short statement about a personal problem on an index card. This card was then folded, with the statement on the inside. The hair was placed inside the folded card and both were sealed inside a heavy opaque brown envelope. The contents of this envelope plus the encased photograph were intended as "contacts" or associated objects. L.H. feels he receives a special impression from photographs whether concealed or not. The hair was used because other sensitives often claim this may aid their ESP. We used the card with a problem to get the TP into a state of mind of "seeking help" from L.H. Such a state would parallel the state of the sitter who goes to a medium seeking advice or assistance about something. Additionally, L.H. likes to view his readings as being of help to people, and feels that such a desire on the TP's part may enable him to read the TP better (see [1] for a fuller description of this aspect of L.H.). The TPs had been told that no one would see the statement with the problem and this was discarded after the test. After he had written the problem, the TP filled out a biographical questionnaire. When this was completed the TP was conducted to the laboratory building, through the front door, and into a side room (Room 3 of the floor plan). The TP experimenter placed the envelope and photograph on a table in the large room just inside the

front door. Following this he rapped once on the door leading to the rear of the building and returned immediately to the TP in Room 3. Upon hearing this rap, the recording experimenter paused to give the TP experimenter time to enter Room 3 and close the door, then came out to get the envelopes and take them to L.H. This procedure insured that neither L.H. nor the recording experimenter had had sensory contact with the TP or any source of information about the TP. L.H. was handed the envelopes and asked to begin. His statements were tape recorded. During the time L.H. made his statements the TP sat at a desk in Room 3 and the experimenter sat about ten feet to the rear. A picture of L.H. was available to the TP if he wanted to look at it. The TP had been requested beforehand to remain as quiet as possible upon entering the building and to let his thoughts center on the problem as he sat at the desk.

After fifteen minutes the TP and TP experimenter left quietly through the front door and returned to the library building. The TP was dismissed. After the TP was gone the TP experimenter signaled the recording experimenter and L.H. by an intercom buzzer. This procedure insured that neither L.H. nor the recording experimenter would see the TP. By that time L.H. had generally finished his reading. If not, he continued until he felt no impressions coming to him. At the end of each reading for the females the recording experimenter asked L.H. to give a rough rating of how well he thought he had done.

After L.H. finished his reading the recording experimenter filled out a copy of the biographical questionnaire taken by the TP earlier, using L.H.'s statements about the TP as a basis. When this was done, and when the TP had gone, L.H. and the recording experimenter were free to leave Room 1. The recording experimenter took the tape of L.H.'s readings, the undeveloped photograph, and the questionnaire back to the library building and gave them to W.G.R. W.G.R. compared the TP's questionnaire with the one filled out by the recording experimenter. He would then call L.H. and tell him in general whether or not it appeared he had done well for the day, maintaining a positive tone even if he had to tell L.H. that the session was not a good one. This procedure served to provide a vehicle for daily encouragement of L.H.

At the end of the two series, the twenty protocols were transcribed and edited (blind) to remove statements not directly related to the TP, plus any statements that might bias the results (e.g., statements pertaining to the TP's clothing which could be related to the weather on the day that particular TP was read). Copies of all ten edited female protocols were distributed to the ten female TPs with the request that each select the record that most closely corresponded to her circumstances, then choose second,

third, fourth, and fifth in decreasing degree of correspondence. The same was done for the males.

Following this, and before the TPs were told which protocols were really theirs, each protocol was separated into discrete units of information or items by J.A.D., using as a criterion the amount of information needed to be able to answer the item true or false. For the ten protocols of each sex all items were then sorted into eleven content categories (see Table 2) to form a male or female questionnaire. The TPs were asked to return to the PRF at their convenience to fill out the appropriate questionnaire. Each item was answered by checking "true," "false," or "?." Target persons did not know from which protocol a given item was taken and J.A.D. did not know the results of the overall ratings by the TPs at the time she constructed the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Rankings of the Complete Protocols

When an analysis is made of the responses according to first choices by all TPs of both series, the exact P-value (by binomial expansion) is $P < .02$ (six out of twenty chosen correctly); when first and second choices are combined, $P < .003$. The scoring for females alone is independently significant on first choices (four correct out of ten) and on first and second choices combined ($P < .02$ and $< .01$ respectively).

Analysis of the Individual Protocol Items

The data were analyzed for ESP hitting using both the unweighted and weighted Burdick-Roll methods (2). The weight associated with each item in the weighting procedure was equal to the total number of subjects (N) minus the number of subjects rating the item true (n). Thus the fewer subjects the item applied to,

Table 1
COMPARISON OF WEIGHTED AND UNWEIGHTED CRITICAL RATIOS
BASED ON ANALYSIS OF TOTAL ITEMS

	Males	Females	Total
Unweighted CR Value	1.00	1.22	1.57
Weighting 1 CR Value	1.55	1.81	2.37*
Number of Items	1102	1147	2249

* $P < .02$.

