Fire In The Sky Essay, Research Paper

Phenomena is a matter that social scientists must view in a very specific and cautious way. Social scientists must have a balance of doubt and caution and willingness to perceive new ideas in order to be successful. Doubt and caution is used when a specific issue is looked into more closely, and it basically takes away the chances of one being too gullible. A willingness to perceive new ideas is another way of saying to be open-minded, which is a trait that is definitely needed. Many examples depicting this balance have been reviewed. Below is a glimpse into some of these examples, followed by a personal evaluation.

In 1975, in White Mountains, Arizona, several loggers released their testimonies about an alien abduction. This incident was the subject of case study three and also made into a movie, Fire in the Sky. After reading and viewing the above, numerous factors support the loggers testimonies. While these six men were listening to the radio on a drive home, the radio suddenly didn’t come in as a result of being near this UFO. This unknown structure radiated red lights all throughout the sky. Amazed by what he saw, Travis Walton got out of the truck and approached the unidentified. Mike Rogers and his four other crew members watched Travis get thrown into the air and land harshly back on the ground. Disturbed by what they saw, the rest of the crew left the scene. As a result of being nervous and worried about Travis, Mike soon returned to the place of encounter, but he was amazed to find out that Travis was gone. For five days, Travis was missing, and the crew members claim he was abducted. It wasn’t until Mike received a phone call from disoriented Travis, that hope of Travis’s survival came about. Mike and a few others quickly responded to the call to get to Travis’s side very quickly. Travis’s mental state, which entailed his being completely oblivious, not recognizing his closest family and friends, screaming hysterically upon being approached and touched, and not speaking, showed that something was wrong. His physical state of being completely naked, dehydrated, and covered in cuts and bruises, also strongly supports the fact that something unusual has occurred. These observations go hand in hand with the other crew members testimony of what had occurred. These other crew members took lie detector tests to validate their stories, and four of them passed, with the fifth being inconclusive. An extremely prestigious polygraph operator did all these tests, so the results were viewed with high regard. After returning home to his somewhat-normal life, Travis Walton experienced out of the ordinary visions. He had very gruesome and disturbing flashbacks to the five days of his abductions. Besides bewildering his mental state, these flashbacks affected him physically. At times Travis would have to hide behind things, such as a kitchen table, in order to feel safe. He also wouldn’t allow anyone to touch him or come near him while envisioning this unbearable experience. After reading the above, this entire incident may seem to be clear as day, but unfortunately, there are many non-supports to these men’s testimonies. First off, Travis himself is known to be quite a dreamer. Mike and he had always dreamed of running there own business. They even thought up a name, MT Motors. The unfortunate thing is that Mike Rogers is going through terrible money problems, so dedicating time and money to his own business is unrealistic. So “dreaming up” this story would benefit both men. In the car at the time of the incident, the crew was reading a tabloid, which had an article about UFO encounters. It can be said that this tabloid helped spark the idea of what happened in the minds of the crew members. The sight of the abduction was specifically noted for neighboring the Apache reservation. The Apache are known to not like loggers, for they destroy valuable land. It was also noted that Alan Dallas, a member of the crew, soon began to have a relationship with the Apache. A deal could have been set up between Dallas and the Apache to hold Travis in order to validate his, and the other members, stories. The Apache are known to use peyote, a drug that enables hallucination. If they gave this to Travis while holding him, his flashbacks could actually be authentic visions that he had.

In case one of the UFO testimonials, Hynek and Harder describe a specific UFO encounter involving a plane. Hynek is noted to be the “Galileo of Ufology” and is the head of astronomy at Northwestern University, an extremely prestigious university. Harder is a professor of civil engineering at yet another prestigious university, University of California at Berkeley. Their testimonies say that a plane was flying on course when the altimeter suddenly began climbing. The pilot, Coyne, first noticed this at 3500 feet and still watched it climb, without touching the controls. Also the radio, which was functioning fine before, blacked out during the encounter. Coyne and the others claimed of seeing a gray metallic structure above their craft, yet no radar showed any other aircrafts being in the same area at the same time. Klass, the editor of Aviation Week and Space Technology, examines the non-supports of this testimonial. He first notes that showers of Orionid meteors where at peak activity at the time of the sighting due to the time of year and the time of night. So the object that was claimed to be seen, could actually have been a fireball. And an estimation of how close this object was, was given. Yet Klass pointed out that the estimation of the distance of meteors is notoriously hard to judge. Klass also says that because of the planes reduced altitude, they were out of range to use the radio and that is why is seised functioning. As to the mention of the altimeter climbing, the pilot, though experienced, probably pulled the controls unknowingly because he felt danger.

After reviewing the above information, it is clear to see that it is unscientific. The term unscientific refers to the fact that there is no baseline for comparison and no controls. Unscientific evidence relies on human observation, translated into human testimony. Though human testimony is accurate 75% to 80% of the time, it does have its flaws. Human memory is distorted by ones biases and needs, therefore is not completely accurate. Schemas, a belief or expectation of what our world is like, are also factors in testimonies. Human observation, which makes up unscientific testimony, differs from scientific observation in that scientific observations are made with instruments, opposed to human observation, which are based on the senses. Also, scientific observations consist of specifying and arranging situations such that observers can agree about what has occurred. This is also known as a baseline, which is in place for comparison.

After I evaluated the case studies above, I believe that they are untrue. The nonsupports gathered in each case seem to out way the supports. In the case of Fire in the Sky, it seemed to coincidental that relations with the Apache soon came about. The fact that Travis and Mike had envisioned started their own business, yet both had finical trouble, seemed somewhat mysterious. It all falls into place when the tabloid is taken into consideration. The entire crew was noted for reading a tabloid containing an article about UFO sightings. With this in mind, Mike and the others came up with this whole ordeal to make money. An arrangement was made with the Apache for their assistance, the holding of Travis, and everything else fell into place. I view the general term phenomena with an extreme amount of doubt, which may be said to be too cautious. Yet in my opinion it is strongly needed.