

A CONTROLLED ANALYSIS OF SUBJECTIVE PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES IN TEMPORAL LOBE DYSFUNCTION IN A NEUROPSYCHIATRIC POPULATION

John Palmer¹, Vernon Neppe², Heidi Nebel², Stacie Magill²

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Abstract

Previous research by Neppe and Persinger supports an association between subjective paranormal experiences (SPEs) and lability in the temporal lobes of the brain in neurologically normal populations. In an effort to extend these findings to a clinical population, Palmer blind-coded files of 100 of Neppe's patients and placed them in a temporal lobe dysfunction (TLD) group ($N=60$) or control group ($N=27$) according to 4 criteria: (1) scores on 16 TLD-relevant items on a symptom questionnaire (INSET); (2) anomalous brainwaves measured by clinical and ambulatory EEG; (3) predisposing conditions (head trauma, recreational drug use); and (4) response to anticonvulsant drugs. SPEs (ESP, out-of-body, and apparition experiences) were measured by 4 items at the end of INSET and blind-scored by Nebel. The TLD hypothesis was confirmed ($p=.049$, 1-t), but subsequent analysis revealed that the significance was due entirely to INSET. Sixty females scored significantly higher than 27 males on both INSET and SPEs, but this confound did not destroy the INSET/SPE effect. Post-hoc logistic regression analyses revealed that jamais vu experiences and visual/auditory hallucinations were the best INSET predictors of ESP experiences. Temporal lobe EEG abnormalities were positively related to ESP for females (especially in the left hemisphere) but negatively for males, and right-lateralized patients were more likely to report ESP than left/mixed-lateralized patients. These post-hoc findings need to be validated with a new sample.

¹ Rhine Research Center, Durham, NC, USA.

² Pacific Neuropsychiatric Institute, Seattle, WA, USA.