

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TEMPERAMENT THEORY AND PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES

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Abstract. Scarce studies explored traits of personality to explain paranormal experiences, so it's not surprising that connection has also been made between simple such experiences and a person's temperament. The aim is to compare four groups of temperaments in terms of a frequency of paranormal experiences. From the usable questionnaires (1860, 21%), 403 undergraduate students (Psychology Department) were used for the categorization procedure, based on mean score to split the sample, combined to produce four groups, Phlegmatic (n= 30), Sanguine (n= 54), Melancholic (n= 159) and Choleric (n= 160), using the standardized Spanish version of the *Eysenck Personality Inventory* (Form A). The sample filled a second 10-item self-report inventory designed to collect spontaneous paranormal/anomalous experiences. Choleric profile scored higher on frequency of Out-of-Body Experiences, ESP dreams, Aura, Déjà-vu, and a count of experiences, Sanguine scored higher on Telepathy, and Melancholic scored higher on frequency of Sense of presence. Certain anomalous experiences, such OOBE, dreams recall and see auras, could be facilitated using extravert subjects characterized for be touchy, restless, excitable, changeable, and impulsive.

Key words. temperament, paranormal experiences, Eysenck Personality Inventory, Psi Index, choleric profile.

INTRODUCTION

The theory of temperament has its roots in the ancient theory of the four humors, which had its origin in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, but it was the Greek physician Hippocrates (460-370 BC) who developed it in a medical context (see Kagan, 1998). Hippocrates believed that certain states of mind, emotions and behaviors were caused by an excess or lack of bodily fluids (called "humors"), blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. Later, Galen (129-200 AD) developed the first typology of the temperament which he classified as hot / cold and dry / wet, from which there was a "balance" between the four qualities, giving a total of nine temperaments (Sertima, 1992).

The word "temperament" comes from the Latin *temperare* (temperature). The "ideal" personality occurs when temperatures, hot / cold and wet / dry, are carefully balanced. But often, in all four types, one of these is dominant above all others. In the remaining four, a pair of qualities dominates the complementary pair; for example, warm and wet dominates the cold and dry. The four temperaments are a psychological "proto-theory" which suggests that there are four fundamental types of personality, sanguine (leader-optimistic), choleric (moody or irritable), melancholic (analytical-calm), and phlegmatic (relaxed-quiet). Most of these allow a large number of combinations (Kagan, 1998; Martindale and Martindale, 1988).

The Greek physician Hippocrates (460-370 BC) incorporated the four temperaments into his medical theories as part of the old concept of moods, and that the four bodily fluids affect human personality and behavior. In his *Canon of Medicine* - a text of classical medicine in many medieval universities - the Persian scholar Avicenna (980-1037 AD) extended the theory of temperaments to include “emotional aspects, mental capacity, moral attitudes, self-awareness, movements and even dreams” (Kagan, 1998, p. 210). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), Alfred Adler (1879-1937), Erich Adickes (1866-1925), Erich Fromm (1947) among others, all have also theorized about the four temperaments (with different names) and to a large extent shaped our current theories about temperament (Martindale and Martindale, 1988).

Other researchers have developed similar systems, many of which do not use the old nomenclature of temperament, but they pair extroversion with a different factor, which would determine task orientation. One of the best known today is the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (KTS) (Billefont, 2012), whose four temperaments are largely based on the Greek gods, and are assigned to the 16 types of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which were renamed Artisan (SP), Guardian (SJ), Idealist (NF), and Rational (NT). Instead of using extroversion and introversion (E / I) as other theories, the KTS configures the “Sensation” and “Intuition” (S / N, renamed “Concrete” and “Abstract”) temperaments as a new categorical pair, “Cooperative” and “Pragmatic”. When factorizing “Role / Informative” and “Role / Manager” (corresponding to the orientation to people or tasks), E / I yields 16 types.

Temperament is considered a relatively stable aspect of inherited personality, and is the basis of the uncontrolled reactions that people have to emotional stimuli (Snowden & Gray, 2010). However, there are not many studies on temperament and paranormal / spiritual experiences. Steiner (1909/2008) tried to find a synthesis between spirituality and temperament. In his philosophical work, which he called *spiritual science*, he tried to apply Western philosophy’s thinking to *spiritual* issues. Lachman analyzed some of the principles of Steiner’s anthroposophy, life after death and rebirth, spiritualism, and the occult history of the world. Steiner himself refused to say how he knew these things, but one could conclude benignly that he learned them from his own practice of meditation exercises (for a review, see Lachman, 2007).

