

outlet for research writing for some time. I am hoping that in *JUFOS* it has materialized.

The schedule of publishing the journal has not yet been determined. Of course it will mainly depend upon two flows: good contributions from the scholars, and monetary "contributions" to the Center so as to create the thing itself. I am only concerned with the former. Please bear with us while we smooth out these flows, and get this enterprise into some definable time-synchronization with the real world we all live in. I have little doubt that will happen soon. But we are dependent upon you, the scholars, to be part of the project. Take kindly the letters from the editor which come in the mail. And, even if you can't do the favor asked, be flattered that you are valued...and maybe do it next time.

Michael D. Swords, editor
Professor of Natural Sciences, Western Michigan University

Damsdale

HYPNOSIS AND UFO ABDUCTIONS: A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT: Researchers have relied on hypnosis to uncover apparently hidden dimensions of UFO encounters and discovered extraordinary abduction stories in the process. Yet scientific studies prove hypnosis is no foolproof truth serum, rather a procedure fraught with risks for error, distortion, and false memories. Critics using these studies have charged that abduction stories amount to nothing more than a structure of fantasy and cultural influence raised to an unusual height of vividness by hypnotic investigation itself. The resolution of these criticisms must lie with evidence rather than theory. Checks on the reliability of hypnosis are provided by comparing abduction stories obtained by hypnosis with those obtained by natural recall, comparing the findings of different investigators, and comparing accounts from hypnotized "real" abductees with accounts from hypnotized non-abductees. In each case the form and content of abduction stories seems independent of hypnosis. The same key traits appear with similar frequency among hypnotic and non-hypnotic reports, the beliefs and personalities of investigating hypnotists show little influence on these frequencies, and "real" abductees tell more coherent stories than non-abductees. These findings indicate that hypnosis makes far less difference than critics have claimed. Though hypnosis cannot be entirely exonerated as an agent shaping abduction stories, a core of experience seems necessary for their formation.

THE ISSUE

Hypnosis and UFO abductions have joined hand in hand from the beginning, for better or for worse. Whether this marriage is a happy union or a mismatch stands as the foremost methodological issue facing abduction research today, and the value of much of the evidence for this phenomenon depends on the outcome.

Barney and Betty Hill's revelations of capture and examination by alien beings, recounted in John G. Fuller's 1966 book, *The Interrupted Journey*, called attention to the spectacular possibilities of hypnosis for exploring the hidden mysteries of a UFO encounter. The Hill case made clear that some encounters were less straightforward than they seemed. In fact for some mysterious reason the witnesses forgot the bulk and best part of their story. As further cases proved the Hills' story was a type rather than one of a kind, the lapse of memory hiding an abduction scenario also assumed the dimensions of a characteristic trait. Time lapse became the telltale clue of abduction, the proof that some shadowy visitors first used the witness

and then tampered with his memory to hide their work. By good fortune hypnosis had the power to crack the amnesia barrier and spill the beings' secrets. Hypnosis became standard operating procedure, practiced regularly by active investigators such as Dr. R. Leo Sprinkle, Dr. James Harder, and Budd Hopkins. The well-known Betty Andreasson, Tujunga Canyon and Whitley Strieber cases came to light in part, and often in large part, with the help of hypnosis. Among investigators who regard abductions as real events, hypnosis is merely a versatile and successful instrument for recovering the hidden memories of a physical experience. Not the lever but the realities it pries loose deserve all the attention.

An opposite point of view is expressed by members of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP). From this skeptical position, hypnosis does not simply reveal abductions but actually causes them. The convenient way hypnosis exposes the best-laid plans of alien skullduggery is simply too good to be true. Philip J. Klass (1988: 51, 67, 82) notes that abduction investigators first looked for a close UFO encounter, then a time lapse in connection with a UFO sighting, later simply a time lapse, and lately nothing more than vague anxieties or misgivings. However faint the hint, abduction researchers still seem to find their aliens. He then proposes that abductions lie within the mind of the witness. Two sources contribute to the abduction story—one is prior expectations, the other hypnotic interference with ordinary memory processes. The actual content derives from exposure to the Hill case and subsequent well-publicized reports, but UFO investigators misusing hypnosis are mainly responsible for the propagation of these tales. A subject comes forward with the will to believe and perhaps a psychological need for approval, then submits to hypnosis by an investigator who believes in the reality of abductions and unwittingly guides the subject to tell a regulation abduction story. Prone to suggestion because of the hypnotic state, the subject confabulates a false story and then in the aftermath of hypnosis cannot distinguish truth from fantasy. The fictitious story seems real and the subject becomes a thoroughly convinced and perhaps even eloquent "witness" (Klass 1988: 57-63). Experiments with non-abductees hypnotized and planted with suggestions to imagine abduction scenarios resulted in remarkably similar accounts, confirming their subjective origin from another direction (Klass 1988: 51-56).

Two explanations vie over the same evidence, poles apart in their assertions and each fatal to the other. Each offers a plausible account for much of the data. On one side sincere witnesses claim a strange experience and hypnosis reveals an even stranger cause; on the other side interpreters reduce the experience to a mundane if familiar mental process. The outcome of this conflict hinges largely on what hypnosis really does.

THE ABDUCTION STORY

The typical UFO abduction report tells a story of strange beings who capture human witnesses, escort them aboard a UFO, and there subject them to a physical

examination before releasing them to resume their normal activities. Two parts comprise the abduction story. At its heart lies this alien encounter, while a "pericardium" of strange events surrounds the central experience. This duality reflects a fundamental division in the story, because the parts only sometimes join together in a consciously remembered narrative. The strange events usually remain open and accessible to recall. The alien encounter is more problematic. Sometimes it too comes freely to mind, but in many cases this bizarre segment remains hidden from memory before hypnosis.

A complex encounter with the unknown may begin when UFOs stalk drivers along remote roads or people afoot outside, in other cases when strange beings intrude into homes and bedrooms. Awareness of a UFO, light, being, or presence of some indefinite sort often persists in conscious memory to signal the onset of abduction phenomena. Unusual events may register at this time, like a sense of vacuum or isolation, or independent behavior by a motor vehicle. Little by little the situation grows ever more strange and unsettling. The ordinary world becomes extraordinary by degrees, but so far no consistent reasons why inform the witnesses.

Then the curtain falls. Unusual occurrences come to an abrupt halt and witnesses go on their way without further ado. To all appearances nothing has happened, only a brief confusion or a momentary lapse of alertness has overtaken the witnesses. They usually feel only a vestigial curiosity or puzzlement, if anything at all. Later they discover that the brief disturbance was more than just a nod and actually an extensive loss of memory covering an hour or two, perhaps even longer. Memory presents the illusion of a continuum, but it seems somehow rough and ragged, like something was cut out and the fabric imperfectly repaired. The size of the actual gap is alarming, more than an ordinary slip of memory can comfortably explain. Then too, that jump in memory may remain an emotional sore spot, touched with anxiety, uneasiness and involvement in bad dreams.

Many times the conscious experience ends with time lapse, but here the actual abduction only begins. Strange beings approach the witnesses and take control of their thoughts and actions through some form of mental influence. These beings pacify the witnesses, circumvent their will to resist, and suppress their natural fear so that they enter the craft and submit to a sometimes gruesome examination. At the end the beings send off their captives, whose awareness of the ordinary world gradually returns while at the same time their recall of the abduction gradually fades.

These events are the commonest, most repetitive parts of the story. They take a prominent place in the most familiar reports and very nearly define the abduction phenomenon as most ufologists speak of it. More or less common additional events during captivity include a conference, tour of the ship, journey to an otherworld, and a religious experience of some sort. Once returned to normal affairs the abductee also may experience an aftermath of short-term physical injuries and mental disturbances, followed by long-term changes in personality and further encounters with the extranormal (Bullard 1987).

This, then, is the typical abduction story taken at face value. According to a literal

reading, witnesses are innocent bystanders seized against their will by aliens and used in some experimental procedure. These beings do not actually destroy witnesses' memories of the abduction, but deliberately seal off the most incriminating parts of the experience. When successful, this mental control leaves only a jumbled disorder of peripheral events, vague anxieties and fleeting glimpses to puzzle the victims. Hypnosis comes to the rescue and breaks the seal, releasing hidden events from the time lapse period into normal recall. Then with the full story told, all the events fit together into a meaningful, amazing whole.

MODERN SCIENTIFIC EVALUATIONS OF HYPNOSIS

Much of the public and many ufologists closely identify hypnosis with the most remarkable episodes in the abduction story. This association is inaccurate because some people relate full abduction accounts without hypnotic aid, but enough of the best-known and most detailed cases have involved hypnosis that its role is necessarily at issue. The damage is done. What matters now is whether hypnosis uncovers real events or leads to remarkable fictions, and the answers depend on our understanding its capabilities and limitations in some depth.

Hypnosis presents two very different faces. A popular image, built up over the past two hundred years and sustained by literature, stage shows, motion pictures, and popular belief, links hypnotism with almost magical powers to control the subject. The idea of hypnosis as a sleeplike trance induced by a swinging pendulum or the overpowering eyes of the hypnotist includes an assumption that the subject loses all free will. As a corollary, lying becomes impossible. Recent successes by police hypnotists in recovering forgotten clues from crime victims has added to the reputation of hypnosis as an almost supernatural channel to truthful past memories (Kroger and Douce 1979: 367-68). Ufologists are most likely to subscribe to this popular view, or give little more than lip service to skeptical reservations.

A scientific understanding of hypnosis dispenses with Svengali-like hypnotists, occult overtones, and nearly all other tenets of naïve popular belief, only to replace them with a less mysterious but far more complicated phenomenon. The experts disagree on even the nature of hypnosis. One explanation treats it as a thing unto itself, an altered state of awareness or a neurological condition with distinct and recurrent characteristics (Sheehan and Perry 1976: 45-49; Orne 1965: 89), or a specific trait possessed by different people in varying degrees (Sheehan and Perry 1976: 50-52, 225-27). The behaviors and sensations peculiar to hypnosis are consequences of the hypnotic state. A radically opposed interpretation rejects the assumption of an internal state and builds theories strictly from observable manifestations. Certain behaviors regularly accompany hypnosis. They result from the hypnosis situation and the relationship between subject and hypnotist (Sheehan and Perry 1976: 83-85). The subject brings expectations and motivations to the situation and there enacts a role suggested by the hypnotist (Sheehan and Perry 1976: 225-27, 228-29, 231, 1977: 4, 8). Responses to the demand characteristics of the

situation with preconceived responses (Sheehan and Perry 1976: 177-80). "Hypnosis" is simply the sum of these behaviors without any unique state of mind to draw them together, a mere terminological or conceptual bag to hold the groceries. Theorists have tried various forms of these extreme positions and many intermediate variations in an effort to explain what hypnosis really is. No consensus has followed.

(a) Effects of Hypnosis on Subjects

If controversy surrounds the nature of hypnosis, its observable phenomena are little less problematic. Two categories of impact on subjects seem constant: one thing hypnosis does, or seems to do, is reduce the volition of subjects so that they become passive and pliant, susceptible to suggestion far beyond their "waking" norm. The external influence of the hypnotist assumes dominant proportions over subjects, and whatever he suggests, whether a selectivity of attention, a calming of emotion, a sharpening of memory, or assumption of an entire role, becomes a direction they follow with literal obedience and remarkable success (Hilgard 1965: 6-10).

Along with this enhanced suggestibility goes a second notable set of characteristics. Subjects appear to gain uncommon mental and physical powers, like sharper memory for past and even long-forgotten events, an ability to act an assigned role with thoroughgoing fidelity, and extraordinary keenness or selectivity of perception in keeping with instructions from the hypnotist. The imagination may improve as well, gaining a new capacity for vivid fantasy. Then at the end of the session the subject often forgets the whole experience with a sort of automatic amnesia (Sutcliffe 1965).

Many of the mental phenomena of hypnosis may trace to its ability to weaken judgment. If less volition means that subjects edit their thoughts less rigorously, if subjects test reality less than usual and delimit their sphere of perceptions more narrowly, concentration on literal detail will improve and expressions flow more freely. Tolerance will increase for bizarre ideas and flights of fantasy. Relaxed and detached by encouragement of the hypnotist, subjects could lose some of their normal inhibitions and act with unselfconscious spontaneity (Hilgard 1965: 6-10).

Alterations in subjects' behavior under hypnosis may be striking, but laboratory results affirm that these differences do not lead inevitably toward greater truthfulness. Hypnotic control is far from absolute. A matter as fundamental as knowing whether or not subjects are really hypnotized turns out to be problematic, with even experienced practitioners liable to deceit (Orne 1979: 313). Well-motivated subjects can lie in their own self-interest even from deep hypnosis (Orne 1979: 313), a finding which demolishes the faith that hypnotized subjects exercise no will and therefore cannot deliberately deceive.

Worse dangers than these deliberate efforts are part and parcel of hypnosis itself. The suggestibility of subjects is as real in scientific fact as in popular belief, but few people realize the consequence that any hint or cue dropped by the hypnotist, even an inadvertent gesture or careless phrasing of a question, may lead subjects to

provide answers the hypnotist seems to want instead of the truth. In an effort to comply, subjects may fabricate an answer when they have none, simply to fulfill the hypnotist's request. Any prior beliefs or expectations, any ideas gleaned from such exterior sources as reading or movies, may join clues from the hypnotist as sources of content for statements made under hypnosis (Orne 1979: 317-18, 322).

Once freed from normal critical judgment, subjects can imagine and fantasize shamelessly. Fragmentary memories and inaccuracies usually censored by everyday caution can emerge with greater ease (Orne 1979: 319). Experiments requiring subjects to recall an elementary school class or recite poetry memorized long ago resulted in detailed responses of great verisimilitude. When checked against historical records and original poems, these responses proved only half-truths. The rest consisted of anachronisms, errors and fabrications of a plausible and even convincing character, the sort of thing a hearer would readily accept as true if no check had been possible (Orne 1979: 317; American Medical Association 1986: 5). Subjects in this experiment blended truth and fiction into a coherent and inseparable whole. An important lesson in caution is clear—the suggestibility and guilelessness of hypnotic subjects may cut two ways, sometimes toward a more reliable truth and other times toward a more convincing fiction.

(b) Hypnosis and Memory

Investigators have turned to hypnosis as a way to reach the supposedly inaccessible memories of abductees, so how hypnosis interacts with memory is a vital question. Experts differ sharply on the value of hypnosis for enhancing memory. Most scientific research indicates some improvement in recall under hypnosis (Kroger and Douce 1979: 371) and the increase in vividness or detail may be substantial—a phenomenon known as hypermnnesia (Relinger 1984: 216-17, 222). Others allow only a modest increase (Orne 1979: 319) or even none at all unless the subject has some sort of emotional involvement with the memories or high motivation to recall them (Putnam 1979: 445). Yet some discriminating experiments indicate that hypnotically enhanced memory is no better than waking memory (Smith 1983: 388).

More is not necessarily better, since the greater wealth of detail brought out by hypnosis may be rich only in falsehoods. Memory is not a museum for preserving past events in a pristine and unchanging state. Experimental evidence shows that memory remains fluid, its processes constructive and not simply reproductive (Bartlett 1967: 205). If memory were simply a storehouse for the past and hypnosis merely a retrieval service, all memories should be equally accessible. In fact no evidence suggests that hypnosis improves recall of nonsense materials. Only when the materials are meaningful are memories enriched under hypnosis, but motivational and emotional factors complicate recall of meaningful contents. The more involved with his memories a subject becomes, the greater the risk that creative functions will change or distort those memories. Research indicates that hypnosis

increases true and false statements alike (Orne 1979: 319; American Medical Association 1986: 5-6).

A great deal of research into hypnosis has been motivated by its use as a forensic tool. Criminal investigation and abduction investigation have much in common, since they deal with sudden, often traumatic events and witnesses with perhaps only confused memories. Any verdict on hypnotically enhanced testimony is thus a matter of great interest for ufologists. Police use of hypnosis during the 1970s scored some spectacular successes and some equally spectacular failures due to confabulated testimony (Serrill 1984: 62). Law enforcement hypnotists have defended hypnosis as reliable when used properly and argued that any form of investigation risks distorting witness memories (Kroger and Douce 1979: 358). The International Society for Clinical Hypnosis and the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis sounded an alarm in 1979 with resolutions calling for extreme caution in procedures and corroborating evidence for any assertions made under hypnosis. In 1985 the American Medical Association reviewed the relevant scholarship and also rejected hypnosis as a generally dependable forensic tool. Several state supreme courts sided against hypnosis as too unreliable for trial purposes. Then in June 1987 a U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that states could not absolutely ban testimony acquired by hypnosis. The ruling was 5 to 4, hedged with many warnings, and permitted such testimony for defense purposes only (*New York Times*, 23 June 1987, 11:8). Hypnosis won a victory but not a vindication.

One of the experts' key reservations focuses on the motivations of everyone in an investigative situation. Motivations are powerful determinants in hypnotically influenced behavior, and everyone in an investigation brings motivations along (Orne 1965: 110-11). Witnesses wish to tell their story and cooperate with investigators, while investigators want information and may demand more from witnesses than they really know. Investigators may have an opinion of their own and convey it consciously or unconsciously to the witnesses (Orne 1979: 322). Self-interest takes a hand at every point and can distort results even in interrogation of fully conscious subjects. Hypnosis simply amplifies the danger.

Another reservation is that a demanding investigative situation increases suggestibility and leads to the creation of fictitious memories. As critical judgment flattens out under hypnosis, the true and the false, the real and the fanciful, the sharp recollections and hazy half-memories assume equal stature as the witness perceives them. The boundaries between the real and the unreal blur beyond recognition. Investigators often assure witnesses that they will remember the truth or give a posthypnotic suggestion to remember everything that comes to light during hypnosis. The witness then becomes even less able to sort out the real from the unreal. In a therapeutic situation fact and fantasy can mix to the benefit of the patient, leading to a relief of symptoms (Orne 1979: 316-20). In a courtroom or UFO investigation where truth counts, nothing could be more perilous than this mixture. What makes it all the worse is that the witness testifies with honesty and good faith that the confabulations are true, because they seem as real as actual memories (Orne

1979: 320; American Medical Association 1986: 9). Once established and repeated, true and false memories may become inseparable—at worst hypnosis may spoil legitimate memories (Orne 1979: 323).

(c) *Techniques for Memory Enhancement*

How reliable hypnotically aided recall may be depends in part on the means for improving memory. Two techniques are in common use—age regression and direct suggestion. For age regression the hypnotist instructs subjects to revert to a particular date or time of life. The degree of subject involvement may differ from dissociated observer to involved participant. Responsive subjects actually seem to relive the past and assume a character appropriate to their age at that time. Sigmund Freud used this technique in his studies of hysteria, but soon realized the results were an amalgam of truth and fantasy, mirrors of a subjective rather than an objective reality. Subsequent experiments show a duality of consciousness, with subjects combining the past role with current knowledge and adult abilities. The show is impressive but the results are often inaccurate. Subjects fill in memory gaps with improvised fiction, and only objective checks can separate the true from the false (Orne 1979: 315-18; Kroger and Douce 1979: 363; American Medical Association 1986: 3-4).

