

# Free using psychology to explain alien abduction experience research paper exampl...

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## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of alien abduction has insisted on the emergence of research procedures that would define the concept by which these assumptions could be proven wrong or not. Relatively, it could be realized that in the field of psychology, unlike in the field of mystified science, alien abduction is seen to have been rooted on the distinct course by which experts intend to see why the sensation happens, and why the assumption itself is developed. The exploration of the issue on alien abduction is completely identified with what is assumed as a consistent experience that a person needs to contend with through psychological realignment of perception and belief. Relatively, however a person reacts to the issue on alien abduction would redefine the way he sees how the said situation is likely to fully affect him.

Through time, alien abduction and its distinct possibility does impose a sense of indication on how humans have developed a grown fondness about the issue, thus determinably insisting on how they would accept the existence of extra-terrestrials; of personas existing in the universe amidst themselves. For this discussion, seeing what psychology is about and how it identifies the meaning of alien abduction shall be the basis of realization that shall be presented herein.

## **Thesis Statement**

A primary explanation for self-reported alien abduction experience is that psychological disorders, such as memory distortion, fantasy proneness and sleep paralysis, cause hallucinations and false memories to mislead people

to believe that they have encountered or have been abducted by aliens. Recent research shows that people who are suffering from sleep paralysis may feel immobility and have hypnopompic hallucination that makes sleepers see unreal figures intruding their bedroom. To authenticate the abduction experience, people should test the possibility of sleep paralysis. Moreover, for most abduction experiences, only the abductee was conscious, and the abductee often reported the experience based on his or her own memory. Hence, before validating an abduction experience, people should test the possibility of fantasy proneness as well as memory distortion through a more efficient method rather than hypnosis. Instead of making a final judgment on the existence of aliens, this paper provides a psychological explanation for the alien encounters. With the psychological explanation, the public can treat the alleged alien related issues more rationally, and people who suffer from unreal abduction experiences can get the right treatment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The real problem behind identifying the reality that binds the emergence of the phenomena that restates to the concept of alien abduction is the fact that that such assumptions could actually mandate a sense of alarm on the thoughts and condition of perception that humans have towards extraterrestrials. Leading towards such belief, it could be understood that the society has emerged to be trusting the matters that are most often than not affecting the overall understanding of what aliens are and how the possibility of their existence is being scored upon. In this research, trying to examine sleep patterns as means of understanding how the mind works in perceiving

matters such as extraterrestrials, the determination of whether or not aliens could be possibly real and how psychology aims to define the problem otherwise shall be presented in the study that follows.

## **Statement of Methodology**

This paper will first summarize the common characteristics of alien abductions that are related to psychological disorders to give a generalization of how psychology connects to alien abductions. Secondly, I will examine how sleep paralysis causes physical restraints and hallucinations to account for the common physical symptoms in alien abduction experiences. Then, I will focus on how fantasy proneness leads people to use paranormal reasons, such as being abducted by aliens, to explain their hallucinations. After that, I will elaborate on how memory distortion constructs false memories, like the fabricating explanation for hallucinations, and implants them into minds. Finally, I will generalize all the aforementioned psychological explanations and present possible psychological issues that might be related to the said experience. At the end of this paper, I will further explore the significance of investigating the connection between psychologies and alien abductions to solidify the idea that employing psychological methods to investigate alleged alien abduction experience are effective and are necessary.

Details of abduction experiences vary from person to person, but many cases share some common patterns. As some reports showing, most abduction cases happens with strange lights or sounds at night, and the abductee always suffers from body restraints or completely paralysis. 1

Those conditions described in reports are very similar to the symptoms of sleep paralysis, and people who suffer from those conditions are subject to have hallucinations, which can be imaginary aliens sometimes. To explain what they have seen, people seek different reasons, but in recent years after the publication of some popular books about alien abduction, like Whitley Strieber's *Communion* (1988) and Hopkins's *Missing Time* (1981), people are more inclined to explain the hallucinations generated by sleep paralysis with the reasons related to aliens. <sup>2</sup> Since in most cases, no other witness could prove the authenticity of the abductee's report and people who have psychological disorders might implant false memories into mind, testing the authenticity of narrative reports through hypnosis becomes an even more tough work. For this reason, investigating the psychological way to validate the alien abduction experiences becomes a topical issue.