Projectiology is a subfield or specialty of the science conscientiology, which studies the projections of consciousness outside the physical body, i.e., the actions of consciousness in non-physical dimensions, outside the biological body (Vieira, 1986, 1999). Projectiology also investigates dozens of phenomena such as bilocation, clairvoyance, near death experiences (NDE), precognition, telepathy (see Vieira, 1997, 2000). However, few studies have explored personality traits to explain spontaneous projectiological experiences, so the connection between such experiences and individual temperament is not surprising. Individuals who indicate certain experiences show a tendency to worry, to be depressed and anxious, to have psychosomatic complaints, to feel tired and to be prone to neurosis

- all aspects of temperament (Gómez Montanelli and Parra, 2004; for a review see Kramer, Bauer & Hövelmann, 2012). People who show higher levels of maladaptation and gregariousness than that “normal” people tend to have more frequency of paranormal experiences (Sebastián and Mathew, 2001). However, Fox and William (2000) examined college students who completed the Keirsey Temperament Sorter but did not obtain any significant relationship.

Several studies have evaluated the personality correlates of those who have spontaneous experiences, some of whom have studied psychic experiences and a large number of cognitive and personality variables in relation to projectiology (Vieira, 1986, 1997, 1999, 2000), such as premonitions (Parra, 2015a; Rattet and Buršík, 2001; Haight, 1979), seeing the aura (Zingrone, Alvarado and Dalton, 1998-99), and empathy (Parra, 2013). For example, to test the hypothesis that the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) psychological types influence the experience of “meeting” with deceased persons applying the psychomental technique, Arcangel (1997) found that 96% of the NF (Intuitive / Sensory) type experiences spiritual contacts, but that 100% of participants with type ST (Sensory / Rational) had no unusual or significant experience (see Arcangel, 2001; Moody, 1994). Arcangel also concluded that personality types influenced spiritual encounters with deceased loved ones and other paranormal experiences, which indicates that the use of an oracle can be an effective source for those who are prone to experience such encounters as opposed to those who do not.

The EPQ is an instrument that evaluates personality traits, designed by Hans J. and Sybil B.G. Eysenck (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). Eysenck (1916-1997) was one of the first psychologists to analyze personality differences using factorial analysis, and his research led him to believe that temperament is biologically determined. He proposed Neuroticism (N), the tendency to experience negative emotions, and Extraversion (E), the tendency to enjoy positive events, especially social ones. In relating these two dimensions, Eysenck observed how their results resembled the four temperaments of antiquity. Eysenck considered the learning of habits of great relevance, but considered as the most important the differences of personality that were developed outside the genetic inheritance. He also developed his model of personality and temperament according to three dimensions: Psychoticism, Extraversion and Neuroticism, also known as “PEN” model of personality (Dergan, 1999).

Originally, Eysenck only theorized about neuroticism and extraversion, but later he realized that psychoticism was also a contributing factor to personality (he later added Psychoticism as the third factor in his model for his new tetra-factorial model of personality) (Eysenck, 1985; for a discussion see Boeree, 1998; Plucker, 2013). The three dimensions posed by Eysenck’s PEN model are Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism (now known as “Negative Affect”). Extraversion is a bipolar dimension in which the highest extreme is extraversion itself,

and in the other extreme, with low score, introversion. According to Eysenck, people with a highly activated cerebellar cortex (Ascending Reticular Activation System) do not need more stimulation and avoid excessive social contact, that is, they would be introverted and vice versa (Social Dimension). The dimension known as Neuroticism at its upper pole indicates a greater presence of anxiety, whereas in the opposite pole is the control of the emotions, that is to say, the “normality”. The biological bases of this dimension are related to the activation of the Autonomic Nervous System (Emotional Dimension) (see Eysenck & Eysenck, 1987). A combination of polar opposites in Neuroticism (High vs. Low) and Extroversion (High vs. Low) produces four temperament profiles (see Table 1):

Table 1. Profile, quadrant and main qualities of the four temperaments measured by the EPQ.

Profile	Quadrant	Qualities such as...
Sanguine	Stable Extravert	Open, talkative, responsible, cordial, lively, carefree, leader.
Choleric	Unstable Extravert	Cantankerous, restless, nervous, moody, impulsive, immature.
Phlegmatic	Stable Introvert	Calm, equable, reliable, controlled, peaceful, thoughtful, careful, passive.
Melancholic	Unstable Introvert	Quiet, reserved, pessimistic, proud, rigid, anxious.

