

Research funded by:



Participant Information Sheet

Social context of anomalous experiences in a spiritual support-seeking population

Invitation to take part in this study

We'd like to invite you to take part in our research study. Please take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to explore relationships between social factors and anomalous experiences, like changes in perception, spiritual-type experiences, hearing voices, or extrasensory communications.

Recent research has shown that many people describe having anomalous experiences. For some people these experiences have a negative impact on their life and result in input from mental health services. For others, these experiences have a positive impact and can be life-enriching. This research aims to explore the protective social factors that, over time, might enable people to integrate their experiences in a helpful way. This study will be split into two parts: the first part is exploratory, with a focus on finding out about the experiences of people who are seeking support from a spiritual network, including social and emotional aspects; the second part will explore how social experiences may change over time (from support-seeking, to 3 months, to 6 months), and how changes in social factors might influence the relationship with, and impact of, anomalous experiences.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you have recently accessed a support network for spiritual crisis/emergence. We don't know anything about your personal experiences, nor are we making any assumptions about these. For this study, it is not important how you describe or explain your own experiences, but the fact that you have accessed support for these experiences through a spiritual network makes you a suitable research candidate.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time in the process of the study without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Taking part will involve one initial meeting with the researcher, either in person or via Skype, to discuss your experiences. This meeting will last about 1 hour, including a short interview about your experiences and some questionnaires about, e.g., how you see yourself in relation to others. At this meeting, a subsample of participants will also be invited to have a selection of the questionnaire measures repeated (online, remotely) at 3 and 6 months. Participants will only be eligible for this subsample if they have never received a diagnosis or treatment from mental health services in relation to their anomalous experiences. If you do participate in the follow-up study, this will involve completing an online questionnaire (lasting about 25 minutes) at 3 months and 6 months. The researcher will email you a link and login details when it is time to complete these follow up questionnaires.

What will happen if I start but then don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any time without having to justify your decision. If you decide to withdraw from the study you can tell us whether you are happy for us to use the information obtained up to that point. If you are not, any information that you have given will be destroyed and you will not be contacted by us again.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

Some of the questions are personal in nature, but you don't have to answer anything you don't want to, and if you do get upset by a question, the interviewer is a trained psychologist who be able to help if necessary.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may find it helpful to share your anomalous experiences with someone who will not be judgemental. It may also be a positive experience to have an opportunity to contribute to our knowledge of social context of anomalous experiences, which could, in turn, be used to develop and research new social initiatives to improve wellbeing.

We are able to offer you £15 remuneration for your time. If you are eligible to participate in the online follow-up subsample, we will be able to offer you a further £10 for each assessment point, so a maximum of £45 if you complete all three assessment points (baseline, 3 months, and 6 months).

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All the information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, secured against unauthorised access. Your personal details will not be seen by anyone other than the primary researcher. Your questionnaire data will be assigned an anonymous code before they are used for supervision purposes with the research supervisors.

How is the project being funded?

The project is funded through a Medical Research Council (MRC) Clinical Research Training Fellowship awarded to Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland (ref: MR/L01677X/1).

What will happen to the results of the study?

The research should be completed by mid-2018. The results will be written-up as part of an academic degree, and submitted for a peer-reviewed journal. This will be openly accessible through King's College London's publications repository. No individual will be identifiable from the published results.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

Primary Researcher

Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland, MRC Clinical Research Training Fellow
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De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF
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What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

Research Supervisor

Dr Emmanuelle Peters, Reader in Clinical Psychology
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Review Subcommittee

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Thank you for reading this information and for considering taking part in this research.