Direct suggestion (or hypnotic hypermnesia) relies on suggestible subjects to respond with more detailed memories when instructed to do so. A common technique sets up an imaginary television or movie screen and proposes that witnesses view an event as objective observers, watching the action unfold with attentive concentration and with the ability to stop the motion or rerun the “tape” when necessary to gather as many details as possible. Witnesses will remember with vivid clarity but not relive the experience as first-person participants. Though seemingly free of hints and clues that might lead subjects, this technique often induces them to confabulate. Its very structure demands responses even if subjects have no valid memories to contribute. In practice the hypnotists are often demanding, and their encouragement may reveal their personal biases. Experimental studies find some increase in memory responses, but many additions are spurious (Orne 1979: 318-20, 324-25; Relinger 1984: 212; American Medical Association 1986: 4-5).

An alternative and less demanding approach—it may not rightly qualify as a technique—seems particularly well suited for abductions. Hypnosis has long served as a successful therapy for spontaneous amnesia and memory loss from traumatic experiences. In case of true traumatic blockage, if the hypnotist asks no questions but instructs subjects to relive the event, they may succeed in overcoming the amnesia without further prompting. The block usually breaks suddenly to release a flood of memories and their accompanying emotions. The experience usually returns to mind as a whole, not a piece at a time, so subjects relive the events in narrative form and may later fill in details under questioning. Nothing can guarantee the accuracy of these memories, but they seem more reliable than most, and circumstances offer the

fewest opportunities for contamination or confabulation (Orne 1979: 324). In fact allowing hypnotized or un hypnotized witnesses to recall in a narrative promises to introduce the fewest errors into testimony, though experiments also show that fewer details emerge this way (Hilgard and Loftus 1979: 348). Traumatized crime victims (and perhaps abductees) are prime candidates for the narrative form of memory restoration, in contrast to witnesses who suffer no mental block and undergo hypnosis only to refresh normal recall. Here, if anywhere, hypnosis stands to benefit recollection of real events.

(d) *A Final Verdict*

The traumatic element in memory loss may bear on an abiding conflict between “field” results with hypnosis and laboratory findings. Police investigators consistently praise hypnosis for aiding memory while experiments largely fail to confirm and sometimes even deny significant improvement. Of course the laboratory situation is far removed from real life, while the police work with witnesses whose experiences are vivid, emotionally charged, and deadly serious. Where learning takes place under stress the circumstances are most true to life, and results indicate some improvement in recall under hypnosis, though these findings are open to question (Smith 1983: 387-88, 390-92; Relinger 1984: 213-14). The fact remains that experiments designed to simulate real-world situations most closely also continue to furnish disappointing results (Smith 1983: 393-98; Relinger 1984: 214-18). Not every variable can be controlled, not every experiment is entirely negative, and not every authority agrees that increases are insignificant, but confidence in hypnosis as a way to enhance valid recall has weakened steadily even as laboratory work has become more realistic.

Anecdotal support for memory improvement remains strong all the same. Some tenuous experimental evidence shows that hypnosis betters memory for incidentally learned material—that is, learning by natural observation (Smith 1983: 398). When the hypnotist repeats attempts to draw the same memories from witnesses, the returns often grow from one session to the next, though again, so do false returns (Smith 1983: 403). Other evidence suggests that the situation of hypnosis rather than hypnosis itself may enhance recall. The relaxed condition of subjects, the slow and deliberate effort to remember amid the otherwise upsetting environment of an investigation, and careful efforts to visualize the context in which observation first occurred may be responsible for any improvements in memory (Putnam 1979: 445-46; Smith 1983: 402; Relinger 1984: 222). The subjects themselves add another complication, since susceptibility to hypnosis and behavior under it differ from individual to individual (Hilgard 1965: 67-93). Some people recall more than others, some fantasize better than others.

All this uncertainty underscores the fact that hypnosis is a complex phenomenon, and almost every aspect of it may act as a variable. On one matter the experts speak with a unified voice: hypnosis is no miraculous key to the truth. If hypnosis improves recollection at all, the improvement works only under limited circum-

stances and is fraught with the risk of distortion, fantasy and false memories. Scrupulous care in procedures of investigation is essential, and so is external evidence to back any statement taken. Hypnosis by itself validates nothing. The one circumstance where hypnosis really seems to help is in cases of traumatic repression of memories. In these instances the fact that witnesses recover anything at all may be more important than how much they recover. If abductions are as shocking as we might reasonably expect them to be, then traumatic repression is a real possibility and justification for a continuing faith in hypnosis as a useful tool.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HYPNOTIC INVESTIGATIONS

Getting at the truth of abductions through hypnosis is clearly a hazardous undertaking. Some procedures are more reliable than others, and proper safeguards to take account of the dangers cited above can minimize undesirable results.¹ The following list closely follows recommendations for forensic investigators (Orne 1979: 335-36; American Medical Association 1986: 10-11).

- The hypnotist should:
- 1) be a psychiatrist or psychologist with special training in hypnosis;
 - 2) have no prior convictions about the case and know only enough about it to question effectively;
 - 3) allow free recall first and only then ask specific questions;
 - 4) avoid leading and demanding questions;
 - 5) permit no one else in the room with the subject, to reduce the risk of accidental cues.

An implicit precaution for abduction research, where witnesses often undergo hypnosis over several sessions, is for the interrogator to:

- 6) withhold from conscious recall by means of posthypnotic suggestion the memories obtained in each session, until the series ends;
- 7) explore all conscious memories of witnesses in detail before hypnosis begins;
- 8) keep a full record of the entire investigation, on videotape if possible, to allow a check on the behaviors of both subjects and hypnotists;
- 9) evaluate subjects for susceptibility to hypnosis. A large academic literature exists on hypnotic susceptibility, with formal scales to classify subjects according to the depth they achieve and behavior they exhibit while under hypnosis (Hilgard 1965: 211-68; Sheehan and Perry 1976: 50-52; Hilgard 1970). This information could add immensely to our understanding of abductees as individuals and witnesses, but so far no abduction investigation seems to have included these standardized tests.

[Note: Dr. Richard F. Haines has pointed out that for reasons of legal liability, silent onlookers should be present during sessions. Concern for the welfare of

¹A detailed guide for do's and don'ts in hypnotic investigations of abductions can be found in the article by Hobart Baker (1986). An excellent program for the use of hypnosis in abduction research prepared by Richard F. Haines answers all reasonable objections and still remains practical (pp. 163-67).

witnesses as they experience the emotional stress of rediscovered memories underscores the need to have a trained professional in charge of hypnosis. Legal and ethical considerations lend an important extra dimension to theory-motivated precautions in the formulation of procedures, but I do not feel qualified to advise in these areas. My discussion will remain limited to theoretical ideals—with an understanding that practice must encompass broader concerns.]

HYPNOSIS AS PRACTICED IN ABDUCTION RESEARCH

Despite the reservations of experts, UFO researchers have plunged full speed ahead with hypnosis. Abduction research contains almost every possible pitfall of hypnotic investigation: witnesses who come forward with their suspicions are usually motivated to cooperate, may wish to find an abduction, and may have a psychological need for such a spectacular experience. Investigators may be believers in one particular interpretation, prone to convey this bias, and insufficiently trained to take precautions against it. Exposure to abduction ideas is almost unavoidable, and witnesses might unwittingly incorporate these ideas into a story. If a hypnotist pressures witnesses for answers, as an enthusiast might, those witnesses may well

Table 1. Hypnotists and Their Adherence to Precautions

Hypnotist		Recommendations					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Aphrodite Clamar	Kilburn, Rich	+	+	+	+	-	-
Harold J. Edelstein	Andreasson	+	+	-	-	-	-
Girard Franklin	Kilburn	+	+	-	-	-	-
James Harder	Roach, Whitley	-	-	-	-	-	-
Budd Hopkins	Davis	-	-	-	+	(-)	-
Donald Klein	Strieber	+	+	+	+	(+)	-
William C. McCall	Shaw, Whitley	+	-	-	-	-	-
Fred Max	Andreasson, Luca	+	+	-	-	-	-
Martin Reiser	Shaw	+	+	+	(+)	(+)	-
D. Scott Rogo	Briggs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Benjamin Simon	Hill	+	+	+	+	+	+
R. Leo Sprinkle	Higdon, Larson	+	-	-	-	-	-

+ = compliance with recommendation
 - = non-compliance with recommendation
 = insufficient information
 (+) = borderline compliance
 (-) = borderline non-compliance

oblige with elaborate but fictitious "information" and then believe their own fantasies with conviction and sincerity. Every appearance of a real phenomenon would result, but the truth would be nothing more than a tissue of confabulations shaped into alien form by suggestion and belief. The scientific understanding of hypnosis warns that this scenario is possible and Klass urges it as the full solution of the abduction mystery (1988: 40, 42, 70, 79, 81, 93, 102-103, 116, 155-56, 172, 187-88).

Are UFO investigators guilty as charged? A thorough evaluation would require a detailed examination of personal theory and practice for each investigator. In lieu of inspecting private records, a look at published descriptions of procedures and transcripts of sessions offers some clues about the practices of various investigators. The recommendations above provide a yardstick to measure actual investigations against an ideal standard. Table 1 summarizes how a dozen hypnotists active in one or more prominent cases have fared against the first six tenets of that standard. A "+" means the hypnotist abided by that recommendation, a "-" means a violation, and a blank means insufficient information to decide.

Precautions 1, 5 and 6 are straightforward and the answers come directly from descriptions of the investigation. Precaution 3 requires a faithful transcript or careful description of procedures for an accurate answer, and the answers offered here are based on the assumption that those descriptions are complete. The second precaution involves a degree of inference. The active ufologists (Harder, Hopkins, Rogo, Sprinkle) have made their inner beliefs clear enough, but the other hypnotists are less certain. Some have indicated skepticism or lack of interest (McCall, Reiser, Simon). The remainder appear at least less committed to the alien interpretation than the ufologists. The fourth precaution is the most difficult to score. What counts as a leading or demanding question depends on inference, and these inferences are based on the fragmentary, sometimes edited transcripts included in published accounts. Some transcripts are extensive, but how representative they are of each hypnotist's methods remains unknown. Within the bounds of these already serious limitations, hypnotists qualify for a favorable score whose usual questions seem open, indirect, free of specific content, or balanced with alternative possibilities; whose usual responses seem noncommittal; and whose usual method seems to allow witnesses to narrate their accounts with minimal guidance. Of course judgments here are subjective and the results impressionistic, but they offer at least a narrow index of how hypnotists fare with this important aspect of procedure.

On the whole this survey of hypnotic techniques leaves a rather favorable impression. Only Dr. Simon's investigation of Barney and Betty Hill rates as exemplary in every respect, though Drs. Klein and Reiser come close. Most investigators are professionals with extensive training and experience in hypnosis. Enough of them are "unbelievers" that if prior convictions were a significant variable, significant differences in testimony should occur. The fact that stories remain pretty much the same whether or not a hypnotist believes in UFOs discredits

Few investigators appear to allow free recall first, but published transcripts may emphasize the more detailed results from question-and-answer sessions over initial free recall as a way to save space. Another dilemma is the fact that some witnesses re-experience their abduction but are too emotional to share it unless the investigator prods them into verbalizing their memories. A no-win situation results: without questions the experience never comes out; with them, skeptics can complain of leading the witness. In key parts of testimony many witnesses narrate spontaneously and in the present tense (e.g., Fuller 1966: 118-19, 149, 189, 191; Fowler 1979: 23, 37, 54-55; Fowler 1982: 66, 122; Druffel and Rogo 1980: 18-19, 50-51; Hopkins 1981: 58-60, 65-71, 98; Hopkins 1987: 40-42; Strieber 1987: 64, 80-84). Some whole cases come out mainly in past tense (Roach, Higdon, Larson) and some past-tense narrative occurs in most transcripts, usually when the investigator questions witnesses in detail or reviews previous testimony. The use of present tense makes for a compelling account and suggests that free recall comprises a part of many testimonies. Such immediacy cannot in itself prove the reality of the story, but when explosive emotions accompany the narrative, and they often do, abductee behavior compares closely with the behavior of crime victims during forensic hypnosis.

Leading and demanding questions are especially threatening to sound testimony. The limited picture offered by published sources shows that most investigators use direct inquiries from time to time, some only after free recall when the practice stands to do the least harm, but others appear to jump in from the start with specific questions and thereby encourage confabulation. Some transcripts indicate that witnesses are less susceptible than theory might suggest. They resist leading questions and stick to an inner conviction in a number of instances (e.g., Fuller 1966: 93; Druffel and Rogo 1980: 24, 41, 67, 163; Fowler 1982: 65). Budd Hopkins remains somewhat tight-lipped about his techniques, but insofar as the transcripts included in *Intruders* (1987: 40-41, 209) are representative, he comes across as aware of the dangers of leading, gives the witness considerable freedom to narrate, and usually neutralizes his inquiries with suitable care.

Every investigator since Simon has regularly permitted observers in the room during hypnosis, but the seriousness of this offense varies from case to case. Klein allowed only one observer (Hopkins) and permitted him to ask questions only at the end. Clamar, Hopkins, and Reiser likewise minimize the number of observers, and their participation appears negligible. At the less favorable end of the spectrum are the two Andreasson investigations, where a squad of participants surrounded the witness and took an active part in the interrogations. Some sessions conducted by McCall and Sprinkle have also included more than a minimum audience. Any hints of interests and wishes from these participants, however unwitting and innocuous, could contribute to false memories.

As far as published accounts indicate, the investigator seldom imposes on witnesses a posthypnotic suggestion to contain their newly released memories. Dr. Simon regularly took this precaution so that the Hills could not share ideas with one

mother, and only in later sessions did he allow his patients to integrate the hypnotically recovered memories into conscious awareness. Most other investigators seem to have handed over these recollections immediately to the witnesses. Some, like Reiser, anticipated only a single session. Other investigators have followed hypnosis with further dialogue to find how the conscious witness reacts to these memories, using them as the starting point for a new and sometimes fruitful line of inquiry. An immediate follow-up is appealing but perhaps not wise, given the dangers of creating a false memory with all the weight of a real one.

A final accounting finds that abduction investigators use hypnosis with better care than we might fear, though their efforts fall short of laboratory perfection. The investigators bring individual styles to their hypnotic work and sometimes compromise ideal procedures to suit the realities of field investigation. Practices vary in varying degrees from the recommended ideals, but the overall picture is one of conscientious effort to achieve valid results. Professional competence seems high and sensitivity to the limitations of hypnosis is widespread though not universal. Skeptics might complain that too many hypnotists know something about UFOs, but not necessarily so—even an unbeliever becomes contaminated after a single case and there are not enough hypnotists to go around for each abductee to get a fresh one. What matters more is that the pool of investigators contains a healthy mixture of believers and unbelievers. If the hypnotist's predispositions influence witnesses, these influences should work both ways. Some measure of free recall appears to be part of most testimonies, though leading questions also figure into every case to a degree that varies considerably from investigator to investigator. The skeptic scores an honest point by arguing that some abduction testimony could take shape under the influence of improper questioning. In most cases the impact of observers seems minimal, but they could be a significant factor in a few instances. Witnesses may gain false conviction because of open access to memories, while repeated sessions may serve to work and rework the same fantasies into ever more presentable shape. Enough doubts still cloud the issue of hypnotic procedures that the resulting testimony also must remain under a shadow.

THE TESTIMONY OF RESULTS

Both theory and practice could provide some grounds for skeptical dismissal of the abduction evidence obtained by hypnosis. Another approach to the reliability of hypnosis is to start from the other end and look at the evidence itself. Instead of considering what might happen under hypnosis, we turn to what has happened, what investigation shows about the form and content of abduction reports and whether the results indicate a stable phenomenon independent of the hypnotic procedures used.

A project sponsored by the Fund for UFO Research to catalogue and compare abduction reports provides the raw materials for this study. The effort netted about 300 reports of abductions or abduction-like events in the published literature, and of this number, 104 cases qualified as high in both reliability and information content.

This sample of reports allows several tests for the effects of hypnosis on the abduction story.

(a) Comparison of Abductions Revealed With and Without Hypnosis

Any attempt to dismiss abductions as a side effect of hypnosis runs up against a serious obstacle from the start—not all abduction testimony emerges under hypnosis. Even for the well-investigated, high quality cases, 30 do not depend on hypnosis and 74 do. Among those 30 cases the recall may be fully conscious all along, as happened with Antonio Villas Boas and Charles Hickson, or initial memory loss may be followed by spontaneous return, as with Sgt. Moody and Carl Higdon. Subsequent hypnosis may check conscious recall, probe for additional memories or firm up indefinite points in primarily conscious testimony, as in the cases of Hickson, Higdon, Travis Walton and Whitley Strieber; but these reports qualify as non-hypnotic because most of the story surfaced first into conscious awareness. Many witnesses keep some conscious recollections or recover fragments through dreams or incidents that jog the memory, but if hypnosis is responsible for revealing most of the story then the report takes its place in the hypnosis column.

Comparative study of abduction reports demonstrates that numerous aspects of form and content recur time after time. Fifty recurrent traits, each too distinctive to arise easily by chance alone, provide a basis to compare reports of hypnotic and non-hypnotic origin. If the traits differ considerably between these two samples of reports, a case can be made that hypnosis is responsible. If reports are essentially alike, however they come to light, the hypothetical role of hypnosis in making the abduction story diminishes. The traits used for comparison cluster into eight categories:

1. *Order.* Abduction stories follow a specified sequence of capture, examination, conference, tour, otherworldly journey, theophany, return, and aftermath. If such episodes as occur in a report conform to this order, then the report scores for proper sequence. The capture episode has a sequence of its own—intrusion, zone of strangeness, time lapse, and procurement—while procurement in turn breaks down into eight characteristic events—beam of light, drawing force, beings appear, conversation, controls imposed, escort, flotation, and doorway amnesia. Examination consists of eight steps—preparation, manual examination, scanning, instrumental examination, sample taking, reproductive examination, neurological examination, and behavioral examination. Then the abduction concludes with the four events of return—farewell, exit, departure, and re-entry. Each of these events is a non-obvious incident and scores for keeping its proper place.

2. *The Craft.* This category cites external and internal characteristics, notably the disk shape of the craft, or a domed and circular inner room with uniform lighting and a cold, damp atmosphere.

3. *The Beings.* Geared to the "standard humanoid"—a composite of the features most often described—this category includes key traits such as shortness, large head,

large eyes, hairlessness and gray skin, also such personality traits as politeness or passiveness.

4. *Examination.* The climactic episode of most abductions, examination is marked by such bizarre and vivid events as cleansing, scanning, sample taking, implants and concern with reproduction.

5. *Communication.* Most communication with the beings takes place by telepathy and instructs the witness to forget, prophesies future events, or promises a return visit.

6. *Otherworld.* The predominant motif in this category is the sight or indication of a barren, devastated or catastrophe-racked planet.

7. *Effects.* Strange mental and physical effects accompany abductions, chief among them being a vacuum or extraordinary isolation, defiance of gravity, time lapse, mental controls like pacification or pain relief, controls over movement like paralysis or heaviness, electromagnetic effects and control over vehicles.

8. *Aftereffects.* When the abduction ends its consequences begin. These include short-term physical effects like eye irritation, sunburn, skin cuts and sickness; intermediate-term mental effects like nightmares and anxiety; and long-term phenomena-like subsequent encounters, personality changes, alterations of beliefs and experiences with the paranormal, such as men-in-black, poltergeist activity and new-found psychic powers.

Traits cited here represent the commonest or majority expression, but alternatives also appear in reports. The order of events may differ from the norm, the craft may be cigar-shaped, communication may be verbal, and beings may be tall humans with hair rather than diminutive humanoids. These minority or "deviant" traits offer a second index for comparing abduction reports.

