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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Why Migraines Don't Explain UFOs

From: **Mark Cashman** <mcashman@ix.netcom.com>
Date: Thu, 6 Aug 1998 02:08:41 -0400
Fwd Date: Thu, 06 Aug 1998 09:23:52 -0400
Subject: Re: Why Migraines Don't Explain UFOs

>Date: Fri, 31 Jul 1998 15:56:46 +0100
>To: updates@globalserve.net
>From: John Rimmer <j_rimmer@library.croydon.gov.uk>
>Subject: Why Migraines Don't Explain UFOs

>>From: Mark Cashman ,mcashman@ix.netcom.com>
>>Date: Thu, 30 Jul 1998 11:09:20 -0400
>>Subject: Re: Why Migraines Don't Explain UFOs

>Mr Cashman notes that the Batelle study and a GEPAN study found
>that there *was* a difference between UFO reports which were
>subsequently identified and those which remained unidentified.
>Other researchers, e.g Hendry and Monnerie found otherwise.

I believe Jerome Clark, with his much broader knowledge of the history of UFO research has covered these items adequately. I will only say that Battelle and GEPAN both are large organizations with statisticians well to hand. I am perfectly willing to listen if other statisticians care to raise methodological problems with such studies. I do not think that generalists have any place in such disputes.

>The real problem with Mr Cashman's approach is that he seems to have
>decided in advance what a "UFO" is: "metallic, structured,
>contains occupants", claiming that these may be safely removed
>from the class of reports which might be explained as
>misinterpretations of natural phenomena.

The following is, as far as I am concerned, the definition of the UFO, as I have stated many times before:

"UFO Report - a statement by a person or persons judged responsible and psychologically normal by commonly accepted standards, describing a personal visual or instrumentally aided perception of an object or light in the sky or on the ground and / or its assumed physical effects, that does not specify any known physical event, object, or process or any psychological event or process [even after examination by qualified persons]..."

Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Northwestern University, founder of the Center for UFO Studies

Given this definition, one must surely see that while NL class reports might slip through this filter as misperceptions, it is highly unlikely for CE reports to do so. Objects with large angular size are clearly observable and details can be seen. In fact, an angular size of a degree allows one to see considerable

features on conventional aircraft such as blimps and airliners.

>I am not so sanguine
>about this, particularly if the original sighting triggers
>psychological reaction in the percipient. This need not
>necessarily be one of panic, although as Hendry has shown this
>can induce remarkable reports.

Yes, it can, However, such reports are identifiable and have been identified.

Secondly, numerous cases exist in the literature where either panic was not present, or where a witness to a previous UFO event was in a position to misperceive a hoaxed UFO event (this happened several times in the Hudson Valley), and said witnesses successfully discriminated between the prior unknown and the current hoax, despite the fact that at flap was at the time underway. These situations indicate that CE events are not caused by misperceptions or by media susceptibility.

>The fact that the concept of the
>extraterrestrial UFO exists, allows percipients to immediately
>place a puzzling experience into a acceptable context.

As Haines points out, the presence of such a concept does indeed allow the witness to avoid panic to some extent.

However, it is noteworthy that even with the wide dissemination of UFO information in our modern culture, most UFO witnesses are not seeking a UFO experience and most witnesses strongly seek mundane explanations prior to admitting their experience as a UFO. Some witnesses, in fact, never admit their experience to be a UFO even when both they and the investigators are unable to identify the object seen.

It is difficult to see how this fits into any model which requires CE cases to be psychologically generated.

>Mr Cashman also has a great deal more faith than I do in the
>capabilities of investigators:

I have offered numerous critiques of field investigation practices in the past and will continue to do so.

>>an interview is usually capable of determining the witnesses
>>perceptual ability and the degree to which they are capable of
>>distinguishing natural phenomena

>>Most investigators use on-site reenactment to determine if the
>>witness is prone to identifying non-UFO stimuli as UFOs.

>From the first quotation I assume that Mr Cashman is not a lawyer
>in his day job, or he would be more doubtful about the ability of
>individuals to accurately describe events months, days or even
>hours afterwards. Still less when these are of an unprecedented
>nature or experienced in periods of anxiety.

Perhaps Mr. Rimmer would care to cite from the literature of witness psychology to demonstrate his contention that the majority of persons are unable to remember or describe what they see from day to day, much less an astonishing event such as a UFO sighting. My examination of that literature and the cognitive psychology literature has failed to support the notion. In effect, the sort of misperceptions which Mr. Rimmer is suggesting lies far from the witness who gets the hair color of a criminal wrong. It's more on the order of someone mistaking a refrigerator for a bird - which, by definition, would be delusional.

