

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE TEMPERAMENT THEORY AND PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have explored personality traits to explain paranormal experiences, so it is not surprising that connections remain to be made between such experiences and a person's temperament. The aim of this study is to compare the frequency of paranormal experiences across four temperament groups. Questionnaires that included the standardized Spanish version of the *Eysenck Personality Inventory* (Form A) were distributed to 2678 Psychology undergraduate students, and 1860 usable returns were retained for the categorization procedure. Individuals who scored in the upper and lower quartiles for extraversion and neuroticism were allocated to one of four groups: Phlegmatic (n = 30); Sanguine (n = 54); Melancholic (n = 159); and Choleric (n = 160). This sample completed a second 10-item self-report inventory designed to measure spontaneous paranormal/anomalous experiences. Members of the Choleric group scored higher on frequency of Out-of-Body Experiences, ESP in dreams, Aura, Déjà-vu, and overall count of experiences; the Sanguine group scored higher on Telepathy; whereas the Melancholic group scored higher on frequency of Sense of presence. Certain anomalous experiences, such as OBE, dreams recall and auras, could be facilitated using extravert subjects characterized as touchy, restless, excitable, changeable, and impulsive.

INTRODUCTION

Temperament theory has its roots in the ancient four humours theory. It may have origins in ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia (van Sertima, 1992), but it was the Greek physician Hippocrates who developed it into a medical theory (see Kagan, 1998). He believed certain human moods, emotions and behaviours were caused by an excess or lack of four body fluids (called "humours"): blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. Next, Galen developed the first typology of temperament where he classified them as hot/cold and dry/wet. There could also be 'balance' between the qualities, yielding a total of nine temperaments (van Sertima, 1992).

In the ideal personality, the complementary characteristics of warm-cool and dry-moist were exquisitely balanced. In four less ideal types, one of the four qualities was dominant over the others. In the remaining four types, one pair of qualities dominated the complementary pair; for example, warm and moist dominated cool and dry. Thus temperament theory might be thought of as a proto-psychological theory that suggests that there are four fundamental personality types, sanguine (optimistic leader-like), choleric (bad-tempered or irritable), melancholic (analytical and quiet), and phlegmatic (relaxed and peaceful). Most formulations include the possibility of mixtures of the types (Kagan, 1998; Martindale & Martindale, 1988).

The Greek physician Hippocrates (460-370 BC) incorporated the four temperaments into his medical theories as part of the ancient medical concept of humourism, that four bodily fluids affect human personality traits and behaviours. In

his *Canon of Medicine* — a standard medical text at many medieval universities — Persian polymath Avicenna (980-1037 AD) extended the theory of temperaments to encompass emotional aspects, mental capacity, moral attitudes, self-awareness, movements and dreams (Kagan, 1998). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), Alfred Adler (1879-1937), Erich Adickes (1866-1925), and Erich Fromm (1900-1980), among others, all theorized on the four temperaments (with different names) and greatly shaped our modern theories of temperament (Martindale & Martindale, 1988).

Other researchers developed similar systems, many of which did not use the ancient temperament names, and several paired extraversion with a different factor, which would determine relationship/task-orientation. One of the most popular today is the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (KTS; Billemont, 2012), whose four temperaments were mapped to the 16 types of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). They were renamed as Artisan (SP), Guardian (SJ), Idealist (NF), and Rational (NT). Rather than using extraversion and introversion (E/I) and task/people focus, like other approaches discussed here, the KTS mapped the temperaments to 'Sensing' and 'Intuition' (S/N, renamed 'concrete' and 'abstract') with a new pair category, 'cooperative' and 'pragmatic'. When 'Role-Informative' and 'Role-Directive' (corresponding to orientation to people or to task), and finally E/I are factored in, this gives the 16 types. Temperament is considered a relatively stable aspect of personality that has been inherited, and it underlies the immediate, uncontrolled reactions people make towards emotional stimuli (Snowden & Gray 2010). This suggests a possible link between temperament and paranormal/spiritual experiences, though to date few studies have considered this, though Steiner (2008) did attempt to find a synthesis between spirituality and the temperament.

Carl G. Jung identified theoretical concepts of different personality types. According to Jung (1921/1971), people can assimilate data from their inner or outer world either by sensation or intuition, but not by both processes at the same time. As Jung describes them, sensation and intuition are antithetical psychological processes; therefore, individuals tend to develop a noticeable preference for one mode of information input over the other. The sensation category consists of individuals who typically perceive information by means of the senses. Comparing the S/N types, Intuitives gather information according to possibilities rather than probabilities; they tend to project themselves into the future and experience the 'whole picture' in a flash of insight. Intuitives are often considered visionaries, creating new avenues for exploration or discussion, whereas Sensors are more down-to-earth and make sure that the information gathered is based on hard reality.

