

EXPLORING THE USE OF FLOATATION TANKS AS A MEANS TO INDUCE PSI-CONDUCTIVE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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Background: Sensory deprivation as a means to promote psi-conductive states of consciousness has most notably been explored through the ganzfeld method (Baptista, Derakhshani & Tressoldi, 2015). Lilly (1969) proposed that floatation could be used as an alternative to the ganzfeld method to encourage similar shifts in consciousness. Cooper, Saunders and Hitchman (2020) conducted a pilot study to explore the methods, ethics and utility of employing floatation tanks within an extra-sensory perception research paradigm. This involved a sender/receiver setup and adopted a standard ganzfeld judging protocol. The pilot study consisted of too few trials to yield statistically meaningful data, but did allow for proof of principle and to resolve practical difficulties in using the tanks for experimentation. There were nevertheless some striking qualitative matches between impressions and targets, suggesting that further investigation would be worthwhile.

Aims: The primary aim of this project is to conduct two formal studies to evaluate the use of floatation tanks as a means to induce psi-conductive states of consciousness. Secondary aims include: (1) Implementing the methodological refinements suggested by Cooper, Saunders and Hitchman (2020) following their pilot study; (2) Exploring the states of consciousness experienced by participants to determine whether these are related to psi task performance; (3) Evaluating a range of individual difference and process variables in relation to psi task outcomes.

Method: Participants relax in a floatation tank and place their attention on a yet-to-be-selected target video clip. They share their impressions by speaking aloud whilst in the tank and producing written notes/drawings after exiting the tank. Participants are subsequently shown 4 video clips (one of which will become the target, in addition to 3 decoys) from a set and asked to judge the similarity between their impressions and each of the four possible target/decoys, culminating in the target/decoys being ranked by similarity. The target is then selected at random by a computer. An independent judge will subsequently be asked to rank each set of 4 video clips according to the participants' written/drawn accounts. Participants also complete a suite of standardized questionnaires that will allow for exploratory analyses of demographic, individual difference and phenomenology of consciousness associations.

Preliminary results: Data collection has only just commenced, therefore preliminary results are unavailable at this stage.

Keywords: Floatation, Sensory deprivation, Precognition, Highly sensitive persons, Altered states of consciousness

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