A quick but useful crude comparison considers the rate at which various traits occur in the hypnotic and non-hypnotic samples.² A count of standard and deviant traits divided by the total number of cases gives the standard traits per category and deviant traits per category for each sample (Table 2).

One result predicted by theory and confirmed by most categories is that hypnosis fetches more details than spontaneous recall. Yet the increase is surprisingly small. Standard order, craft descriptions and aftereffects traits occur at very nearly the same rate in both samples, and effects show only slightly larger differences. The rate at which abductees describe the otherworld as barren and introduce deviant traits is nearly identical with or without hypnosis, though here the actual count of traits is small. Extenuating circumstances may explain some similarities—the craft may be the most familiar aspect of the story and aftereffects usually emerge without

²Two tables available directly from the author list the standard and deviant traits for the 74 hypnotic and 30 non-hypnotic cases. They are adapted from Bullard (1987, vol.1:332-33), with three Kathie Davis abductions added from Hopkins (1987) and two of Whitley Strieber. In one case Strieber describes the same abduction both consciously and under hypnosis, while Betty Hill describes her abduction in dreams and under hypnosis. These two cases enter into both the hypnotic and non-hypnotic tables.

Table 2. Frequency of Occurrence (per case) for Standard and Deviant Traits, Hypnotic vs. Non-Hypnotic Cases

Trait	Hypnosis (74 cases)		Non-hypnosis (30 cases)	
	std / categ.	dev / categ.	std / categ.	dev / categ.
Order	13.5	1.7	11.6	1.1
Craft	2.3	0.3	2.1	0.3
Beings	6.5	1.0	4.2	1.8
Examination	2.6	0.1	1.7	0.1
Communication	1.8	0.1	0.7	0.2
Otherworld	0.2		0.2	
Effects	3.5		2.8	
Aftereffects	1.5		1.5	
All categories	31.9	3.1	24.9	3.4

hypnosis, so equal rates here cannot rule out hypnosis as the reason for stronger rate differences among traits for beings, examination and communication. Even the largest distinctions still remain small. If hypnosis added much fictitious content to reports we would expect greater divergence than we actually see.

More sensitive analysis can refine these rough impressions. Table 3 lists results from two types of comparison. One is a chi-square test, a statistical test for the homogeneity of frequency distributions in the two samples. If the distribution of a trait, deviant possibilities and "no response" is essentially the same in both samples, with less than a 5% probability that chance could account for the similarity, then the samples are homogeneous. A "+" indicates that the samples are alike, a "-" means they differ, and an "*" says the reading is borderline. The second comparison simply converts the raw counts of traits and alternatives in each sample to percentages, to compensate for different sample sizes. When a trait tallies few entries, the distribution of alternatives or "no responses" may carry a positive result for the chi-square test, while the percentage figures may show a mismatch. This conflict accentuates the danger of small sample sizes and signals for caution in interpretation.

A finding of homogeneity means that the same traits appear as often in one sample as the other, report for report, within the standardized bounds of tolerance allowed by the test. Hypnotized and un hypnotized witnesses would tell the same story and it would show no sign of varying on account of hypnosis. If differences predominate between samples, then we will have reason to suspect that hypnosis is an important variable. An overall tally of findings shows the two samples compare as follows:

Homogeneous	36 traits	(72%)
Borderline	6 traits	(12%)
Not homogeneous	8 traits	(16%)

In other words, traits occur with similar frequency among hypnotic and non-hypnotic cases nearly three-fourths of the time. A further breakdown of the findings is found in Table 4.

Table 3. Comparisons of Hypnosis vs. Non-Hypnosis, Investigators

	Hypnotic		Non-Hypnotic		Investigators						
	χ^2	% std	% dev	% std	% dev	χ^2	C	H	M	S	D
Order											
OV=overall order	+	374	30	350	10	+					
CP=capture	*	299	34	270	23	+					
PR=procurement	+	258	43	237	43	+					
EX=examination	-	234	30	153	23	+					
RT=return	+	189	30	163	23	+					
Craft											
DK=disk shape	+	50	7	53	10	-					<
BM=beam of light	+	47		47		-					<
FG=fog	+	9		10		-					<
CR=circular interior	+	28	4	27	7	-					<
DF=diffuse lighting	+	43	11	30	10	-					< +
CD=cold atmosphere	+	28	5	27		-					< +
BD=breathing hard	+	23		17		-					< +
Belings											
HD=humanoid	+	81	5	67	17	+					+
SH=short or av. height	+	62	11	53	23	+					+
LH=large head	+	53	4	40	0	-					<
HL=hairless	-	49	8	23	27	-					< +
LY=large eyes	+	58	5	40	17	-					<
SM=small mouth	*	49	5	23	10	-					>
SN=small nose	+	38	12	17	13	-					< +
SE=small ears	-	31	9	10	23	-					>
GR=gray, ashen skin	*	51	14	37	3	-					>
CV=coverall clothing	+	41	15	43	13	-					>
LD=leader	+	35	3	23	0	+					+
FN=friendly	-	62	8	33	30	+					+
EV=evasive, deceitful	*	38		20		-					>
Examination											
TB=table	+	59	7	47	7	+					+
ND=undress	*	39		20		-					<
CL=cleansing	+	16		7		+					<
SC=scan	+	35		30		+					<
SA=sample taking	+	15		17		-					<
IM=implant, neural	-	35		3		-					<
RP=concern w/reprod.	+	28		17		-					<
MI=mission suggested	+	32		27		-					>
Communication											
TL=telepathy	-	65	5	23	23	+					<
RG=must forget	+	38	7	27	0	-					<
WR=warning	+	27		13		-					<
RE=promise to return	-	46		10		-					<
Otherworld											
BR=barren otherworld	+	16	0	17	3	-					<

NOTE: The last column indicates a high count of deviant entries from one or more hypnotists.

Table 3 (continued)

	χ^2	Hypnotic		Non-Hypnotic		Investigators					
		% std	% dev	% std	% dev	χ^2	C	H	M	S	D
Effects											
VA=vacuum, isolation	+	23		10		-					<
FL=flotation	+	57		40		-					<
MT=missing time	-	95		70		+					<
MC=mental control	+	72		60		+					<
CM=body control	+	54		43		-					<
EM=EM effects	*	24		43		-					<
VC=vehicular control	+	26		17		-					<
Aftereffects											
PY=physical	+	36		33		-					>
MN=mental	+	20		37		-					>
PN=paranormal	+	26		30		-					<
PC=personality chng.	+	16		13		-					<
OE=other encounters	+	54		33		+					<

Hypnotized and un hypnotized witnesses describe the craft, other-world and aftereffects in similar ways with about the same frequency, though some aftereffects and craft descriptions subsist on dangerously small numbers. Descriptions are alike for examinations and effects in about three-fourths of the traits, down to under two-thirds for order, and about fifty-fifty for beings and communication traits.

Some differences actually define what we mean by distinct samples and therefore do not count as troublesome incompatibilities. A time lapse is the hallmark of cases requiring hypnosis, but some cases never require hypnosis for the simple reason that no time lapse ever occurred. This same difference explains one dissimilarity in order as well. Since the time lapse event figures in the capture episode, cases without time lapse necessarily diverge in a comparison for order.

What remains are the irreconcilable differences, the elements most likely to condemn hypnosis as an active agent in abduction-making. The examination involves several of these problems. Under hypnosis the episode proves longer and more detailed than without hypnosis; hypnotized abductees report the undressing incident twice as often as nonhypnotized abductees, while in a surprising outcome, just one un hypnotized subject reports an implant into his head or body.

Hypnosis might account for these differences, perhaps because the investigator presses to find an implant and the witness obliges. Cleansing and sample taking compare in frequency, but carry little weight because their entries are few. Scans are also compatible, but this element has been familiar ever since the Pascagoula case. Reproductive tests like the needle in the navel might stand out in the memory of anyone acquainted with the Hill case. The many reports of witnesses being charged with a mission or having their thoughts altered is surprising because the notion is less familiar and yet comparably represented in both samples. The high frequency of

Table 4. Homogeneity in Frequency Distribution of Traits, Hypnotic vs. Non-Hypnotic Cases

Trait Group	Traits / Group	Homogeneous Traits	Borderline Traits	Non-Homogeneous Traits
Order	5	3 60%	1 20%	1 20%
Craft	7	7 100%	0 0%	0 0%
Beings	13	7 54%	3 23%	3 23%
Examination	8	6 75%	1 13%	1 13%
Communication	4	2 50%	0 0%	2 50%
Otherworld	1	1 100%	0 0%	0 0%
Effects	7	5 71%	1 14%	1 14%
Aftereffects	5	5 100%	0 0%	0 0%

NOTE: Data taken from Table 3.

implants in the hypnotic sample may result from investigators who favor this trait as something concrete, a potential for physical confirmation; but they might push equally hard for scans and sample taking as vivid, "traditional" and meaningful parts of an examination within the context of alien exploration beliefs. The investigators have as much vested interest in one trait as the other.

Important elements remain too scarce, little-known elements too common, and equal or unequal distributions too unpredictable to allow much confidence that hypnosis is to blame.

An interpretation that takes abductions at face value fares better with these findings. Assuming some captives are less susceptible than others to aliens' control techniques, these subjects will prove less docile and might resist certain procedures. Implants are painful and frightening enough to provoke such resistance. Undressing might offend a conscious captive, though hypnotized subjects may better overcome their bashfulness about relating this incident. Once the aliens discover that a captive is hard to control, they may truncate the examination procedures and seek more congenial subjects. This interpretation solves another problem difficult for the hypnosis explanation to handle—far more hypnotized abductees state that the beings promised to return for them. Susceptible people might be worth coming back for, while for less pliant witnesses, goodbye may mean good riddance. Promises aside, a third of the un hypnotized witnesses nevertheless report some kind of subsequent encounter.

The most serious differences between the two samples concern the beings. Similar numbers of hypnotized and un hypnotized witnesses agree that the beings are short humanoids with large heads, large eyes and small noses, wear coverall clothing and have a distinctive leader. This harmony goes sour over small mouths, gray skin or evasive behaviors, and breaks down altogether over hairlessness, small ears, and unfriendly behaviors. Hypnotized witnesses are most consistent in their descriptions, so that deviant traits seldom amount to a fifth of the total. The exceptions are

alternatives to small noses and ears, gray skin, and tight coveralls or uniforms, where deviant entries may rise to one-third.

"Standard humanoids" appear to hypnotized and un hypnotized witnesses alike, but the latter describe notably more deviant traits. Alternatives make up a substantial proportion of traits cited in 9 of 13 categories: Human types, robes or two-piece garments, tall stature, average-sized eyes and mouths occur from a fourth to a half as often as standard traits. Large or average noses appear as often as small noses and unfriendliness as often as friendliness. Beings with hair and large or normal ears actually outnumber beings with standard traits in the un hypnotized sample. When the beings communicate, un hypnotized witnesses divide their descriptions equally between telepathic and audible means, whereas hypnotized witnesses favor telepathy over speech twelve times as often.

Serious differences clearly separate the samples. The rather small base number of non-hypnosis reports means one or two cases loom large in the percentages, but an accidental consequence of sample size cannot explain so many high figures for alternative traits. A special plea might account for the beings seeming unfriendly to so many un hypnotized witnesses, since the impression of friendliness may result from a pacification effect rather than genuine kindness, or the beings may have little patience with a captive they cannot control. Otherwise the differences are matters of physical description and ill accord with the hypothesis that everyone sees the same thing.

The most striking contrast between the two samples is the concentration of tall humans with hair and normal facial features in reports from un hypnotized witnesses. A whole type of being distinct from the "standard humanoid" appears more often to the un hypnotized than to the hypnotized. Betty Hill's two reports are especially instructive, since her initial dream recollections of the beings included human figures with hair and long noses, while these beings metamorphosed into typical hairless and small-nosed humanoids during hypnotherapy. No other changes of comparable importance occurred in her testimony. These findings suggest that hypnosis is responsible in part for the humanoid aliens.

If the occupants are actual aliens, we might expect above-average variety in their descriptions. They are literally and figuratively the "moving parts" of the story, the elements which make things happen by their activity and which inspire the most curiosity, wonder and fear in the witness. Always busy about their tasks, the beings present ever-changing views and seldom let the witness enjoy a careful look. Then too, the witness focuses on the beings as living things, sentient creatures like himself and the agents of his captivity. The excitement of the occasion combined with a conscious effort to squeeze these beings into a conventional category of understanding might drive the witness to overhumanize them. An un hypnotized witness might be especially prone to the human weakness of reshaping a disturbing past into a comfortable but somewhat fictitious history. With hypnosis to lower the censorship barriers of conscious thought, a hypnotized subject may be better able to relive the experience in all its strangeness and keep more bizarre details intact. On

he other hand perhaps this witness sees the beings as they wish themselves to be seen. Their evasiveness often seems aimed at preventing the witness from getting a good look at them. This effect succeeds best with witnesses requiring hypnosis, so perhaps the humanoid form disguises the real beings and the less susceptible witnesses see real occupants rather than a planted image.

No apology can or should hide the inconsistencies plaguing descriptions of the beings. Whether these inconsistencies point to a causative role for hypnosis is less certain, since the beings are the most volatile aspect of abductions with or without hypnosis. Consider the Pascagoula "mummies," Alan Godfrey's biblical figure, Julio F's tall beings with pointed noses and chins, Carl Higdon's bow-legged "Ausso," Travis Walton's mixed crew of humans and humanoids, Luli Oswald's "rat faces," or Whitley Strieber's four distinct types of humanoids. Truly abductees round up a diverse population of extraterrestrials. Geographical differences pose another challenge for both objective and hypnotic hypotheses: humanoids prevail in North America, but tall humans, perhaps Nordic in appearance, people reports from England in disproportionate numbers whether the investigation includes hypnosis or not. South America concentrates tall humanoids into its geographical province. No good reason comes to mind why a distinctive race of aliens would visit one area and shun another, but geographically distinct versions are characteristic of traditional narratives. In this respect abduction reports resemble folklore rather than news of real events (Bullard 1987: 315-20).

Hypnotized and unhypnotized witnesses alike contribute to the diversity of the beings. More variety comes from unhypnotized witnesses and consistency under hypnosis is uniformly greater, so hypnosis or guidance under it seems to help standardize descriptions in this corner of the abduction story. Hypnosis might explain the floating sensation some witnesses report, telepathic communication, and "doorway amnesia"—a momentary lapse of consciousness on entering and leaving the ship. All these elements share a surreal, dreamlike character and may trace to sensations associated with subjective experience. Caution here is necessary, because fully conscious witnesses have reported the same events. The influence of well-publicized abductions on all witnesses remains a significant open question. The geographical differences and common sense urge that several causes contribute to the final story. Still, some traits seem too minor or underemphasized in media exposure to attract the attention of a casual reader, so in some instances similarities of experience seem to best explain similarities in the story.

Dwelling too long on the beings upsets an evenhanded evaluation of this comparison. Its message is that the hypnotic and non-hypnotic samples match rather well, even with the beings included. Not all abduction cases are alike by any means and most stories veer off the standard line at some point or other, but similarities prevail with or without hypnosis. Under these circumstances the influence of hypnosis appears modest at best. It may shape a few traits, but it leaves the majority

(b) *The Hypnotists Compared*

Klass proposes that the beings a witness describes may reflect the personality of the hypnotist investigating the case (1988: 168-69). He bases this conjecture on the observation that Hopkins, used to the fast pace of New York City, discovers businesslike or cruel aliens, while Sprinkle, living in a college town in Wyoming, finds his more easygoing nature reflected in a gentler breed of abductors. This observation is more playful than precise, since Sprinkle's investigations have covered the almost sadistic beings of the Casey County abduction and Hopkins the tender reunion of Kathie Davis with her half-alien daughter. Even if Klass misplaces his evidence, he still raises a good point: Does the hypnotist make a difference? Does personality and individual style cause perceptible variation in the story?

The problem is finding hypnotists with enough cases to their credit for a worthwhile comparison. Four hypnotists have contributed more than five cases involving mostly different witnesses: Clamar (6), Harder (6), McCall (7) and Sprinkle (12). If the frequency of reported traits compares favorably for all these investigators, then little reason will remain to suspect that the hypnotist, his style, technique or personality influences the story in any significant way. A small sample frustrates this effort, since too few traits actually register within the already small samples for each investigator to permit a meaningful comparison of frequency distribution. Only characteristics of order are an exception. No chi-square test is possible for other traits and a cruder measure will have to serve. Cases for Clamar, Harder and McCall number about half as many as cases for Sprinkle, so if traits appear in an approximate ratio of 1:1:1:2 for the respective hypnotists, the findings qualify as similar. Table 3 (right side) shows the results. The first column displays similar "+" and dissimilar "-" traits (based on chi-square tests for traits of order and ratios for the rest), the next four columns show when a hypnotist tallies disproportionately high ">" or low "<" findings for a trait, and the last column notes traits with a high count of deviant entries from one or more hypnotists. The overall scores for similarities and dissimilarities are as follows:

Traits similar for all four hypnotists	15	(30%)
Traits dissimilar for at least one hypnotist	25	(50%)
Insufficient entries	10	(20%)

All four hypnotists return comparable frequencies for the order of abduction stories, the one category where the number of entries rises above marginal values. Other categories prove less consistent. In none of them, not even in descriptions of the craft, do consistencies predominate. What makes these findings less serious is the fact that only one hypnotist may be responsible for an inconsistency. Results are similar for three out of four hypnotists in 21 of the 25 instances of dissimilarity, and no more than two hypnotists diverge from a proper ratio with respect to the 4 remaining traits. Table 5 provides a summary of the direction of differences and the occurrence of deviant traits.

26 Sprinkle's findings most often foil consistency, always by falling short of the expected number. Harder's results most often exceed expectations, while Clamar and McCall offer the most nearly harmonious samples. Deviant traits are fewest in cases from Clamar and Harder, of nearly equal numbers in cases from McCall and Sprinkle.

Interpretation of these findings must begin with an understanding of how small the numbers are. Many ratios are figured from just two or three entries per hypnotist, and I allow a latitude of one or two entries in reckoning the proportions. The margin for error is necessarily vast, so any conclusions count as tentative and impressionistic. Causes other than hypnosis seem responsible for some differences. Perhaps Sprinkle's results fall short so often because his counts are larger and maybe better representative of the average. Any findings for aftereffects depend on how far an investigator goes in following up a case, and some published accounts appear so soon after the alleged abduction that subsequent events may not have had time to unfold in full. Sprinkle's cases are especially vulnerable to this complication, since he has responded quickly to several reports (e.g., Casey County, Schirmer, Higdon, Larson), while Clamar and McCall have investigated mostly abductees with the experience deep in their past (e.g., Kilburn, Rich, Osborne, Horton, the Tujunga Canyon cases).

Patterns emerge only dimly here: the four hypnotists are consistent in findings for order, where the evidence is most reliable, but no consistencies among traits of the craft comes as a surprise. The beings once again vary in many traits and contribute most of the deviations. Implants score low for two hypnotists, reaffirming an unsettled status for this trait. Sprinkle's frequent low readings may represent a trend, but they may be an artifact of the small numbers involved. More interesting are Harder's five excessive readings for traits of the beings. He finds more "standard humanoids" than the others, a result which could mean that he pushes his witnesses to deliver beings cut to his own expectations. The considerable differences among messages communicated by the beings hint that this category owes some of its content to confabulation.