Finally, Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) is a questionnaire to assess the personality traits of a person, and was developed by analyzing personality differences using factor analysis, which led to a model of personality and temperament that consisted of three dimensions: Psychoticism, Extraversion, and Neuroticism (also known as the 'PEN' model of personality). Two of these factors can be mapped onto the humours model (see Figure 1), representing neuroticism which is the tendency to experience negative emotions, and extraversion which is the tendency to enjoy positive events, especially social ones.

Given his understanding of the biological basis of extraversion, Eysenck argued

that extraverts should be more successful as receivers in a psi task than introverts because they are more sensitive to subtle information or stimuli (Eysenck, 1967). It could also be that the experimental situation favours extraverts, who respond well to novelties but lose interest with monotony; in contrast, the introvert would be disconcerted by novelty, which would heighten anxiety and this might mask psi information, resulting in psi missing. Since extraverts tend to have a lower level of cortical stimulation than introverts, it is expected that the extraverts manifest greater psi abilities because the introverts have too much internal 'noise' to be able to capture and utilize the weak ESP signal (Eysenck, 1967; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964, 1985).

		<i>Extraversion</i>	
		<i>Extravert</i>	<i>Introvert</i>
Neuroticism	Stable	<u>Sanguine</u> Outgoing, talkative, responsive, easygoing, lively, carefree, leadership	<u>Phlegmatic</u> Calm, even-tempered, reliable, controlled, peaceful, thoughtful, careful, passive
	Unstable	<u>Choleric</u> Touchy, restless, excitable, changeable, impulsive, irresponsible	<u>Melancholic</u> Quiet, reserved, pessimistic, sober, rigid, anxious, moody

Figure 1: The four humours in terms of Eysenck's dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism

A small number of studies appear to have addressed the personality correlates of those reporting spontaneous psychic experiences. Some of them have studied ESP claims and a variety of personality and cognitive variables as correlates of parapsychological experiences, such as out-of-body experiences (e.g., Alvarado & Zingrone, 1997), precognitive experiences (Parra, 2015a; Rattet & Bursik, 2001), extrasensory experiences (Haight, 1979), aura (Zingrone, Alvarado, & Dalton, 1998-99), and empathy (Parra, 2013). Arcangel (1997) asked each of her 68 participants to complete the MBTI, once they had emerged from the psychomanteum chamber. Her results indicated that people having a reunion (apparitional) experience while in the chamber showed a strong tendency towards a personality that emphasizes feelings over logical thoughts, and intuitions over sense-perception, with approximately 96% of these 'intuitive-feeling' participants having a reunion experience while 100% of the ST (Sensing, Thinking) participants did not experience anything unusual or significant (Hastings et al., 2002). Participants reported visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, gustatory, experiences and/or an intuitive sense of presence with post-mortem disembodied persons under controlled circumstances of observation. Arcangel also concluded that personality types influence facilitated reunions and other paranormal encounters, indicating that using an oracular chamber can be an effective source of information regarding those who are most likely to experience discarnate visits as opposed to those who do not.

Given the dearth of formal research, a more circumstantial case can be made by noting that people who report frequent psychic experiences show a tendency to worry a lot, be depressed and anxious, have psychosomatic complaints, feel tired and be prone to neurosis — all aspects of temperament (Gómez, Montanelli & Parra, 2004; for review see Kramer, Bauer, & Hövelmann, 2012). Individuals who report more psi experiences also demonstrate higher levels of maladjustment, gregariousness and thoughtfulness than those that do not (Sebastian & Mathew 2001). However, Fox and Williams (2000) found that personality dimensions as measured by the Keirsey Temperament Sorter played only a minor role in predicting scores on the Anomalous Experience Inventory among college students. Taken together, these suggest that it would be beneficial to explore whether the incidence and type of spontaneous paranormal experience reported by the general population are related to their temperament types.

METHOD

Participants

From a total of 2678 undergraduate students recruited from the psychology department, 1810 usable questionnaires (67%) were received, 1216 (75%) from females and 594 (35%) from males, ranging in age from 18 to 53 (Mean = 33.47; SD = 13.30). From the 1810 usable questionnaires, 403 cases (21%) were used (see *Categorization procedure*).

