

GREAT LAKES PARANORMAL RESEARCH TEAM

What can be Considered Evidence

It is really important to define what is paranormal evidence that can stand up to the test. We always want to avoid presenting material or recordings that are iffy at best. This is not easy because the paranormal in most cases tends to be subtle, gentle, soft sounds, vague, and of course exciting. That is the reality of the field. However let us not get over zealous about evidence.

It becomes a challenge to differentiate between an environmental sound or was it truly paranormal. It is not common for something to clearly manifest itself, tap you on the shoulder, say hello and leave you with no doubt that the experience was paranormal.

You always need to look at possibilities. Never assume an experience or recording was absolutely paranormal. You need to test, debunk and look at what other issues could have caused the event. If you can't come up with any hard and clear explanations, then you *might* have some paranormal data. For this reason when we are presenting a report to a client, we always use words such as: it appears to be this or that, there is a probability that this is what it is, there seems to be this or that. We never state it as absolute evidence of the paranormal. Why? Because there is always a *slight* chance it was produced by an environmental situation, or contamination caused by the team themselves. Always be prudent and leave room for possibilities and doubt. It will be up to the client to state what they sense or believe after seeing the evidence.

Rules in choosing good evidence:

Knowing how challenging paranormal evidence can be, what do we do now? The answer to that is clear, practice debunking. Test to see if you can reproduce the event, see if you can manipulate the environment or the object such as a door and see if it moves again. The hard thing about the paranormal in testing the event, is making it happen again. If you can reproduce the event yourself, then it is not paranormal. If a situation responds to you on cue, it happens more than once and nothing else around or near you seems to be causing the event, you might be on to something. That is why it is so important to record what you are doing, all visuals and auditory events.

No matter what the evidence is, it is critical to keep good notes *during* the investigation. What kind of notes? Keep notes of time, place, people present, temperatures, weather conditions and any other important information as you investigate the various points. This will help in seeking patterns, other clues, and being able to remember what was going on and what was happening around you when you caught XYZ evidence.

Examples:

Moving objects:

Many times we have recorded a door moving. That always needs debunking. Good questions here to consider. Never jump to the conclusion it was paranormal. What is causing this door to move? Is the door installed correctly? Is there a problem with the level, is there a slant? Was there a draft that pushed

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the door to close or open? Is there a problem with the latch? Consider weight of the door as well. Will the door or situation happen again if you set up the situation exactly how it was? Will the door move if you ask it to?

Toxic Environment:

Client reports they are becoming ill frequently in the home. They want to know if there is something evil or demonic causing the issue. This is a tough one because the client already has an idea in their head of what it could be. However, as an investigator, you have the responsibility to first consider a problem in the environment in the home. Like what? Here is a list to consider: Radon gasses, high EMF levels, gas leak (which can be very serious, so go with caution), water issues, ventilation issues, etc. In some homes we have found paint, paint thinners and other chemicals placed near or next to the ventilation system of a home. This of course causes respiratory problems for everyone. If you do find concrete proof that there are air quality concerns in the home, inform the owner/client right away. Help them ventilate the home by opening doors and windows. Give them some direction of how to correct the problem ASAP. There are tools that can be purchased to test air quality issues. Some are more expensive than others.

Sounds:

The recorders we use today are digital and very sensitive. Sound in itself can be tricky because it is dynamic, travels and can be interrupted or distorted by walls, doors, ceilings, etc. Don't trust everything you hear during your review. Sometimes a barking dog from a block away might sound like someone talking. Keep all possibilities on the table. This is why it is so important to tag the recordings. If you hear a bus, barking dog, motorcycle or other sounds while recording, state "truck going by", "dog barking again", "people talking outside", "my stomach growling", etc. That way you avoid confusing normal sounds with possible paranormal events and make your review a whole lot easier.

