Preliminary Results of April 22/23, 2001 Human Aura Viewing Experiment

Craig R. Lang CHt June 2001 (format revised Feb 2002)

In an effect known as the human aura (or halo), a translucent glow can be seen surrounding a person under certain circumstances. This effect has been observed throughout history and has been described in many texts, both ancient and modern[i]. These books describe specific techniques which may (allegedly) be used to view the human aura, and to use these characteristics to draw conclusions about the subject, both in biophysical terms, and in terms of metaphysics and spirituality. An explanation for the human aura is not clearly established. However, there appears to be enough evidence to suggest that it may be a bona-fide phenomenon.

One's aura is said to vary in thickness, intensity, structure, etc. according to one's physical, mental, or spiritual state at that particular moment. Auras have historically been described in association with various religious/spiritual/meditative circumstances. The ability to see auras is often associated with trance states of the viewer. It is also stated that auras may be seen as a result of a deliberately acquired skill on the part of the viewer.

As a member of the National Guild of Hypnotists, I have participated in a number of hypnosis experiments, during and immediately after which, some people reported that they were readily able to see auras around other people in the room. As a result, I and several other hypnotists in the guild have become curious about this phenomenon, and have been devising experiments to measure it, as well as its relationship to hypnotic trance.. This article describes one such experiment which I conducted during a hypnotherapy certification class in April of 2001, at the Minnesota Institute of Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy.

The goal of this experiment was to measure the degree to which each student could observe an aura, and to determine the degree of consistency between what each viewer observed. It was also intended to measure how these observations were affected following a deep-trance experience.

The hypotheses being tested were as follows:

1) It is possible to observe a human aura around an observed human subject, given the expectation that this effect will be present.
2) The ability to view an aura will be enhanced immediately after the viewer has been in a deep trance state.
3) The observed aura of a subject being viewed will be consistent as seen by different observers.

The subject being observed was seated about 15 to 20 feet away from the viewers, in a position such that he could be clearly seen against a blank whiteboard. We asked the students of the class observe the aura of a test subject immediately following a deep-trance exercise, and at a time far removed from any trance states. Each time the viewers were asked to complete a short, standardized questionnaire with a description of the aura, with questions asking for its color,

shape, intensity and time variation. On the back of the form was space for a sketch of the aura, using a stylized human outline as a template.

This set of observations was taken at two times: The first was immediately following a deep trance exercise which was performed in late evening of one class day. The other (a control measurement) was done first thing the following morning.

In the literature, it is suggested that a person's aura is strongly dependent upon his/her mental or emotional state. Thus, it was desirable to have the subject be in a known state of mind at the time of the experiment. I therefore asked him to imagine a very pleasant scene, known only to himself. (Note: I had earlier asked the viewed subject to recall a pleasant memory on cue). In both measurements, immediately following the cue words the volunteers viewed the aura of the subject, and filled out the questionnaire.

Results:

In both the control and the post-trance observations, all but one viewer indicated that they were able to see an aura around the viewed subject, making a complete set of observations. All viewers who could see the aura indicated that the aura was brighter than the white background. All described it to be white or pale, with some describing various (but not consistent) color overtones.

Several viewers described seeing two (or more) layers of aura, and various other structures. Where this was the case, viewers typically described an inner and outer layer. The inner layer was very well-defined, and the outer layer was highly diffuse, but may have had features or colors associated with it. In post-trance, four or more observers described more than one layer in the aura. However, in the control case only one observer could discern more than one layer (Note: a second observer, who did not participate in the post trance observation, also observed structure during the control observation). In general, in the post-trance measurement viewers described more layering/structure to the aura than they did in the control measurement.

Statistical Summary:

The following are the statistics, from those questions which asked for numeric results.

Ability to view:

The self-reported ability to see the aura did not vary much between the control and the post-trance measurements. In the control case, the ability was described as an average 5.225, and in the post-trance case, the ability averaged 5.25 on a scale of 1 to 10. The variation in abilities was slightly greater in post-trance measurements, however - in the control case the standard deviation being approximately 2.7 and the post-trance case the standard deviation being approximately 2.98.