Eysenck’s PEN model and its relation to psychic experiences fit well with the present study because Eysenck also believed that extroverted participants in parapsychological experiments should have better psi capacities than introverts because extroverts respond better to new stimuli (Eysenck & Sargent, 1984). He suggested that it is possible that in the context of experience, it may favor extroverts, who respond well to the novel, but lose interest in monotony. Conversely, the introvert is more inclined to entertain themselves with their own thoughts and thereby mask the psi information, and this causes psi to be nullified. Since extroverts tend to have lower levels of cortical stimulation than introverts, extroverts would be expected to exhibit higher psi abilities because introverts have too much internal “noise” to capture the weak psi signal (Eysenck, 1967).

PREDICTIONS

Although in essence this study is really exploratory, the aim is to compare the four groups of temperaments mentioned above in terms of the frequency of paranormal experiences, such as dreams, telepathy, seeing aura, projectiological experiences, past life memories, distance healing, déjà-vu, mystical experience, apparitions and an index (or count) of paranormal experiences.

METHOD

Of a total of 2678 university students recruited in the Department of Psychology, 1810 completed questionnaires (67%) were received. Of this number, 1216 (75%) were women and 594 (35%) were men, aged between 18 and 53 (mean = 33.47, SD = 13.30). Of the 1810 questionnaires, only 403 cases (21%) were used to group the four temperaments (see *Categorization Procedure*).

INSTRUMENTS

Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, Form A (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1964/1978, 1975, 1985; latest Argentinean standardized Spanish version of Argibay, 2008). The EQP contains 94 response items, each of which is answered by Yes / No. It measures two personality factors: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E) and Psychoticism, but only the first two were used to group temperaments.

The second instrument was administered in previous studies (Parra and Argibay, 2013a, 2013b). It is a 10-item self-administered questionnaire designed to collect information on the type and frequency of spontaneous anomalous / paranormal experiences. Each item has a Likert scale, being 0 = Never, 1 = Once, 2 = Rarely and 3 = Multiple times. The internal reliability of this inventory is good, with a Cronbach alpha reliability of 0.92, and test-retest reliability also acceptable. An index, or count, of psi (Index Psi) experiences was used for each subject based on the answers to each question of each reported experience. The index has a range of 0 (No experience) for 10 (have had all the experiences listed).

Both questionnaires were delivered under the pseudo-title Questionnaire of Psychological Experiences, with items randomized (set of five sheets) to avoid bias in responses. Each student received vague information from the study and was invited to complete both scales voluntarily and anonymously, in a single meeting previously agreed with the teachers.

CATEGORIZATION PROCEDURE

The following criterion was used based on the percentile (+75 vs. -25%) obtained from the total sample (N = 1810) to divide the sample into two groups: Participants scored 75% to 99% on the N subscale (EPQ) were grouped as "High N" (Gross score range = 17-25) and participants who scored 0% to 25% on the N subscale were grouped as "Low N" (Gross score range = 0-9). Those participants who scored 75% to 99% on the E subscale (EPQ) were grouped as "High E" (Rank gross score = 15-25) and participants who scored 0% to 25% on the subscale E were grouped as "Low E" (Gross score range = 0-9). For all analyzes the SPSS program (20.0) was used. A cut-off point of 0.05 and one-tailed analysis was used for all statistical tests. Both ranks were combined in the data matrix to produce four well-defined groups: (1) Phlegmatic (n = 30, 7.4%), (2) 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 the analysis.

RESULTS

First, a KS normality test was used for all four groups. The results showed high asymmetry ($p < .001$) by which non-parametric statistics (Kruskal-Wallis test) were used to test the hypothesis, since the results were not normally distributed. The resulting statistic was transformed into an X^2 to assign probability values. All comparisons were two-tailed.

Table 2. Descriptive data of gender, age and Index Psi for the four temperaments

	Men	Women	Age Range (DT- Average)	Index* (DT-Average)
Melancholic	70 (44%)	89 (56%)	18-72 years (34,35-12,59)	3.03-2.59
Sanguine	24 (45%)	30 (55%)	18-62 years (28.09-9.52)	2.59-2.03
Phlegmatic	17 (56%)	13 (44%)	18-60 years (31.67-10.54)	1.50-1.63
Choleric	51 (32%)	109 (68%)	17-63 years (30.47-11.41)	3,79-2,51

* Range: 0 = No experience to 10 experiences.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of the four temperaments reporting paranormal experiences

Experiences Paranormal	Melancholy (n = 159)	Sanguine (n = 54)	Phlegmatic (n = 30)	Choleric (n = 160)
1. Premonitory 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. Projectiology	27 (17.0)	7 (13.0)	2 (6.7)	45 (28.1)
5. Memory of past lives	46 (28.9)	10 (18.5)	3 (10.0)	43 (26.9)
6. Feeling of presence	92 (57.5)	19 (35.2)	6 (20.0)	66 (41.5)
7. 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 shows the frequency and percentage of cases of the four groups for the 10 abnormal / paranormal experiences. The Choleric profile obtained a higher frequency of experiences compared to the other three temperaments, except Past Memory of Lives and Sensation of Presence.