Table 2
CONTENT ANALYSIS BY ITEM CATEGORY FOR FIRST FIVE TPs OF EACH SEX

	Males		Females	
	No. Items	CR's for Unweighted	No. Items	CR's for Unweighted
Physical Description	124	2.57	121	1.81
Health	13	1.22	50	0.95
Vocation/Education	32	0.52	47	0.26
Family	32	2.53	30	1.73
Love Life	28	0.20	42	1.61
Other	17	0.42	47	0.71
Future	37	0.45	23	0.63
Wants	43	0.61	26	0.72
Interests	32	0.02	21	0.94
Needs	8	0.39	13	0.70
Personal Characteristics	157	0.08	225	0.94
Total Items	523	1.21	656	0.80
				CR's for Weighting 1
				3.81*
				1.23
				1.77
				3.76*
				0.38
				0.88
				0.10
				1.09
				0.08
				0.62
				0.19
				2.25
				CR's for Weighting 1
				3.51*
				0.82
				1.38
				1.98
				2.09*
				0.82
				0.70
				0.34
				0.42
				0.97
				1.15
				0.90

* The categories on which these CR's are based were weighted ($N-n$)² in the Weighting 2 analysis of the second five TPs of each sex. Remaining categories were weighted ($N-n$) as before.

the more it was weighted. In both methods, L.H. was more accurate with female than with male target persons. The unweighted method for the total data gave a nonsignificant CR of 1.57, whereas the weighted method (Weighting 1) yielded a CR of 2.37, $P < .02$ (Table 1).

In addition to this procedure, a differential weighting technique was developed to investigate the extent to which various item categories might contribute differentially to the overall significance of the results. Half the data were used to obtain these differential weights, which were then applied to the other half. When the data from the first five TPs of each sex were analyzed by item category, using both no weights and weights, it was found that for the men Physical Description and Family were the most significant categories, and for the women Physical Description and Love Life (Table 2).

To incorporate the category differences into the analysis it was arbitrarily decided to arrive at a differential weighted value (Weighting 2) for each item in the high-scoring categories by taking the square of the weighted figure ($N-n$)² as the final weight, while the remaining items were weighted as before ($N-n$). These new weightings were then used to analyze the data from the second five TPs of each sex. The results, shown in Table 3, reveal that this second method of weighting improved the results for both men and women. For men, the CR rose from 2.37 for Weighting 1 to 3.82 for Weighting 2. For women, the CR rose from 3.85 to 4.55. This increase indicates that the categories which were successful during the first half were also successful during the second half. This consistency can be employed statistically to make the results more sensitive to the differential distribution of psi across categories.

Table 3
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TOTAL ITEMS FOR SECOND FIVE TPs OF EACH SEX

	CR's for Males	P	CR's for Females	P
Unweighted	1.65	$< .10$	2.47	$< .02$
Weighting 1	2.37	$< .02$	3.85	$< .0002$
Weighting 2	3.82	$< .0002$	4.55	$< .00001$
Number of Items	579		491	

Analysis of L.H.'s Own Ratings of Success

Unfortunately there was not a great deal of day-to-day differences in L.H.'s ratings of how well he had done with the female TPs.

and statistical analysis is inappropriate. There were three days in which he considered that he had done quite well; for those three days he got two direct hits and the remaining TP ranked her protocol second. There were two days in which L.H. felt that he had not made contact. One of these was a direct hit; the other was a complete miss and was not ranked in the top five. For the other five days there was one direct hit, one ranking of second, one of fourth, and two complete misses.

DISCUSSION

The conditions in these experiments were such that the only reasonable explanation of the results appears to be ESP. This was the first controlled test with L.H. using free verbal response methods. In attempting to collect evidence about a sensitive's FVR abilities, the investigator must provide a friendly environment which is conducive to the expression of the sensitive's psychical abilities, yet must maintain conditions which will rule out normal causes, in particular sensory cues and chance coincidence, as an explanation for the results.

In earlier tests with a sensitive who seemed to show evidence of psychical abilities under informal conditions, we obtained barely suggestive results when formal experimental procedures were used (4). Even in the case of L.H., with whom a great deal of our recent work has been done, our results in FVR experiments have been much less impressive than those obtained in card tests, although the FVR experiments much more closely resemble the normal working conditions of L.H.

