A Comparison of UFO and Near-Death Experiences As Vehicles For The Evolution Of Human Consciousness

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ABSTRACT: This study compares unidentified flying object experiencers (UFOErs) with near-death experiencers (NDErs) in regard to changes in attitudes toward self, others, and life in general, toward religious or spiritual orientation, and toward psychic abilities and beliefs. Kenneth Ring's questionnaires administered to NDErs (1984) were given in this study to 93 persons whose UFOE included either a light experience, an object experience, or a "close encounter." The author concludes that the UFOE, like the NDE, provides impetus toward spiritual growth, but neither as consistently nor as strongly.

The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that the unidentified flying object experience (UFOE), like the near-death experience (NDE), provides an impetus toward spiritual growth in terms of (a) increased positive attitudes and decreased negative attitudes toward self, others, and life in general; (b) increased belief in broader, more universal "spiritual truths" rather than narrower, denominationally oriented religious doctrines; and (c) increased psychic sensitivities.

Ms. Davis is an author and lecturer on consciousness studies. This paper was derived in part from her M.A. thesis submitted to John F. Kennedy University. Requests for reprints should be addressed to Ms. Davis at Route 1, Box 122, Eilers Road, Montague, MI 49437, from May through November, or at 616 Aleta Place, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 from December through April.
Method

Questionnaires

Questionnaires from Kenneth Ring's *Heading Toward Omega* (1984) were presented to a group of 206 UFOers. This battery of questionnaires consisted of the (1) Background Information Sheet, which included, in addition to standard demographic data such as name, age, education, and occupation, a description of the individual's UFOE; (2) Life Changes Questionnaire, designed to test the effect of the UFOE in terms of increase, decrease, or no change in attitudes toward appreciation of life, concern for others, concern with impressing others, materialism, and quest for meaning; (3) Religious Beliefs Inventory, to test growth away from narrower denominational beliefs toward a broader spiritual universalism; (4) Psychic Experience Inventory, to explore changes in a variety of psychic abilities and beliefs, (5) Future Scenario Questionnaire, to examine what vision of the near future UFOers now have, to see whether they report apocalyptic visions similar to those reported by some of Ring's NDErs; and (6) Behavior Rating Inventory, filled out by acquaintances who knew the experiencers well enough to report on whether or not they had changed since the experience. The latter was included in an attempt to evaluate the objective validity of the subjects' self-evaluation.

Sample

The packet of questionnaires was sent to 250 UFOers on the mailing list of the Institute for UFO Contactee Studies (IFUFCOS), and was also distributed to 11 UFOers who volunteered at a meeting of the Western States Division of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) in Mountain View, California. Of the 261 potential respondents, 55 never received the mailing because of inaccurate addresses; of the remaining 206 subjects who presumably received the packets, 93 (45%) mailed back completed questionnaires.

Results

Respondent Profile

Respondents from 28 American states, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Australia ranged in age from 25 to 73, with an average age of 44 years. Of these respondents, 60% were female, 40% male. There were 80 whites, seven Native Americans, two Hispanics, one black, one Oriental, and two of unknown ethnic background. The group consisted of 39