Instruments

Eysenck Personality Inventory, Form A (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964/1978; 1975, 1985): EPI is a 57-item self-report inventory. Each item of this scale requires a 'yes' or 'no' response. A standardized Spanish version was used that measures two personality factors: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E). The latest standardized Argentine-Spanish version was used (Argibay, 2008).

The second instrument was used in a number of previous papers (Parra & Argibay, 2013a, 2013b), and is a 10-item self-report inventory designed to collect information on spontaneous paranormal/anomalous experiences. Each item has a Likert response scale, on which 0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Occasionally and 3 = Frequently. The internal reliability of this self-report inventory is good, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92, and test-retest reliability has also been found to be acceptable. An index, or count, of psi experiences (Psi Index) for each subject based on range of 'yes' responses to questions about having had paranormal experiences was constructed. The index has a range from 0 = no experience to 10 = having reported all the experiences listed.

Both questionnaires were given under the title *Questionnaire of Psychological Experiences*, in a counterbalanced order to encourage unbiased responding. They were given in a single envelope to each participant during a class. Each student received information about the study and was invited to complete the scales voluntarily and anonymously, in a single session selected from days and times previously agreed upon with the teachers.

Categorization procedure

The following criteria based on mean score to split the sample into two groups was used: participants who scored 75% or above on the N scale (EPQ) were categorised as the High N group (Range raw score = 17–25) and participants who scored 25% or below on the N scale were categorised as the Low N group (Range raw score = 0–9). Participants who scored 75% or above on the E scale were categorised as the High E group (Range raw score = 15–25) and participants who scored 25% or below on the E scale were categorised as the Low E group (Range raw score = 0–9). For all analyses *SPSS 20.0* was used. An alpha level of .05, one-tailed was used for all statistical tests. Both ranks were combined in order to produce four groups (the sample examined), Phlegmatic (n = 30; 7.4%), Sanguine (n = 54; 13.4%), Melancholic (n = 159; 39.5%) and Choleric (n = 160; 39.7%). The remaining cases (n = 1407, 75%) were excluded from analysis.

RESULTS

First, two-sample KS tests was used for comparing four groups, as it is sensitive to differences in both location and shape of the empirical cumulative distribution functions of the samples. Non parametric statistics (Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance) was used to test the hypotheses, since the scores were not normally distributed. The resulting *H* was transformed into a X^2 for the purposes of assigning probability values. All comparison were two-tailed.

Table 1

Descriptive Data Of Gender, Age And Psi Index For Four Temperaments

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Mean Age (SD)</i>	<i>Mean Psi-Index* (SD)</i>
Melancholic	70 (44%)	89 (56%)	34.35 yrs. (12.59)	3.03 (2.59)
Sanguine	24 (45%)	30 (55%)	28.09 yrs. (9.52)	2.59 (2.03)
Phlegmatic	17 (56%)	13 (44%)	31.67 yrs (10.54)	1.50 (1.63)
Choleric	51 (32%)	109 (68%)	30.47 yrs (11.41)	3.79 (2.51)

* Range: 0 = No experience to 10 experiences

Table 2 shows the percentages and number of cases of four groups for ten paranormal/anomalous experiences. Cholerics scored higher than other temperaments for all phenomena types except Past lives recall and Sense of presence.

Table 3 shows that Cholerics scored higher on frequency of Out-of-Body Experiences ($p = .005$), ESP dreams ($p = .035$), Aura ($p = .039$), Déjà-vu ($p < .011$), and the Psi Index ($p < .001$) than for Melancholic, Sanguine, and Phlegmatic; Sanguine scored higher on frequency of Telepathy ($p < .001$) than Cholerics,

Melancholic, and Phlegmatic; and Melancholic scored higher on frequency of Sense of presence ($p < .001$) than Sanguine, Melancholic, and Phlegmatic.

Table 2
Frequency And Percentage (%) Of Four Temperaments Who Report Paranormal Experiences

<i>Paranormal Experiences</i>	Melancholic (n = 159)	Sanguine (n = 54)	Phlegmatic (n = 30)	Choleric (n = 160)
1. ESP dreams	66 (41.5)	22(40.7)	6 (20.0)	78 (48.8)
2. Telepathy	58 (36.5)	20 (37.0)	4 (13.3)	83 (51.9)
3. Aura	29 (18.2)	8 (14.8)	0	34 (21.3)
4. Out-of-Body Experiences	27 (17.0)	7 (13.0)	2 (6.7)	45 (28.1)
5. Past lives recall	46 (28.9)	10(18.5)	3 (10.0)	43 (26.9)
6. Sense of presence	92 (57.5)	19(35.2)	6 (20.0)	66 (41.5)
7. Remote healing	35 (22.0)	8 (14.8)	2 (6.7)	39 (24.2)
8. Déjà-vu	115 (72.3)	41(75.9)	18 (60.0)	140 (87.5)
9. Mystical experience	22 (13.8)	4 (7.4)	1 (3.3)	27 (16.9)
10. Apparitions	18 (11.3)	1 (1.9)	3 (10.0)	25 (15.6)