Perhaps as revealing as comparisons between hypnotists are comparisons among their own cases. Some pattern in idiosyncrasies should emerge if the personal touch really makes a difference, but descriptions vary enough from case to case in each investigator's sample to deny that any hypnotists carbon-copy their own work or

Table 5. Disproportionate and Deviant Traits Found by Four Hypnotists

Hypnotist	lower	higher	total	deviant
Clamar	2	0	2	0
Harder	2	6	8	1
McCall	3	1	4	3
Sprinkle	15	0	15	5

successfully impose a predetermined idea on a succession of witnesses. Clamar's sample has fewest deviations and is probably the most homogeneous overall. Even so, qualitative differences set apart the beings described by Virginia Horton from those described by Steven Kilburn. Deviant features appear in several cases investigated by McCall and Harder. Sprinkle's sample contains both the most cases and the most variety. The interior lighting may be uniform and diffuse, but may also be dim; the temperature can be warm as well as cold. Examinations may or may not require a table, and verbal communication may replace telepathy. Most of the beings are humanoids and display many familiar features, but only a minority qualify as "standard humanoids." Instead Sprinkle finds that Sandra Larson's beings were mummy-like, Herbert Schirmer's had thin heads, and Carl Higdon's "Ausso" was uniquely exceptional. Sprinkle's cases echo the commonest descriptions for most traits, but at least some significant feature sets most of his beings apart from one another and from the beings found by other hypnotists.

If the hypnotist truly stamps a significant personal mark on abduction stories, this comparison fails to uncover it. Some differences nuance the various accounts, but except for Harder's overly standardized and Sprinkle's understandalized beings, no consistent evidence points to a causative role for the hypnotist. The variety among each hypnotist's cases seems as extensive as the differences between hypnotists. This finding itself calls into question the source of inconsistencies. If the hypnotist influences the outcome, we should expect the cases from each of the investigators to show more similarity and those between them to show less. Every investigator's cases should betray a self-consistent constellation of characteristics, a pattern of influences as distinctive as a personal signature. What we see is just the opposite. The beings in Clamar's cases vary even within a sample of six cases. Sprinkle's witnesses furnish a whole menagerie of aliens and yet he is the believer, the veteran investigator most likely to have fixed ideas and impose them on witnesses. The idiosyncrasies turned up under hypnosis seem to belong to the witnesses and not the investigators. Rather than a full-scale shaping force as postulated by the skeptics, hypnotists appear less the leaders than the led.

(c) Hypnosis of Real and Imaginary Abductees Compared

Dr. Alvin C. Lawson, Dr. William C. McCall and John De Herrera challenged an objective interpretation of the abduction phenomenon when they hypnotized people with no inkling of an abduction experience, and still recovered "abduction" stories. In a 1977 experiment the investigators selected volunteer subjects with minimal prior UFO knowledge, hypnotized them, then asked them a series of questions based on an outline of reported abduction experiences. The hypnotist asked each subject to imagine a UFO, board it, describe its interior, describe the occupants, describe a physical examination, receive messages from the beings, exit the UFO, and imagine subsequent life changes. Subjects responded and the investigators compared these accounts with reports from "true" abductees (Lawson 1980: 195-204, 211-12).

initial suggestion with an elaborate and detailed story, with little need for prodding along the way, but the contents bore striking similarities to alleged real abductions, both in more obvious matters and in odd, minute details. The investigators scored their data in eight categories including pattern, strangeness, subject objectivity, and emotional component. When reduced to percentages and plotted on a graph, the findings for abductees and the experimental non-abductees nearly coincided. Lawson hedged his discoveries with a list of differences, cautioning that the emotions, time lapse, amnesia, nightmares, and conscious UFO encounter of real abductees distinguished them from the experimental subjects. Still, these observations did little to soften the impact of the experimental results. The plain fact that a subject with no abduction experience could replicate the abduction story cast serious doubts on the reality of all reports, and bolstered the possibility that hypnosis played a crucial role in a subjective origin.

These experiments have provoked an extensive critical literature from ufologists. Harder condemned the leading structure of questions and contrasted it with the neutral language proper in actual investigations. The cues guided subjects well enough, he said, for their responses to appear similar to the descriptions from real witnesses, but otherwise differences would multiply (Harder 1977: 5-6). Rogo pointed out that the procedures too often let the wolves guard the sheep—McCall was a poor choice for hypnotist because he was already deeply versed in real abductions, and the quantitative comparisons would be more convincing if performed by an outside party unaware of what to expect (Rogo 1985a: 3-4). Dr. Willy Smith criticized Lawson for seeing similarities where differences prevailed. This failure was especially notable among the beings, since humanoids predominate in natural reports but comprise a minority in the experimental cases; but the list of false identities could go on and on (Smith 1981: 3-4).

Whether the experimenters or the critics are right depends in large part on how similar the stories really are. If the similarities are as valid as the experimenters propose, an imaginary origin seems most plausible for all abduction stories. If differences prevail between real and imaginary stories, a difference in origin probably separates them as well. The sequence of questions in the experiment forecloses any test for order of events, so comparison must depend on descriptive features. Lawson's quantitative comparison is of no help here, since it uses generalized categories like "pattern" and "strangeness" rather than particular traits, and relies on a small sample of eight imaginary and four real cases. Specific motifs and descriptions offer more persuasive terms to evaluate the similarities of abduction stories. The following comparison expands the real cases with those in the two samples, but the number of imaginary cases remains at eight. Lawson's article does not include full transcripts of the imaginary reports, only a table of selected comparisons between real and imaginary cases, along with indications of how frequently a trait appears among the latter (1980: 202-204). Traits recur too infrequently among the imaginary cases to pursue formal tests, so again an informal comparison of percentages will have to do (see Table 6).

Table 6. Percentages of Traits Present in Imaginary, Real Hypnotic, and Real Non-Hypnotic Abduction Cases

(imaginary cases = 8, real hypnotic = 74, real non-hypnotic = 30)

Trait	Imaginary	Hypnotic	Non-Hypnotic
Craft			
Disk shape	75%	50%	53%
Saturn-shaped	38%	1%	7%
Fog	13%	9%	10%
Beam of light	38%	47%	47%
Cold inside	38%	27%	23%
Cold to warm	13%	5%	0%
Misty atmosphere	25%	15%	3%
Bright lights	75%	12%	10%
Screens	13%	11%	10%
Furnishings	63%	58%	50%
"Bubble"	13%	5%	0%
Humming	13%	1%	0%
Beings			
Human	20%	14%	20%
Humanoid	10(40)%	66%	43%
Robot	10%	3%	7%
Animal	10%	4%	3%
Exotic	50(10)%	18%	23%
Apparition	20%		
Two types	25%	9%	13%
Webbed hands	13%	7%	0%
Kindly	13%	62%	33%
Examination			
Mind probe	25%	35%	3%
Communication			
Telepathy	50%	65%	23%
Verbal	25%	5%	23%
Message	25%	66%	40%
No message	38%	23%	40%
Effects			
Doorway amnesia	25%	42%	43%
Paralysis	50%	19(30)%	3(33)%
Pacification	38%	26%	33%
Aftereffects			
Positive attitude	13%	12%	10%
Itching, burns	25%	8%	13%
Dehydration	13%	9%	3%
Greater open mind	13%	11%	10%

NOTE: Since two experimental subjects described two types of beings, the base sample for imaginary beings rises from 8 to 10.

At first glance many similarities seem to characterize real and imaginary abduction stories. Some 13 out of a possible 33 proportions in Table 6 compare reasonably well, indicating that these traits appear about as frequently in imaginary cases as in real cases of hypnotic or non-hypnotic origin. Many doubts nevertheless crowd behind these favorable impressions. The sample of imaginary cases is so small that 13 traits appear in only one case, 9 in just two; so most proportions remain the roughest estimates at best. Another loose end is descriptive terminology. Three experimental subjects described Saturn-shaped craft, whereas this specific term is rare among natural cases. Other metaphors like a "Chinese hat" shape might reduce to the same thing, but Lawson's article does not elaborate on how the experimenters rounded off their terms. A corollary problem is the vagueness of some categories, for example the messages. Several experimental subjects reported messages of ecological and scientific content. Messages from real cases touch on the same themes, so the two samples qualify as alike in general thematic terms. Yet too broad a base of comparison leaves room for largely incompatible traits to stand side by side in an apparent but ultimately unconvincing matchup. Without more specific details of the experimental findings, no informed judgment is possible about whether the categories are tight or tenuous, and consequently, no definite conclusions can be reached about how comparable the traits really are.

The question comes to mind of how far chance goes in accounting for many of these similarities. Where one example sustains a comparison, or where generalizations grow broad, an accidental likeness becomes a real possibility. Lawson's table of comparisons contains two columns, one for more obvious patterns and one for rarer patterns. The obvious patterns include furnishings inside the craft, calming influences from the beings, a good feeling about the experience, or a more open mind afterwards. Traits like these could occur to anyone. Even more distinctive traits like a quick-healing incision or burning skin might occur now and then by chance alone.

Similarities actually account for a minority of traits. Many quantities in the above table register differences, and a qualitative comparison of imaginary and real cases even further dispels any impression of their likeness. Most people expect disk-shaped UFOs and notably more imaginary than real abductees fulfill this expectation. Smooth, circular and domed rooms characterize the interiors reported by real abductees, but go unmentioned in the imaginary sample. Imaginary abductees cite brilliant lights inside, whereas real abductees far more often tell of a diffuse, all-pervasive fluorescence from no specific source. If the number of imaginary subjects reporting a humming sound or isolation within a bubble or glassed-in area is truly representative, these traits far exceed the norm for real cases.

The imaginary crews of imaginary ships bring an even more incompatible variety into the comparison. Something approaching monotony characterizes the beings described by real abductees. Most beings are humanoid in outline and include some of a set of features definitive of the "standard humanoid." A rich but finite array of alternative characteristics may vary the appearance of beings in given accounts,

abductees seldom utilize this opportunity for variety. Their descriptions muddle closest to the humanoid type and standard features, so that the less standard a form becomes, the rarer it occurs.

What a contrast the imaginary cases present: Lawson's table identifies only one humanoid out of ten beings in the experimental sample. He may underestimate his own results, since at least one illustration of a subject's apparitional being looks humanoid, and two forms categorized as exotic could qualify as deviant humanoids. Still, none of the illustrations depict a "standard humanoid." When the proportions in Table 6 include every possible humanoid the imaginary sample may hold, the result nearly overtakes the proportion of humanoids among non-hypnotic real cases. The figure for this latter sample represents only standard or near-standard humanoids, however, and if the total also added all possible humanoids, even the tall and deviant examples, the proportion would soar nearly 30 percentage points and leave the imaginary sample far behind. Occupants with human form are uncommon in the imaginary cases. Animal, exotic and robot beings actually predominate in these cases, yet such forms are quite scarce among real reports. What the experimenters have found is a variety of types comparable to real cases, but in proportions comparable to chance occurrence and not at all like the distribution in real cases. Here the imaginary cases seem well named. They follow a pattern appropriate for imaginations at work.

Traits from imaginary subjects with few if any parallels among real abductees drive yet another wedge between real and imaginary cases. Lawson's articles (1980: 202-204; 1977: 107, 109) note a being shaped like a hairy cone with a single eye, a retracting beam of light coming from this eye, a subject who takes a long sleep after an exam, an entity with a moving mouth but no sound coming from it, a UFO becoming larger and smaller, a long journey taken prior to boarding the ship, and a subject who feels taller after the abduction. These traits are extremely rare or nonexistent among real cases. Even a subject who enters the craft through its solid bottom or within a tunnel of light (three instances in the imaginary sample) is rather scarce. So many unconventional traits in just eight cases emphasizes how prolific of variety the imaginary stories are, and how unlike the real reports.

Picking at individual points may unravel the case for resemblances between real and imaginary abductions, but reading from full transcripts of the experimental sessions gives another, more disturbing impression. When the subjects speak for themselves their narratives bear closer ties to real reports than selected comparisons suggest. One subject describes two beings (Lawson 1980: 209-11). Their overall appearance is idiosyncratic, but they have deep-set eyes without visible pupils, a tiny nose and a round, lipless mouth. These beings stand just over four feet tall. The clothes are seamless and skin-tight, indistinguishable from the skin except in color. The floor of the room moves down like an elevator. Lawson's comparison list omits these traits, yet they mimic the descriptions from real abductees with greater fidelity than some traits he includes. The examination scene is even richer with parallels (1980: 237-38): one being serves as leader and takes a blood sample while another

examines bone structure, the witness lies on a table and alternates between feelings of calm and panic, while the examination includes an X-ray scan and investigation of the reproductive area. Major events, minor details, the atmosphere and spirit of this episode of the abduction story appear with impressive verisimilitude in this imaginary account. It differs enough from real accounts to subdue enthusiasm for these experiments as the certain key to the abduction mystery, yet the variation falls mostly within the range found in natural cases. Too many similarities appear in the transcripts for chance alone to explain.

Imaginary cases thus pose a vexing question—how can non-abductees tell stories even broadly like those of real abductees? For all the differences in frequencies and descriptive specifics, imaginary subjects still bring out unusual details and even extended vignettes of uncanny likeness to scenes from real abduction narratives. Non-abductees have no experiences to draw on, no hidden memories to tap. How can they still imagine a good abduction? More to the point, how can the hypothesis of an objective abduction survive if anyone can tell the abduction story, no experience required?

Any answers can only be speculative, given the uncertainties surrounding the non-abductee experiments. We need to know more about them; we need very much to repeat them. Do the published excerpts from experimental transcripts represent one subject's impressive performance in one episode only, or are the other episodes equally impressive? Do any other subjects report equally convincing details for the same episodes, or are the vivid moments one of a kind? How many truly striking and recurrent traits in real cases never turn up in imaginary cases, and vice-versa? As the number of experimental subjects increases does the variety in reports multiply as well, or does narrative content settle down to a constant pattern? These are a few of the questions necessary to place experiments with non-abductees in meaningful perspective.

Taking the evidence at hand, the role of hypnosis again warrants attention as a possible reason why imaginary accounts resemble real ones. Theory warns and skeptics advocate that a hypnotist familiar with real abductions might pass his prior knowledge inadvertently to his experimental subjects. McCall's position as both hypnotist in the experiments and expert in the contents of real abductions leaves his results vulnerable to this charge. Most of the few Saturn-shaped craft in the natural sample concentrate in the Tujunga Canyon abductions, which he investigated. If the description is not just a terminological convention and the hypnotist-as-guide notion is valid, the frequency of this shape among imaginary cases is a clue that he may have influenced his subjects' descriptions. The transcripts indicate that little overt transfer of information could or did occur. Whether such transfers took place by subliminal cues or other means cannot be settled by available evidence. Why he would convey small details like skin-tight clothing but leave behind an important trait like humanoid beings still poses a serious problem for any attempt to blame resemblances on the hypnotist.

Imaginary abductions actually resemble non-hypnotic real cases most closely

The frequency of 11 traits in the imaginary sample parallels their frequency among non-hypnotic real abductions, against only 6 parallels among hypnotic real abductions. A wider variety of beings with more human forms and fewer humanoids also links the imaginary and nonhypnotic samples. We cannot expect much reliability in these findings, but for what they are worth, they raise another caution against charging too many of the similarities to the use of hypnosis.

We can even wonder if a convincing imaginary abduction story requires hypnosis at all. How would fully conscious subjects respond to the experimental questions? The experimenters apparently never explored this possibility, but the results would offer a valuable check on the importance of hypnosis. Lawson points out that he and his colleagues screened out subjects who were too familiar with UFOs, yet the participating subjects may have been only relatively naïve. UFO lore is pervasive. Some familiarity with the subject comes as part of the baggage of living in the modern world, and learned expectations may stamp a powerful image on both observations and imagination (Haines 1979). Vintage science fiction literature and 1950s space movies incorporate a number of vivid abduction-like details (Méheust 1978; Simon 1979). These images prove that casual exposure is almost unavoidable and that conscious imagination can anticipate abduction ideas. Even a naïve non-abductee may know enough to tell a somewhat plausible abduction story, with or without hypnosis.

A reasonable guess would be that real abduction narratives trace to no single source, but represent a melange of contributions. Ideas may come from popular culture, the hypnotist, actual experience, and the life of the witness. Many investigators have noticed that personal content slips readily into an abduction story and becomes an integral part of it, perhaps ideas drawn from general interests and concerns, or matters related to psychological anxieties, or specific memories such as the experience of a painful operation (Hendry 1979: 179-80; Druffel 1979: 29-30; Spencer 1984; Rogo 1985ab). Adapted to an extraordinary context, these mundane elements could distort into unearthly events in keeping with the overall tenor of the story. Real and imaginary abductees might share this earthbound content and outfit their stories with it. The result would be a series of ready-made similarities. Under this scheme a key role would open for hypnosis, since it has proven itself a deft aid in blending fact and fantasy, old experiences and new.

An even more prosaic source for likenesses in abduction stories is the common cultural language shared by real and imaginary abductees. If real abductees experience an objective event, they necessarily would describe it in terms of the vocabulary, metaphors and expectations learned in the course of a lifelong social education, just as non-abductees would draw from this same fund of ideas to create and describe an imaginary abduction. Some terms of this cultural language seem bound to overlap, with the consequence being a series of similarities. They imply nothing more than that the narrators share the same opportunities and limitations of language.

One fact still favors a sharp distinction between real and imaginary cases: real

abductions present the appearance of a coherent phenomenon. Their consistency in content and narrowness of variation contrast with the much greater looseness and diversity of imaginary abductions. Such contrast denies any impression of coherency to the imaginary cases. Real hypnotic and non-hypnotic abduction stories share more in common with each other than with imaginary abduction stories, strengthening the sense that not hypnosis or the hypnotist, not cultural or personal elements can explain the unity behind real reports. Of all possible factors that might contribute to imaginary abduction stories, only experience is surely lacking. An experience of some sort thus offers the most plausible explanation for the underlying coherency of real abduction stories.

What the imaginary abduction story teaches us about the real abduction story is not that the two are ontological equivalents, but rather that real stories may well incorporate extraneous elements. The final expression of the story may represent a core of experience layered more or less thickly with unrelated events and ideas. A real abductee is thus a bad reporter, since his news includes inaccuracies. Understanding the ultimate nature of abductions depends greatly on the proportion of experience to these inaccuracies. Influence of the hypnotist may account for a few of them, but only a few. Hypnosis itself may add a few more, like perhaps the floating sensation in some cases, though its presence in non-hypnotic cases means even this trait cannot be solely an artifact of hypnotic trance. A concession to personal, cultural and linguistic contributions may explain some vivid smaller details and perhaps some larger components as well, but probably not the impressive coherency of the entire body of abduction reports. How much of the story represents experience, and whether that experience is objective or subjective, remain crucial questions still unsettled by experiments with non-abductees. Yet after considering the alternatives, experience seems the only adequate explanation for many traits of real abduction stories.