No investigator doubts that witnesses vary in quality. But previous studies have found that the better the report the less likely the object is to be identified, and no explanation other than that better witnesses provide better details has been supportable.

Obviously, every investigator knows that the best report is obtained as close as possible to the event. Further, investigators frequently use SI or CI techniques to improve the amount and accuracy of recall. These techniques do improve on unstructured interviews in quantity and quality of recall according to studies done in the field of criminal

investigation.

>Even if I believed
>that "most" investigators used on-site reenactment, I would
>still be doubtful as to how accurately such a reenactment really
>duplicated the original event, at the same time of day, weather
>conditions, etc.

The whole point of doing the reenactment is to accomplish just that. One goes at the time of day and week of the original sighting and attempts to match weather conditions as best as possible.

Do most investigators use the technique? That's unknown. And for many cases it would be overkill. But for cases where the object was in close proximity and for cases where measurements (such as triangulation) may be possible, it is essential.

>How, for instance, would they ensure that a
>suitable UFO-stimulus just happened to be passing by? Presumably
>the witness simply has to say, "oh, that's a plane, nothing like
>what I saw", and the investigators can rule out a conventional
>explanation and start looking for ETs?

During a reenactment, which it is clear Mr. Rimmer has never performed, the investigator visits the site first without the witness to assess such variables as visibility, traffic, air traffic, etc.

When the investigator meets with the witness, he watches the witness to see how the witness reacts to the environment, and to the astronomical and air traffic features in that environment. If the witness starts claiming aircraft to be UFOs, the investigator knows to pack it up and go home. If not, then the investigator then runs through the sighting with the witness. In some cases, the investigator rides or walks with the witness, trying to keep the witness in a state of mind that allows for clear recall of events, while at the same time trying to keep the witness from introducing confabulatory material. There's also the check provided by the first, off site interview.

Investigators don't go looking for ETs. We go looking for airplanes, car lights, house lights, bright planets, fireworks, etc. We know very well, without Mr. Rimmer's amateur advice, that many reports are by well-intentioned people who have had a low strangeness experience which represents a misinterpretation of an existing phenomenon.

>Mr Cashman considers that any suggestion that rather more than
>the "tiny percentage of reports [that] have been explained as
>hoaxes" might actually be hoaxes is 'not scientific', yet later
>he tells us that "unreported but witnessed unusual natural
>phenomena are more frequent than UFO reports". If they are
>unreported, how does he know? Is this scientific? Presumably
>there is no such thing as an undiscovered hoax?

I'd ask Mr. Rimmer how frequently he has seen an unusual insect or bird in his yard vs. how frequently he had reported it to the Audubon Society or a local university.

As for the issue of hoaxes, let's see a study that demonstrates the proportion of undiscovered hoaxes.

We have several studies which indicate the reservoir of unreported UFO cases. Perhaps such a study exists for hoaxes of which I am unaware.

>I am surprised by the qualifications which Mr Cashman makes when
>considering his class 'd' reports:

>There seems to be no logic to these qualifications. Our 'analyst'
>seems happy to include 'clearly structured objects, engaged in
>distinctive behaviour, often leaving physical traces', but starts
>getting cold feet when this 'distinctive behaviour' includes
>contact with the predominant life-form of the planet the presumed
>ETs are visiting! Is this science, or just a hunch?

Perhaps Mr. Rimmer is unaware of the fact that believing oneself to be a privileged victim or a privileged person specially selected by the phenomenon is a psychological sign of a person seeking attention and importance. Messages from the space people

informing the contactee of his special mission and tasking him to inform the world are the special sign of the crackpot, and are the indicator of witnesses who are rightly rejected by the serious investigator.

Once we get to CEs, it seems clear that the explanation of misperception just doesn't hold up. Therefore, psychological problems and hoaxing become the major concern for the investigator.

I'll close by stating that there is no question we need better studies in a number of areas:

- 1) IFOs vs. UFOs.
- 2) The pattern of IFOs across Hynek categories.
- 3) Psychological profiles of problematic witness types.

Unfortunately, we have to do all that and investigate UFOs too. Mr. Rimmer and his associates are of no assistance in these tasks, despite the relevance of these problems to the MHH. The reason for this is unknown.

Mark Cashman, creator of The Temporal Doorway at
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- Original digital art, writing, and UFO research -
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