Study Registration for the KPU Study Registry

The registration information for the study is given below. Each section can be expanded as needed.

1. The title or name of the experiment (for listing the experiment in the registry).

Investigation of the phenomenology and impact of spontaneous After-Death Communications (ADCs)

2. The name, affiliation, and email address for the lead experimenter(s) for the study.

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3. A short description or abstract of the purpose and design of the experiment.

The proposed study is an online survey exploring the phenomenology and impact of spontaneous After-Death Communications (ADCs). ADCs are taken to refer to the unexpected perception by the bereaved of a deceased person through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, or touch.

4. A statement or list of the specific hypothesis or hypotheses being tested, and whether each hypothesis is confirmatory or exploratory. (confirm/explore guidance)

The proposed study is an exploratory phenomenological survey without any pre-specified predictions or hypotheses. Rather, the research aim is to gain a better understanding of the subjective experience and the self-perceived impact of spontaneous After-Death Communications, and to explore how these might differ from country to country. Survey data gathered online using the JISC onlinesurveys service (https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/ -- formerly Bristol Online Surveys) are expected to provide insights into the profile of the recipients; the profile of the deceased person supposedly initiating the contact; the circumstances of occurrence; the form, process, and meaning attributed to ADCs; and their impact on recipients. Data are mainly quantitative / nomothetic to enable us to note the incidence and co-incidence of features (NB given the sampling strategy we make no claims to representativeness).
5. The planned number of participants and the number of trials per participant.

The funding proposal specifies a minimum of 200 complete responses, and this is still our aim. In practice, however, the study will remain 'live' for a pre-specified period of time rather than closed as soon as we have achieved 200. We propose to leave the survey open from 00:01 on 1 August 2018 to 23:59 on 31 January 2019.

6. A statement that the registration is submitted prior to testing the first participant, or indicating the number of participants tested when the registration (or revision to the registration) was submitted.

I hereby confirm that this project has not yet begun. The survey is not yet 'live', and no data have been collected.

The following additional information is needed for studies that include confirmatory analyses:

7. Specification of all analysis decisions that could affect the confirmatory results, including: the specific statistical test for each confirmatory hypothesis, whether the test is one-sided or two-sided, the criterion for acceptable evidence, any transformations or adjustments to the data, any criteria for excluding or deleting data, and any corrections for multiple analyses. Checklists and examples for registering classical analyses, permutation and bootstrap analyses, Bayesian analyses, and classification analyses are provided in the statistics registration document. (This information can be included in section 4 above for simple experiments.)

8. The power analysis or other justification for the number of participants and trials.

9. The methods for randomization in the experiment. If a pseudorandom generator is used, specify how and when the seed(s) will be obtained.

No randomisation is used in this study.

10. A detailed description of the experimental procedure.

A detailed survey has been constructed to explore all aspects of respondents' ADC experiences. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed separately for the KPU review board, but we request that this is not made available to the public in advance of the launch of the survey. A submission has been made to the Faculty Research Ethics committee at the University of Northampton, which oversees staff research activity. The
final version of the survey may be modified in response to FREC requirements and suggestions. The survey will not be advertised or made live until ethical approval is given. The questionnaire is being transposed into an online version that will automatically omit items that are deemed irrelevant given participants' prior responses (for example, if they report that they have not had an auditory component to their experience then they will not be asked about auditory characteristics).

Through adverts to special interest groups, prospective participants will be invited to access a general web page at https://www.evelyn-elsaesser.com/research/ which introduces the project and will enable them to decide whether they are eligible and interested to participate. They can click through to the onlinesurveys site which provides practical details of the survey including that the survey need not be completed at a single sitting. Participants must complete an online consent form in order to progress. This provides details of participants' assurance of anonymity, their right to omit items, to withdraw from the study at any time while completing the survey (all incomplete returns will be destroyed), and to withdraw data during a 7-day ‘cooling off’ period by noting their participant number.

Data will be stored and processed in accordance with GDPR requirements (https://gdpr-info.eu/). Responses are mainly to closed questions so data are anonymous; a relatively few items allow short answers and these will be checked to ensure they do not contain identifying information, and will be edited to protect the respondent’s identity where appropriate. Analysis will primarily consist of reporting incidence and coincidence of features and tests of association between features of the ADC and their impacts. These analyses are exploratory and will not be corrected for multiple analysis, though it will be explicitly acknowledged that the analysis strategy can greatly inflate the likelihood of Type 1 errors such that reported findings will need to be independently replicated. Samples will be drawn from Switzerland, Spain, France and the UK, and differences in patterns of response will be noted, with the same caveat.