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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Terminology

From: [SGBConsult@aol.com](mailto:SGBConsult@aol.com) <Steve Bassett>  
Date: Tue, 31 Dec 1996 00:22:40 -0500  
Fwd Date: Tue, 31 Dec 1996 02:02:35 -0500  
Subject: Terminology

In a message dated 96-12-30 21:51:58 EST, Greg Sandow wrote:

> >Dunno about "alleged," though. That also sounds negative to me. The more  
> >I think about this terminology business, the more I'm inclined to go  
> >with "experimenter." It only says that someone has had this experience.  
> >We can use the term with respect, while reserving judgement on exactly  
> >what the nature of the experience is.

Michael Malone replied:

> Perhaps the problem is with the term abductee. What we need is a new term  
> that is defined as "one who honestly believes they have been abducted by  
> sentient non-human beings and believe that these beings are either  
> extra-solar, or extra-terrestrial in origin."  
>  
> I've struggled to make the "definition" as natural as possible, without  
> being obscure. Can we even agree on a definition?

Terminology has the power to self-generate epistemology.

As historical evidence prior to the modern era (1947-1996) is gathered, the spectrum of encounter experiences continues to broaden. In this time period three terms have been most prevalent: contactee, abductee, and experimenter.

"Contactee" as a basis for consensus was weakened by its use during the "space brother" period and with other later extreme fringe reportage.

"Abductee" has a substantive lineage which gained strength after the Hill case and further developed with the work of Budd Hopkins and other early investigators.

"Experimenter" is a much more recent nomenclature which emerged from support groups with impetus from group members dissatisfied with "Abductee". It has been particularly embraced by Dr. John Mack's Program for Extraordinary Experience Research, one of the most prominent research and support organizations in the field.

Not uncharacteristically, these terms have created lines of debate. This debate is exacerbated by the personal and emotional involvement of the participants in much of the developing evidence.

Not enough is known about this phenomenon to rely upon narrow nomenclature, however comforting. Motivations are ascribed to entities not yet conclusively proved to exist, for conduct as yet not understood, within contexts completely outside consensus reality.

The wave/particle conundrum in subatomic physics is a good model. Until more evidence is in, a beneficial course might be one of hoping for the specifics

while expecting a protracted period of generalities.

Unlike most fields of scientific research, certain aspects of this sub-field of UFOlogy place exceptional demands on the education, experience and personal values each investigator brings to the work. As such, this pivotal field of study is both complicated and well serviced by the diverse range of approaches represented by Sims, Smith, Jacobs, Carpenter, Boylan, Hopkins, Mack, and others.

The likelihood that any one camp is precisely on target, given the extraordinary elusiveness, complexity, and paradigm challenging nature of the unfolding evidence, is slim.

There is a painful need for tolerance at this point. The community of UFOlogy is still building the formal structures for ordered investigation and peer review. The field has struggled against the effects of advanced speculation and theorizing running well ahead of the evidence.

Of course, the involved participants have a powerful need to put language to these encounters - to find some solid ground upon which to stand. Each must cope in their own way. There is, however, something to be said for an intrinsic nimbleness - a readiness, given the huge potential for unprecedented intellectual quakes in our very ground of being, to set down on that piece of earth still intact when the shaking is over.

Steve Bassett  
SGBConsult

Afterthought:

There may be merit in a formal, broad based attempt by the community to expand the CEI, II, III, IV schema so as to describe the full array of encounters in forms less emotional and open to schism.

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