

Paranormal Belief and Well Being: An Exploration of Cognitive-Perceptual Bias

Results:

Study 1 was conducted with the intention of identifying common facets of paranormal belief. A composite self-report measure containing items from several existing scales and newly constructed items (haunting/poltergeist activity and extraterrestrials) was produced. Principal component analysis was performed, and a nine factor structure emerged; measuring belief in: Hauntings, Other Life, Superstition, Religious Belief, Alien Visitation, Extrasensory Perception, Psychokinesis, Astrology, and Witchcraft. The analysis suggested that items measuring Alien Visitation and Hauntings should be included within paranormal belief measures.

Study 2 investigated the relationship between belief in extra-terrestrial life, UFOs and paranormal belief. The results revealed that UFO-related beliefs were more highly correlated with paranormal belief than belief in extra-terrestrial life. Partial correlation controlling for the overlap between the two extra-terrestrial related dimensions revealed a series of weak negative correlations between belief in extra-terrestrial life and paranormal belief, and moderate positive correlations between UFO-related beliefs and paranormal belief. These findings indicate that only the more extreme UFO-related beliefs were associated with general paranormal belief.

Study 3 investigated the relationship between cognitive-perceptual measures (schizotypy, transliminality and delusional ideation) and paranormal belief. All three constructs were found to be significantly positively correlated with paranormal belief. Comparisons between participants high and low (above vs. below the median) on each cognitive-perceptual measure revealed that participants above the median demonstrated higher levels of endorsement on each of the paranormal belief subscale measures. Partial correlation and a hierarchical regression, with the predictor variables entered in order of zero-order correlation, revealed the majority of variance within paranormal belief was explained by the cognitive-perceptual factor of schizotypy.

Study 4 employed the dot-probe detection technique to investigate whether participants high in paranormal belief demonstrate a selective attentional bias towards paranormal related words. Level of paranormal belief, schizotypy, delusional ideation and transliminality were not found to affect attentional deployment; no differences were observed between participants scoring high and low on each of the measures. The pattern of results was consistent across factors suggesting that paranormal related stimuli are no more prone to attentional capture than neutral control stimuli.

Published work:

Journal Articles:

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K., & Parker, A. (2011). Alien visitation, extra-terrestrial life, and paranormal beliefs. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 25(4), 699-720.

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Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K., Parker, A., & Munley, G. (2011). Reality Testing, Belief in the Paranormal, and Urban Legends. *European Journal of Parapsychology*, 21(2), Special. Issue, 182–202.

Dagnall, N., Munley, G., Parker, A., & Drinkwater, K. (2010c). Paranormal Belief, Schizotypy and Transliminality. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 74, 117-143.

Dagnall, N., Parker, A., Munley, G., & Drinkwater, K. (2010a) Common Paranormal Belief Dimensions. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 24, 477-494.

Dagnall, N., Parker A., Munley, G., & Drinkwater, K (2010b). The relationship between belief in extra-terrestrial life, UFOs-related beliefs and paranormal belief. *Society for Psychical Research*, 74, 1-14.

Conference Presentations:

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K., Munley, G., & Parker, A. (2010). The Effect of Paranormal Belief and Cognitive-Perceptual Factors on Mnemonic Performance: An Experimental Investigation. Research Institute Health and Social Change Annual Conference.

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K., Munley, G., & Parker, A. (2010), Paranormal Belief and Well Being: An Exploration of Cognitive-Perceptual Bias. 8th Bial Symposium.

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K., Munley, G., & Parker, A. (2010). The Effect of Paranormal Belief and Cognitive-Perceptual Factors on Mnemonic Performance: An Experimental Investigation (Poster). Research Institute Health and Social Change Conference.

Dagnall, N., Drinkwater, K., Munley, G., & Parker, A. (2010). The Effect of Paranormal Belief and Cognitive-Perceptual Factors on Mnemonic Performance: An Experimental Investigation (Poster). 8th Bial Symposium.

Area(s) of interest:

Paranormal Belief, Individual Differences, Cognitive-Perceptual Personality Factors

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