Extraterrestrial Beings & Their Associated Abductions of Humans: A Comparative Analysis of Popular Culture Film and Real Life Experiences

The human race has been ever-changing and as time moves forward into the future, we continue to see this trend moving in a positive direction. From tools made out of stone to the construction of highways and railroads, we have evolved into superior people capable of adapting to society in the blink of an eye. These advancements into modern society have molded not only the cultures of people but their minds as well. As society continues to become more complex, science and technology integrate themselves into it as well, ultimately establishing facts that should never be argued or changed and quite frequently being phrased “things are the way they are. But what if there was another side that this scientific rationalism has never once explored or knew existed? What if science is nothing but one side of a two-sided story, one in which the other side consisted of a paranormal existence of an alternative people such as aliens, whom we have already had a multitude of accounts of extraterrestrial encounters with?

Within the world of folklore, anything is possible, and this is especially true given the collaboration of evidence provided by real people who have witnessed these paranormal events first-hand. In this heavily supported field of folklore, we come to find out that they divide groups debating on this specific topic into two folk groups: “the first group consists of UFOlogists and their alter egos, the skeptics;
… The second "folk group" consists of the abductees themselves" (Bynum 87). The skepticists often fight with everything in their power to rule out the belief of a people with differing opinions by using their intellectual capabilities to sway the minds of those on the fence over the subject. Scientific phrases such as “internally generated fantasies have the potential to be mistaken for autobiographical memories, and one's confidence in the veracity of those memories might subsequently increase” (Newman 195) are used within this process of degrading the extraterrestrial believers. Diving deeper into the realm of these extraterrestrial encounters, specifically speaking in terms of a process known as alien abduction, humans have experienced life-changing events that will forever change their view on life itself and how their stories are altered dramatically within the technological world of film.

Where did these phenomena come from? When did it start? Why is it happening? According to Mr. Thomas E. Bullard, “The "first" and still most familiar abduction story came to light almost twenty years after the modern era of flying saucer reports began in 1947” (Bullard 148). Before the time of abduction occurrences, the UFO sightings were the first factors in promoting the idea that another life existed amongst us, gaining heavy interest within global populations as the sightings began to pile on. With this sparked interest came to the introduction of an even more bizarre question: “What if inside these spaceships, there lies another form of life, and like us can communicate as a species allowing them to be able to make contact with us?” This finally occurred in the year 1961 when the most infamous of all alien contact reports ended up starting a frenzy of accounts of what they called abductions, first-hand experiences passed down by word of mouth usually in the form of a memorate or a fabulate; this can also be deemed an urban legend within modern society. Betty and Barney Hill had gone out to the
mountains for a getaway retreat to relax, little did they know the memories weekend would forever be etched into their minds, a moment that these people will never forget. A flying disk trailed their car from behind, hiding in the shadows of the night but still being visible due to its flashing iridescent lights. All electron signals become jammed within the car, causing mass confusion until ultimately coming to a roadblock two hours down the road. Soon the couple had been taken up into the craft by six uniformed extraterrestrial beings for experimental testing upon their human bodies. Within a time lapse, the Hills soon returned to their home feeling dirty, almost lifeless, and in complete awe at the amount of time just spent on an alien craft. After such an experience an individual comes to now ask of the intentions of the extraterrestrial. In a journal by Joyce Bynum, there are three central theories: Extraterrestrials’ homeworld has been destroyed and is deprived of resources, so they come to our world to acquire materials needed to save their planet; they come to our world to perform scientific surveys on human beings; or they experiment by carrying off human beings for sexual or reproductive purposes. (Bynum 92)

This is just one of the various accounts of abductions that had the world of media itching to get their hands on this type of information. Among these ways of media production, we see things like TV shows, posters, books, or even cereal boxes impact the imagination and creative mind of any individual of peaked interest but the film industry takes the prize for the most contributive; but, the most contributive aspect comes within the world of film, where individuals place themselves into the paranormal shoes of an abductee and let their minds run free for an hour and a half.

The movie ‘The Fourth Kind’ (2009) is one of these recent productions that speculates upon this extraordinary supernatural experience that the Western world deems today as the ‘alien
abduction’, that of which a multitude of reports of its occurrences are still reported to the present day. The box-hit thriller involves a psychologist interviewing individuals claiming to be abductees as ways of solving mysterious missing person cases in 1960s Nome, Alaska. Dr. Abigail Emily "Abbey" Tyler uses a technique called hypnosis which is used to recover fuzzy memories that the victim may have endured when being under the impression that they were in fact abducted by aliens. These memories are taken through a visual dramatization in which the specific details and each individual step of this abduction cycle are played out in flashback scenes throughout the interview; most cutscenes use actual archived audio and footage of the extensive interviews between victims and the outside world. These unique features within the film allow outsiders to step into the role of an individual affected by this bizarre extraterrestrial contact.

