

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN WHO
REPORT PREVIOUS-LIFE MEMORIES: AN EXTENDED STUDY
AND REPLICATION IN LEBANON**

*Erlendur Haraldsson**

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Abstract

An investigation in Sri Lanka of 60 cases of children who speak of previous-life (p-l) memories revealed that most of them speak of a life that ended at a young age, usually through an accident, and in a few cases by murder. They often claim that their present parents are not their real parents and that their real home is somewhere else, and may give the name of the previous location and express a wish to be brought there.

A psychological study showed that these children have a larger vocabulary, better memory, score higher on a brief test of intelligence than their peers. Their school performance is higher, and they are not more suggestible than other children. They have a higher "problem score" on the Child Behavior Checklist; are argumentative, nervous, feel they have to be perfect, like to be alone, tend to be withdrawn but are socially capable, are concerned about cleanliness and neatness, talk too much, etc. Furthermore they have high scores on the Child Dissociation Checklist; show rapid changes in personality, daydream frequently, have intense outbursts of anger, act sexually too old for their age, and often refer to themselves in third person. In short, they have problems of personal identity and display frequent shifts as if from one personality to the alleged previous personality.

Thirty children in Lebanon, aged 6-11 years, were administered the same tests as in Sri Lanka. Each child claiming previous-life memo-

* University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland.

ries was matched with a control child of the same age, sex and socio-economic status. The purpose was to test the validity of the Sri Lanka findings in a widely different culture.

At the time of the conference about two-thirds of the children had been tested. In some respects the findings were the same, in other they were different. Children in Lebanon did not have better memories than "normal" children, nor did they have a greater vocabulary or do better in school. In common with Sri Lanka children they had high "problem scores" on the Child Behaviour Checklist and high dissociation scores, such as frequent daydreaming and referring to themselves in the third person (previous personality). It was hypothesized that children claiming memories of a previous life would have greater dream recall and control over their nocturnal imagery than other children, as vivid dream-life can be seen as evidence of rich imagery, and has also been found to relate to having psychic experiences. This hypothesis was confirmed. There are indications that the high scores on the Child Behaviour Checklist and Dissociation Checklist may be seen as the effects of a post-traumatic stress disorder caused by frequent reliving of the violent death that most of the children talk so often about.