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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Philosophy of Science and UFOs

From: "Steven J. Powell" <sjpowell@access.digex.net>
Date: Mon, 30 Dec 1996 08:59:16 -0500
Fwd Date: Mon, 30 Dec 1996 11:23:52 -0500
Subject: Re: Philosophy of Science and UFOs

> From: jan@cyberzone.net (Jan Aldrich)
> Subject: Philosophy of Science and UFOs

> However, I would like to throw out some more half-baked ideas.
> 1. LARGE NUMBER OF REPORTS:
> The actual number of ufo reports is unbelievably huge. Few, I think,
> realize the sheer number of reports. Vallee, Don Johnson, Barry
> Greenwood, and some of our French colleagues probably have an idea.

Something like 10,000 a year worldwide.

But this is just the rawest data, no investigation whatsoever, and is therefore a wholly meaningless number.

Obviously if the sightings have passed even basic investigation then they should not be included in a database upon which statistical analysis is to be performed.

> Most reports become IFOs, but it is easy to become bogged down in
> these IFOs. Reading some of Ruppelt's papers it can be seen, by
> Sep-Oct 1952 he was very discouraged about the great amount of useless
> data, contradictory eyewitness testimony, and just plain foolishness
> that he wanted to chuck the whole thing and go to an instrumentation
> only study.

There's a catch-22 here. Obviously everything starts with collecting data, then at some point moves to analyzing that data. The purpose of analysis is to find significant patterns and significant lack of patterning in the data. The third basic step can go two ways. One way is to take the general population patterns back to specific cases and confirm matching. The other angle is to begin to make predictions, collect additional data to test those predictions.

The catch-22 is that we should technically be collecting all the data so as not to risk jeopardising the database and therefore the results.

I think the safe way out of this catch-22 is to create selection criteria that don't affect the observation, just the observing/observer.

For example, remove from the database all single person observations.

> However, the surprising thing is that Battelle did not use this data
> as a check against the Air Force files. The USAF data was bias
> because many of the reports were from official sources around military
> and official installations which were forced to report ufos by
> regulation while public reports were voluntary. If the same analysis
> were done using clipping service reports, what patterns would appear?

Actually, Battelle should have performed two in-parallel series of analysis on both sets of data to confirm/disprove the assumption of bias. I don't think (personal opinion) that the assumption is valid or