A newly adopted theory of abduction events was heavily described by Thomas E. Bullard in his study ‘UFO Abduction Reports: The Supernatural Narrative Returns to Technological Guise’ which can be compared to experience centered studies such as the ones done by David Hufford, Raymond Moody, and Kenneth Ring in terms of supernatural folklore. Bullard explains the distinct conditions that these events have when stating, “The abduction story consists of a maximum of eight episodes in the following order: 1. Capture… 2. Examination… 3. Conference… 4. Tour… 5. Otherworldly Journey… 6. Theophany… 7. Return… 8. Aftermath” (Bullard 153). It is with these very conditions that I will display how and argue how the film industry, specifically the movie ‘The Fourth Kind’, has differed or remained the same throughout the decades.
Before watching ‘The Fourth Kind’ I had differing thoughts of how close these events would be to real-life experience considering most motion pictures modify characteristics of any event in order to appeal to its audiences. There was only question I was left with: how far could these details be taken out of proportion to make the world believe in false information about such a historical topic? By doing an analytical critique of this supernatural film, I will be able to uncover the truths about the intentions of the film industry and how it has been pivotal in the spread of abduction awareness.

I begin by analyzing stage one of three in the process, where extraterrestrials arrive at the abduction site in a spacecraft of epic proportion and appearance, following a traumatic abduction about this unidentified flying object. From an ideal perspective from the folklore world and from the multitude of studies done, we come to see that the arrival of the craft involves a complete lack of nose in most cases but you are still able to notice the craft given its pinking-green rotating lights (Dewan 194). The craft hovers over the given building of its victim and sends a bright yellow-white beam of light into the home, extracting the victim through walls and the roof, slowly levitating the person’s body to the entrance of the spacecraft. It is this very entrance that the individual will finally be able to witness the overall appearance of the extraterrestrial life forms before their very eyes. In folklore, they are often described in one of two forms: the standard Grey form or the classic “Aryan” human being form. This ideology shifted between the 1970s and 1980s as the film industry often described the aliens as having grey skin, short stature, large black eyes, etc. This shift in trend can be seen when Chris D. Bader explained “From the late 1970s through the early 1980s, UFO contact cases once again went through pronounced changes. First of all, the UFO community came to a much-needed, albeit forced, "consensus" as
to what the aliens looked like...To be sure, most contactées reported visitations with tall, blond, Aryan, humanoids’ (Bader 81). When speaking in terms of specifics, aliens are most accurately described as being 3-5 feet tall, having an asexual orientation, no signs of any hair on the head or body or even having extremely thin chins with a larger upper head. They are also seen as having a shiny grey appearance, having no ears or very tiny ones, having a mouth barely existent besides a small slit; Other characteristics include two air holes with absolutely no nose structure, abnormally long arms, crooked knees that cause them to walk with an awkward limp, tight one-piece uniforms, a hood or wrap around head.

When comparing these primary characteristics to those of ‘The Fourth Kind’, we can see that the movie doesn’t clearly illustrate the events with much detail at all. Before contact occurs in the movie, there is a large emphasis on a white owl, most often being seen as another form of extraterrestrial life that serves as a warning for events that will soon follow in the near future. The spacecraft then arrives out of nowhere, seen as a large black shadow within the sky with no sign of any flashing iridescent lights on the outer surface of the craft. What the craft did have was a complete lack of noise, likely trying to not wake the victim amongst the abduction process. The craft also displayed the idea that “UFOs defy physical laws by making right-angle turns at high speed or disappearing in mid-flight” (Bullard 148). In the scenes of the movie, the extraterrestrial beings are rarely seen but when they are, long black shadows are the only glimpse that we get of this paranormal creature. We see this abnormal proportion of size within the body and head but the viewer does not get a clear, in-depth analysis of their appearance. Given the rapid speed of the events within the first stage and the trauma endured by them, it is possible that the producer may have wanted to display the victim’s lack of awareness here, presenting an
almost impossible situation for any person to catch any feature from the abductors. This could also be turned the other way, making for a situation in which the filmmaker may have been going for more suspense and drama than actually dedicating their time to accurately depicting the situation.

