

# Paranormality

By

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I am extremely new to paranormal research, especially from a scientific perspective. In the almost one year I have been a member of ARPAST I have learned a lot. One important thing I have learned is there is still a lot I do not know. During my tenure with ARPAST I have tried to exercise scientific methodology to the best of my ability. The training and equipment that ARPAST members have access to is second to none and I see ARPAST as one of, if not *the* front runner in the country of paranormal investigation through scientific methodology.

ARPAST has chosen to align themselves with the TAPS family, which I believe to be a good fit. The TAPS standards of professionalism, training and resource sharing amongst its members make it an excellent source for our research. Over the past few months I have taken notice of some of the other groups that fall under the TAPS family umbrella. While we all share a common goal, I have noticed distinct differences with investigative techniques and tools. Some of the groups use psychics and demonologists while others, like ARPAST, take a strictly scientific approach. Some groups only have a handful of equipment while others, like ARPAST, have an abundance of good scientific equipment. Some have limited training while others, like ARPAST, believe thorough training to be the core of their success. In pointing out these differences I am not making the inference that one is right and one is wrong, just different. Differences....“Therein lies the rub” to quote Shakespeare.

One thing that all the TAPS family members have in common is the desire to be recognized and taken seriously by the scientific community. One common factor the scientific community has that gives universal credibility to its research is method and standards. These are used worldwide by scientist to give a universal or more specifically global standard for research, observation, experimentation and hypothesis. To give the classic definition of scientific method in a nutshell:

**“Scientific method refers to a body of techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge. To be termed scientific, a method of inquiry must be based on gathering observable, empirical and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning. A scientific method consists of the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses.**

**Although procedures vary from one field of inquiry to another, identifiable features distinguish scientific inquiry from other methodologies of knowledge. Scientific researchers propose hypotheses as explanations of phenomena, and design experimental studies to test these hypotheses. These steps must be repeatable in order to dependably predict any future results. Theories that encompass wider domains of inquiry may bind many hypotheses together in a coherent structure. This in turn may help form new hypotheses or place groups of hypotheses into context.**

**Among other facets shared by the various fields of inquiry is the conviction that the process be objective to reduce a biased interpretation of the results. Another basic expectation is to document, archive and share all data and methodology so they are available for careful scrutiny by other scientists, thereby allowing other researchers the opportunity to verify results by attempting to reproduce them. This practice, called *full disclosure*, also allows statistical measures of the reliability of these data to be established.”**

I will not bore you with the technical aspects of this but suffice it to say that scientific methodology covers everything from weights and measures to detailed processes for experiments and hypotheses. In short, a scientist in China can reproduce an experiment, based on the standards, which a scientist in Germany did and expect to have reproducibility because the same standards were followed by both. I believe that the scientific paranormal community needs a set of global standards that are followed in our research. This would not be an easy task because the paranormal field touches several scientific disciplines from biology to quantum physics. But, if this could be accomplished, the ramifications could be huge for our research. Another major hurdle in making this work is, as I mentioned earlier, the vast differences that exist right now amongst different paranormal groups. But this could also be huge in weeding out a lot of the chafe in the field. What if a global standard, based on scientific methodology, were put forth then to set a "certification" that paranormal investigative groups and individuals had to meet to be members or certified? If a group did not receive this certification, then their research could not be validated or recognized by other paranormal groups that were certified. This would work much the same as USDA approved or ADA approved that we see on products and research every day.

The first place to start would be the standardization of the equipment used to gather data. The equipment used would have to be capable of scientific calibration and not just off the shelf stuff from the local Best Buy. Second, you would need a standard calibration for all equipment used. Everything from EMF meters to FLIR thermal cameras would have to have defined calibration tolerances that every certified group would have to follow. Third, there would need to be training certifications for everyone using the equipment. Even if the equipment is scientific grade and calibrated properly, when the user does not know how to operate the equipment or interpret the data from the equipment, the data collected would be worthless. It would also not be reproducible by another researcher that is using the equipment correctly. Once the equipment standardization is defined, next we would need universal

means for experiments and investigation. This covers a wide area to be ironed out. One place to start in this area is to have set guidelines for researchers at an investigation. An example would be to have a set number of investigators per square foot at a location. If you get too many people together in one location, every time someone coughs, sneezes, moves, breathes, yawns, belches or farts you run the risk of having data contaminated. (yes, I said that in a serious article, but there is an element of truth to it and hey, you have to have a sense of humor) The most important thing to all of this is a standard documentation method. Documenting is the key to our research and without it, any data collected however valid, would be worthless for reproducibility.

The certification could be called something like: "Scientific Paranormal Inclusive Research Investigation Training and Standards". It could even be given a clever acronym like "spirits". The name is not important. The important thing is this would give the scientific community reason to step back and give paranormal research consideration as legitimate. If they see we are serious about following a strict methodology and standard, that we govern and police our research, only then will we start to get the acceptance we are looking for. There will always be fringe groups that will still do their own thing with Ouija boards, mediums and collecting orb photos but they would not have the certification. Their evidence would be dismissed, rightfully so, as illegitimate.

This global standard could give certified paranormal research groups the normality or "*paranormality*" that could get our research someday into mainstream science. I realize it is a huge undertaking and can no means be done in a matter of days or months or perhaps even years. But if a couple of plumbers from Warwick, RI can start a global paranormal research group that is respected far and wide, it is definitely possible.