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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Books - 'The Threat'

From: "Greg Sandow" <gsandow@prodigy.net>
Date: Sun, 8 Feb 1998 23:55:48 -0500
Fwd Date: Mon, 09 Feb 1998 00:31:24 -0500
Subject: Re: Books - 'The Threat'

I was catching up on some past messages, and noticed Dennis Stacy taking my name in vain.

> Date: Sun, 25 Jan 1998 22:33:07 -0600 (CST)
> To: updates@globalserve.net
> From: Dennis <dstacy@texas.net>
> Subject: UFO UpDate: Books [was: 'The Threat'...]

> One might begin, for example, with the conclusions Jacobs
> extrapolates from the Roper Report, which lead him to proclaim
> that "millions" of Americans may have been abducted. (See pp
> 124-5 of The Threat.)

> The unfortunate fact of the matter is that no such claim can be
> made in the first place, let alone supported by the resulting
> evidence. This should be self-evident by a simple reading of the
> poll questions and the responses to same.

> In other words, why not simply ask: do you think you have ever
> had a close encounter with a UFO, and following that, do you
> think you may have been taken aboard same?

> Instead, Hopkins and Jacobs ask a series of questions -- none of
> which has to do with a distantly perceived ufo -- and then
> conclude that anyone positively responding to a certain number of
> indicators unequivocally(sp?) indicates an abduction by alien
> extraterrestrial beings -- that is, respond yea to, say, six out
> of ten questions, and you therefore corroborate our theory and
> assumptions of what abductions are all about, no ifs, ands or
> buts. You've been abducted by literal ETs, no other theorists
> need apply.

> All very neat, if extremely messy. But let's suppose you wanted
> to take an equally oblique approach in determining what numbers
> of Americans are heavy drinkers. The direct approach would be to
> ask such questions as a) do you drink more than such and such a
> day, b) starting at what time of day, and so on.

> The Jacobs/Hopkins approach, however, is to ask whether you might
> not have smelled beer on one occasion, sipped champagne on
> another, imbibed Wild Turkey on a third, downed a scotch on a
> fourth -- and thereby conclude that one is both an alcoholic and
> abductee.

> To put it bluntly and parsimoniously: *nothing* in the Roper
> Report supports Jacobs's latest contention -- let alone his
> cataclysmic and catastrophic warnings that we are now hovering on
> the edge of alien absorption.

> For all the money spent on it, the Roper Report means nothing
> whatsoever.

> Over to Greg and the rest of the list,

> Dennis

You can ask direct questions about drinking, because people know whether they've had a drink or not. But you can't ask with equal confidence about abductions, because (assuming that abductions take place at all) people don't always remember being abducted. They're apt, instead, to remember things like lights in their rooms, beings by their beds, and missing time.

The mail Budd Hopkins gets bears this out. You don't find many, if any, people writing to say "Yes! Those beings you write about took me, too!" Instead, they say "All my life I'd had experiences I couldn't understand. I've seen lights in my room (etc.). I read one of your books, and thought, maybe this is the explanation. I'm hoping you can tell me whether or not it is."

It's against this background that the Roper Poll was conducted. The reasoning Budd and Dave Jacobs used was more or less this: Since nearly all abductees remember having a number of experiences, like lights in their rooms, we should ask how many people have had these experiences. That might give us a rough notion of how many people have been abducted."

There's a logical fallacy if you take this absolutely literally. Just because nearly all abductees have had these experiences, you can't conclude that nearly all people who say they've had these experiences have been abducted.

Still, we're familiar with this sort of inductive reasoning in other contexts. If you come home and find your house has been turned upside down, and your valuables are missing, you conclude you've been burglarized. Doctors look for symptoms, and reason backwards from the symptoms to the disease. Assuming, again, that abductions are real, we don't know for sure that all the indicators Budd and Dave asked about in the Roper Poll mean for sure that people have been abducted. But they might, on the analogy with being burglarized.

In any case, there's nothing more to go on. If you believe in abductions and you want to know how many people might have been abducted, you can't ask directly, because people won't remember. But you can ask about memories that are nearly universal among abductees, and move on -- as best you can -- from there.

Greg Sandow

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