

Lability, paranormal beliefs and psychokinetic experiences: A questionnaire-based survey

Sophie Louise Drennan, University of Northampton

Although reports of psychokinetic (PK) occurrences, including poltergeist activity, are consistent, investigations in real-world environments are acknowledged to be notoriously problematic due to the spontaneous nature of such events. However, anecdotal reports regarding protagonist poltergeist agents and observational experiments using individuals with alleged abilities have led to theories regarding the causative nature of PK manifestation. In addressing these issues, recent experimental PK studies have begun focusing on identifying the optimal conditions needed for PK effects using tasks involving random number generators (RNG). Factors under investigation include strategies towards achieving PK effects, the interaction between the experimenter and participants and various individual differences. Within these individual differences, particular interest is being given to the relatively new construct of lability. Defined by Braud (1981), as 'a system's ready capability for change' it has been theorised that manifestation of PK is mediated by inherent levels of lability within the cognitive, emotional and physiological processes of an individual. This theory takes its cue from Rex Stanford's Conformance Behaviour Model (1978), whereby psi effects are produced via the interaction between two systems with differing levels of lability, such as human processes and RNGs. Previous PK-RNG studies conducted by Holt and Roe respectively (Holt & Roe, 2006; Roe & Holt, 2006), have shown supporting results with significant PK performance being achieved via the interaction between low and high level lability systems. However, at that time, there was no comprehensive scale with which to measure lability. To this end, the initial stage of this PhD project has been twofold - to construct a new Lability Scale from existing individual difference measures of creativity, temporal lobe activity, mood affect and openness to experience and then use it to explore the relationship between lability, paranormal beliefs and psychokinetic experiences with an online survey.

Preliminary analyses has adjusted the Lability Scale to a measure of 71 items ($\alpha = .89$) with 5 retained factors - Intuitive Cognition, Conceptual Cognition, Ego-Orientated Cognition, Emotional Interpretation and Analytical Cognition. Results show an obvious positive relationship between paranormal beliefs and psychokinetic experiences and also support the mirrored interaction between low and high levels of lability. Furthermore, there are strong inverse relationships between paranormal beliefs, psychokinetic experiences and Intuitive Cognition, Ego-Orientated Cognition and Emotional Interpretation factors, with no apparent relationships with either Conceptual Cognition or Analytical Cognition factors.

This paper will discuss the construction and results of this survey and subsequent implications for the following sequential experimental PK-RNG studies.