

Project CORE

Personal Observations and Interpretations of Data

Possibilities for Future Research and Inquiry

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This document contains my personal thoughts about the results and interesting potential directions that arose from this initial project. I will also be commenting on what I glean out of the raw accounts from participants of exactly what happened to them. We read over 200 accounts of the strange and they have in my opinion, shown there are certain aspects to the paranormal experience that warrant further serious and sober study.

I also want to personally thank the participants for their efforts in typing out their experiences and answering our some would say, intrusive questions. Without your participation, there would be no study data to examine, and you have my gratitude. One thing needs to be said from the outset of any personal views about what Project CORE's resulting data indicates, is that this was a **preliminary survey** and not a formal study. I caution readers, and potential researchers to approach the data garnered with careful, and critical discretion. As I have said to my team members since the day the data was collected: this project is not an answer machine, it's an idea generator. If you're looking for answers, you're in the wrong place.

Project CORE undertook a massive and daunting task to collect personal information and accounts of paranormal events, while asking participants specifically not to edit their stories in any way. Not even in ways that may force many in the paranormal research organizations to dismiss their accounts completely out of hand, and with extreme prejudice.

Those familiar with the work and words of Jacques Vallee and Terence McKenna on the UFO phenomena will be familiar with the "self negation" aspect of the UFO occupant contact experience. The idea is this: to speak of alien contact with 100% honesty is to be thought a fool. If the experiencer is to relate the account verbatim, there will be elements in the narrative that will negate the experience as absurd, or make the experiencer look foolish or pathological.

It's one thing in paranormal circles to relate an alien encounter coupled with a UFO sighting. It's another matter to relate that the occupants were large white rabbits. Within Project CORE were many accounts that either bordered on the absurd or crossed it entirely. Commonly referred to as "outlier" data by researchers, it is often discarded for reasons ranging from marketability to the public by way of book sales, to solidifying an already preconceived ideology, despite the evidence that something much more complex is happening. Outlier data has been steadfastly removed from the narrative given to the mainstream public interested in paranormal occurrences, and sadly by the

experiencers themselves concerned that no one will believe such a strange thing – and possibly realizing that the one surrealistic aspect renders the entire event unbelievable in the extreme.

This project requested the raw truth, no matter how absurd or self negating. The anonymous nature of the submittal process I believe helped make participants comfortable enough to relate the event(s) in their lives with naked candor. I can attest that the stories gathered by the survey were varied, and the outlier data doesn't seem confined to the UFO subject, but exists across the spectrum of what would be deemed paranormal.

The Rh Negative Factor

Data in our survey seemed to indicate a higher frequency of Rh negative blood types within paranormal experiencers. Thirty percent of Project Core participants reporting a blood type were Rh negative, approximately double the frequency expected to be obtained in a survey of a general population comparison group (18%). Some may see this as confirmation of previous survey results, but there's something I feel needs to be considered: Rh factors in comparison to ancestral heritage and cultural lineage. We saw in Project Core data a higher percentage of certain cultures with the following showing significantly higher numbers:

Native American: 20

Welsh: 20

French: 26

Scottish: 49

English: 59

German: 64

Irish: 71

My own informal research over the course of the past approximately 25 years has shown me an interesting consistency: Irish, German, and Celtic ancestry seems a familiar trait when talking to experiencers of "alien abduction". Since the UFO topic has been my main focus, I cannot speak to paranormal events across the board and potential connections to ancestral lineage. However Project Core seemed to bear out my own thoughts and experience in asking the question - however this was a much broader question that included experiencers of all paranormal events.

The question here in regard to Rh Factor is this: is there a consistency in Rh negative prominence in the higher ranking cultural heritage groups shown in Project Core? Lets look at what cultures that have detailed studies published of statistical rates of Rh negative factors in comparison to weighted means:

ABO and Rh blood type distribution by country (population averages)

Country	Population ^[1]	O+	A+	B+	AB+	O-	A-	B-	AB-
Weighted mean	2,261,025,244	36.4%	28.3%	20.6%	5.1%	4.3%	3.5%	1.4%	0.5%
Ireland^[14]	4,203,200	47.0%	26.0%	9.0%	2.0%	8.0%	5.0%	2.0%	1.0%
France^[12]	62,150,775	36.0%	37.0%	9.0%	3.0%	6.0%	7.0%	1.0%	1.0%
United Kingdom^[28]	61,113,205	37.0%	35.0%	8.0%	3.0%	7.0%	7.0%	2.0%	1.0%
Germany	82,329,758	35.0%	37.0%	9.0%	4.0%	6.0%	6.0%	2.0%	1.0%

(source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_type_distribution_by_country)

As you can see, negative factor blood for these countries falls (in the majority) higher than the weighted mean. Whether these differences rise to a level of statistical significance is unclear.