If you have a stationary recorder that is left alone in a room, that becomes more difficult to control. Just do your best to be aware of the normal sounds in and outside of the home when reviewing a stationary recorder. You almost have to not consider anything as evidence unless it is absolutely beyond a doubt nothing could have produced the voice or sound on the recorder. That is why it is strongly advisable to record visuals at the same time.

Shadow events:

What is important here is to be aware of light and shadow dynamics of the home or building. Be aware of who was where and when if a shadow appears on camera. Sometimes we can become very excited about a shadow appearing. But most times, it was produced by a car outside or one of your own investigators. Again, do all you can to debunk the event. "If in doubt, throw it out".

Personal experiences:

We say in the paranormal that you should not add personal experiences into your list of evidence. Why? Because it can't be debunked, it usually can't be reproduced, there are too many factors involved when a

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person sees or hears something. We can't always trust our senses or our mind for that matter. We are already heightened going into a possible haunted location. Our minds can play many tricks on us. In our GLPRT team, we have a separate sheet that can be filled out by the investigator if they have a personal experience. It is placed in the back of the report for reference, but not as hard evidence.

Orbs:

This is a controversial one. Some really jump on the ban wagon about orbs. But sad to say, we have debunked them over and over and over again. We have even put orbs to the test in labs. So if you decide to chase orbs, just do your research before-hand of what we know already. Don't waste your time or your client's time.

Feelings:

In the paranormal, it is good to use yourself as a barometer, if something does not feel right, check things out and be cautious. However, we never use feelings as evidence. Why? Because we can't measure, test or debunk a feeling. We can add feelings as a personal experience. So it does not mean feelings are useless, we just can't quantify them or use them as absolute evidence.

How to make the decision to keep or throw out evidence:

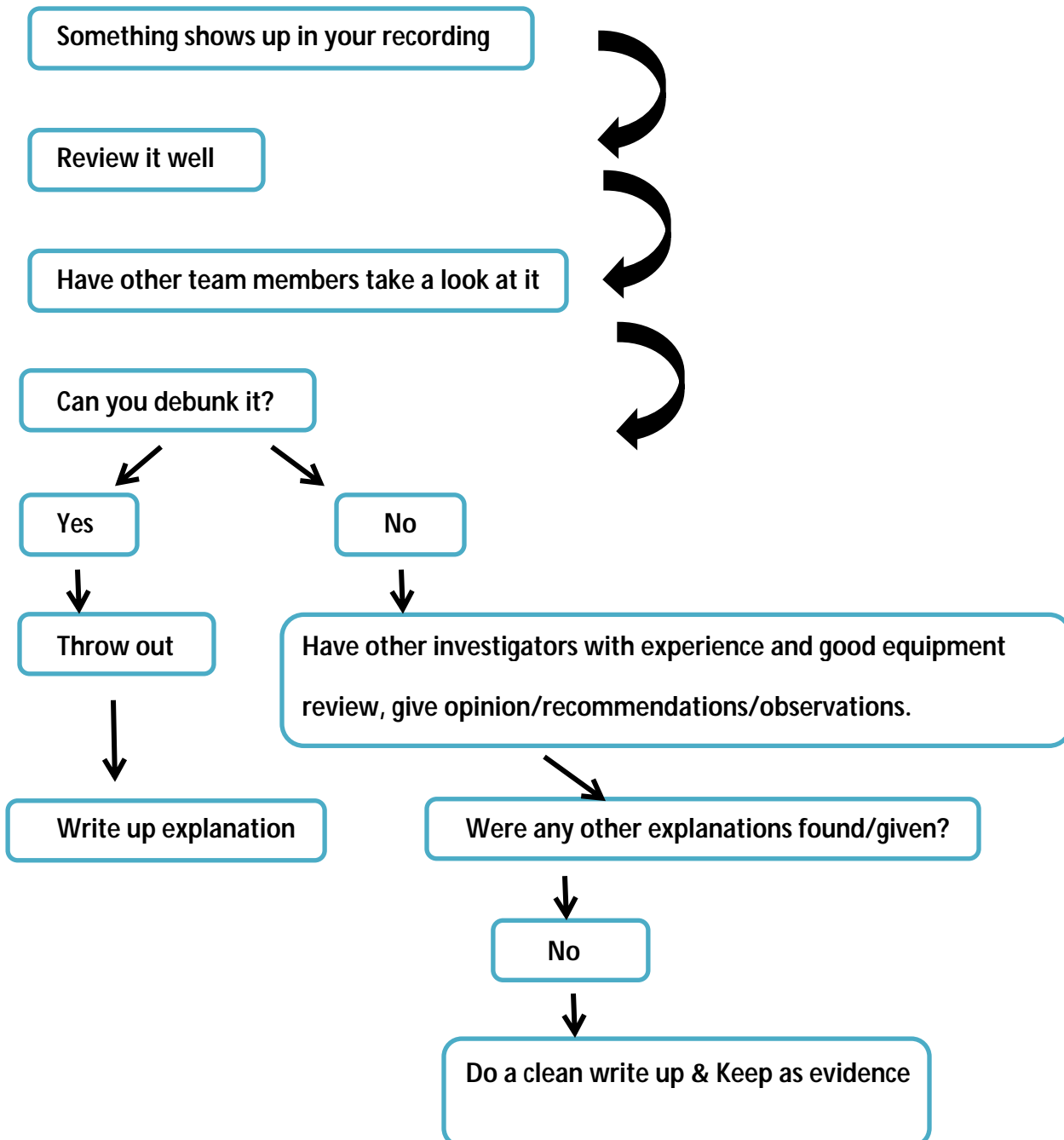
Here we will offer a type of "path" that might help decide what will be used as evidence and what will need to be thrown out.

