

Attitudes and beliefs as predictors of psi effects in a pseudo-gambling task

ABSTRACT:

Background and Aim

Predictors of psi-hitting due mainly to compliance in believers in psi (sheep), and psi-missing due mainly to noncompliance in non-believers in psi (goats), were sought in an on-screen forced-choice card-identifying (guessing) experiment in a gambling scenario. Hypothesized predictors are paranormal belief (using the *Australian Sheep-Goat Scale*), gambling attitudes (*Gambling Attitude Scales & Attitudes Towards Gambling Scale*), and beliefs about luck (*Belief in Good Luck Scale & Questionnaire of Beliefs about Luck*).

Method

Participants completed the scales, then five card-guessing trials (5 x 5 playing cards face-down). Correct guesses of Ace-of-Spades win a Scratch-It card for possible cash prize. Participants were asked to avoid Ace-of-Clubs. It is theorized that sheep, being positive towards the psi hypothesis, are compliant and prefer Ace-of-Spades; whereas goats, being noncompliant, prefer Ace-of-Clubs.

Results

All gambling attitude scales inter-correlated significantly, as did most luck scales. For the whole sample ($N = 120$), effect sizes were at chance for spade-hitting and club-hitting, as was the case for sheep and goats separately. Sheep and goats did not score differently from each other on spade-hitting. None of the scales correlated significantly with spade-hitting or club-hitting. The spade-hitting/club-hitting correlation was negative and significant, which replicated the same finding in Storm and Thalbourne (2005).

Conclusions

The spade-hitting/club-hitting correlation suggests that when participants target Ace-of-Spades, they will tend to avoid Ace-of-Clubs, though there is option to displace to King cards. Also, belief in psi and luck, and attitudes towards gambling (whether positive or negative), may not influence gambling success.

Keywords

Gambling, Sheep-goat effect, Compliance, Psychic ability

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