CONCLUSION: ALARM OVER HYPNOSIS A FALSE ALARM

Scientific studies make clear that testimony obtained under hypnosis can be false, distorted, confabulated and intertwined with fantasy. Far from assuring truth, hypnosis brings manifold possibilities for error. Skeptics have carried this prospect to extremes and concluded that errors riddle the hypnotically derived testimony for abductions. For skeptics the magnitude of these errors is great enough to explain away everything extraordinary about the abduction story. Its components consist of dreamlike fantasy, personal experience, prior acquaintance with UFO lore, or expectations conveyed by the hypnotist, but nothing more. Hypnotism provides the ideal medium in which all the parts come together to form a vivid and convincing—but fictitious—whole. Besides Klass, psychologist Robert A. Baker favors this view, while others who incorporate it in their explanations for particular abductions include Ernest H. Taves and Robert Wanderer for the Betty Andreasson case, Stuart Campbell for Alan Godfrey, and John Spencer for the Hills. A spirit of

extreme caution toward hypnosis permeates writings of Lawson, Hilary Evans, Willard D. Nelson and Hobart Gregory Baker. Many thoughtful ufologists now regard hypnosis with reservations, though some still accept it unconditionally and no consensus is in sight.

The potential for misuse of hypnosis is undeniable, yet an examination of the abduction evidence points to a reassuring conclusion: what might happen according to theory seems not to have happened in fact. Whether comparing abductions reported with and without help of hypnosis or testimonies obtained by four different hypnotists, few incompatibilities appear among 50 outstanding story traits. The traits occur with similar enough frequency among the hypnotists to deny that personal style controls the form and content of abduction stories to any great extent. The similar frequency of these traits among hypnotic and nonhypnotic cases discredits hypnosis as an important influence on story form and content in any way at all. Outcomes in every comparison give little reason to believe that hypnosis enhances the imaginations of receptive witnesses or would-be witnesses to create abduction fantasies, or that Svengali-like hypnotists lead the witness or impose a standardized abduction story. If they do, they achieve the remarkable feat of drawing out the same complex story full of extensive similarities time after time, in spite of all differences in backgrounds, circumstances or personal opinions of everyone involved. The fact that some abductees tell the same story without professional help casts even deeper doubt on how much of a variable hypnosis can be in the abduction story.

Differences in trait distribution do exist. They appear between the hypnotic and non-hypnotic cases as well as among the four hypnotists, even considerable differences where the beings are concerned. More consistency in descriptions of the beings from hypnotized subjects and slight individualized patterns in descriptions associated with certain hypnotists keep alive the likelihood that hypnosis is not entirely neutral. Still, its influence seems minor. Consistencies far outweigh differences, and many differences seem more reasonably attributable to the conditions of an experience than to hypnosis. It may help a witness embroider the narrative here and there, but within the limits of the comparisons presented above, no evidence supports the skeptical claim that hypnotically induced fantasies or the influence of a hypnotist deserve substantial blame for the abduction story.

Results from experiments with non-abductees should prompt some deep soul-searching among supporters of an objective abduction phenomenon. Ways in which imaginary abduction narratives resemble real reports are startling enough to raise doubts about the viability of an objective interpretation, but ways the imaginary stories differ from the real ones are many and serious. The likenesses seem more apparent than real, more surprising than threatening. At the same time they cannot be ignored. If some traits enter the abduction story without benefit of experience, suspicion must fall on the rest. Someone might imagine any individual trait sooner or later, so the coherency of real abduction reports in contrast to greater diversity among imaginary reports offers the firmest basis for an inherent distinction between

ment. Only when further experiments enlarge the imaginary sample can we know if coherency is a certainty or a mirage.

These experimental cases should cause a little soul-searching among skeptics as well. They especially need to reexamine the importance they attach to hypnotists leading the witness. If Lawson and his colleagues are right about their experiments, hypnotic leading contributed little or nothing to the imaginary abduction narratives. Then the hypnotist is an insignificant factor behind the similarities of real and imaginary cases. Of course if the experimenters did lead their subjects, those similarities become easy to understand, they drop in status from a challenge to a triviality, and imaginary abductions pose no threat to an objective interpretation. The skeptics have tried to have it both ways, citing these experiments as evidence that non-abductees can imagine as good a story as an alleged real abductee, then blaming hypnotists for steering the witness toward a story configured to their personal biases. These arguments cannot peacefully coexist. Either leading is important in imaginary as well as real narratives, or its restriction to real ones becomes a new mystery for skeptics to explain. No evidence supports a major role for influence by the hypnotist, so individuals must have the raw materials of the abduction story already within them. Other signs cast doubt on imagination as sufficient cause for abduction stories, so suspicion falls at last on experience as a necessary component.

Weighed and found wanting time and again, hypnosis cannot shoulder nearly as much responsibility for abductions as the skeptics have proposed. None of their appeals to confabulation, influence by the hypnotist, and experiments with non-abductees stand up under a comparative examination. In light of these findings, the burden of proof now drops on the skeptics. They can no longer repeat their old claims as meaningful answers. For any future rebuttals the skeptics must look deeper into the phenomenon itself rather than simply deduce the hazards of hypnotic testimony from scientific studies of hypnosis, or read theoretical interpretations into abduction reports from a safe distance. The skeptical argument needs rebuilding from the ground up.

One chance to salvage a significant place for hypnosis in the abduction phenomenon might come from a challenge to the comparisons carried out above. Is the comparative net too coarse or too fine, or its sweep too broad or too narrow in range, thereby missing the really significant terms? Future work especially needs to consider the witness as an individual. If a hypnotized subject is psychotic, all bets are off; nothing learned from a mentally disturbed witness can be taken as reliable (Mutter 1984: 45). Abductees seldom if ever fall into this category, but the issue of personal differences still matters. Individuals vary greatly in their hypnotizability and perhaps also in their ability to fantasize under hypnosis, so the possibility that abduction stories come from people with certain personality types or particular talents opens another avenue for exploration. Prior knowledge of the witness affords one more direction needful of investigation. No consideration was given to complications that might arise from the witness being under hypnosis at the time of the abduction-like experience, either because alien captors used hypnosis or

something akin to it for purposes of mind control, or because some natural state affected the witness. Various sleep-related phenomena could serve the purpose, and so could highway hypnosis, a condition often accompanied by time lapse (Basterfield 1981; Williams 1965). No evidence indicates that such conditions lend abduction reports their observed coherency, but the possibility merits inquiry.

The popular reputation of hypnosis suffers from unreasonably high expectations. Contrary to popular belief, hypnosis cannot guarantee truthful testimony. In that sense hypnosis is a disappointment, a technique full of promises it cannot keep. On the other hand, if abductions are actual and traumatic experiences, no other tool may serve as well for releasing the repressed memories. Ufologists can take comfort from the findings that many abduction investigators have followed sensible precautions in the use of hypnosis, and that the body of abduction evidence now on record seems little contaminated with fantasies and inaccuracies of hypnotic origin. Investigators are becoming increasingly aware of the potentials for danger in hypnosis. Carefully worked out programs of abduction investigation now under development promise far tighter control over hypnotic procedures in the future, leading to even more reliable testimony.

One cloud still darkens this otherwise bright vista: a negative scientific reputation also burdens hypnosis. Too many doubts surround it for the scientific community to readily embrace hypnotic testimony as valid, especially for any claims as remarkable as UFO abductions. However rigorous the procedures, however unequivocal the comparative analyses, doubters looking for ways to condemn the abduction evidence without facing up to it can always create doubt by questioning hypnosis. For ufologists hypnosis will remain an indispensable tool, but attention to conscious testimony, multiple-witness cases, and physical evidence holds out better hope than hypnosis for gathering the kind of evidence no one can ignore. Only time and open-minded research can reveal the ultimate value of hypnosis in abduction research.

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THE DELPHOS CASE: SOIL ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL OF A CE-2 REPORT

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ABSTRACT: Three members of a farming family claim to have witnessed an unusual luminescent object hovering over their land. After departing, the soil over which the object allegedly hovered was found to have undergone considerable physical and chemical change, the effects of which lasted for several months afterwards. Subsequent chemical analysis of the soil provided data which virtually discounts any hoax interpretation and even goes a considerable way to corroborating the witnesses' testimony. A plea is made for a conclusive analysis involving the identification of a single unstable compound which just might provide evidence of a genuine UFO-related event occurring at Delphos.

INTRODUCTION

The Delphos case is well known in the UFO literature having been investigated in depth by Ted R. Phillips Jr. and reported elsewhere (Phillips 1972a, 1972b, 1981). For present purposes a brief description of the important aspects of the sighting report will suffice. On November 2, 1971, at Delphos, Kansas, at 7:00 p.m. local time, a sixteen-year old boy, Ronald Johnson, was tending his sheep at his father's farm when he suddenly became aware of an illuminated object hovering beneath a tree about 75 ft. away from him. The object had an estimated diameter of 9 ft. and appeared to be about 10 ft. high (Fig. 1). It also emitted a rumbling noise "like an old washing machine that vibrates" which was not heard before the object became illuminated. The boy described the object as multicolored with blue, red and orange glows about its surface as it hovered about 2 ft. off the ground. He also observed a bright glow between the object and the ground for the duration of the sighting. The boy said that it hurt his eyes when looking directly at the object and for several days after the incident his eyes were painful and he suffered headaches. After 3-5 minutes the object began to move off passing over a nearby shed by about 4 ft. Ronald called to his parents at the farm who then proceeded to the site and saw a ring of soil over which the object had hovered glowing in the dark. Looking up into the sky they observed a bright luminescent object receding into the distance bearing "the color of an arc-welder." The glowing ring so impressed Mrs. Johnson that she ran back to the house to fetch a Polaroid camera with which she took a photograph of the effect.

The witnesses proceeded to touch the ring, which they described as having a cool



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WHAT'S NEW IN UFO **ABDUCTIONS?** HAS THE STORY CHANGED IN 30 YEARS?

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ABSTRACT

The apparent consistency of UFO abduction reports from one abductee to another remains a key argument for abduction being a genuine mysterious phenomenon. Critics see many examples of deviation and argue that any consistency owes its existence to influences of culture and investigators, or phenomena like sleep paralysis and hallucinations. The historical dimension has received little attention in this dispute. To redress this neglect, the current study compares 437 abduction reports, divided into 52 cases published between 1966 and 1977, 131 from the period 1978-1986, and 254 from 1987 to the present. Of the 64 content features examined, 42 appear in approximately the same proportions in all three periods while 12 change significantly, though only four of these offer strong support for the hypothesis that abduction reports have altered over time. So little change belies suppositions that cultural influences like Close Encounters of the Third Kind or Whitley Strieber's Communion revolutionized the abduction story, and reinforces the hypothesis that abduction reports are consistent because they have an experiential basis of some sort. Such a finding challenges the political agendas and intellectual comfort zones of critics, but it also raises disquieting issues for proponents.

INTRODUCTION

The last year of the 20th century also marks a milestone in the history of the UFO abduction phenomenon. A third of a century has passed since 1966, when John G. Fuller introduced the story of Barney and Betty Hill in his book, *The Interrupted Journey*. Since Fuller first brought abduction to public attention, a trickle of cases has grown to a torrent, with more than a thousand reports published to date and countless others held in the files of investigators. Once considered the rarest of UFO experiences, abduction is now the close encounter of the most frequent kind.

Where the Hills were driving along a remote highway when the UFO descended on them, the aliens have since taken other people from out of doors, still others from their beds in the course of a house call. The abduction record now presents a rich texture of reports, different in situation, diverse in their means of recall. Some abductees remember the entire experience from the start, others recover it over time or in bits and pieces through dreams or flashbacks, still others find out only with help of hypnosis. For some people abduction has the hard edge of an encounter with nuts-and-bolts hardware, other people float through a dreamy and surreal neverland. There is no one way into the abduction experience. It does not require hypnosis or sleep, a long drive or—for all the current psychological tests

reveal—a fantasy-prone personality. The when and where, who and how of abduction betray no obvious correlation with psychology or situation.

If many roads lead toward abduction, they all seem to arrive at the same place. From the earliest days when investigators could count the known cases on their fingers, a striking similarity characterized the reports, a sameness in what happened to abductees and what they saw among the aliens. This pattern continued to build as the reports increased in number. I found about 300 reports in the literature by 1985, and 103 reports carried sufficient information and basic reliability credentials to permit a content analysis (Bullard 1987). The results portrayed a coherent story with recurrent episodes and similar events within the episodes, also comparable descriptions of the entities, the interior of the craft, and sensations accompanying the experience. This coherency contrasted with the wide scatter of sequences and descriptions in the less reliable reports, where hoaxes and fantasies seemed rampant. One outgrowth of the Abduction Study Conference Held at MIT in 1992 was a survey of 13 abduction investigators with about 1700 cases to their credit, and here again consistencies prevailed as one investigator after another reported similar descriptions in similar proportions (Bullard 1995). Dan Wright's MUFON Abduction Transcription Project drew on nearly 150 accounts (as of 1995) taken directly from abductees, and analyzed the content elements in unprecedented detail (Wright 1995). The picture of a coherent phenomenon with consistent content shone through once again, and once adapted to a common footing with my 1987 and 1995 results, most of Wright's findings matched mine with a bewildering closeness (Bullard 1998).

TELLING A DIFFERENT STORY?

These studies underscore sameness, but any critical reader of the literature may well frown on such conclusions and say, wait a minute, light years of difference separate today's story from the reports of 20 or 30 years ago. New elements have shouldered in, old ones dropped out, until today's abductions bear only a partial likeness to their forerunners. Such impressions are strong, and the following list, by no means exhaustive, highlights themes now prominent in the literature but seldom seen ten or twelve years ago.

Alien types have diversified. Yesterday's abduction was usually limited to one type of being per capture, today the abductee witnesses an interplanetary United Nations aboard ship. Tall and short gray humanoids, Nordics, hybrids, reptiles, and insectoids mingle in the same crew. Social relationships among the types have grown more complex, and the answer to who is the boss passes from taller grays to Nordics to mantis-like entities. Relationships between aliens and humans evolve as the hybridization program unfolds, with abductees serving not merely as a materials resource but also as agents of nurture, interaction, and training in human skills. A moral polarity has emerged in the story as good aliens bring help and friendly intentions, while bad aliens intend evil and harm.

The dividing line between human and alien has blurred. Hybrids of differing degrees appear aboard ship and on the streets. The old separation of us versus them has folded into one as many abductees speak of double identity, a sense of living as a human on earth but having alien roots, perhaps even a former life on another world and a longing to return (Nyman 1989, Randles 1994).



Hybrids have taken center stage. Budd Hopkins (1987:108-122,154-163) introduced this theme, David Jacobs (1992:107-131,153-186; 1998a: 128-184) has cultivated it as the ultimate purpose behind the abduction phenomenon. In the process a new episode has muscled into the old lineup, with scenes of interaction with hybrids now dominating the story as the new dramatic climax.

Repeat abductions have become the norm. Once was enough in the old days, but most abductees now discover a string of encounters reaching back to earliest childhood, and for some the experience recurs as often as three times a week. One entity shows up time after time and becomes familiar, a sense of long-term purpose now replaces the original idea that alien explorers gathered an occasional human sample at random in the course of a scientific survey.

Intimations of government involvement have infected the story. Current abductions sometimes lead to an underground place and observations of uniformed soldiers, often in league with aliens, though in some interpretations the whole experience is an experiment in government-sponsored mind control, perhaps a Roswell-inspired offshoot of rumors about pacts between the government and aliens. David Jacobs (1992:149-150) has introduced the idea of staging procedures, where aliens assume human disguises and act out emotion-laden scenes as part of a program to learn the nature of human experience. This idea of staging turns the supposed human involvement in abduction inside out and unmaskes aliens as the sole perpetrators once again, as the story evolves ever more convoluted twists.

New content details trace directly to well-publicized abduction accounts. A look at the 1987 bestseller lists confirm the popularity of Whitley Strieber's *Communion*, and the book infused squat blue beings into the crew, wide hats into alien attire, and a graphic rectal probe into the examination. The cover picture of a large-eyed alien did not originate the image by any means, but spread it far and wide. To Budd Hopkins goes credit for introducing missing fetuses and baby presentations, while David Jacobs has contributed Mindscan and emotional tests to the examination routine. Once introduced, these story elements appear to take on a life of their own.

The spiritualization of abduction has accelerated into a major trend. Ideas of educational and helpful purposes have persisted over the years (e.g., Sprinkle 1980), a sense of mission or an important task to perform has accompanied the experience almost from the beginning, but in the last decade Kenneth Ring (1992:239-246), Michael Grosso (1989), and Keith Thompson (1991:181-195) have implicated abduction in major shifts of human consciousness now underway. John Mack (1994:387-422) has championed the redemptive implications of the experience, and points out the positive consequences of abduction on the lives of the people he has investigated. The entities admonish an end to exploitation of the earth and warn of cataclysms to follow if humans persist in their materialistic rapaciousness. Similar spiritual themes now play a central part in the story, gaining in nuance, sophistication, and emotional power as they seem to exercise more and more transformational leverage on abductees. Apocalyptic warnings increase in number and urgency, a burgeoning rank of abductees approves the experience as beneficial and life-changing rather than terrifying, exploitative, and akin to rape.

Whether or not recent abduction stories break with the supposed continuity of the past depends on impressions, not a close reckoning with the data. The impressions bear persuasive force nonetheless.

They gather added momentum from the apparent effectiveness of Whitley Strieber's *Communion* and other cultural influences in reshaping the abduction story, popularizing it into a modern myth of universal recognition. A stock argument of the critics says the stories reflect little more than shifting influences of popular culture, social concerns, and the imagery of the abduction myth itself (Peebles 1994:241,283-291; Brookesmith 1998:73-159), but these assertions have been long on supposition and short on evidence. The argument remains incomplete because we have not heard from history. How much have abduction stories really changed in a third of a century? A lack of perspective handicapped any earlier efforts to explore the historical question, but that excuse is no longer viable. Enough years have passed and enough cases come to hand for a look along the temporal dimension, and for some answers with evidence to back them up.

THE STUDY

This exploration of abduction history depends on 437 reports from the literature, selected because they include enough information for comparison and pass minimum standards of reliability. These standards do not imply a deep investigation, only confirmation of such basics as the actual existence of the witness as well as an appearance of sincerity and mental competence. Another requirement is that the report describes not just any sort of UFO close encounter, but one with some key characteristics of abduction. An examination is a hallmark episode but not necessary for inclusion; instructional or conference sessions together with involuntary entry, or even characteristic capture events suffice to qualify a report for inclusion in the sample.

I have divided the total sample into three temporal divisions. This partition is not arbitrary, but recognizes two watershed events in the social history of abduction. The first is late 1977 and release of Steven Spielberg's movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, since skeptics have favored its influence as the source for the "standard" gray humanoid of abduction reports (Peebles 1994:234). The second is 1987, when Budd Hopkins's *Intruders* and Whitley Strieber's *Communion* became best-sellers and abduction acquired household familiarity. The first period covers 52 reports published through 1977, the second 131 reports from 1978 to 1986, and the third 254 reports from 1987 to the present, though the latest went on record about 1996 and rounds out a 30-year period of coverage from 1966 to 1996. For this study the relevant date of a report is its date of publication rather than the alleged time when the abduction occurred, since current expectations might restructure past memories.

The study compares these reports for 64 content features, mostly the usual suspects, like paralysis and missing time, humanoids and large eyes, examinations and reproductive procedures, nightmares and scars¹. The means of comparison is elementary. It asks only what percentage of reports in each of the three divisions includes the feature in question. The resulting percentages show if features have increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the three periods of comparison. These results are not directly comparable with the percentages in my 1998 article, since those figures were adjusted to suit the questions from the 1995 survey. What these present figures show is the general proportions of the content elements, and how those proportions have changed over the three periods of comparison.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

A series of graphs depicts the findings and gives away the secret at a glance: Not much has changed throughout this time. Most graphs show a flat line, or at least a line that varies little relative to its scale over the three periods, and indicate that the content elements of abduction reports appear in about the same proportions from start to finish. Few graphs show the strong increasing or decreasing trend necessary to confirm alterations in the accounts over time. The rest of the story lies in the details.

