

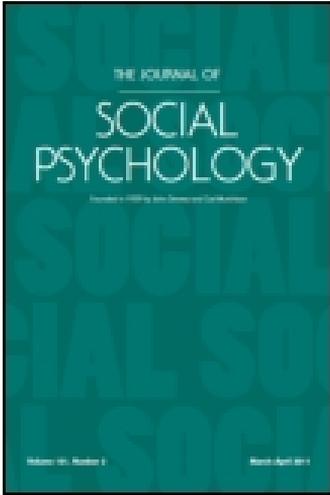
This article was downloaded by: [University of Sussex Library]

On: 02 February 2015, At: 17:34

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## The Journal of Social Psychology

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/vsoc20>

### Affiliation Motivation and Belief in Extraterrestrial UFOs

Lawrence W. Littig<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychology , Howard University , USA

Published online: 30 Jun 2010.

To cite this article: Lawrence W. Littig (1971) Affiliation Motivation and Belief in Extraterrestrial UFOs, The Journal of Social Psychology, 83:2, 307-308, DOI: [10.1080/00224545.1971.9922478](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1971.9922478)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1971.9922478>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

## CURRENT PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS

*Under this heading appear summaries of data which, in 500 words or less, would increase our comprehension of socially compelling problems, hopefully move us somewhat closer to a solution, and clearly show promise of transcending their own origin in the Zeitgeist; additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the investigator or, when indicated, by requesting tabular material from ASIS National Auxiliary Publications Service.*

---

*The Journal of Social Psychology, 1971, 83, 307-308.*

### AFFILIATION MOTIVATION AND BELIEF IN EXTRATERRESTRIAL UFOs\*

*Department of Psychology, Howard University*

---

LAWRENCE W. LITTIG

---

Interest in the existence of extraterrestrial life and its manifestation in the form of "unidentified flying objects" (UFOs), such as flying saucers, exhibits a persistence, in the absence of objective evidence,<sup>1</sup> that suggests that beliefs about such phenomena are deeply embedded in personality. To explore this possibility the relationship between affiliation motivation<sup>2</sup> and the belief that UFOs originate in other worlds was considered. Implicit in the belief that UFOs come from outer space is the assumption that life, much as we know it, exists in other worlds. This belief, it was conjectured, may represent a projection of a human disposition to be accepted and loved by others (the affiliation motive). It was hypothesized that strong affiliation motivation is associated with a belief in the alien origins of UFOs. This hypothesis was predicated on the assumption that in a peopled universe the possibilities of positive emotional responses from others are greater than in an empty universe.

The Test of Insight<sup>3</sup> was administered to 77 undergraduate students. Their responses were coded for affiliation motivation. The range of scores was from

---

\* Received in the Editorial Office, Provincetown, Massachusetts, on May 27, 1970. Copyright, 1971, by The Journal Press.

<sup>1</sup> Condon, E. U. *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Shipley, T. E., & Veroff, J. A projective measure of need for affiliation. *J. Exper. Psychol.*, 1952, 43, 349-356.

<sup>3</sup> French, E. G. Development of a measure of complex motivation. In J. W. Atkinson (Ed.), *Motives in Fantasy, Action, and Society*. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1958.

zero to 10 with a median of four. Seven subjects scoring at the median were discarded. Subjects ( $n = 34$ ) above the median were considered to be strong and subjects below ( $n = 36$ ) were considered to be weak in affiliation motivation. The mean strong and weak affiliation motivation scores were 7.79 and 2.03 respectively. The hypothesis was tested by comparing responses of strong affiliation motivation subjects with responses of weak affiliation motivation subjects to Likert-type<sup>4</sup> alternatives to the statement, "Further research on UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects, e.g., 'flying saucers') will reveal that they come from outer space," which was administered as part of a six-item "Current Scientific Affairs Questionnaire."

The response scale ranged from Strongly Agree (+2) to Strongly Disagree (-2) with the statement. The strong affiliation motivation subjects' mean response ( $+1.15 \pm .72$ ) was in the direction of agreement with the statement, whereas the mean response ( $-.22 \pm .97$ ) of the weak affiliation motivation group was in the direction of disagreement with the statement. This difference of .37, though small, was statistically significant ( $t = 1.76$ ,  $df = 68$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No significant differences were present for any of the other five "neutral" items in the Current Scientific Affairs Questionnaire.

It is commonly accepted that belief in the existence of advanced forms of life on other planets can be explained by reference to psychological factors. Typically, however, such beliefs are relegated to the neurotic, irrational, or less intelligent (or are presented as scientific inferences based upon statistical probabilities).<sup>5</sup> The study lends some support to the idea that the belief in UFOs, as an index of life on other worlds, is related to psychological processes, but it suggests that the relationship is with normal rather than abnormal psychology. Belief in life on other worlds tends somewhat to be a function of a very human characteristic—the need to be responded to positively by other human beings.

*Department of Psychology*  
*Howard University*  
*Washington, D.C. 20001*

<sup>4</sup> Likert, R. A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Arch. Psychol.*, 1932, No. 140.

<sup>5</sup> Cameron, A. G. W., Ed. *Interstellar Communication*. New York: W. A. Benjamin, 1963.