

The Psychological Characteristics of Children Who Speak of Previous-Life Memories: An Extended Study and Replication in Lebanon

Results:

Various explanations have been put forward why the alleged memories develop in children who speak of previous-life memories. These explanations range from reincarnation to ‘therapeutic resource’. This project puts to test the role of some psychological characteristics and the circumstances in which the children live, such as fantasy, suggestibility, social isolation, dissociation, and attention-seeking.

Thirty children in Lebanon who had persistently spoken of past-life memories, and 30 comparison children claiming no such memories, were administered relevant tests and questionnaires. As in an earlier study in Sri Lanka the target group obtained higher scores for daydreaming, attention-seeking and dissociation, but not for social isolation and suggestibility. The level of dissociation was much lower than in cases of multiple personality and not clinically relevant. There was some evidence of post-traumatic stress disorder-like symptoms. Eighty percent of the children spoke repeatedly of past-life memories of circumstances leading to a violent death (mostly accidents, also war-related deaths and murder) and some had phobias related to these memories. Apparently this imagery that the child experiences as memories of a previous life serve as a stressor and causes the post-traumatic stress disorder-like symptoms.

The contents of the alleged memories of four of these children were intensively investigated and attempts made to verify them by searching for a potential “previous personality”, and examine in how far the child’s memories corresponded to facts in the life of the previous personality. In some of the cases a high correspondance was found, in others only slight or no fitting person could be traced. See references below.

Published work:

Erlendur Haraldsson and Majd Abu-Izzeddin (2002). Development of Certainty about the Correct Deceased Person in a Case of the Reincarnation Type: The Case of Nazih Al-Danaf. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. 16(3), 363-380.

Erlendur Haraldsson (2003). Children who speak of past-life experiences: Is there a psychological explanation? *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory Research and Practice*. 76, 1, 55-67.

Erlendur Haraldsson and Majd Abu-Izzeddin (2004). Three randomly selected Lebanese cases of children who claim memories of a previous life. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*. 86.2, 875, 65-85.

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Ian Stevenson and Erlendur Haraldsson (2003). The Similarity of Features of Reincarnation Type Cases over Many Years: A Third Study. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 17, 2, 283-289.

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