

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENSORY PROCESSING SENSITIVITY, ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCES, AND PRECOGNITIVE PERFORMANCE

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Background: Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) is a temperament trait identified by deeper processing of information, being easily overwhelmed by stimulation, having greater empathy and emotional reactivity, and being able to sense subtleties in the environment (Greven et al., 2019). There is some promising initial research to suggest that SPS may be associated with anomalous experiences (AEs) (Irwin et al., 2014; Jonsson et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2021). SPS also seems to share similar features with transliminality (Thalbourne & Delin, 1993) and boundary-thinness (Harmann, 1991). However, no research, to date, has combined these three measures to explore their relationship to AEs.

Aims: 1) Investigate the relationship between SPS, transliminality, boundary-thinness, and AEs 2) Establish if high SPS is associated with better performance on a dream-precognition task 3) Establish if high SPS is associated with greater presentiment effects.

Method: Study 1 used an online survey to investigate if sensitivity measures (SPS, transliminality, boundary-thinness) predicted scores on a measure of anomalous experiences, beliefs, and abilities (AEI). Study 2 used a dream diary precognition protocol to investigate if SPS predicted similarity ratings given to a target image. Study 3 will use measures of heart rate variability and electrodermal activity to establish whether SPS is associated with correctly anticipating exposure to randomly selected alerting or neutral sounds.

Preliminary results: Correlation analysis showed a relationship between each of the three sensitivity predictor variables and the subscales of the AEI. Both transliminality and boundary thinness positively predicted anomalous beliefs with transliminality being the stronger. Only transliminality predicted anomalous experiences and anomalous abilities. Participants rated target images marginally higher than the decoy images. However, there was no clear relationship between these target ratings and SPS, transliminality, boundary thinness, or anomalous belief and experiences.

Conclusions: Study 1 found that transliminality plays a mediating role between SPS and anomalous experiences, belief, and abilities. Study 2 results suggest that when using a home-dream paradigm participants were able to precognitively dream about a future target image, but that this was not influenced by sensitivity.

Keywords: Anomalous experiences, Boundary-thinness, Sensory processing sensitivity, Transliminality

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