This led me, someone not versed in Phlebotomy, to ask what is so different about Rh negative blood? The most glaring fact about Rh negative is its seeming predilection towards keeping the negative bloodline “pure” or unencumbered from what *may* exist in other blood types that we might not know about. Positive blood type patients can receive transfusions of negative or positive blood types. Negative blood type patients will reject positive blood transfusions, and only accept negative. Again, if this is of import or not, I don’t know, but I found it interesting to mention here as part of my conjecture.

As to if the blood type/ancestry issue is significant or not is as of yet unclear. Project Core gave us interesting threads to follow up on, but the scope of the study was admittedly narrow and qualifying the blood type data as 100% accurate was impossible at this stage. I do realize that the higher ancestry numbers may only be indicative of the audience we are reaching. We were not able to confirm the blood types, but make the reasonable assumption they have been reported accurately. The blood type “anomaly” may have evolved itself over time. I believe it’s been presented in media outlets that some earlier statements alleged ‘rare’ or blended blood types such as AB were connected to “alien abductions” which may have morphed into Rh negative.

However barring cultural contamination, if this factor is correct, and further studies bear this out, this data could represent something very significant. My personal opinion is it’s tantalizing enough of a response to follow up on. Later studies may focus on how negative Rh factors effect brain chemistry, or ocular/auditory functions, and how they differ in response to different stimuli from positive Rh subjects.

Project CORE, Liminal States, Marginality and Anti-structure

The connection spoken of by George Hansen in his book “The Trickster and the Paranormal” of liminality (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “a threshold”) seems well represented in CORE gathered accounts. Liminality is the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the “between” stage of rites of passage when participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the ritual is complete. In other words, it’s the state of being in transition. Moving into a new house, renovations, and construction sites are some examples. The personal state of marriage separation – not divorced, but certainly not married in the commonly accepted sense. Being between jobs, or in the process of embarking on a new one. There are also liminal places that seem to be havens for paranormal events – for instance lighthouses seem to have more accounts of being haunted than most structures, and they exist between land and water.

To read through the accounts given to our study is to read time and again “when my Grandmother died...” or “when we first moved in...” and many other frameworks of the liminal state, over and over.

Anti-structure is the nature of being out of routine, and is intertwined at times with the liminal state. The anti-structural idea states that when one is out of a normal schedule, or life is disrupted into chaos for any number of reasons, paranormal events are more likely to be experienced.

Marginality is an interesting one I think we’ve all seen at one time or another. The state of being on the outer edges, the fringe, but also on the limits of being minimal for requirement, and even insufficient. Close to a limit, and especially the lower limit. I think marginality most closely relates to the self-negating aspect of the paranormal. Marginal people are often easily dismissed, and the outlier data that seems simply too bizarre to relate in a public sense immediately renders one as a marginal character. However it must be noted with all due respect, that the paranormal “fields” are rife with marginal people. George Hansen’s often referred to example is the “Ghost Hunters” program now in it’s tenth season: there is no scientific member on the GH team – or even a member of high standing in academe, and the principal investigators are plumbers. This immediately places them into a marginal category, like it or not.

Evidence of paranormal events are often blurry, nondescript and barely passable for evidence of anything at all. Look at the vast majority of ghost or UFO photos, and you’ll instantly see this is very marginal material to be considered anything even close to evidence.

Why all this seems to be, Mr. Hansen would say “is not a productive question to ask”. That these states of being seem to attend the paranormal event says to me that there is more going on here than ghosts of the dead, or aliens from outer space. To understand these aspects that surround the paranormal event is to come to expect them and see these as far more than something to be ignored or discarded.

My contention is that much more study needs to be done in examining what surrounds a paranormal event. It's fine to ask the typical questions such as "did the craft have markings?" or "was the ghost anyone you knew?" - but just as important are the details of the witness' life and state of being. Are they in a routine life? Is there domestic upheaval? Are they marginal people? Also worthy of examination is the state of being of a place: is the house being renovated? Being built? Is anything or anyone in a state of betwixt or between? There are many more aspects to these states that are far too complex to go into here. I have given the best abbreviated definitions and examples I can within this commentary. For more detailed information I highly recommend reading George Hansen's book "The Trickster and the Paranormal" which will give you far more to think about.

