

## **Assessing the relationship between subjective validation, personality characteristics and beliefs in the paranormal**

### **Results:**

Subjective validation occurs when a person maintains her/his prior beliefs when given clear and unambiguous evidence to the contrary (Marks & Kammann, 1980; Marks, 2000). This project focused upon the psychological characteristics of people who believe or do not believe in psi, independently of the issue of whether or not the phenomena are real. There were 120 participants who were interested in the paranormal and/or believed they were psychic (62% female, 38% male). To assess schizotypy, the Oxford-Liverpool Inventory of Feelings and Experiences (Mason et al., 1995) was utilized. Fantasizing was measured using the Wilson-Barber Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings: Children's Form (Myers, 1983). Vividness of visual imagery was measured using the Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire (Marks, 1973), and finally, we used the Transliminality Scale, Form B (Thalbourne, 1998). A Zener Card guessing task was designed to evaluate the participants' tendency to subjectively validate their beliefs. The first block of 20 trials was arranged to enable participants to obtain double the chance rate (from 20 to 40%) of successful predictions. The second block of 20 trials was arranged to decrease the prediction rate. Subjective validation, assessed by measuring participants' confidence level during block 2, had a correlation of .64 ( $p < .001$ ) with psychic beliefs indicating that high subjective validators also have a strong tendency to proclaim personal psychic powers. A significant association also occurred between three of the schizotypy scales and beliefs in their psychic abilities: unusual experiences ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), impulsive non-conformity ( $r = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and cognitive disorganization ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Significant correlations also occurred between psychic beliefs and fantasizing ( $r = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the VVIQ ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### **Discussion:**

This study helped to identify the characteristics of people who strongly believe in personal psychic powers in spite of disconfirmation of their beliefs by actual physical events. Psychic believers have a strong tendency to subjectively validate and have personality characteristics that are linked to schizotypy, fantasizing, and vivid visual imagery. This is result which will not surprise many scientists and sceptics of the paranormal. However it is a result that should give pause to those who continue to claim the existence of powers and phenomena for which there is objective evidence.

### **Published work:**

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