Strength/Intensity of aura:

The average strength/intensity of the observed aura was actually slightly greater in the control observations than in the post-trance observations. The variation in observed intensities was also slightly greater in the control case. In the control case, the intensity was observed as approximately 4.7, with a standard deviation of 2.5 (on a scale of 1 to 10). In the post-trance case, the reported intensity was an average of 4.18, with a standard deviation of 2.4 (on a scale of 1 to 10).

Boundary Diffuseness:
In the control measurement, the boundary appeared sharper and more defined than in the post-trance measurement. The control measurements averaged a boundary diffuseness (1 to 10, with 1 being sharpest and 10 being the fuzziest) of 5.25, with a standard deviation of approximately 2.9. In the post-trance measurement, the average diffuseness value was approximately 6.23 with a standard deviation of approximately 2.6.

In cases where two layers of the aura were described, the inner band was always described as very sharp (2 out of 10), with the outer layer being very diffuse (7.5 out of 10).

Aura Width:
In the post trance condition, observers on average, reported a greater width to the aura. However, there was also a greater variation in the reported width measurements. In the post-trance case, viewers reported an average of 3.5 inches of thickness with a standard deviation of approximately 3 inches (nearly a 100% variation in observed thickness). In the control case, the average observed width was approximately 3.2, with a variation of 2.5 - considerably smaller, but still widely varied.

Variation:
The observed degree of variation of the aura during the observation, and the rate at which that variation occurred, were both noticeably greater in the post-trance measurements than in the control measurements. During the control observation, the average variation (on a scale of 1=no variation to 10=total variation) was described as approximately 3.85, with a standard deviation of approximately 2.05 (approximately 50% variation). During the post-trance observation, the average variation was described as approximately 5.86, with a standard deviation of approximately 2.3 - greater variation, with less standard deviation in the measurements, a larger, more coherent effect.

The average variation rate (on a scale of 1=no variation to 10=rapid variation) in the control was approximately 4.2, with a standard deviation of approximately 2.06. The variation rate in the post-trance observation was 5.33, (slightly greater variation), with a standard deviation of 2.5 [CL Note: In both cases, the standard deviation was approximately 50% of the mean].

Subjective/Descriptive Results:
The most interesting results in this experiment were not necessarily associated with numbers. Rather these had to do with the subjective nature of the aura-visual effect. There was often a wide variation in the subjectively described results, such as colors, structure, time-variation, and other non-visual (parapsychological, clairempathic, etc..) attributes of the observed aura.

Subjective description of the variation of the aura was generally given as rippling, shimmering or dissolving. This was the case in both the control and post-trance measurements [However, noting above the slightly greater variation in the post-trance cases].

The subjective description of the aura's structure was much more pronounced in the post-trance case than in the control case. More viewers described multiple bands in the post-trance case. Where only one band was seen in both cases, the post-trance case still had more featuring or

detail present. The description of details varied widely between viewers. However, nearly all descriptions fit into a range of variations on the theme of a single or double band, with a well-defined interior and more diffuse exterior.

Colors:
The reported colors of the aura were much greater in the post-trance measurement than in the control measurement. The control experiment observations contained 14 observations of white/clear with 5 observations of weak colors overlaying the white.
Color indications of the control were given as follows:
- White/Clear/None (14) [CL Note: 1 said "brilliant white"]
- Blue around throat (1)
- Yellow/Green (1)
- Gold (2)
- Dark Blue (1)

The post-trance observations contain only six references to white, but much greater references to more pronounced colors.
Color indications on the post trance were described as follows:
- White/Clear/None (5) [CL Note: 1 said "brilliant white"]
- Blue/Violet (2) - (1 said royal blue around throat)
- Yellow/Green (3)
- Green (1)
- Gold outline (1)
- Blue/Green and Gold

It was apparent from the data that color and structure/detail indications in both sets of observations tended to vary considerably from observer to observer. This suggests that there is a high degree of subjectivity to the aura-visual phenomenon.

