

## **Title: Investigating Experiences of Depersonalisation and Derealisation**

Date of approval: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022

### **Invitation to our study**

If you are a young person aged between 18 and 30 years, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Email Evelyn Dilkes on [ed21531@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ed21531@essex.ac.uk) if there is anything that is not clear or you would like more information.

### **What happens if you agree to participate**

This survey will begin by asking you about your gender, where you live, ethnicity, age, social position and sexual orientation.

Following this, the survey will ask you questions about events that sometimes happen in people's childhood (please note that some of these questions regarding age and frequency of the events are optional, and if you feel that evaluating those past experiences in such detail would be highly distressing, please skip these questions), followed by questions regarding 'depersonalisation' and 'derealisation'. Depersonalisation is the experience of feeling detached from your mind or your body, and/or feeling as though you are watching yourself from the outside. Derealisation is the feeling of the world around you being unreal and/or feeling detached from your surroundings. In this survey you will be presented with statements that are sometimes experienced when someone is going through depersonalisation and/or derealisation and you will be asked to indicate how frequently you identify with the statement, and, if you do experience it, you will be asked how long the experience lasts.

Following this, you **may** be presented with questions regarding the way your mind thinks in general, as well as how it thinks in relation to experiences of derealisation and depersonalisation, as well as scenarios that could trigger these experiences of depersonalisation and derealisation and you will be asked to rate how intense this reaction would be in you. You will also be asked a small number of questions regarding your health. Additionally, you will be presented with scenarios that could have a grounding/calming effect on the depersonalisation and derealisation, and you will be asked to rate how grounding or calming they may be. If we have not described a situation that you feel would be triggering or calming, you will have the option to add your own, and we encourage you to do so.

Finally, you will be given the option to, in a few sentences, describe how your depersonalisation and derealisation affects you uniquely.

This questionnaire should take between 20-30 minutes.

### **Potential risks**

Please be aware that while these are normal procedures in examining childhood events and depersonalisation and derealisation, and are not intended to be harmful, there is potential for you to feel distressed as you are asked to reflect on your experiences. Before deciding to participate, consider this fact and assess whether completing this survey will be harmful to you. At the end of the survey you will be presented with resources that will be helpful should you become distressed. Should you become distressed during the questionnaire and would not like to finish it but would still like access to resources, please contact Evelyn Dilkes on [ed21531@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ed21531@essex.ac.uk).

### **Informed consent**

Should you agree to take part in this experiment, you will be asked to agree to the below statement of consent before the questionnaire commences.

### Statement of consent

- By completing this online study you are consenting to the following:
- I am 18 years or older
- I agree to participate in the research project 'Investigating Experiences of Depersonalisation and Derealisation' being carried out by Evelyn Dilkes
- This agreement has been given voluntarily and without coercion
- I have been given full information about the study and contact details of the researchers
- I have read and understood the information provided above

### Risk statement:

- I agree to have my anonymised data shared on publicly accessible repositories
- I agree to be contacted in the future by the researchers
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and my participation in it

### Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. If you wish to withdraw, after completion you can get in touch with Evelyn Dilkes via email on [ed21531@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ed21531@essex.ac.uk). Any data already collected, upon withdrawal, will be destroyed if possible, unless you inform the researchers that you are happy for them to use such data for the scientific purposes of the project. It will not be possible to destroy any data that have already been shared anonymously on data sharing repositories.

### Data gathered

- We will collect the following data from each participant: Gender, where you live, ethnicity, age, social position and sexual orientation. Additionally, we will ask you questions regarding significant events that can occur during childhood. Depending on your response to the questions regarding depersonalisation, you may be lead to more sections, including questions regarding your thinking style, as well as how you would respond to certain scenarios and how distressing and calming they may be to you, as well as a small amount of information regarding your health. Finally, I will collect data on your description of how depersonalisation affects your life (which is optional).
- We are using your data to understand how many people experience depersonalisation and derealisation, whether they are linked to some childhood events, whether derealisation and depersonalisation are linked to thinking style and whether the frequency and severity of the experiences are linked to thinking style. Additionally, we want to understand what types of situations may 'bring on' depersonalisation and derealisation experiences, and also what type of activities may 'bring you out' of these experiences. We would also like to give you the opportunity to write your own personal experience of depersonalisation and derealisation so that we can ensure you have the opportunity to describe features that are unique to you.
- Your data will be gathered by Evelyn Dilkes.
- Personally identifying data will be stored on a password secured laptop only accessible to Evelyn Dilkes.

- Consent will be obtained from you at the beginning of the questionnaire by selecting 'agree' to the consent statement. The consent data will be kept with the main data.
- You will be given the option, at the end of the survey, to give your name and email address. This data will be used to contact you for two reasons: (1) to contact you if you win a £20 Amazon voucher, and (2) to contact you to participate in an in-person lab experiment where you would be paid £50. Personally identifying data will be retained until the end of Evelyn Dilkes's PhD, after which point all personally identifying data will be deleted.
- Our legal basis for processing your personally identifying data is that you have consented to it.
- The data controller is the University of Essex.
- Essex University's Data Protection Officer can be contacted on [dpo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:dpo@essex.ac.uk).
- Your data may be anonymised (so that you cannot be identified from them) and published in scientific journal articles, and shared in permanent, publicly accessible archives accessible from any country.

### **Funding**

The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

### **Ethical approval**

This project has been reviewed on behalf of the University of Essex Ethics Sub-committee 1, and had been given approval with the following Application ID: ETH2223-0190.

### **Concerns and complaints**

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the Principal Investigator of the project (see contact details below). If you are still concerned or you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the Director of Research in the Principal Investigator's department (see below). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager (Sarah Manning-Press).

### **Contact details**

#### **Principal investigator**

Evelyn Dilkes ([ed21531@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ed21531@essex.ac.uk))

#### **Co-investigators**

Dr Helge Gillmeister ([helge@essex.ac.uk](mailto:helge@essex.ac.uk))

Dr Katie Daughters ([k.daughters@essex.ac.uk](mailto:k.daughters@essex.ac.uk))

#### **Director of Research, Dept of Psychology**

Prof Sheina Orbell ([sorbell@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sorbell@essex.ac.uk))

#### **University of Essex Research Governance and Planning Manager**

Sarah Manning-Press, Research & Enterprise Office, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, CO4 3SQ, Colchester. Email: [sarahm@essex.ac.uk](mailto:sarahm@essex.ac.uk). Phone: 01206-873561