

Poltergeist or NoGhost?

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What is Poltergeist?

Poltergeist is a German term meaning "rumbling ghost" or "noisy spirit". In the past it was widely believed that a spirit was responsible for an outbreak of anomalous phenomena in and around a house. Physical disturbances could be manifold. For example, inexplicable movement of small and large objects, sometimes in unusual trajectories (changing speed and direction, even floating). Objects appearing and/or disappearing, from one room to another, or from inside a house to outside the house. Objects, like stones or coins, seem to form in mid-air, and fall or fly through the room. Fragile objects do not break when they should. Stone bombardment is common, sometimes outside the house, sometimes inside the house. Liquids can appear suddenly, such as water puddles in a room. Graffiti can appear, cloths are thorn. Disorder in the house. Disturbances in water supply and electricity (lights flickering). Unexplained fires. One feels cold, heat, sees shadows, smell odors, hear sounds or voices (that other might not hear). Smearings. Cabinets, doors, windows open by themselves. Apparitions however are uncommon, and they do not always take on a human shape; they can be animal figures, demonic figures, amorphous shapes, shadowy and mist-like. Strobe-like flashing lights and light orbs are rare too.

Latest Research

Poltergeist cases are actually rare, and they are not easy to investigate. Different researchers have come to a variety of conclusion, based on the cases they investigated. The latest research have moved a way from the presence of a mischievous spirit, and have embraced the theory that the phenomena are the

result of emotional (or psychic) energy, likely of magnetic nature transduced to kinetic energy (to move objects), released by a *focus person*. Most researchers are now convinced that the incidents are due to psychokinesis by the living people who are at the center of the turmoil. Although this vision is at present widely held, it is not a new one. In 1911 William Barrett, a physicist and one of the founding members of the Society for Psychical research was the first one to suggest that the poltergeist phenomena tended to focus around a certain person.

Researchers have started to use the term RSPK (= Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis). The term was coined by paranormal researchers J. Gaither Pratt and William Roll.

Recurrent: the phenomena repeat themselves

Spontaneous: they are not the result of conscious intent, and are unpredictable

Psychokinesis: the power to move something by the use of psychic powers

Difference Between Poltergeist and Hauntings

When the phenomena are focused on a location, with no one around, then we speak of a haunting. Haunted places also know electrical disturbances and strange noises, but their occurrences are more spread out over time. These particular phenomena might be caused by the appearance of electro-magnetic and other geophysical fields. With poltergeist, a focus person is necessary to produce the other phenomena.

However the difference between poltergeist and hauntings is not always that clear. The phenomena of a location-bound haunting can be activated by a visiting, or moving-in, person. It is important to understand that despite the great progress researchers have made, there are still many issues unresolved.

In poltergeist the person-bound cases are active for at least a period of several consecutive days, and sometimes several months (a few cases a couple of years), whereas in the case of non-person-bound hauntings the phenomena occur very sporadically and sometimes no abnormalities are reported for many years.

The Focus Person's Psychological-Neurological State

Psychology

In most cases there is clear evidence that the phenomena in poltergeist are centered around one particular person. In contrast with earlier beliefs that poltergeist happens more with young girls, modern research has shown that gender does not play a role. There is an equal balance between males and females.

The phenomena with poltergeist do not seem to be meaningful, although it can display apparent intelligent behavior, as in responding with knocks on questions,

or reacting based on the actions of an observer.

In about half of the cases the phenomena are clearly directed against certain people.

Interesting to note is also that the phenomena often occur when the focus person is awake, and rarely when he is asleep, or assumed to be asleep. Continuous observation of the focus person is not always possible.

Although the focus person is often a child or teenager, there are also cases where it is an adult person, and even an older person. In all cases, these people have severe emotional problems, often due a trauma, and the entire family can be involved. For example, mother-child relationship can be under severe stress. Problematic can also be the entire social situation. Since the affected persons themselves are often not aware of the problem and they themselves would never establish a connection between the persons involved and the unusual events, they often associate the events with the presence of a spirit. Religious ceremonies, exorcisms, or magic rituals are only successful in very few cases, likely due to the fact that they are usually held when the phenomena are already waning.

Studies on the personality of the focus person have repeatedly given indications of unresolved conflict situations as well as anxiety and neurotic states. It is also stated that in general, poltergeist incidents seem to be symptoms of pathological interpersonal relations more than of pathological individual personalities. Perhaps the poltergeist person is an individual who is unusually sensitive to interpersonal stress or a person in whose life such stress has been unusually severe. The poltergeist phenomena are then directed to the person(s) that are the cause of the focus person's anger.