Table 4. Comparison of the four temperaments reporting paranormal experiences.

Paranormal Experiences	Melancholic (n = 159)		Sanguine (n = 54)		Phlegmatic (n = 30)		Choleric (n = 160)		X ²	P
	Average	DT	Average	DT	Average	DT	Average	DT		
1. Premonitory 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	<0.001
3. Aura	,24	,55	,20	,52	,00	,00	,32	,66	8.36	,039
4. Projectiology	,26	,64	,15	,40	,13	,50	,45	,76	13.04	,005
5. Memory of past lives	,50	,84	,31	,72	,17	,53	,46	,81	6,36	ns
6. Feeling of presence	1.04	,99	,61	,87	,30	,65	,79	1.01	19.69	<0.001
7. Healing	,38	,80	,28	,68	,10	,40	,41	,77	5.97	ns
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	ns
10. Apparitions	,19	,56	,02	,13	,17	,59	,27	,68	7.73	ns
Index Psi	5.82	5.31	4.98	3.86	2.77	3.04	7.33	5.49	27.84	<0.001

* Non-parametric analysis (Kruskall-Wallis H).

** Range: 0 = Never to 3 = Multiple experiences.

Table 4 shows that Choleric scores significantly higher in the frequency of projective experiences ($p = 0.005$), psychic dreams ($p = 0.035$), Aura ($p = 0.039$), Déjà-vu ($p < 0.011$), and Psi ($p < 0.001$) compared to Melancholic, Sanguine, and Phlegmatic; the Sanguine profile obtained significantly higher scores in Telepathy ($p < 0.001$) compared to Choleric, Melancholic and Phlegmatic; and the Melancholic profile obtained significantly higher scores in Feeling of presence ($p < 0.001$) compared to Sanguine, Melancholic and Phlegmatic.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to compare four types of temperament in terms of the frequency of ten paranormal experiences. First, the Choleric profile presented significant scores in five (50%) of ten paranormal experiences, such as projective experiences, dreams, aura, déjà-vu, and the Psi Index. This profile (those that

score high on instability and extroversion) seems to be associated with the propensity to report or search for meaning in anomalous experiences, in fact, this result seems consistent with previous research (Kumar, Pekala and Cummings, 1993; Parra, 2015b). Parra (2015b) obtained positive relations between search for sensations and paranormal experiences, such as telepathy, spontaneous projectological experiences, and déjà-vu.

The linkage of extroversion and excitation seems important and, possibly, could be related to anomalous experiences. For example, extroverts, whom Eysenck (1967) found to be less excitable than introverts and therefore tolerant and even individuals who actively seek greater stimulation than introverts are those who respond well to the psi signal (as in the Ganzfeld studies), while introverts enjoy less of that environment, are more self-absorbed and less sociable (Honorton, Ferrari and Bem, 1990; Parra and Villanueva, 2003a, 2003b; Schlitz and Honorton, 1992) producing non-significant results in favor of introversion. Certain anomalous experiences, such as OBE, memory of dreams, or seeing the aura, could be facilitated in extroverted individuals, characterized by being more sensitive, restless, excitable, shifting, and impulsive. However, this profile is debatable (for example, see Bierman, Bosga, Gerding and Wezelman, 1993).

Secondly, the Sanguine profile that has extrasensory experiences (mainly telepathy) is characterized by being extroverted, communicative, sensitive, tolerant, cheerful, carefree, and probably in combination with empathy to be a facilitator for abnormal cognition experiences in comparison to other (anomalous) "intracognitive" experiences, such as OBEs, and seeing auras or ghosts.

Finally, the melancholic profile compatible with depression and pessimistic attitudes, is usually associated to people who lost loved ones. Consequently, "feeling of presence" is a common anomalous experience in elderly people with depression and widows, and refers to a cognitive-perceptual modality that may imply an illusion, or where there is a misinterpreted perceptual stimulus (Cheyne, Newby-Clark, and Rueffer, 1999; Parra, 2006). Of course, we are speculating here, but these results confirm that there is a large amount of potentially useful and meaningful psychological data that can be applied in laboratory psi research. Future studies should examine other variables associated with temperament theory from psychoanalytic, behavioral, and humanistic perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the BIAL Foundation for their financial support for this research project.

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