Suffice to say, these often overlooked or unknown aspects are well represented in Project Core gathered accounts.

The Liminal, Anti-structural, and the Marginal: A recent example

I'll extrapolate on the liminal and anti-structural states and give a recent account that was made very public in *Scientific American*. A well noted skeptic was getting married. His future wife was from Germany. Her possessions were shipped to the U.S., a lot of them being damaged in the process. One of the undamaged items was her Grandfather's transistor radio, which had been mute, and broken for years. The future husband set out to make the radio work again for his bride, who I'm sure was feeling rather out of her element after having moved to this country. Try as he might, he couldn't get the radio to work after trying everything he knew to do. The radio was put away in a drawer.

Three months later, the couple exchanged vows on their wedding day in their home surrounded by the groom's family. The bride seemed amiss and lonely, and remarked that she wished her Grandfather had been there to give her away. The couple excused themselves for a private conversation at the back of the house - where they heard music playing.

After searching for anything that could have been left on, they realized it was coming from a drawer - and upon opening the drawer found that the Grandfather's radio was playing, and playing a romantic love song no less. The bride emotionally remarked that she wasn't alone, and her Grandfather was clearly there with her. After relating the story to guests at the wedding, one member stated they too heard music coming from the room, just as the ceremony was about to start.

The couple later fell asleep to the sound of the radio playing lovely classical music. It ceased working the next day, and has not played since.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/anomalous-events-that-can-shake-one-s-skepticism-to-the-core/>

A more perfect recent example of liminality and anti-structure there could not be. The liminal state of the bride moving to the U.S. from another country and the temporary anti-structured life no doubt that accompanied the big move. That radical change of routine that comes with acclimation to a new country, and a new home. The event happened on a wedding day - the liminal state of not yet married, but also not single. The between-status of the ritual of marriage participants is liminality in the classic definition. Once the couple had entered marriage, and the start of a new life together had begun - the radio ceased working.

And just to point out an interesting trait: the bride is from Germany, one of the highest ranked nationalities reporting paranormal experience within our survey.

There is another example here that must be mentioned: the fact that the groom in this situation is a nationally known and well-respected skeptic makes him a marginal source in reporting an anomalous event such as this. None of his colleagues could possibly take the story seriously from a man like him - so the story is marginalized, but the man himself in even discussing the event publicly, has now in some people's eyes, marginalized himself.

Certainly not in my eyes. His story is a classic example of the liminal, the anti-structural, and the marginal undercurrents that surround paranormal events. I for one commend his honesty, no matter how he might categorize the event in the future. Looking at strictly the physiological, stress is potentially measurable through several means; heart rate, blood pressure, blood glucose levels, galvanic skin response and perhaps stress hormone levels like cortisol and adrenaline. In principle, following these biomarkers would make it possible to quantify and compare stress levels in subjects and seek correlations between global stress levels and paranormal event reports. There are also other questions to be asked in tandem here, such as diet. Could what we eat have any influence on perceptions of anomalous instances? There exists the idea of a link between the microbes resident in the gut and brain function/behavior. These links are now being subjected to testing, but the implications could be staggering. Could there be a connection to N,N-Dimethyltryptamine or DMT-the compound that seems to illicit paranormal-like experiences such as near death and contact with non-human beings? As of yet, unknown. I am including hyperlinks to two studies at the end of this commentary.*

While these sorts of studies would be helpful in looking at the physical attributes and physical behaviors such as the diet of experiencers, it is only a potential piece of a much bigger tapestry. There may be the equivalent of a very complex "perfect storm" in which the internal: physical, mental and emotional are occurring in specific ways that coupled with external elements: sudden geographic relocation, random loss of routine, forced chaotic reactions, taboo acts, liminal locations and perceived marginal personalities to name only a few discussed here - culminate in varied degrees of anomalous, external, witnessable events.

The internal, and the external become one, as the internal externalizes.

The Creative Mind and Paranormal Experience

Survey results to the question of “Are you a creative person” were 175 (87%) Yes to 11 (5%) No. An extremely high percentage of creative personalities seem to be having paranormal experiences. There are some elements worth mentioning here:

1) Marginality and anti-structure seem to attend paranormal events, as mentioned earlier. Artists are often devoid of structure as they create (staying up late, not eating regular meals, and often the creative drive pushing one into all sorts of chaotic behavior.) and they are also going to be considered marginal characters if they present evidence or accounts: these are creative people, who could easily make the story up out of imagination. Being a professional artist myself, I am certainly not demeaning the artist by saying there’s a fair bit of eccentricity in the arts, another marginal trait. Artists are often considered “outsiders”.