The poltergeist then manifests itself in an uninhibited destructive rage, in a sinister character, but also, for example, through obscene insinuations. This led to the hypothesis that poltergeist is an acting out of an immature part of a person's personality in a subconscious way, without the person being aware of it. In this way, the poltergeist often seems to take over the role of the naughty little girl/boy. The poltergeist does everything that a well-behaved child is not allowed to do or that is even taboo. Even when communication with poltergeist is attempted by, for example, an established code of knocking sounds, the responses are at the level of the focus person.

Poltergeist can be considered to be subconsciously directed psychokinetic outbursts of the inner emotional turmoil of the focus person.

It has also been noted that the phenomena also happen when the focus person likes the increased attention. While the focus person lacks the attention of family members, when visitors or researchers arrive, the child often likes the new attention, and then phenomena start to happen.

Neurology

The question is if some of the psychological problems of the focus person are the result of neurological problems, or vice versa.

When the health of focus people were examined, researchers found that some of them were prone to seizures or dissociative states. Symptoms included sudden muscle contractions, convulsions, fainting spells and trances, all symptoms of epilepsy. Epilepsy can have its origin in the temporal lobe, which is sensitive to external electric stimulation. More about this in the next section.

Geophysical Influences

Pathological situations are not that uncommon in people or families. So, there is still the unresolved question why poltergeist cases are so rare. There must be another trigger. There is probably an additional factor required, such as an inherent psychic ability of the focus person, but more likely earth-generated electro-magnetic fields.

It has been proposed that the additional factor in poltergeist phenomena are *transient geophysical fields* that involve electro-magnetic components. These fields would be generated by changing tectonic stresses within the earth's crust. They would appear as brief, very localized manifestations of this strain. Such fields with a small area (max. 1 cm²) would only last for seconds, while larger areas (1 m²) would last longer.

Transient geophysical fields dominated by electromagnetic features could be the cause of electrical disturbances, current surges, and disturbances in radio reception. Researchers in poltergeist cases have reported disruptions in their electronic equipment. In one case deflections in electrical current as high as 50 amps was registered.

If the intensity of those fields is high enough, they could be the reason for body burns, welts, lacerations, suggestive of intense microwave exposure. The high intensity could also be the cause for known cases of recurrent telephone rings, or repeated dialing of a particular number, due repeated current induction in electrical conductors.

The same for light bulb failures and malfunction of household appliances. Dielectric materials could be displaced, such as glass, crockery and plastic, what is common in poltergeist cases.

Since the human body is an organic semi-conductor, it has also been suggested that the transient geophysical fields induce current induction within biological tissue, especially in the electrical unstable temporal lobe of the brain. We know that (surgically) electric stimulation of the temporal lobe causes experiences similar to poltergeist phenomena and at hauntings: strong smells, loud noises (especially heavy footsteps), odd visceral sensations, de-personalization, dreamy scenes, and visual, vivid scenes. It is interesting to note here that these particular

phenomena also happen with sightings of bigfoot and other cryptics and ghost forms in the woods.

With poltergeist, one person can hear loud noises, while another person nearby can hear nothing. This suggests that hearing noises are hallucinatory, that is, produced by the brain due to stimulation by external electric fields. This could also be the explanation for seeing apparitions.

The question remains if the temporal lobe experiences are the result of repeated exposure to the transient geophysical fields, or that are people who display temporal lobe lability, or instability, more sensitive to the fields.

The problem is that detection of electrical or magnetic fields is still lacking in poltergeist cases.

Interesting too is that as survey of the Earth's magnetic fields showed that poltergeist tend to coincide with increases with geomagnetic activity.

Vortex Field

It is still unexplained how the often massive physical effects observed in poltergeist cases occur. Chair, table and even heavy cabinets are moved. It has been observed that these phenomena become much less frequent with increasing distance from the focus person. However, objects farther away from the focus person moved over greater distances. It is assumed that the psychic field of the focus person field can rotate around the person like a vortex, with the consequence of a greater rotation speed at greater distance from the center of the field.

Resources:

Wanted: The Poltergeist1 Description and discussion of a collection of 54 RSPK reports of the years 1947–1986, kept at the Freiburg Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health, by Monika Huesmann and Friederike Schriever.

Geophysical Variables and Behavior: XXII. The Tectonogenic Strain Continuum of Unusual Events, by Michael Persinger.

Poltergeist, phenomena a primer on parapsychological research and perspectives, by Brian Williams and Annalisa Ventola.