

THE PSYCHOLOGY AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY

Lance Storm & Monika Goretzki

School of Psychology, University of Adelaide, South Australia

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Background: A defining aspect of Spiritual Emergency (SE) is 'psychic opening', characterized as psychic ability. SE may include psychic opening, which means individuals who had or were having experiences of Spiritual Emergency (i.e., 'SE-experients') may perform well on psi tests. SE is related to psychosis, but not the psychosis-related symptoms, alogia (poverty of speech), depression, anxiety, and stress, which may all be psi-inhibitive.

Aims: This study aimed to assess the psychological and parapsychological aspects of spiritual emergency and differentiate it from psychosis. Psi performance of SE-experients were compared with controls. The study also assessed psychological aspects of SE to differentiate it from psychosis and other proposed psi-inhibitive symptoms (alogia, depression, anxiety, and stress).

Method: Two groups of participants were formed: SE-experients and Controls (mainly psychology students). Participants either completed the study on a computer in the laboratory or online. Questionnaires on SE (which includes a subscale on Psychic Opening), positive symptoms of psychosis, alogia, spiritual identity, paranormal belief, mysticism, depression, anxiety, and stress, were administered to participants, who then completed a psi task—the Imagery Cultivation picture-identification psi task, which uses a shamanic-like journeying protocol (Storm & Rock, 2009a, 2009b).

Results: The differences between controls and SE-experients on the psi measures, Direct Hitting (as a percent hit-rate) and Mean Rank Scores, were not significant, but the Sum-of-Ranks difference was highly significant. Also, SE-experients had a marginally significant Mean Rank Score. Direct Hitting did not correlate significantly with any variable, except Rank Scores, which correlated significantly with Psychic Opening, spiritual identity, and paranormal belief, and marginally significantly with Spiritual Emergency. As expected, Direct Hitting, Rank Scores, and SE did not correlate significantly with alogia, depression, anxiety, or stress, but the psychosis measure did correlate significantly with alogia, depression, anxiety, stress, and SE.

Conclusions: The statistical evidence suggests that some proportion of SE-experients experience Psychic Opening. While SE and psychosis overlap, only SE was predicted by spiritual identity, extrovertive mysticism, and paranormal belief (but not alogia), whereas psychosis was predicted by alogia only.

Keywords: Imagery cultivation, Psychic ability, Psychosis, Sheep-goat effect, Spiritual emergency

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E-mail contact: lance.storm@adelaide.edu.au