



Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture

By Christopher D. Bader, F. Carson Mencken, Joseph O. Baker

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A significant number of Americans spend their weekends at UFO conventions hearing whispers of government cover-ups, at New Age gatherings learning the keys to enlightenment, or ambling around historical downtowns learning about resident ghosts in tourist-targeted “ghost walks”. They have been fed a steady diet of fictional shows with paranormal themes such as *The X-Files*, *Supernatural*, and *Medium*, shows that may seek to simply entertain, but also serve to disseminate paranormal beliefs. The public hunger for the paranormal seems insatiable.

Paranormal America provides the definitive portrait of Americans who believe in or have experienced such phenomena as ghosts, Bigfoot, UFOs, psychic phenomena, astrology, and the power of mediums. However, unlike many books on the paranormal, this volume does not focus on proving or disproving the paranormal, but rather on understanding the people who believe and how those beliefs shape their lives.

Drawing on the Baylor Religion Survey—a multi-year national random sample of American religious values, practices, and behaviors—as well as extensive fieldwork including joining hunts for Bigfoot and spending the night in a haunted house, authors Christopher Bader, F. Carson Mencken, and Joseph Baker shed light on what the various types of paranormal experiences, beliefs, and activities claimed by Americans are; whether holding an unconventional belief, such as believing in Bigfoot, means that one is unconventional in other attitudes and behaviors; who has such experiences and beliefs and how they differ from other Americans; and if we can expect major religions to emerge from the paranormal.

Brimming with engaging personal stories and provocative findings, **Paranormal**

America is an entertaining yet authoritative look at a growing segment of American religious culture.

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Editorial Review

Review

While this [book] showcases an astounding amount of research, [i]t is accessible to any reader with an interest in the convergence of paranormal beliefs and religion... Highly recommended. --Library Journal

"*Paranormal America* provides an in-depth analysis of beliefs and experiences that lie outside the realm of mainstream religion and science, or at least those that exist at their furthest edges, and it will serve as a seminal work for future research on the paranormal."

-Paul J. Olson, *Sociology of Religion*

"Entertaining sightseeing in a world that is often trivialized by academics." -*Journal of American History*

"*Paranormal Activity* is the ultimate anthology of the educational, religious, sexual, and monetary factors that influence people's perceptions and interests in the paranormal . . . The book deconstructs what would normally be dry and stuffy scientific data into cleverly engaging sections."

-Kyle B. Morton, *Fate Magazine*

"*Paranormal America* presents an array of fascinating data derived from a large-scale survey on areas of human experience that are sorely in need of scholarly attention." -*Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*

"Sociologists all, Bader and Mencken and Baker have written a solid book on an esoteric topic . . . this is the most authoritative profile this reviewer has encountered on Americans who believe in or who have experienced 'paranormal phenomena'." -S. Krippner, Saybrook University, *Choice Magazine*

"(The Authors) have used the data from the Baylor Religion Survey, and relevant field work, to provide a demographic profile of paranormal beliefs in the United States . . . The strength of *Paranormal Activity* lies in its ability to avoid joining the debate on either extreme. Reporting the field work in a straightforward manner, the book allows for the statistics to stay in the foreground."

-wordpress.com

"The authors convincingly show that believing in flying saucers or some other paranormal subject?Bigfoot, ghosts, astrology, psychics?is not fringe at all. More than two-thirds of Americans accept the reality of at least one such phenomenon."

-The Washington Post

"**Paranormal America** is an authoritative but extremely readable analysis of an important but often ignored subculture. This fine book explains how many people seek personally-relevant meaning in a chaotic and

often alienating world. In these pages we learn much not only about believers in ESP, Bigfoot, and astrology, but also about the general ways in which all human minds make sense of our perplexing position in the universe.”

-William Bainbridge, author of *Across the Secular Abyss: From Faith to Wisdom*

"The book provides solid evidence on a number of topics about paranormal belief and practice that have been much debated by social scientists." -Andrew McKinnon, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*

“What makes *Paranormal America* a fun read is that one would assume scientists would poke more fun at people who study paranormal activity. Instead, they blend skepticism with data and great details that leave readers with a sense of balance.”

-Austin American-Statesman Blog

“It is accessible to any reader with an interest in the convergence of paranormal beliefs and religion. The thought-provoking narrative will not disappoint experts on the topic. Highly recommended”

-Library Journal

“This is an interesting study which is likely to be referred to by sociologists for some considerable time to come, and no doubt put to various, sometimes mutually contradictory, uses.”-The Magonia Review of Books

About the Author

Christopher Bader is Professor of Sociology at Chapman University and affiliated with the Institute for Religion, Economics and Culture (IRES). He is Associate Director of the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.theARDA.com) and principal investigator on the Chapman University Survey of American Fears, as well as coauthor of *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture, second edition* (also available from NYU Press).

F. Carson Mencken is Professor and department chair of Sociology at Baylor University.

Joseph O. Baker is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at East Tennessee State University and a senior research associate for the Association of Religion Data Archives.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wanda Matthews:

Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in words, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to set every word into pleasure arrangement in writing Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture yet doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be among it. This great information can drawn you into completely new stage of crucial contemplating.

Willie Collier:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you actually, why because this Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture e-book written by well-known writer who knows well how to make book which might be understand by anyone who all read the book. Written with good manner for you, still dripping wet every ideas and creating skill only for eliminate your hunger then you still question Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture as good book not simply by the cover but also by content. This is one publication that can break don't assess book by its cover, so do you still needing another sixth sense to pick that!? Oh come on your reading through sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

Melvin Dove:

Is it you who having spare time in that case spend it whole day through watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture can be the reply, oh how comes? It's a book you know. You are thus out of date, spending your free time by reading in this new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these guides have than the others?

Kent Moore:

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