

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

The following is an informal report, no doubt of interest to *Journal of Polymorphous Perversity* readers, that describes our progress in several interrelated areas of inquiry. Through the systematic deployment of many undercover behaviorally oriented investigators and the expenditure of vast sums of Canadian tax dollars, we have reached a number of conclusions regarding the "Christmas Phenomenon." These conclusions must be viewed as tentative, however, until we have fully analyzed our data.

1. There is a statistically significant tendency for Christmas to fall on December 25th ( $p < .0000001$ ). Explanations for the regularity of this phenomenon are at present obscure. We hypothesize that it is related to sunspots, although some Canadian investigators claim it is related to "cabin fever."

2. Among the most peculiar aspects of the Christmas Phenomenon are the appearance of many fat individuals with beards and red suits. These persons start appearing in shopping malls about September but disappear after December 25th. Where they remain for the rest of the year is a complete mystery. We at first assumed that they hibernated in underground parking areas. To investigate this idea, we sent bearded researchers, shouting "ho, ho, ho," into underground garages during August to see if we could attract some of these individuals.

Although we found no hibernating red-suited persons, we did attract a number of policepersons who were distinctly unsympathetic to our line of inquiry.

Incidentally, we think we have discovered why these red-suited persons shout "ho, ho, ho." If we assume that (a) each red-suited person requires a great deal of food (based on their body weight, their daily caloric intake must be prodigious), and (b) that "ho, ho, ho"-ing is aversive to other red-suited persons (note that we did *not* attract any of these persons through our use of this behavior), then we would expect that natural selection would ensure the differential survival of ho-ho-ho-ing individuals. The non-ho-ho-ho-ing individuals would cluster together and starve, whereas the ho-ho-ho-ing individuals would be spread apart and compete less for food. Thus, ho-ho-ho-ing behavior can be viewed as a population density dependent spacing device. This explanation accounts very well for the observation that red-suited persons are *never* found together.

3. This raises the question of how red-suited persons reproduce, as no females have ever been observed among them. It is our belief that each red-suited person clones himself and carries the developing clone around with him in a sack. Support for this view comes from our attempts to get sack samples from red-suited persons. On such occasions, these persons fight ferociously to keep their sacks from us, leading us to believe that something very important is in these sacks (clones?).

4. Another topic of our investigation has been the increased frequency of smiling behavior associated, at least temporally, with Christmas. This smiling is in turn connected with the presence of evergreen trees in the home. The association of these two phenomena leads us to believe that evergreen trees contain small quantities of dope-like substances which are released into the atmosphere and inhaled, thus causing inappropriate smiling. This substance is also hypothesized to cause impaired judgment, explaining why so many people plunge themselves into debt at this time of year.

We plan an experimental test of this hypothesis this Christmas by inhaling extract of evergreen and monitoring our Chargex expenditures.

### Conclusion

We think that this area of research is new, innovative, and socially relevant. How can readers be of help? Primarily by sending gifts to our address. And, if any readers manage to capture red-suited persons for us to experiment upon, please send them to us via air freight.

O. Parent, Ph.D., and S. Dee, Ph.D.  
Service de recherche  
Institut Philippe Pinel de Montreal  
10905 est boulevard Henri-Bourassa  
Montreal, Quebec H1C 1H1  
Canada