The procedure we employed included many features designed to make L.H. psychologically comfortable, while at the same time maintaining an adequate experimental design. L.H. had asked for some form of feedback after each session to help him keep up his confidence and motivation. We were able to provide some information by having the TP fill out the biographical questionnaire which could then be compared with a similar questionnaire filled out by the recording experimenter on the basis of L.H.'s statements. The information given L.H. was always general, and he was never shown the questionnaires themselves. However, L.H. might still have tried to use this information by avoiding making statements in the future that resembled his successful statements on that day. By avoiding similar statements in the future, he would reduce the opportunity for later protocols to resemble the one that he knew to be fairly accurate. It would be easier then for the TP to pick out his own protocol later. To check on this possibility, we examined

the questionnaires to see if statements that had been accurate in earlier questionnaires were avoided in later questionnaires. There was no such trend, so it is unlikely that L.H. used the questionnaires in this manner.

A problem that occurs when TPs are run one a day over several days is the possible biasing effect of the particulars of a given day, such as weather, day of the week, current events and so on, which may increase the likelihood that the TP is in a certain mood, or is worried about certain things. Additionally, the fact that a TP chose a certain day to come may indicate something about working habits (e.g., those who come on Saturdays may have a job that they cannot leave during the week).

As a partial check on this possibility, we examined the rankings done by each TP of all ten protocols pertaining to his or her sex. If L.H. said similar things about all people run on Fridays, then a TP run on Friday should not only rank himself among the first five; he should also rank others run on Friday among the first five. We examined the extent to which protocols of others run on a similar day to each TP were ranked high by that TP. No evidence for similarity was found with respect to day of week, temperature, or presence or absence of rain. We could only examine specific current events indirectly. A major current event of the sort that would influence both L.H. and the TP would probably exert an effect over not just one day but conceivably three or four. If such were the case, consecutive protocols should tend to resemble each other and be rated similarly. Examination of the data showed no such trend.

Of additional bearing on this point is the differential success among content categories. Both sexes had good results on Physical Description; males had good results on Family Life and females on Love Life. None of these categories would appear to be related to current events. Statements in Physical Description category which might be related to the weather on the day of the test, such as references to raincoats, were edited out. Since the tests were run during the same season, it seems unlikely that other statements, referring for instance, to color of clothing, could have been rationally inferred by L.H. on the basis of the weather.

Certain possibilities for sensory cues may have occurred to the reader. L. H. was confined to his room with the recording experimenter at the time of the TP's arrival. No TPs parked their cars near the PRF grounds, so no cues from automobile sounds were present. Arrival time was known approximately to L.H., and deviations which sometimes occurred might have led him to form hypotheses about the TP. However, there are many possible reasons for delays ranging from unstable personality traits to heavy traffic and other conditions over which the TP had no control. Of course,

any direct or indirect reference to delays in the protocols were edited out. Early arrivals were camouflaged from L.H. in that the TP experimenter never started the experimental procedure until 10:00 A.M.

When the TP experimenter and TP entered the laboratory building, there were two closed doors between them and L.H. at all times. The experimenter led the way, thus controlling the tempo of walking. The floors were covered by rugs to reduce vibrations and the noisy fan from the heating unit was always on. It is unlikely that L.H. was able to discriminate the TP's footsteps from the other end of the house. Even if he was able to hear the footsteps of the TP, it is unlikely that he could have inferred anything from them since the TP always walked quietly and at a speed set by the experimenter.

The results of the content analysis suggest some possible parapsychological interpretations. L.H.'s success with Physical Description may indicate that he was aided by the physical location of the person, and was able most effectively to home in on the information that was available in the same building as he was. Also, the physical appearance of the TP would be the main information available through the thoughts of the experimenter who was in the same room as the TP. Alternatively, the success on statements of Physical Description may be a matter of their being initial impressions: they were generally given at the start of the reading.

The research worker who is interested in the question of survival after death as this arises in experiments involving ostensible communications through mediums is faced with two separate problems. First of all he must be able to set up his experiments or observations in such a way that he can be reasonably certain that some evidence of psi is present in the utterances of the medium, be that psi between the medium and a theta agent or psi between the medium and some other aspect of the environment such as a living person or an objective record. Secondly, he must have some way of determining whether or not these processes involve deceased personalities. It is obvious that the parapsychologist can only seriously explore the second hypothesis if he has solved the first problem and can show that the medium possesses genuine psychical abilities. The experiment reported here suggests that L.H. can produce ESP information under controlled FVR conditions. Additional studies along similar lines, but with a greater emphasis on the aspect of possible input from theta agencies, have been conducted and are currently being analyzed.

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