Table 3
Comparison Of Four Temperament Who Report Paranormal Experiences

<i>Paranormal Experiences*</i>	Melancholic (n = 159)		Sanguine (n = 54)		Phlegmatic (n = 30)		Choleric (n = 160)		X^2	<i>p</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
1. ESP dreams	.78	.99	.78	1.0	.37	.76	.93	1.02	8.57	.035
2. Telepathy	.66	.92	1.03	1.06	.20	.55	.74	.99	22.07	<.001
3. Aura	.24	.55	.20	.52	.00	.00	.32	.66	8.36	.039
4. Out-of-Body Exp	.26	.64	.15	.40	.13	.50	.45	.76	13.04	.005
5. Past lives recall	.50	.84	.31	.72	.17	.53	.46	.81	6.36	n.s.
6. Sense of presence	1.04	.99	.61	.87	.30	.65	.79	1.01	19.69	<.001
7. Remote healing	.38	.80	.28	.68	.10	.40	.41	.77	5.97	n.s.
8. Déjà-vu	1.53	1.05	1.63	1.01	1.17	1.02	1.80	.84	11.10	.011
9. Mystical experience	.24	.64	.09	.35	.03	.18	.32	.75	6.56	n.s.
10. Apparitions	.19	.56	.02	.13	.17	.59	.27	.68	7.73	n.s.
Psi Index	5.82	5.31	4.98	3.86	2.77	3.04	7.33	5.49	27.84	<.001

* Non parametric analysis (Kruskall-Wallis's H)

** Range: 0 = Never to 3 = frequently

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to compare four types of temperament in terms of the frequency of paranormal experiences. Firstly, those in the Choleric category (who scored high on both Emotional unstable and Extraversion) scored higher on five (50%) out of ten paranormal experiences, including reported Out-of-Body Experiences, ESP dreams, aura, déjà-vu, and the overall count of experiences. The Choleric profile seems to be associated with proneness to report or search for meaning in some anomalous experiences; in fact, this finding appears consistent with previous research (Kumar, Pekala & Cummings, 1993; Parra, 2015b) in which positive relationships were obtained between sensation seeking and paranormal beliefs/experiences, such as telepathy, out-of-body experiences, déjà-vu and the count of paranormal experiences.

The linking of extraversion and arousal seemed potentially important and, conceivably, might be related to anomalous experiences performance. For example, extraverts, whom Eysenck (1967) regards as chronically less aroused than introverts and thus might be sensitive to subtle psi signals that would be lost in the 'noisier' introverts nervous system. It is also possible that extraverts would enjoy the novelty of unusual situations such as the ganzfeld whereas introverts might enjoy the setting less and relax less well in it (Honorton, Ferrari & Bem, 1990; Parra & Villanueva, 2003a, 2003b; Schlitz & Honorton, 1992). Certain anomalous experiences, such OBE, dreams recall and seeing auras, could be facilitated by targeting Choleric participants, who would be characterized as touchy, restless, excitable, changeable, and impulsive. However, this profile is somewhat debated (for example, see Bierman, Bosga, Gerding & Wezelman, 1993).

Secondly, the Sanguine group reported higher scores for ESP experiences (i.e. telepathy). This group is characterized as outgoing, talkative, responsive, easygoing, lively, and carefree, a profile that could, in combination with empathy, be a facilitator for such "intraceptive" anomalous experiences than other (anomalous) experiences, such as OBE and seeing auras or ghosts (Parra, 2006).

Finally, the Melancholic profile is indicative of a quiet, reserved, pessimistic, sober, rigid, and anxious attitude. This group reported the greatest incidence of "sense of presence", which might be a consequence of bereavement (Cheyne, Newby-Clark, & Rueffer, 1999). We are speculating here, of course, but these results confirmed our suspicions that a great deal of potentially useful and meaningful psychological data may be uncovered by examining data collected in the context of laboratory experiments. Future studies should surely examine other variables associated with temperament, addressing psychoanalytic, behaviouristic, and humanistic schools of thought.

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