Capture Elements (nos. 1-15). Most abduction reports describe the strange sights and sensations at the onset of the experience in considerable detail, often drawn from conscious memory.

1,2,3. *Circumstances of Capture: Highway, Outdoor, Bedroom.* The first graph shows a changing aspect of the phenomenon. In the early days, almost half of all abductions (49%) began in a car, another third with the abductee out of doors, while only 18% located the witness at home or in bed. Most of these cases from the 1960s and 1970s left conscious memory of a UFO approaching, and the sighting remained as a visible handle to the buried portion of the experience if a time lapse occurred. The period from 1978-1986 corresponds to the rise of missing time as a primary clue to abduction, when a growing troop of witnesses finds aliens in the bedroom as the first sign that an encounter has begun. In this middle period the proportions are almost equally divided, with about a third of the reports beginning on the road, out of doors, and in the home (35%, 31%, 34%). Since 1987 the balance has shifted in favor of the bedroom encounter. Home is now where the action is, and this category accounts for 59% of reports, while outdoor encounters have fallen moderately to 24% and highway captures claim only 17%.

4. *Premonition or Restlessness Prior to Encounter.* This uncommon element has changed little across the three time periods. An apparent slight decline from 17% to 15% to 13% probably falls within the margin for error of this study.

5. *UFO Present during Initial Stages of Capture.* The considerable decline in this aspect of the report, from 78% to 58% to 41%, parallels the decline in highway and outdoor encounters relative to abductions beginning in the bedroom.

6. *Beam of Light.* A beam of light serves multiple purposes in the capture process. Sometimes this beam shines into the bedroom windows, at other times it lifts the abductee into a hovering UFO. Mention of this element has remained steady in about one third of reports over the years (38%-35%-31%).

7. *Beings Present.* The abductee's first awareness of an alien presence may be entities in the bedroom, while highway and outdoor encounters often progress from the approach of a craft to the approach of its occupants. An initial appearance of the beings before the abductee enters the UFO stays almost steady over time at 59%, 55%, and 60%.

8. *"Oz Effect."* Jenny Randles gives this apt designation to the surreal silence, stillness, or absence of traffic that may accompany capture. Specific mention of the Oz Effect occurs in a minority of cases, and the percentage has dropped from 17 to 12 to 8 across the three periods. This decline may again be tied to a diminishing number of outdoor locations.

9. *Inappropriate Behavior.* Target individuals often act in unreasonable or uncharacteristic ways during capture. A driver may turn onto a deserted road or an alarmed individual may surrender a weapon and “decide” not to fight. At 15%, 14%, and 11%, clear references to such behavior are an uncommon but relatively stable fixture of the abduction story.

10. *Drone, Hum, or Musical Sound.* The sounds that sometimes accompany capture seem to help the aliens take control of the abductee. These sounds occur in 24% of the early cases and 21% from the middle years, but the number drops to 13% after 1987. This decline is surprising, since sounds are more common in bedroom cases and should increase with the rise in this type. A genuine change in the story is possible, though recent reports are sometimes careless of details and may understate this feature.

11. *Paralysis.* This familiar accompaniment of capture recurs throughout abduction history in about one third of the reports (35%,30%,33%). These figures recognize only paralysis at the capture stage and not immobilization during examination or while aboard the UFO.

12. *Missing Time.* The famous time lapse effect blanks out abductees’ memories between the middle stages of capture and the late stages of return. This feature is a stable element of reports and occurs in about three-quarters of all cases (75%, 71%, 74%).

13. *Flotation.* A sense of floating or actual levitation into or through the air is one of the most surreal aspects of capture. This means of transport to the craft holds rather steady through abduction history at 47%, 41%, and 42%. These figures do not include flotation that occurs only aboard the craft.

14,15. *Sudden Entry/Awareness of Entry.* The transition from outside the UFO to inside is a simple matter of walking or being carried inside in 31% of the cases for both the early and middle periods. This number drops to 18% after 1987, again perhaps a consequence of lapses in the published accounts. An alternative motif of common and relatively steady occurrence (40%-31%-40%) has the abductee suddenly pass from outside to inside without awareness of entry. David Jacobs (1998b:41) argues that this “doorway amnesia” is not a genuine aspect of the abduction phenomenon, but this element still remains a recurrent part of the abduction story.

Types of Beings (nos. 16-24). Some of the most detailed descriptions in abduction reports picture the occupants. A variety of beings man the ship and require sorting according to type.

16. *Humanoids.* Beings generally human in form but distinct from normal human appearance comprise all or part of the abduction crew in the great majority of cases. With percentages of 84%-83%-84%, the presence of humanoids qualifies as a constant through the years.

17. *Standard Humanoids.* The familiar “standard” humanoid is short, gray, and hairless, with an enlarged cranium and large, elongated or wraparound eyes, while the mouth is a slit and the ears and nose are small or absent. Descriptions in the literature are often sketchy and omit too many key features to certify the entity as a genuine Standard Gray. The problem has grown more acute as reports appear to take the standard entity for granted. A compromise between assuming too much and accepting too little grants standard status to a humanoid if it registers two or more appropriate features and no deviant

elements. By this criterion, the familiar humanoid becomes a steady fixture in reports at 65%-64%-71%.

18,19. *Short Humanoids, Tall Humanoids.* The usual humanoid is shorter than average human height, and shortness is a constant description at 63%-59%-62%. Taller humanoids are also constant at 24%-24%-23%, though this group mingles individuals relatively taller than the shortest humanoids and individuals tall by human standards.

20. *Crew with Mixed Types.* Humanoids usually have the ship all to themselves, but in a fifth of the reports these entities share the craft with one or more distinct types. This pluralistic society may include Nordics, humans, hybrids, robots, reptilian beings, insect-like entities, ape or Bigfoot-like creatures, and monstrous forms. At 22%-19%-19%, such mixtures have not changed significantly over the years.

21. *Nordic and Human Types.* The commonest alternative entity is Nordic or human in appearance. The ideal Nordic is tall, blond, blue- (or pink-) eyed, often long-haired and compassionate. In practice, ideal Nordic elements shade into descriptions of normal humans or adult hybrids until any hard-and-fast separation becomes unworkable. Taking the full spectrum of possibilities, Nordic/human entities make up the sole crew of the ship or (more often) share it with humanoids in a steady fraction of reports over the years (22%-23%-19%).

22,23,24. *Robots, Reptiles, Insects.* These alternative types are much rarer than Nordics, and almost always share the ship with humanoids or Nordics. Robots have declined from 9% to 4% to 2% over the three periods of abduction history, while reptilian beings occur in 2% of reports in both the earliest and latest periods, but were absent during the middle years. Since the earliest days some witnesses have described their captors as resembling insects, but a distinct type of mantis-like entity with exaggerated humanoid features has entered the mix only during the latest period. These "insectoids" appear in 5% of reports during this time.

Humanoid Descriptions (nos. 25-34). The facial characteristics of standard humanoids make up a vivid and frequently described cluster of abduction story elements.

25. *Large Eyes.* The percentage of humanoids with large, usually elongated or wraparound eyes has increased by a slight but probably insignificant margin over the years, from 86% to 90% to 94%.

26. *Eyes Dark or Iris Large.* An unmistakable trend marks a change in descriptions of humanoid eyes over 30 years. In the early days these eyes often had irises of human or smaller size. A steady darkening has followed, with only 17% of the eyes described as wholly or almost entirely dark in the first period, while this description grew to 48% in the middle years and then to 71%. Here then is one abduction motif that has changed too dramatically to ignore or to excuse as an accident of faulty reporting.

27. *Staring Eyes.* Descriptions of piercing or staring eyes have been a staple in abduction reports and appear in 14% of descriptions in the early years, 15% in the middle period. David Jacobs

raised the significance of staring with his description of the Mindscan procedure in *Secret Life* (1992), and instances of staring jumped to 24% in the latest period.

28. *Slit Mouth*. Descriptions of the mouth as a lipless slit or small hole remain almost universal 96%-95%-96%.

29. *Vestigial Nose*. A nose described as small, a bump, holes, or nonexistent is also nearly universal and constant, 92%-90%-96%.

30. *Vestigial Ears*. While most descriptions of ears identify them as small, holes without structure, or nonexistent, proportions have grown from 74% to 85% to 95% over the years. The number of reports that neglect to mention this feature casts some doubt on how reliable this trend really is.

31. *Enlarged Cranium*. The familiar large head of the aliens, often shaped like an inverted pear with a narrow or pointed chin, dominates over the years with 88% in the early period, rising to level off at 96% and 95% thereafter. The increase after 1977 is not dramatic enough to deserve much attention.

32. *Hairlessness*. The bald, hairless quality of abductors maintained a steady 82% and 84% during the first two periods, then rose to 94% in the third. This climb may represent a small trend.

33. *Gray Skin*. The gray, pallid, chalky white, or sunless and fungal attributes of alien skin repeats at 87%-81%-86%.

34. *Leader*. Perception of rank among abductors, where one individual seems in charge and others subordinate in some respects has recurred over the years at 27%-23%-23%.

Descriptions of the Craft (nos. 35-40). The shape of the UFO and descriptions of the examination room are staple elements of abduction reports.

35. *Disk-Shaped Craft*. The archetypal flying saucer in some version or other held at 71% and 75% over the first two periods, but dropped to 65% in recent years. No obvious alternative shape accounts for this slight decline and it is probably insignificant, though triangular or boomerang-shaped abduction craft have increased slightly in the most recent period.

36. *Examination Room*. Mention of a specific room set aside for examination continues at about the same level over the years at 89%-85%-92%.

37. *Round Room*. An examination room of round, rather than square or pie-slice shape, held steady at 83% and 81% during the first two periods, then rose to 94% in the third, for a possible trend.

38. *Cool Temperature*. A cold, chilly, or clammy atmosphere in the examination room holds steady at 88%-93%-92%.

39. *Indirect Lighting.* Fluorescent, luminescent, or sourceless lighting in the examination room comprised 63% of descriptions in the early period, with a similar 69% and 63% in the following periods.

40. *Table.* Presence of an examination table, bed, or reclining chair continues at a near-constant 89%-93%-95%.

Examination (nos. 41-48). The central episode of the abduction experience encompasses a distinctive set of procedures recurrent throughout abduction history.

41. *Examination Occurs.* Some people enter the craft but do not undergo—or at least do not recall—an examination. Reports of this episode have remained almost steady at 71%-71%-76%.

42. *Manual Examination.* Reports of examiners manipulating the abductee by hand have remained dead constant at 11% through all three periods.

43. *Instrumental Examination.* Use of handheld instruments or attachment of the abductee to machinery has fluctuated over the years, but kept to a narrow range of 41%-35%-39%.

44. *Scan.* Use of an eyelike device or a machine like an X-ray to examine abductees appears in 44% of early reports, but subsequent figures drop to 25% and then 16% under a strict reading of the scanning device as mechanical. If the reading is loose enough to allow staring or Mindscan during the examination as a substitute for the mechanical scan, numbers for the middle years rise to 32% and 37% for the most recent period. Taking this liberty finds some justification in the inability of many abductees to distinguish organic from mechanical eyes during the confusion of an examination, and confirms some sort of scanning procedure as loosely constant over the years.

45. *Implants.* Insertion of a tiny device into the body of an abductee has grown, either in incidence or in recognition, from 19% to 23% to 29% over the years.

46. *Sample-Taking.* The removal of hair, blood, saliva, skin scrapings, and other non-genital samples from abductees has remained constant at 19%-19%-18%.

47. *Reproductive Examination.* Reproductive procedures—genital manipulation, sperm or egg extraction, needle in the abdomen, sexual activity—remained constant at 25% and 26% during the first two periods, followed by a significant rise to 41% in the most recent period.

48. *Nursery/Hybrid Scenes.* The vivid scenes of an incubatorium with fetuses floating in containers and a nursery where the abductee holds a frail baby or interacts with hybrid children have defined the post-1987 period in abduction history, yet they are not really new. Containers holding undeveloped humanoids, children with a mixture of human and humanoid characteristics aboard the UFO, and adults with clone- or hybrid-like qualities appear throughout abduction history. These antecedents are few, 8% in the early years and 5% in the middle period, but even with all the publicity surrounding hybrids, they occupy only 12% of reports in the latest period.

Other Onboard Episodes and Messages (nos. 49-55). In question here are three of the less frequent episodes an abductee may experience after examination, several recurrent messages the beings may impart, and their means of communicating those messages.

49. *Conference.* A formal meeting for discussion or education has persisted as a distinctive episode at the rather steady rate of 35%-36%-31%.

50. *Otherworldly Journey.* Transport of the abductee to some strange location, perhaps underground, perhaps on another planet or aboard a mother ship, held steady at 23% and 24% during the early and middle periods, before falling to 16% in the most recent period. Whether these journeys are physical, out-of-body, or some sort of screening or visualization process was not considered here.

51. *Tour.* A walk around the ship to see the engine room or control room has never been a very common episode, at 17% in the early days and 11% in the middle period. Since 1987 the episode has returned to its former level at 18%, aided by visits to nurseries and incubatoria.

52. *Task.* A common message abductees report is assignment of some task or mission, with recollection of its specifics postponed "until the time is right." Such messages appear in 21% and 25% of reports during the first two periods, but leap to 45% in the period since 1987.

53. *Cataclysm.* Prophecies or warnings of an impending catastrophe have held steadier over the years at 21% during both early and middle periods, with a modest increase to 27% in the latest period.

54. *Forget.* Instructions to the abductee to forget the abduction have also held the course at 48%-48%, then a slight rise to 55%.

55. *Telepathy.* Many reports fail to specify the means of communication. Among those that do, telepathy dominated at about the same rate during the early and middle periods at 73% and 68%, but increased to 91% in the latest period.

Aftermath (nos. 56-64). The lingering residue of abduction includes short-term physical injuries, intermediate-term psychological effects, and long-term changes in outlook and habits.

56. *Aftereffects of Any Sort.* Percentages of 81%-73%-80% show about the same proportion of reports mentions aftereffects throughout abduction history, though the mixture has changed over time.

57. *Nausea.* Abduction becomes a less sickening experience over the years as reports of nausea, gastrointestinal upset, and general illness immediately after return decline from 19% to 15% to 7%.

58. *Skin and Eye Irritation.* Instances of reddened eyes or sunburned skin have tumbled from 26% to 17% to 9%.

59. *Nightmares.* In contrast to the diminishing reports of short-term physical aftereffects, instances of nightmares hold steady at 33%-31%-33%.

60. *Anxiety.* Onset of anxiety some weeks or months after the experience, either a general sense of dread or fear reactions tied to some specific stimulus like a doctor's office or a large-eyed animal, were most frequent during the earliest period at 24%, then later settled down to 15% and 16%.

61. *Scars.* Bodily markings, whether puncture wounds, linear cuts, or scoop marks, hold constant at 19%-20%-21%.

62. *Increased ESP and Paranormal Experience.* Some abductees report long-term enhancement of psychic powers and increases in paranormal experiences like apparitions or poltergeist activity. Claims for these aftereffects peaked in the early years at 33%, then declined to 17% and finally to 9%.

63. *Changes in Habits.* By contrast, claims for long-term reforms in habits, lifestyle, and outlook remain unchanged at 14%-13%-13%.

64. *Repeated Encounters.* The number of abductees repeating their abductions and encounters with UFOs maintains a healthy growth from 48% to 59% to 76%.

TALLYING THE RESULTS

A simple head count of abduction story elements that have or have not changed over the years leaves a notable impression of continuity. Table 1 sums up the 64 elements according to their tendency to change, and 42 elements turn up in about the same proportion during the beginning, middle, and ending periods of this 30-year history. Not everyone may agree with my choices. After all, tours slipped to 11% during the middle years, didn't they, down a third from the consistent 17% in the early period and 18% in the late? My justification is that the order of magnitude stays similar all the time and uncertainties in the data warrant some flexibility. Among less common elements the apparent difference needs to muster a persuasive significance to count, and in this example the difference achieves no such significance. An irregular profile for graphs of some commoner elements may appear to belie their similarity, but for features appearing in more than 60% of the reports, a variation of 10% or even 15% seems well within the margin for error inherent in this study. The results converge on a surprisingly narrow band of variation.

Of the 22 elements that manifest significant changes, 10 hold the course over two periods then veer off in a third. In fact it is the period from 1987 onward when most of these inconsistencies occur. Four of them—sounds, conventional entry, otherworldly journey, and nausea—are declines more likely to be artifacts than trends, perhaps oversights in data tabulation or the published record. The prominence of anxiety responses in the early period depends on the smallest sample, where a difference of one or two instances swings the percentage over a wide arc. Only the rising elements—insectoids, staring, reproductive procedures, tasks, and telepathy—testify in favor of a genuine change in the story.

The strongest trend appears where the proportions of an element progress up or down across all three periods. These rises or falls occur in 12 elements, though this number is inflated and misleading. Highway, outdoor, and bedroom capture situations are three aspects of a single element, while the initial appearance of a UFO and Oz effects also work in tandem with the situation of capture. An apparent

decline in robot entities relies on a tiny sample, and dwindling reports of physical irritation and paranormal phenomena could be consequences of the haphazard treatment of aftereffects in the literature. All that remain as strong trends are the darkening of alien eyes and diminution of their ears, more repeat abductions and, less distinctly, a climb in nursery/hybrid scenes.

One other shadow of a trend takes shape in the slight drift toward a stereotypical humanoid. The increases—in standard humanoids, large eyes, dark eyes, large heads, no hair, and vestigial nose and ears—mostly lack the support of strong numbers when taken feature by feature. Taken as a whole, these increases suggest the crystallization of a standard pattern, though a close approximation to the ideal short gray humanoid prevails from start to finish.

Table 1. Summary of Changes Among 64 Content Elements.

Features	No Significant Change	Change in 1 Period	Change in 3 Periods
Capture	4,6,7,9,11,12,13,14	10,15	1,2,3,5,8
Types of Beings	16,17,18,19,20,21,23	24	22
Humanoid Descriptions	25,28,29,31,32,33,34	27	26,30
Craft	35,36,37,38,39,40		
Examination	41,42,43,44,45,46	47	48
Other/Communication	49,51,53,54	50,52,55	
Aftermath	56,59,61,63	57,60	58,62,64
Total	42	10	12

BALANCING THE PICTURE

History has weighed in and disposed of the notion of a fluid abduction story. Its consistency in most respects is clear to see for anyone who takes the trouble to look. The argument that Close Encounters of the Third Kind and the popular abduction books of 1987 wrought major changes in subsequent reports takes its place on the dusty shelf of failure where other promising skeptical theories have finished.

A survey of occupant illustrations refutes the claim that the standard humanoid originated with Close Encounters. The familiar image established itself in the published record years before the movie, in the cases of Sgt. Moody, Travis Walton, Betty Andreasson and others. Occupant types and descriptions hold steady before and after 1977, and in fact only one of the 64 content features in this study appears to have altered in response to this movie, despite its popularity. That feature is the darkness of occupant eyes, and if the movie had an influence, it was no more than to start a trend that continues to grow until today. One untested feature that may have responded to Close Encounters imagery is the body build of the occupants. Humanoids tended to have a more robust torso and a head settled square on the shoulders prior to the movie, whereas afterwards spindly limbs, a fragile build and a thin, stem-like neck became more fashionable, in keeping with the being that emerged from the starship. Even here the evidence is tenuous, since the willowy figure of the Tujunga Canyon entities (Druffel and Rogo 1980:244-245) attests to a long-term presence of thin occupants and no sudden innovation.



