

Doctor takes exception to critics who portray him as UFO believer

■ Harvard psychiatrist calls himself an agnostic who's simply posing questions. 0514F

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Since publication in recent months of John E. Mack's *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens*, the Harvard University psychiatrist has encountered much professional criticism.

"There are people who think this is an embarrassment to Harvard, that he's gone off the deep end," acknowledges Douglas Jacobs, an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard who has known and admired Mack since 1975.

The stories he heard from nearly 100 self-proclaimed abductees varied, but many told of being taken from their homes by big-eyed extraterrestrials and borne aboard spaceships; there, sperm or ova samples were extracted from their bodies as part of an ongoing Earthling-alien hybrid breeding program.

Whatever his colleagues may think, Mack's credentials set him

apart from the pack and lend a stamp of respectability to a topic generally relegated to tabloids.

"I guess what gets me most upset is getting pushed off in a category as a rigid believer," Mack says.

"It's (presented as) 'This doctor believes in alien abductions.' That really isn't fair. I'm opening up an area that has some power to teach us something, an area that seems to have some implications for all of us, even though I don't know what it's about and where it's going. It's a mystery, and I want to stress my agnosticism.

"Yes, I take these peoples' stories seriously. Yes, I think that they are telling the truth. Now, does that mean that the whole thing is literally of our physical world and is going to conform to the requirements of proof of our classic Western scientific methodology? Probably not. We need a more complicated ontology to grasp it."

A different reality

The extraterrestrials, Mack theorizes, may be coming from some other dimension of reality — possibly a parallel universe.

"I'm not convinced that when the abductees are brought aboard

ships to see hybrid beings, however real that may be to them experientially, this is really occurring in physical reality as we know it," he says. "But does that mean that it's not really happening? I don't think you can conclude that."

Philip J. Klass, publisher of the Washington, D.C.-based publication *Skeptics UFO Newsletter*, has his doubts.

"If you assume that we do have extraterrestrial visitors who are engaging in crossbreeding and that they are very advanced, why don't they abduct Olympic athletes?" Klass asks. "And why is it that not one person who claims to have been aboard a flying saucer has ever brought back a paper clip or cigarette lighter or some other souvenir?"

Mack responds: "I'm not trying to prove this with physical evidence." I take the whole package. These abduction accounts are so congruent among healthy people, from all over the United States — people who are not in touch with each other, who have nothing to gain and everything to lose by telling their stories. The only thing I know that behaves like that is real experience, and I am going to continue to try to deepen my understanding."