American Spiritualism is an American religion that was born in 1848 in Hydesville, New York. Its central principles state that there is life after death and that mediums have the capability to communicate with discarnate beings. Mediums are persons who claim they can communicate with the dead. Today, Lily Dale, New York is the largest surviving community of American Spiritualism, with a population of mediums that host an annual festival that draws large crowds from around the world upwards of 20,000-30,000 visitors. The author of the present interdisciplinary study outlined a historical overview of American Spiritualism and conducted empirical research with twelve medium participants in Lily Dale, for qualitative and quantitative purposes. The purpose of the study was to better understand why American Spiritualist mediums believe they are communicating with discarnate beings and to explore how they experience alterations of consciousness. There was a total of 10 women and 2 men (N=12). The mean age of participants was 62.58 (SD=13.53; age range: 36-76 years; N=12). Participants were tested on the Big Five personality measures, a Communication with Discarnate Beings Interview Questionnaire devised by the researcher and on the Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory to test altered states of consciousness. Significant differences were found between the medium sample when compared to other populations.

Keywords: American Spiritualism, mediumship, Lily Dale, discarnate beings, spirit, death, consciousness.