

NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE-PERCEPTUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MEDIUMS AND PSYCHICS

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Grant 82/18

Background: Mediums/psychics are individuals who claim to communicate with discarnate spiritual entities. Historically, the study of mediumship is important because it has influenced the development of psychological and parapsychological concepts. Although healthy/well-adjusted subjects often report supernatural experiences, previous research indicates that experiencers differ in subtle cognitive/perceptual ways. Accordingly, this three-phase project examined whether individuals with self-professed paranormal ability possess a unique psychological profile.

Aims, Method & Results: PHASE 1 Identified neuro/psychological differences as a function of level of self-ascribed paranormal ability. This method was important because it revealed characteristics typically found in anomalistic experiencers. Specifically, it compared three groups differing in personal ascription of paranormal powers: no ability, self-professed ability, and paranormal practitioners (i.e., Mediums, Psychics, Spiritualists, and Fortune-Tellers). A sample of 917 respondents (329 males, 588 females) completed online self-report measures. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed an overall main effect. Discriminant analysis indicated that paranormal practitioners scored higher on proneness to reality testing deficits, paranormal belief, and emotion-based reasoning. Findings revealed subclinical delusion formation and thinking style varied as a function of self-professed paranormal ability and were congruent with preceding research.

PHASE 2 This study investigated relationships between inter-class variations in paranormal experience and executive functions of mediums/psychics, experiencers & normal population. A sample of 516 adults completed self-report measures assessing personal encounter-based paranormal occurrences (i.e., Experience, Practitioner Visiting, & Ability), executive functions (i.e., General executive function, Working and Everyday Memory, Decision Making, and Emotion Regulation), and Belief in the Paranormal. Latent profile analysis (LPA) combined experience-based indices into four classes, whilst multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) then examined interclass differences. Results revealed breadth of paranormal experience was associated with higher levels of executive functioning difficulties for General Executive Function, Working Memory, Decision Making, and Paranormal Belief.

PHASE 3 This study examined personal perceptions (involvements) and comprehensions (interpretations) of self-ascribed paranormal abilities across 12 semi-structured interviews. Analysis revealed that self-ascription is a complex/sophisticated process. Interviewees narrated rich and detailed accounts that made sense of declared capabilities. They contextualised, rationalised, and provided evidence to support claims.

Keywords: Self-professed paranormal abilities, Cognitive/executive functions, Latent profile analysis, Emotion-based reasoning; Semi-structured interviews

Publications:

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