## **Solution**

As aforementioned, many physical symptoms reported in alien abductions are similar to those of sleep paralysis, and recent psychological researches demonstrate that sleep paralysis can be a credible explanation to account for alien abductions. Psychologically, sleep paralysis is an episode when people are half awake with immobility often caused by the discordance between cognition and motor function during the awakening period. This episode often arises in a sleep phase called "rapid eye movement (REM) sleep", which is the phase that motor functions are blocked and most dreams occur. Upon awakening period, if the dream mentation lingers, they may hallucinate sounds, visions, and tactile sensations during this period. <sup>3</sup>

In another words, if people are suffering from this process, seeing what exists in either their dream or imagination, such as shining lights and supernatural figures, coming into the reality is highly possible for them. However, such process will last no more than several minutes in general, and sleepers will be fully awake after the cognition and motor function having synchronized. Based on recent survey, researchers claim that approximately one third of people have ever experienced at least one episode of sleep paralysis, and about five percent people have experienced sleep paralysis accompanied with all three modalities of hallucinations. 4 The result of survey demonstrates that sleep paralysis is not a rare case among the population, and people should be serious about the fact that sleep disorders are highly possible to cause fabricated alien abduction experiences. For most cases of sleep paralysis, hallucinations do not occur, and people will forget the experience soon after they have fully awakened. However, for some people with specific psychological profile, they may have intense hallucinations during sleep paralysis episode, and they do not want to accept psychological explanations for what they have experienced. In this way, they will seek for satisfied explanations even that the explanations are ridiculous. McNally and Clancy have tested the psychological profile difference between abductees and normal people, and the result shows that the experimental group, which consists of abductees, has higher rate of experiencing psychological disorders than the control group, which consists of normal people. 5 Though some of abductees had sought for hypnotic help from the professionals, the result of losing memories cannot convince them as well. At that point, they would try to seek for more ridiculous explanation, such as

what they had experienced was alien abduction and the reason that they could not fully recall what had happened was that the aliens had erased their memories. Through this process, people who have just experienced a simple sleep paralysis will become alleged abductees, and the spread of such cases will influence more people to use alien abductions to account for their sleep paralysis.

## **Significance**

The integration of aforementioned research and statistics provides firm evidence that sleep paralysis leads people with potential psychological disorders to have hallucinations, which can be the basic material for fabricating alien abduction experiences. Though the samples in those researches are not big enough to account for all the alien abductions, the several interviewees that they choose are typical enough to investigate the primary effect of sleep paralysis in the majority of cases. Hence, this research's significance is more dependent on how the emergence of sleep paralysis and other physiological implications to distorting memories could be used to disprove elements of distinct possibilities of alien existence and how its phenomena affects the overall concept of human thinking.

## **Scope**

Sleep paralysis can account for the physical symptoms and hallucinations that people encounter in their alien abduction experiences, but it cannot explain why people prefer to use paranormal phenomenon to interpret their hallucinations. To explain such preference, some researchers have investigated the connection between fantasy proneness and alien abduction

experiences. Fantasy proneness is a personality that most likely results from psychological disorders, and it highly correlates to amnesia. Amnesia can manifest as repression or dissociation. Repression is a process that individuals suppress the memories of childhood abuse, and dissociation is that individuals use abnormal ways to integrate thoughts, feelings, and experiences to split off traumatic memories from their minds. 6 People who possess such personality more likely believe the existence of supernatural creatures, and they are prone to use paranormal reasons to account for what they cannot understand in the reality, such as the lost memories. Another research shows that people who have reported alien encounters have a higher possibility to experience dissociation than the normal people, which means that they tend to experience more amnesia and they are more susceptible to manifest fantasy proneness. 7 [Here I will further analyze the connection about dissociativity and alien abductions.] In addition, based on recent research, fantasy-prone personality appears to originate from early ages. A typical characteristic for many fantasy-prone individuals is that they believed that dolls had feelings and personalities during their childhood, and some of those individuals also had imaginary companion, which shows that their minds are more fantasized than normal people. 8 Because of the existence of hallucinations, individuals become highly concerned about how they are going to explain the unexplainable; thus resorting to superficial considerations over the possible existence of aliens. In an overall context, this research would be focused on how conditions of development would be able to determine how alien assumptions arise and how it could be explained based on more moral and rational distinction of truth.



