

(NZ)

Psychological dangers seen in hypnosis-inspired

Chicago. — UFO investigators who promote the stories of people claiming to have been kidnapped by unidentified flying objects may be causing serious psychological damage to those "abductees," a psychologist has warned.

Some recent books chronicling alleged UFO abductions have become best sellers in the United States.

Robert Baker, an expert in abnormal psychology at the University of Kentucky, said the authors and promoters of books on UFO abductions may be using hypnosis to uncover many of the stories of kidnappings by flying saucers.

Because hypnosis can transform a dream, a hallucination or a fantasy in-

to a seemingly real event, Baker said, the UFO investigators may be doing psychological harm to their subjects.

He added that a hypnotist, using the power of suggestion, can even create "memories" of an event that never occurred.

Baker said the claims made by UFO abductees fall into a category of psychology that is "by no means new, and it is well documented. It is no mystery to someone trained in abnormal psychology, hypnosis, and cognitive psychology."

The pattern of the abduction, he said, is the same seen by psychologists in the days when people claimed to have been abducted by fairies and leprechauns.

Many UFO abductees appear sane and normal "because they are perfectly sane and normal", he said, explaining that it's not uncommon for people to occasionally suffer hallucinations or waking dreams. In addition, some fantasy-prone people have trouble determining where the fantasy ends and reality begins.

UFO experts "would like us to believe that all of these experiences are alike. They are not," he said. People report a wide variety of creatures and spaceships.

"Despite claims to the contrary, all abductee claimants are (either) victims of their own hallucinations and delusions or fantasies lifted from their

subconscious, or else they are victims of other misguided individuals," Baker told a meeting of scientists, magicians and writers gathered to discuss supernatural claims.

"These people are literally talked into believing they've been abducted," Baker said.

He accused unscrupulous authors of using the power of suggestion "to convince the unwary and unsuspecting that their fantasies of abduction were suppressed memories of actual occurrences."

Baker warned that using hypnosis to turn such fantasies into reality was "a form of psychological rape worse than any claimed alien abduction".

UFO abduction stories

According to several recent articles and books on the subject, many "abductees" report having alien creatures extract tissue and sperm samples from them, or having aliens rape them. Sometimes the aliens are supposed to have returned to remove a foetus from the victim.

"This is not an innocent game. It's a dangerous game," said UFO critic Philip Klass, who also spoke at the meeting.

Klass said that artist and bestselling UFO author Budd Hopkins is now promoting the idea that many people with serious psychological disturbances are actually suffering the side effects of a forgotten UFO abduction.

And because some people report repeated contact with the creatures, Klass said, promoting the idea that abductees may be kidnapped again "will ruin the lives of many suggestible people".

Hopkins' most recent book, "Intruders," and one by Whitley Strieber, "Communion," which is to be released as a film early next year, were both listed on the New York Times best-seller list for non-fiction books.

Hopkins, Strieber and others who have written about UFO abductions were invited as speakers at the meeting, which was sponsored by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, but all declined to appear.