The cultural influences of 1987 seem to have left a more concrete mark on the story. The missing fetus motif was almost nonexistent before, at best vague; but it has become a staple though not extensive element in subsequent years. Nursery and hybrid elements have a long pedigree but a low profile before Hopkins and Jacobs elevated the incubatorium visit and baby presentation to the status of major story events. Reproductive matters in general have jumped into prominence during the past dozen years, presumably through the attention paid to this sensational aspect of the story by investigators following the lead of Hopkins and Jacobs.

Evidence for Whitley Strieber's direct influence accumulates in instances of squat blue beings appearing for the first time after 1987, and an increasing record of graphic rectal probes during the same period. To keep these changes in perspective, only seven cases out of 254 mention the blue beings and ten the rectal probe. Abductees reported the taking of fecal samples during the early and middle years as well, though the indelicate nature of this procedure perhaps guaranteed the suppression of details. One abductee repeated Strieber's very words to describe the probe, confirming one instance of borrowing beyond any doubt. The broader reach of his influence may lie in the standardizing image of the humanoid, since the most familiar features have gained ground after circulation of the famous cover picture.

An expansion of the task or mission message in the story may reflect the eloquent advocacy of John Mack and increasing emphasis on spiritual themes by other writers. This evidence for cultural intrusion is far from clear-cut, since conferences and life or habit alterations have stayed the same, reports of paranormal events seem to have decreased, when we might expect the number of these elements to soar. Prophecies of an approaching cataclysm or time of tribulation interest some investigators and share a recent fashion for end-of-the-millennium doom-saying, but the actual increase in such messages is too slight for anyone to worry that the sky is falling. The means of apocalypse has transferred over the years from nuclear to ecological terms, but while the qualities have shifted, the quantities have not. A mixed message comes across here, then, and any spiritualizing trend seems to owe more to the interpretation and emphasis of investigators than to any evolution in the story itself.

An inescapable fact is the growing recognition and popularity of abduction ideas over the years. In the early days a case could be made that such-and-such a fact was known only to a learned priesthood of ufologists, but now the vast majority of abduction motifs have become public knowledge, known at least in principle to everyone but the reclusive and the culturally dead. Books, movies, TV specials, magazine articles, the tabloid press, even cartoons and advertisements have spread the gospel and made it universal property. The story reflects that cultural trend in some spots. Not only have the occupants standardized, but certain descriptions like the roundness of the examination room as well as striking story elements like reproductive exams and telepathic communication have increased.

The headline story behind these tallies is not that a few instances of cultural influence turn up, but rather the changes are so few and so mild. Sweeping alterations such as cultural theorists proclaim are simply nowhere to be found. Missing time has enjoyed the spotlight of publicity, yet this element serves as a steady workhorse in reports, its incidence neither waxes nor wanes over the years. Standard humanoids have acquired popular icon status, but not this expectation of how an alien ought to look, not mention of alternative types such as insects and reptiles or even the usually restless effort of the human

imagination has unsettled the mix of occupant types. Most humanoid features of 1966 recur in similar proportions in 1996, the interior of the ship looks about the same throughout this time. For all the talk about the spiritual significance of the experience, examinations still dominate the itinerary at a level frequency, while conferences and educational sessions likewise hold a steady course over the years. What happens in the early examinations still happens today, what the aliens tell their captives then and now remains largely the same. Many odd effects at capture and characteristics of the aftermath persist unchanged.

REASONS FOR THE APPEARANCE OF CHANGE

If the story has not changed much, why do casual readers come away with gut feelings that it has? Part of the blame lies with the fact that words are leaky vessels to hold and transport intended meanings. I have a drawing of three entity heads side by side. A verbal description of the differences in these heads runs to considerable length, but one glance nullifies the distinctions and confirms that these entities are alike, more so than most three people I pass on the street. No rigorously standard terminology exists, and the words one abductee chooses may not match the words of another, even if both abductees describe an identical sight. The same descriptive terms do not necessarily weigh the same in a hearer's reconstruction of the observation, further distorting the balance between consistency and variety as the reader perceives it.

New discoveries alter the presentation of the story, though not necessarily the content. The initial picture represented only a first approximation of the innate range of the phenomenon. Since then repeat encounters have become the norm and an age-related cycle of encounters come to light, with different activities and procedures for every stage of life. Elements present but unrecognized at one time rise to prominence in another as their significance dawns on investigators over the years. In this way the intent staring of an alien has transformed from an unsettling bad habit in the early days to an integral part of examination, but only after David Jacobs identified the practice as a regular event and called attention to its importance in the abduction scheme of things. If the objective consequences of these discoveries are slight, the subjective impression they leave can be considerable.

Individual investigators emphasize matters of special interest to them in writing up their cases. These specialties include Oz factor events for Jenny Randles, instances of resistance for Ann Druffel, educational experiences for Leo Sprinkle, and evidence of consciousness change for John Mack. David Jacobs emphasizes Mindscan and hybrids, Budd Hopkins has focused on missing time, scars, and disappearing fetuses. The converse is also true as matters of lesser interest suffer from neglect. Instances are not hard to find where investigators downplay a part of the story that contradicts their favored explanation. For example, a harrowing examination may end up a curt summary in the account of an investigator with favorable expectations, while educational and compassionate scenes wither in reports from the investigator with a negative view. Familiar aspects receive shorter and shorter shrift as time goes on, with some writers now condensing their reportage to say only that "a typical examination" occurred, or that the beings were "the usual short humanoids." The story itself runs the same course with the same content, but unequal emphasis leaves lopsided impressions.

The reader needs to keep in mind the distinction between the facts of the story and their interpretation. Few investigators today are content to serve only as reporters. Reportage goes hand in hand with a reading of what the story means, and the art of persuasion licenses a certain amount of slanting as investigators urge the reader to accept their version. It fills in gaps and connects the dots in a way the stated facts may not warrant, as any interpretation does. No intentional lies or fancies result, but the reader may carry off a distorted view, one where theory masquerades as fact. Abductees also react to the experience in personal ways, some with terror or anger, others with wonder or curiosity—in short, with the whole spectrum of possible human responses. These attitudes color a reader's perception of the report without necessarily altering any of its content. Wide reading offers the best antidote to the illusion of change, since a bulk sample best allows the norms of the story to find their own level. Budd Hopkins and John Mack, for example, take very different tacks on the meaning of the phenomenon, but remove the names and interpretive clues and the stories they find in the course of their investigations read as indistinguishable.

Perhaps the most serious threat to a balanced perspective is the human tendency to magnify exceptions. Whether in the proverbial expression that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, or in the biblical lesson that the one lost sheep means more to the shepherd than the ninety and nine that remain in the fold, the message is the same—attention sharpens its focus on the exceptions. Abductions obey the same rule. Though reptilian and insectoid entities are few in number, they earn an attention premium for being exotic and rare while the gray humanoids, by far the majority of the alien population, suffer as casualties of their own success. Their commonness rates them no more than passing mention and turns proper perspectives upside down. Allegations of military involvement have added a weird new twist to the story, but not necessarily a significant new tangent. My sample includes only two instances, and a full gathering of examples would still leave only a handful. Nevertheless a whole revisionist school of interpretation has sprung out of this small deviation. The very sameness of the abduction story undermines perception of its sameness, since writers dwell on any difference to break the monotony. Where differences loom large when viewed close up, a full and even-handed perspective levels them to their proper size, and that size proves to be a small one after all.

WHY ARE THE STORIES ALIKE?

This study demonstrates consistency in abduction reports over 30 years, at least for a few content elements and within the limitations of a comparison based on my personal evaluation of verbal records. The fact of consistency still does not establish any one explanation as a fact. Why the story appears stable may find an answer in systematic errors of the study. The definition of abduction as an encounter including an examination stacks the deck in favor of a narrow range of events, unconscious exclusion of the more bizarre reports as too hard to codify is also possible. The elements chosen for comparison are obvious candidates, mentioned in report after report and highlighted at some time or another in the literature. Any or all of these factors may lead to false consistency. Against this likelihood is the expectation that more would change even if selection bias did its furtive work, and the differing levels of appearance for the 64 elements of comparison. An argument in favor of overexposure might work if the elements appeared in nearly every report, but in fact their incidence ranges from 90% levels down to 10% levels. For an element to appear in 60% of reports means that 40% of the narrators forbear to include it. This element has not lodged as a necessity in everyone's idea of what an abduction story

should be, and having the same proportion of narrators pass over this item across 30 years still qualifies as unusual, whether the consistency results from recurrent experiences or from similar creative choices.

If consistencies do not originate in the study, the investigation process offers another tempting possibility. Does the investigator manipulate subjects so that they never really tell their story, and in most cases, they have no coherent narrative to relate in the first place? Critics see not a recovery of lost memories but a construction of false ones, either through confabulation under hypnosis or through the investigator imposing an agenda on a pliant, even willing and hopeful candidate. Investigators homogenize the stories by leading the witness to describe a "proper" abduction and then by editing out the deviant material before the report appears in print. In this theory the abduction story really is consistent, but arrives at that state only because investigators impose an ideal image on the inconsistent fantasies of their subjects.

This theory has merit, but some cautions against its wholesale acceptance deserve mention. The 437 reports used here derive from 129 different investigators. When I queried investigators for their attitudes in my 1995 study, the 13 respondents expressed 13 distinct opinions, with only one favoring literal aliens while another called the same idea "baloney". A similar diversity of views seems likely here. Investigators are not single-minded fanatics spreading the same alien-happy agenda, yet the sameness of their reports contrasts with the variety in their interpretations and outlooks. The more investigators that uphold consistency, the shakier becomes the theoretical house of cards that seeks the source of sameness in an unwitting collaboration of investigators on content, when they disagree so readily over so much else. Of those 129 investigators, many contribute one or two cases, but a few claim a larger share—46 cases for Budd Hopkins, 25 for John Mack, 22 for David Jacobs, 20 for Leo Sprinkle. A critic might argue that Hopkins and Jacobs see eye to eye and their portion is large enough to shift the balance in their favor. This argument might work if the study depended on a single time period, but it depends on three. An element earns its stripes for consistency only if its proportions match from the earliest to the latest period, and no Hopkins reports appear in the earliest sample, no Jacobs reports prior to the latest. Somebody or some thing must keep up appearances before 1978, when the usual suspects are unavailable to take the blame.

Hypnosis remains a lightning rod for controversy, and justifiably so in this age of recovered memories and false memory syndrome. All this study can add is my impression from reading the cases contained here, and I come away with a striking sense of how aware abductees often are without any hypnotic assistance. Few people go to an investigator with no strong clues and walk out a card-carrying abductee. Most people bring their conscious recall, dreams, flashbacks, and gradual return of memory to the investigator, and these self-acquired memories often outweigh anything hypnosis eventually adds. Ordinary memory often shortchanges onboard experiences, but abductees recall enough of UFOs, aliens, weird sensations, and strange experiences to leave few surprises for hypnosis to reveal or create.

Cultural influence casts a long shadow over the value of consistency in abduction reports. How significant can it be for hundreds of people to repeat a story when millions know it? Abduction has become common property, a modern myth familiar to all. A total absence of influences would contradict all expectations and discredit the study itself. In fact this study points to unmistakable examples of popular descriptions entering the story stream and a stereotype of the small gray humanoid



solidifying over the years. Ample evidence attests to the influence of culture on abduction reports, one notable example being the wraparound and telepathic eyes of an alien in a TV series, *The Outer Limits*, that entered Barney Hill's recollections when he underwent hypnosis a week after the episode aired in 1964 (Kottmeyer 1998). Yet neither Close Encounters in 1977 or the books of 1987 marked important turning points in the abduction story. As popular and potentially influential as these two events were, most story elements pass from one era to the next without rounding any turning point or even curving off course enough to notice.

A minor industry flourishes on efforts to trace abduction motifs to their supposed cultural origins, and critics of the "psychosocial" school comb movies, pulp science fiction, mythology, and folklore for apparent similarities. The steadiness of story content actually turns influence theory back on itself. A story subject to influence ought to reciprocate with reflections of the abundant plots and images modern culture has to offer. Abductees have responded to Hollywood's largesse of suggestions for how aliens should look with stinging indifference, and rejected with similar ingratitude the possibilities for adventure, romance, and self-fulfillment inherent in a story of alien kidnap. One narrator after another shuns the wide-open spaces of creative opportunity out of commitment to a narrow plot of unheroic victimization, bland aliens, and unimaginative repetition of a story often retold. Who would have expected it? Such lack of creativity amid so many opportunities converts the cultural influence explanation into the cultural influence paradox. Thirty years is ample time for one story to wear out and others to replace it, but this exchange does not seem to happen, either piece by piece or wholesale, and such stability poses a mystery in its own right.

The most straightforward explanation for how diverse individuals create similar reports is experience, and stability in the abduction story credits the possibility that multiple individuals have experienced a similar event. Experience in this case may mean a literal abduction by aliens, but not necessarily so. Before jumping to such a radical conclusion, other sources of experience deserve attention. A core experience characterizes paranormal encounters like the Mara (or nightmare) experience, near-death experiences, death omens, deathbed visions, visits by certain paranormal entities. That is, reports of each type share a similar phenomenology worldwide in apparent independence from learned traditions (Hufford 1995:34-36). Whether abduction constitutes a distinctive core experience is less certain, since abduction capture events resemble the phenomena of Mara attack, such as paralysis in the night, a sense of presence, and even a floating or out-of-body experience (Hufford 1995:37-38). In other words people may mistake one phenomenon for another, or the phenomena of abduction may be transpersonal and recurrent but still originate in subjective, rather than literal experience.

The present study submits one tidbit to consider in reckoning with this entanglement. My findings show that the situation of abduction has altered without any attendant changes in most of the story elements. If critics are right and many abductions begin in frightening but natural sleep phenomena, a rise in bedroom encounters should accompany a parallel rise in reports suggestive of sleep paralysis and hallucinatory phenomena. No such pattern takes shape among the story elements, where suggestive candidates like paralysis, flotation, droning noises, and missing time maintain their frequency or decrease. Here then is an informal test of an explanation for abductions. As far as it goes, and it admittedly does not go very far, unchanging descriptions amid changing situations undercut sleep-related phenomena as a general solution for the abduction experience.



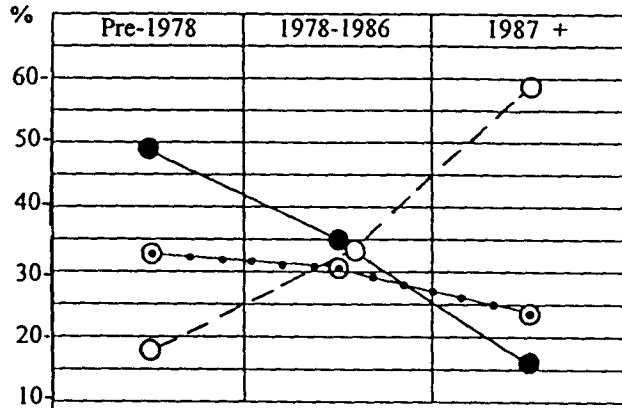
Journalist H. L. Mencken said the job of a newspaper was to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. The abduction phenomenon takes an impartial tack and afflicts everyone. Reports that change little over 30 years disappoint critics expecting to see reflections of cultural influence at every turn. Proponents may take comfort in a consistency that appears to vindicate a literal abduction phenomenon, but must reckon with the fact that a mere story, however consistent, is no substitute for convincing physical evidence, a commodity still in notorious short supply. Much research into abductee psychology and alternative solutions is necessary before a literal reading builds persuasive force. With the state of current research still so uncertain, abduction rattles political norms and intellectual comfort zones on both sides of the dispute.



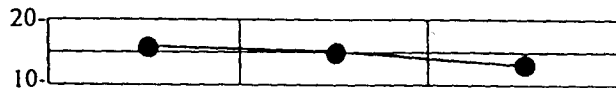
Percentage of UFO Abduction Reports Citing 64 Content Elements, 1966-1996