## Discussion

In recent investigation, researchers have noticed a special connection between alien abductions and systemized amnesia, which may well explain how people integrate fantasy proneness into reality. As Hopkins summarized in his book, some people were first abducted in early ages, and they would report repeated abduction experiences throughout their lifetime. 9 By investigating the period of amnesia, researchers states that the period of abduction experiences is in accordance with the frequency of systemized amnesia. Further research shows that those people who have been abducted more than once believe that they are the chosen ones for alien's experiments, such as reproduction or genetic research. For this reason, they would like to use alien abduction as explanations to explain the lost memories each time when they got amnesia. Although fantasy-prone personality does not ensure that people who possess such personality would like to use alien abductions to account for the incomprehensible issues in their life, combining with sleep paralysis and publication of aliens, those people will be more likely to accept alien abductions as the explanation for lost memories and unknown things.

Besides sleep paralysis, memory distortion is another important field that may lead people to believe that they have been abducted by aliens. In recent years, due to the thriving study of memory distortion, many researchers begin to focus on how faulty memories connect with alien encounters. According to Loftus, many researches had shown that newly information could easily contaminate the memories, which means changing the details of memories of previous life experiences and planting memories

of experiences that never happened into minds are highly possible. 10

Though alien abduction is quite a ridiculous experience for ordinary people, as long as the influence of memory distortion is strong enough, people can implant such memories into their minds as vivid as real experiences.

A recent experiment of memory distortion gives a firm evidence of feasibility of implanting false memories. In this experiment, people were led to believe that they had witnessed a person being demonically possessed in their childhood. The subjects in experimental group were required to read articles about demonic possession to increase its plausibility, and they were taught much about the fear of that. The result shows that people in experimental groups recalled more about demonic possession in their childhood experiences. 11 Assuming that the subjects were assigned to read articles about aliens, they may recall more about aliens, even abduction experiences, in their childhood. Such early encounters with aliens appear repeatedly in alien abduction reports. In recent years, the alien topic spawned millions of publication, movies, and TV programs. Alien related medias appear everywhere in people's daily life, and they accommodate all ages through babies to the adults. The external influences are so spread that the chances of fabricating memories are dramatically increased. To validate one's experience of alien abduction, people must assess the possibility that the experience results from external influence.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have examined the sleep paralysis to explain the physical phenomena in alien abduction reports, and I have examined the fantasy

proneness as well as memory distortion to provide psychological evidences to disprove those reports. I have also generalized them as an integrated explanation to disprove the most alien abduction experiences. Although the possible psychological explanations for alien abductions are far more than the three that I mentioned, this paper is a good start to inspire the public to seek for more scientific explanations of paranormal issues. By examining the fantasy proneness and memory distortion, I demonstrate that hypnosis and narrative reports are not enough to validate the authenticity of alien abduction experiences, and people should assess the abductee's psychological profile before making conclusion. Also, through the investigation of sleep paralysis, I give a convincing evidence to prove that sleep paralysis is the primary cause of physical restraints and hallucinations in most cases of alien abduction experiences, and I suggest that examining the abductee's sleeping condition is significant for authenticate one's experience. Though I cannot make a final judgment on all the alien abduction experiences, employing psychological method to detect potential disorders, including sleep paralysis, fantasy proneness, and memory distortion, possessed by alleged abductees can filter out most false experiences and leave us with the most valuable experiences for further scientific research in the alien field.

## Notes

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2. Ibid.
3. McNally, Richard J, and Clancy Susan A. " Sleep Paralysis, Sexual Abuse, and Space Alien Abduction." Transcultural Psychiatry (Sage Publications ) 42, no. 1 (2005), 114.
4. Ibid., 114.
5. Ibid., 115-117.
6. Clancy, Susan A, McNally Richard J, Schacter Daniel L, Lenzenweger Mark F, and Pitman Roger K. " Memory Distortion in People Reporting Abduction by Aliens." Journal of Abnormal Psychology (American Psychological Association) 111, no. 3 (2002), 455.
7. Powers, Susan M. " Fantasy Proneness, Amnesia, and The UFO Abduction Phenomenon." Dissociation: Progress in the Dissociative Disorders (Ridgeview Inst), 1991, 49.
8. Ibid., 47.
9. Budd, Hopkins. Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods. New York: Random House New York, 1987, 281-284.
10. Loftus, Elizabeth F. " Memories of Things Unseen." Current Directions in Psychological Science (SAGE Publications) 13, no. 4 (2004), 145.
11. Ibid., 146.

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