We now come to the second stage of abduction which can be broken down into six steps: capture, examination, conference, tour, otherworldly journey, and Theophany. Starting off, victims are restrained to a metal table and put into a supine position. Several procedures are following including sexual reproductive organ analysis along with simple check-ups like reflexes and visual or optical exams. These examinations are often thought to be processes involved with the making a superior being by ultimately mixing traits between human characteristics and extraterrestrial characteristics; this process can be seen from a first-hand viewpoint when Susan Lepselter states, “She tells us this was not a dream, but neither does she insist it has some objective reality outside her own experience; instead, she carefully clarifies: I’m saying I’m aware that this happened to me. And she tells us she was aware that “beings,” as she calls them, were doing something to her body” (Lepselter 64). This step is then followed by a conference with the beings usually in the form of telepathic communication, a trip to another world that usually involves showing the humans their devastated planet, and finally the meeting between the human and the supreme leader of the extraterrestrial nation. These final steps of this stage are said to be the guidance of the alien showing humans that they must take proper care of their planet and must always worry about its state of health. Then the supreme being, usually of larger size, cures the victim of any trauma by performing miracle acts that only a god holds within their power, all before returning the victim to its rightful destination.
When comparing stage two to ‘The Fourth Kind’, there is a common theme found in the idea that experience a form of temporary amnesia upon entering the craft which is often called “Doorway Amnesia”; This causes individuals only to remember minuscule details of all events occurring the day of the abduction. Another common characteristic is seen in the depiction of the examination room, a bright white room that was circular in orientation and was comprised of one piece of furniture. This piece of furniture varied from a metal table in folklore to a chair with instruments attached all around much like that of a dentist’s office, which is what can be seen in the movie. Upon this furniture, there is usually a device used to probe the human being. In the movie, this can be seen as a large drill resembling a milkshake machine but in folklore, it is usually described as a needle or a microchip. Almost as if the pupil was fully dilated, the victim seems to have a very sensitive sight in this situation, again only picking up on shadows of movement due to the bright lighting. In the movie though, Dr. Abigail Tyler failed to recall events of meeting a supreme being or taken to another world but rather only remembers the pain she endured during the examination sequence that left boils melted into the skin of the back of her shoulder. This can be seen as the aliens being aggressive and not caring for the condition of their patient, or this could be seen as the aliens taking every measure to complete a successful experiment on the human population. Whatever the case may be, these intricate procedures are prevalent in all cases, real-life or film related. It is the more specific events that follow that are rarely depicted accurately.

Moving forward to the final stage in alien abduction is the return of the victim to their home and the traumatic aftermath that coexists. Victims are released from the spacecraft via the same gravity-defying beam of light that the individual first encountered upon being abducted
from his/her home. Again a lapse of time occurs during this whole sequence, making the victim feel like that had been on the craft for a shorter amount of time than they actually were. As the victim wakes from this nightmare, they notice immediate physical effects to their body that could include burning eyes, needle wounds, burned skin, gastrointestinal problems, feeling of dirtiness and/or thirst. These symptoms often last up to a week before the mental aspect of the abduction horror begins (Bullard 155). An influx of mixed feelings of anxiety and paranoia are infused within the mind of the victim. Mental and physical health is degraded to a concerning level, often leading them to adopt severe personality changes. According to the brilliant Roger Luckhurst, “Your phobias may become increasingly unmanageable, forcing you to seek help, or else (more commonly) flashes of content begin to return to fill in the absence, sometimes triggered by reading or viewing UFO-related material” (Luckhurst 31). Common human activity such as visiting a doctor’s office can trigger memories that victims wish they could erase from their minds for eternity. As time goes on, victims also see further contact with the supernatural that provides yet another catalyst in the degradation of the overall health state of the individual.

Within ‘The Fourth Kind’, these horrific characteristics of abduction aftermath are illustrated beautifully; as the hypnosis interview continues to move forward, victims are eventually pushed to a climax of pure fear and pain that results in shrieks and in the most severe cases paralysis of the entire body. These people are depicted as people in terrible shape that usually involves pale skin and dark rings around their eyes like their body has been drained of its energy, almost as if the paranormal was a parasite and this individual was their host. It is the voices of these creatures (often being a language of foreign descent) in the head of the individual that drive them to cut their lives short byways of suicide or random acts of violence as shown in the movie when
Tommy Fisher murders his family and then ends his own life in a standoff with the police of Nome with a .45 caliber pistol. These intense scenes not only provide accurate descriptions of possible symptoms and events incurring because of them but they also please the film viewer by ways of drama and suspense. In her book, Susan A. Clancy explains that “This takes us to the second thing I learned about alien-abduction reports: they began only after they were featured on TV and in the movies. Abduction accounts did not exist prior to 1962” (Clancy 84). This comes to show how influential the film industry has become in effectively pushing a new ideology among the population, sometimes to an extreme where we can see people driven to their limits mentally as seen in ‘The Fourth Kind’.

We come to find that the film industry is not so much trying to accurately depict the life of an abduction victim and spread awareness, but more so they are trying to please the avid movie critic looking for the best film possible. The producer of a film can only go so far in pleasing both sides of the picture before they start to provide society with false information. The globalization of alien media production has blossomed heavily into a society where we were no longer speaking of a “Technological Ghost” but rather a “Technological Extraterrestrial Being” and people were ecstatic to jump at the opportunity to explore this new dimension. This gained attention in the community has taken us to a period where films placed ideas of great extent that never once existed into the imagination of individuals, leading to true accounts and planned hoaxes alike. Whether a believer or a skeptic, in the end, what you believe is yours to decide.