Evidence Chart can be found on the next page:

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Evidence Chart



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The critical point here is to do all you can to find a logical explanation for the piece of evidence, no matter how exciting it might seem or appear. If you are sure you did all you could to find what caused the event and you were not able to, then there is a probability you have a piece of paranormal evidence.

Using other input from other investigators:

This point is an important one. You never know when you will need someone outside of your team to take a look at your evidence. Make friends and seek out other investigators who have solid experience, might have better equipment than you do to take a look at your evidence. It also helps to look at things from another angle whether that be via an opinion or use other instruments to examine the situation.

Don't forget to keep guarding the confidentiality of your client when sharing evidence. Get permission from your team, remove any identifying information that might reveal who the client is and any biographical info.

Going overboard:

This section might be a bit controversial. However, the paranormal field has been around for some time now. Many experiments have been conducted. There are some facts we already know in the paranormal field. It is important to learn those issues we know today are not paranormal. We have learned much about nature and how it can also put on a show which is also not paranormal. We have learned about environmental contamination which can appear or seem like paranormal. We know of our own human frailties and how we can misinterpret what is normal for something paranormal. We have learned how technology can help us tremendously in the field and we continue to learn about its limitations.

Excitement in the paranormal is normal and fun. But we have to be prudent, logical, hopeful and doubtful all at the same time. We have to not go overboard with orbs, bugs flying by, one blink of the KII or shadows that we might have created ourselves. This might sound like a painful and sad paragraph, but it is all for the benefit of the field, the client and your team. Credibility is important. Working in a team has its benefits; if someone begins to get over-excited about evidence, someone else can throw them a life-vest until all has been confirmed or thrown out.

Keeping it clean, keeping it safe:

Safe guard your evidence. Review your data promptly. Download it as soon as possible. If it appears you will definitely tag a film or recording as evidence, keep it clean, do all you can not to tweek or alter it in any way. If you recorded video, sound or photos with equipment used by others in your family or group, download it BEFORE you put the equipment back in its drawer. There is nothing more horrible and scary than losing important data because someone yanked the battery out or pressed the delete button. This is just an extra note regarding evidence. Many investigators out there are still kicking themselves for not doing more to protect what they worked so hard to collect in their last investigation.

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Go out there, work hard, have some fun and enjoy each investigation as they come.