CAPTURE

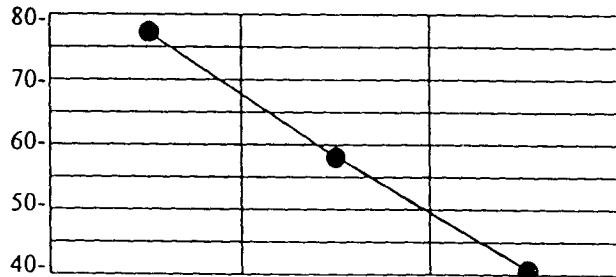
- Highway ●
- Outdoor ⊙
- Bedroom ○



Premonition



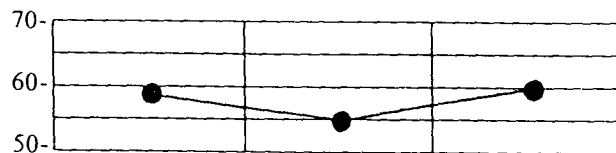
UFO Present

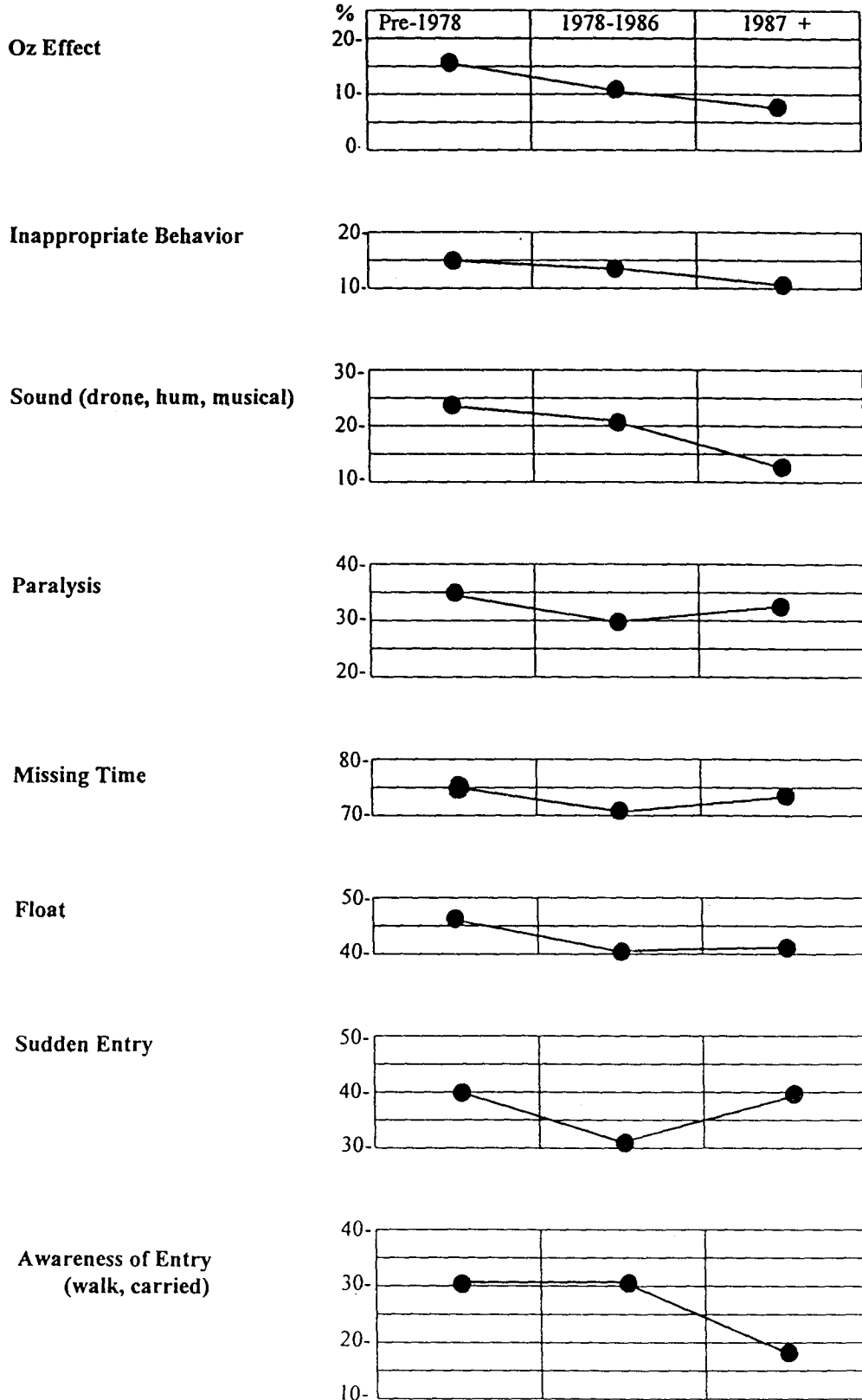


Beam of Light



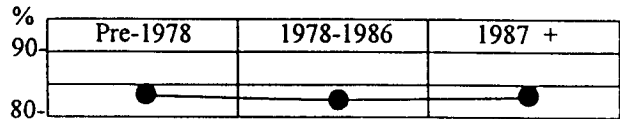
Beings Present



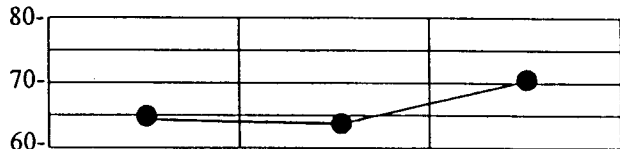




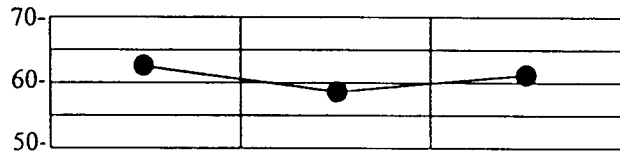
TYPES OF BEINGS
Humanoid



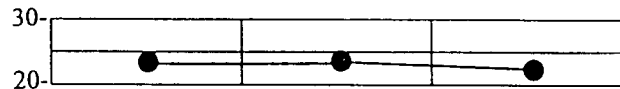
Standard Humanoid



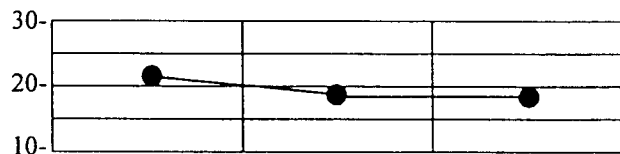
Short Humanoid



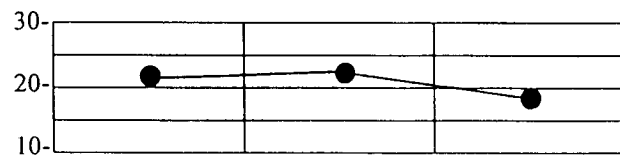
Tall Humanoid



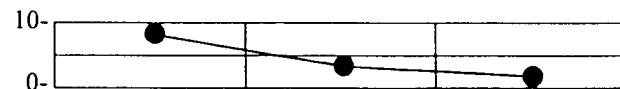
Crew with Mixed Types



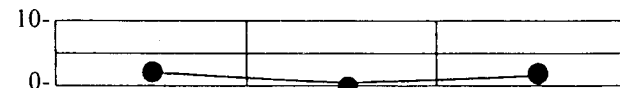
Human/Nordic



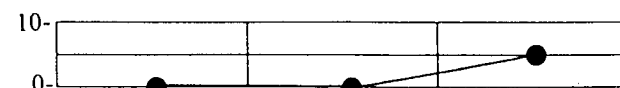
Robot



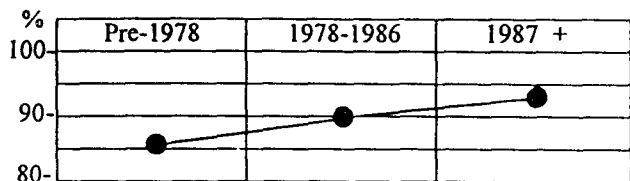
Reptilian



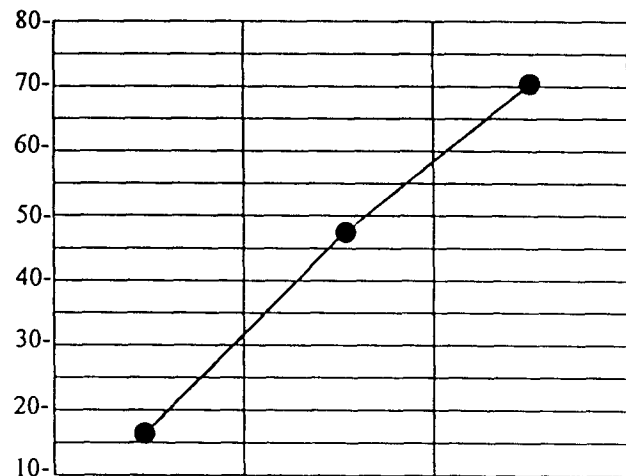
Insectoid



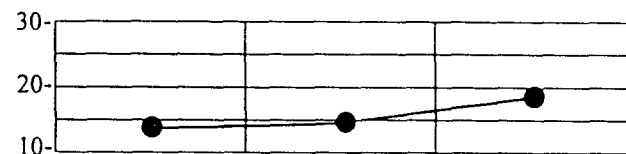
DESCRIPTIONS OF HUMANOIDS
Large Eyes



Dark Eyes or Large Iris



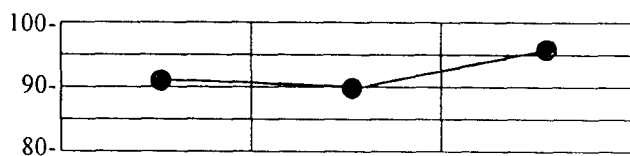
Staring, Piercing Eyes



Slit Mouth

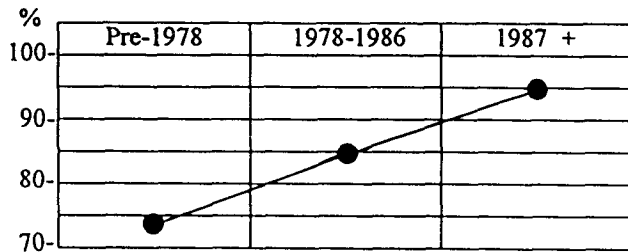


Vestigial Nose

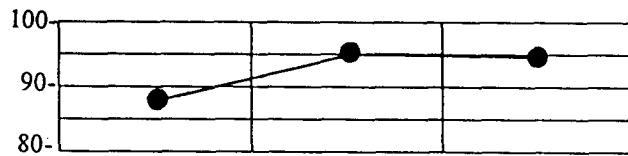




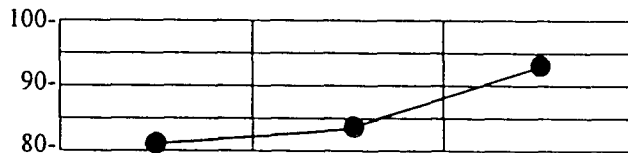
Vestigial Ears



Enlarged Cranium



Bald, Hairless



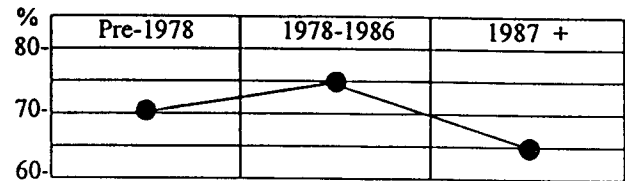
Gray or Pallid Skin



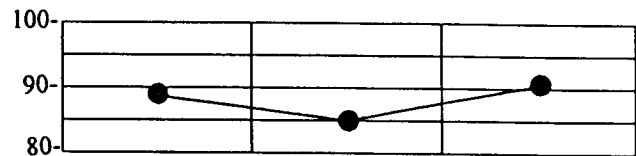
Leader



DESCRIPTIONS OF CRAFT
Disk Shape



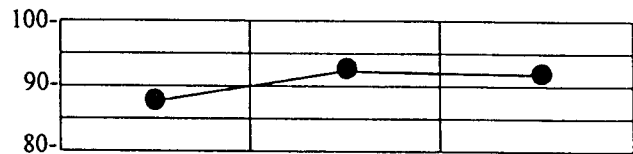
Examination Room



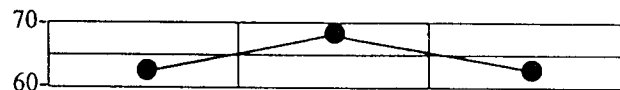
Round



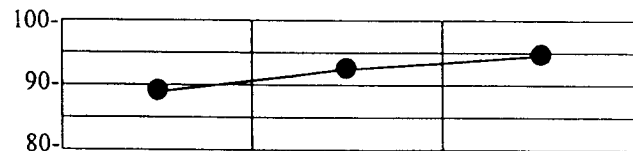
Cool



Indirect Lighting

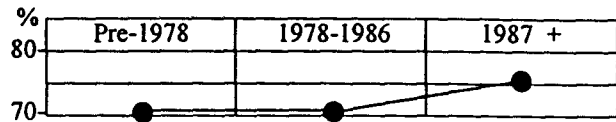


Exam Table

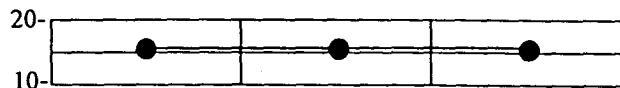




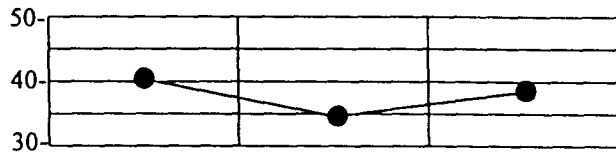
EXAMINATION
Examination Occurs



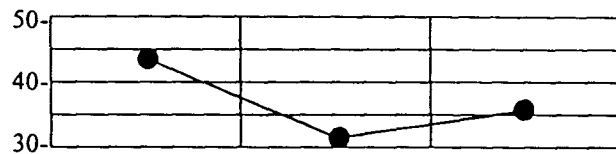
Manual Procedures



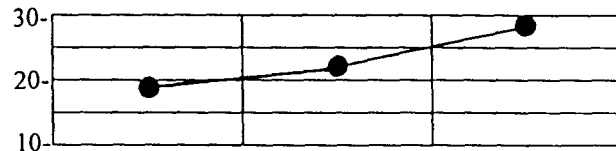
Instrumental Procedures



Scanning Device



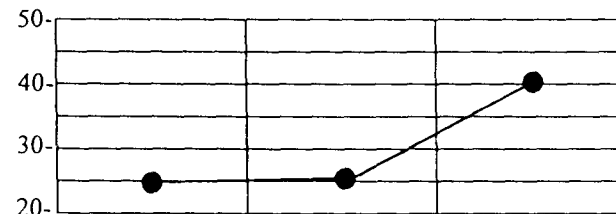
Implant



Sample-Taking



Reproductive Procedures

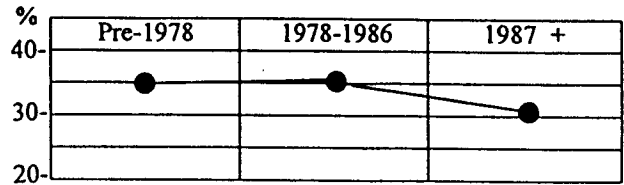


Nursery/Hybrid Interaction

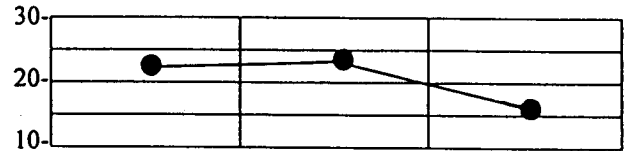




OTHER ONBOARD EPISODES,
COMMUNICATION
Conference



Otherworldly Journey

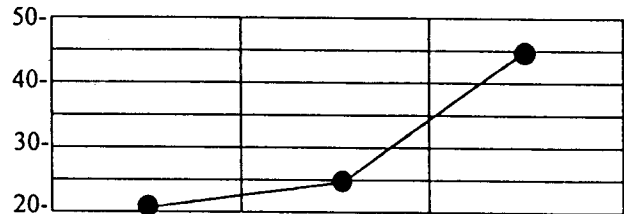


Tour

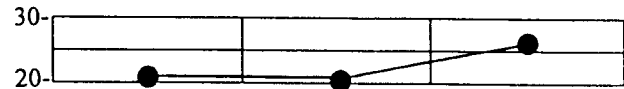


Messages:

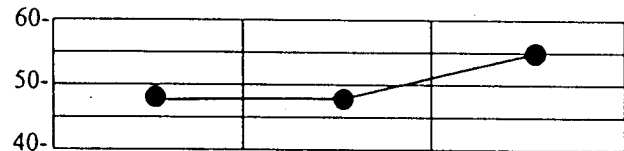
Task



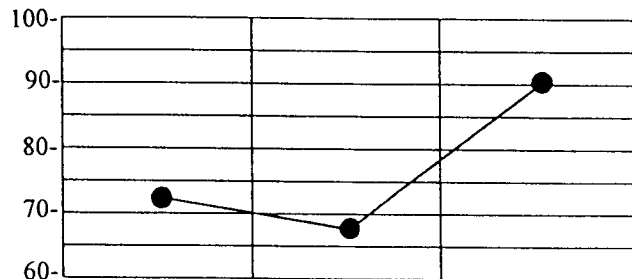
Cataclysm



Forget

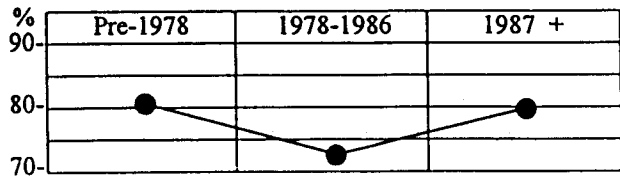


Telepathy

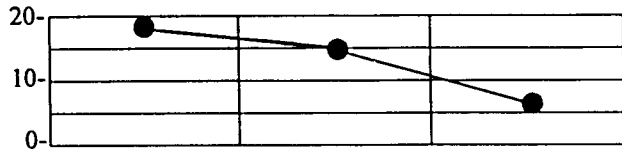




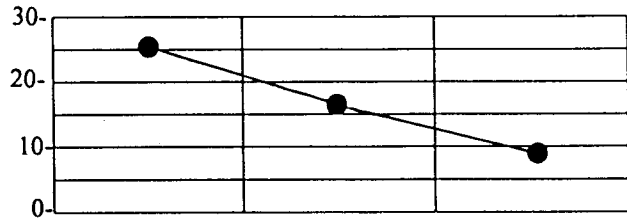
AFTERMATH
Aftereffects of Any Sort



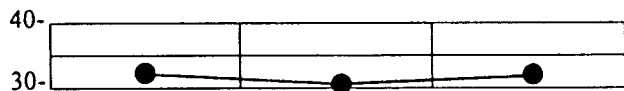
Nausea, Sickness



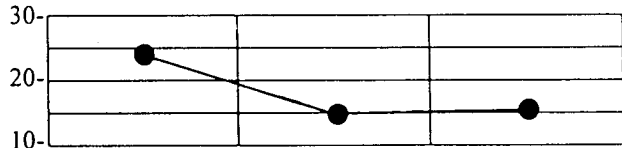
Eye/Skin Irritation



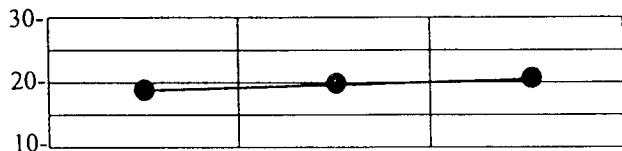
Nightmares



Anxieties, Fears

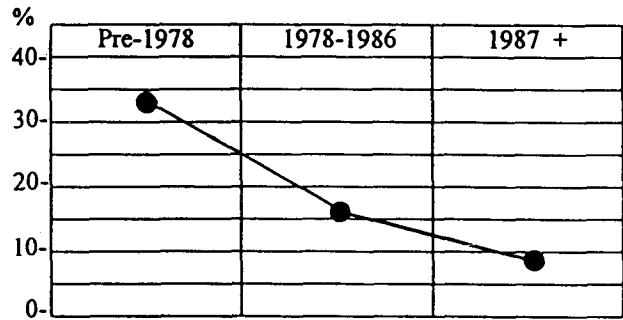


Scars, Skin Markings

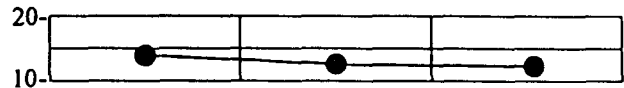




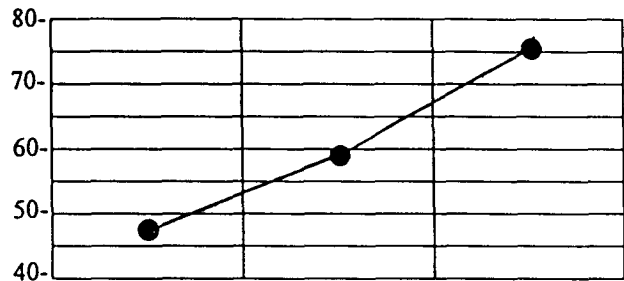
Increased ESP and
Paranormal Experience



Change of Habits, Lifestyle



Repeat Encounters





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During this period David Schwartzman, Ph.D., resigned from the National Board. He was replaced by Thomas E. Bullard, Ph.D., an assistant professor of folklore at the University of Indiana and a recognized authority on UFO abduction cases.

ABDUCTIONS

Also during this period, the Fund for UFO Research joined with the Center for UFO Studies and the Mutual UFO Network to help form the Joint American-Soviet Aerial Anomaly Federation, which was initiated by Richard Haines, Ph.D. (a member of the Fund's National Board). The primary purpose of the organization is to foster an exchange of information between major UFO organizations in both countries. The breakup of the Soviet Union into the Commonwealth of Independent States is not expected to affect this unprecedented effort of international cooperation in solving the UFO mystery.

Late in 1991 the Fund acquired five theses prepared by students attending the U.S. Air Force Air University and Staff College between 1968 and 1974. Two of the theses are highly interesting, because they are extremely critical of the Air Force's official position on the UFO question. The Fund is publishing the two best papers and will make the others available upon request.

Fund for UFO Research

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