2) Could it be that the creative mind is more apt to recognize the divergent, or the out of place? Typically, visual artists for example are often more visually observant than most people, allowing them to paint or draw more effectively from life - they sense the finer details that others glaze over, or miss completely. This allows the artist to capture what they see in more detail. That detail and subtle elements represented in a painting for example, connects with the non-artist end-viewer in a way that conveys the subject of the painting with clarity - even in the case of abstracts and impressionist art. Could it be this perceptual effect that allows for a more open sense of experience, and the ability to relate it more accurately?

Artists and other creative personalities throughout time have in many ways been the documentarians of the populace’s view on society. Even today by simply looking at a painting from the time of the revolutionary war - you can be instantly transported to that time. Perhaps the reason for the connection to creative personalities is the phenomena, whatever it represents, is revealing itself to those most able to describe the event to others. One cannot help but to consider such things, but I have long since stopped trying to guess the enigma’s intentions, if there even is one at all.

Dr. Jeffrey Kripal, (J. Newton Rayzor Professor of Philosophy and Religious Thought), has equated mystical experiences with what he calls a “hidden structure of reality” that is paradoxical to our normal sense of perception or being. Through perception, there is the mental or the material. You have a mental image or perception of reading this document, then there is the material aspect of it existing in consensus reality. The creative person - brings the mental to the material through the creative process. Is this what is going on in paranormal events, where the objective, and the subjective, are the same?

Who is to say?

The creative process need not be undertaken by purpose or by talent - but by emotion, turmoil and chaos - all the anti-structural elements you can think of. Is it the emotional conflict and deep anguish at the death of a loved one that creates the externalized

“ghost”? Is it the creative, subjective force externalizing in some way we don't fully understand? By focusing intently upon the misery of the loss, you are visualizing that person within a strong emotional context. And the key word here is “visualizing”. A creative process. The specter then appears, often in non-subjective ways, and in shared experiences.

Dr. Kripal, in a [TEDx presentation](#) that he delivered in 2013 has a slide that reads:

“The paranormal is a story waking up to it's author.”

It stands to reason that if these experiences equate to symbol and sign, narrative and story, one would expect creative persons - writers, artists, musicians, etc., to have exceptional access to these perceptions and experiences. And Project Core data seems to indicate that they indeed do. I highly encourage those interested in the connections of the paranormal to creative processes to read Dr. Jeffrey Kripal's books, “Authors of the Impossible” and “Mutants and Mystics”.

In Closing

Project CORE was an undertaking that far exceeded my expectations when I first conceived of it. What I believed would be a simple survey turned into a massive amount of work and with the help of Dr. Tyler Kokjohn, Dr. Ellen Tarr, and Dr. Kimbal Cooper, we managed to undertake one of the first surveys of this kind with what I believe to be a scholarly, academic approach. That we accomplished this in such a way, is success enough in my mind - that the study provided interesting data was a huge bonus.

As stated, Project CORE is only the starting point for future work. It is not a formal study, and future efforts to probe the paranormal experience will undoubtedly need to be more invasive - involving blood tests, DNA sampling, and psychological evaluations conducted by accredited professionals not associated with the paranormal fields. If we are to gain any ground in this very strange and elusive subject, we cannot expect it to come from the paranormal fields that have stagnated long ago. We must venture out into areas and tangential studies that may not interest the ghost hunter or UFO buff, because they don't provide “instant answers” that they so desperately cling to. This is what divides the fields, and divides the individuals attempting to study the anomalies.

I have often likened the study of paranormal subjects to that of submerging one's head underwater in a still lake. Keep your head down under too long and you drown, come up for air too often and you miss the rare glimpse of the fish that defies all reason. I have come to see as of late that this analogy is lacking - as perhaps we should be looking at the flora that surrounds the lake, rather than the water or the elusive fish. The undercurrent of the oddly consistent siren song that leads us to stick our heads under the water in the first place, requires far more attention.

Jeff Ritzmann, November 25, 2014

***Links for further reading:**

[*Mind-altering microorganisms: the impact of the gut microbiota on brain and behaviour*](#)

John F. Cryan and Timothy G. Dinan

[*Gut-brain link grabs neuroscientists*](#)

Sara Reardon

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