

EFFECTS OF PARTICIPANT AND TARGET SYSTEM LABILITY UPON PK PERFORMANCE USING AN I CHING TASK²

Chris A. Roe, Hannah Martin & Sophie Drennan
Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes
University of Northampton, UK

Relatively few parapsychological experiments investigating micro-PK effects have been designed to consider psychological or individual differences factors, and those variables that have been considered have been subject to too few replications to give a clear indication of which persons may perform best under which conditions (Gissurarson & Morris, 1991; Roe, 2001). Previous research by the first author discovered and replicated an interaction effect between an individual differences factor, participant lability, and a situational factor, target system lability (Holt & Roe, 2006; Roe & Holt, 2006). The present study was designed to conceptually replicate that finding using a novel task so as to control for possible artifacts due to the computer program or task used there. An alternative task was built around the I Ching divination procedure, which it was felt retained important characteristics of being personally relevant for the participant and intuitively straightforward to understand. Methodological weaknesses in previous I Ching experiments were addressed here, in particular by automating the I Ching casting and by having participants rate all possible hexagram outcomes for applicability using the Q-sort method. An opportunity sample of 34 participants completed a battery of measures used to construct a metric of lability, along with a measure of absorption and decided upon a personal question that the I Ching could help with. Participants were run individually and completed a Q-sort of all 64 hexagram descriptions based on their applicability to their question. Once completed they cast three hexagrams using a computer based program that used a live random number generator (Live), the pseudorandom function of the computer (Pseudo) and a predetermined list of random numbers derived from published tables (Table). The order of conditions was randomized across participants, who remained blind as to the source of randomness in each case. The Q-sort positions were used to rate the applicability of the selected hexagrams. Although the general pattern of performance was in line with prediction, with the highest average ratings awarded to hexagrams selected by the most labile Live method, next highest for the moderately labile Pseudo method and worst ratings for the most stabile Table method, the mean shifts were small and non-significant ($F_{2,58} = .571, p = .568$). Similarly, although the highest overall performance was achieved by the most labile participant group, an intermediate level of performance was recorded by the intermediate group and worst performance was by the stabile group, the modest differences were not significant ($F_{2,29} = .099, p = .906$). Therefore, despite the pattern of performance being superficially similar to that reported in previous studies, this experiment was not able to replicate the interaction between participant and target system lability ($F_{4,58} = .896, p = .473$). Possible causes for this failure to replicate are considered, including that the original studies' findings reflect Type I errors, and that the sampling method was insufficiently sensitive to belief and expectancy factors. Suggestions are made for future research, particularly with respect to identifying variables that might have contributed to the unexpectedly large variance in scores due to 'error'.

[Email: chris.roe@northampton.ac.uk]

² We would like to thank the Bial Foundation (award 104/08) for their kind financial support for this project.