Preliminary Conclusions

Based upon the data taken during this experiment, the following basic conclusions are suggested:

1) Given the expectation that a viewable aura would be present, all but one viewer was able to observe/describe it.
2) All who saw the aura observed a well-defined band surrounding the head of the viewee.
3) Immediately following trance, the observed detail in the human aura was slightly enhanced.
4) Immediately following trance, the self-reported ability to see auras showed very little change. This was somewhat of a surprise given earlier anecdotal accounts, resulting in the hypothesis that trance enhances the ability to see auras. The results suggest that overall, this hypothesis is not strongly supported by the data.
5) Where color, detail, and time-variation were observed in the aura, the observations were generally not consistent between observers. The variations in the description between viewers suggests that aura-vision, like may other reported parapsychological effects, tends to be subjective in nature. It will be very interesting to conduct more runs of this experiment to observe whether this variation continues in a larger body of data.

Other Notes:

The following are some additional comments and lessons learned from the experiment, along with notes and recommendations.

1) The actual protocol called for three measurements to be done throughout the day. One was to be taken prior to deep-trance. A second run was to be done immediately following a deep-trance exercise, and a third several hours afterwards. The purpose was to measure the hypothesized enhancement from deep trance, followed by decline over the next several hours.

However, on the day of the experiment we had both a change of viewed subjects, and a shift in the class schedule. It was thus necessary to change the protocol such that only two measurements were taken, one before and one immediately following deep-trance. This measured the immediate effect of deep-trance but did not measure its subsequent decline. In subsequent experiments, to capture all three data points, it would be best to do this on a day when the post-trance measurement can be done at approximately mid day, and a third point can be taken after a subsequent lapse of several hours without deep trance.

2) In this run of the experiment, the control measurement was done first thing in the morning, while the post-trance experiment was done at end of the day, following deep-trance experiment. Quite possibly, first thing in the morning, (simply put) not alot of people felt like viewing auras. The post trance measurement was done late in the day, following an evening run of the deep trance exercise. At that point, everyone was eager to get out of there, and were probably less inclined to read auras. In both cases, this perhaps reduced the quality of results. In future runs of this experiment the control and post-trance measurements might be more effectively conducted later and earlier in the day respectively.

3) The experiments were performed in full lighting conditions, with the subject being viewed against a blank whiteboard. This is a favorable condition for viewing auras, but the resulting high-contrast between the subject and background may have resulted in retinal contrast effects. This is often suggested as a null-hypothesis to explain the visual aura phenomenon. The visual contrast influence could be minimized if both the visual background and ambient lighting conditions were softer, perhaps with partially dimmed lights, and a gray screen.

4) If the human aura is in-fact an objective phenomenon, then the variations in results among the different viewers suggest that involves a perception unique to each viewer. Whether the viewer can consistently view and interpret auras will be an interesting (yet to be designed) set of follow-up experiments.

Final Notes

The explanation for the phenomenon of the human visual aura is not known. Some suggest that it is nothing more than an optical illusion caused by the retina's reaction to color contrast. Others believe that it is an electromagnetic, or related field phenomenon. Still others claim that there is a more subtle metaphysical explanation. Whatever the aura may be, nearly all people in our experiment were able to see something, with some degree of consistency in some factors, yet with a highly subjective variation in other factors.

Special thanks go to Dr. Kevin Hogan for the participation of his basic and advanced certification classes in this experiment. Thanks also to the students in the class for their participation, and to Ron Stubbs, who was the viewee during both data runs of the experiment. It is hoped that this experiment and subsequent followup measurements have been able yield some very interesting data on this disputed, yet fascinating area of human perception.

---

[i] Much of the description of the human aura is taken from the books:

- "Auras (See them in only 60 Seconds)", by Mark Smith
- "You are Psychic", by Peter A. Sanders.

Author Bio and Contact Info:

Craig R. Lang is a field investigator with Mutual UFO Network, and is a certified clinical hypnotherapist with the National Guild of Hypnotists. He lives in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, a northern suburb of Minneapolis, where he has his practice. He also conducts anomaly research in the Twin Cities metro area of Minneapolis and Saint Paul and in surrounding areas within Minnesota and Wisconsin.

He can be reached at the following:

Craig R. Lang MS CHt
e-mail: craig@craigrlang.com
phone: 763-257-7334

Note: This experiment was conducted through the Minnesota Institute of Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy, affiliated with the National Guild of Hypnotists. This report can also be found on Dr. Hogan's website, www.kevinhogan.com.