

Suicide and Reincarnation

There are many ideas about the spiritual consequences of suicide and how it might affect reincarnation. This article examines verified past-life memory



cases that provide a scientific basis for understanding the implications of self-killing, investigated by Ian Stevenson and other researchers. These verified cases suggest that following suicide, the intermission between lives is unusually short and that the return often is to a relative or friend. As in other reincarnation cases, personality and behavioural traits carry over from life to life.

Overview of Research Findings

There are many ideas about the spiritual consequences of suicide and how suicide impacts the reincarnation process, but what does the case research tell us? Is the time before reincarnation longer or shorter than with other causes of death? Does the 'soul' undergo a period of self-examination before starting the new life? What is the effect of committing suicide on the next incarnation? Does it make a difference if the self-killing was done to avoid having to deal with a failing body, say, or to escape money problems, or from feelings of being in the body of the wrong sex or simply from a deep depression?

[Ian Stevenson](#) began field research with [cases of past-life memory](#) in 1961 and by 2001 he and his colleagues had collected data on some 2,500 cases, mostly of young children. Twenty-five of these cases involved people who had intentionally taken their own lives, in two cases to avoid capture by police or soldiers, in the rest 'when a social situation, such as a bankruptcy or thwarted love affair, seemed to them worse than death'. Stevenson remarked that these cases disprove the notion that suicide necessarily results in consignment to Hell for eternity. However, the cases do not suggest that suicide is a good way to extricate oneself from one's troubles; it only changes 'the location of their occurrence'.^[1]

Stevenson published detailed case reports of seven of his 25 intentional suicide cases. All but one are 'solved', meaning that a person matching the past-life memories has been identified. Five additional solved suicide cases have been reported by other researchers.^[2] These cases conform to the general [reincarnation case patterns](#): Children typically begin to speak of their memories between two and

four years of age. They may display [behaviours](#) consistent with the previous persons and there may be [physical traits](#), such as [birthmarks](#), linking the lives. Some children recall having been [a member of the opposite sex](#). The children may have [memories of the intermission](#) between lives. Their mothers may have experienced [announcing dreams or other interactions](#) with the deceased persons before or while pregnant with them.

Several of the subjects of Stevenson's suicide cases had phobias for the instruments of the suicide, such as guns or poisons. Some considered killing themselves; one, Paulo Lorenz, actually did so.^[3] Several expressed their memories in their childhood play. A Burmese child, Maung Aung Win, would put a piece of rope round his neck and pretend to hang himself, as the person whose life he recalled had done. Two Burmese subjects who recalled lives that ended in suicidal drowning mimed drowning in their play. Ramez Shams of Lebanon reenacted shooting himself with a rifle by placing the end of a long stick under his chin. When he was in trouble as a child, the German Ruprecht Schulz would make his hand into the shape of a pistol with the index finger extended, point at his temple, and say, 'I shoot myself'.^[4]

Stevenson did not comment on two features that appear commonly in the twelve solved suicide cases that have received full reports in print. All case subjects except Ruprecht Schulz were children at the time the identifications were made. (Although in childhood Ruprecht acted as if he were about to shoot himself, he did not recall the circumstances of his death and solve his case until he was in his fifties). Ten of the twelve cases involve reincarnation amongst relatives or friends, a much higher rate of family and acquaintance relationships than appears in reincarnation cases as a rule.^[5] One subject, Wael Kiwan, killed himself out of frustration at not being able to go from Los Angeles to his native Lebanon, and was reborn in Lebanon. Only with Ruprecht Schulz is there no obvious connection with parents or place in the selection of the new life.

The other common feature is the brevity of the intermissions. In a collection of 616 cases from ten cultures Stevenson found the median intermission length to be fifteen months.^[6] In Western cases, the intermission frequently is a good deal longer than in Asia, however. The median intermission for solved American stranger cases is around thirty years.^[7] The median intermission of 32 solved European cases is 33 months, although it is shorter in family and acquaintance cases (eighteen months) than in stranger cases (ten years). The median intermission is longer (around 100 years) in unsolved European cases.^[8] The median intermission length of the twelve solved suicide cases summarized below is only three months and, interestingly, it is shorter in Asian than in Western cases. All of the Asian cases with the exception of Kazuya have intermissions shorter than the median length and all of the Western cases with the exception of Ruprecht Schulz have intermissions longer than the median length.

In several cases, there are reported contacts between either the past or present mothers during the intermission but only in two cases – one solved, the other unsolved – did the subjects report memories of that period. Kazuya, the subject of the solved case, talked about having spent time in a 'reflection room' after his death, coming to terms with what he had done. The intermission in the unsolved case of Maung Myint Aung, a Burmese boy who recalled having been a Japanese

soldier occupying Burma during World War II, said he took his own life rather than surrendering. The apparent intermission in this case also was unusually long, but Myint Aung made no mention of a reflection room or of having had to come to terms with his actions before reincarnating.

Reincarnation researcher [James Matlock](#) observes that the short intermissions and returns among family and friends suggest that self-killing conveys considerable control over the reincarnation process, perhaps because the death is premeditated. Although cases of violent death have statistically shorter intermissions than cases of natural death, the intermissions in suicide cases are especially brief.^[9] These findings are robust cross-culturally and have been confirmed by solved suicide cases that have come to light since Matlock first recognized the patterns.^[10] But with Myint Aung there is neither a short intermission nor a connection between the previous person and the case subject's parents.

Myint Aung was born with a mark resembling the scar of a knife wound across the front of his neck. He said that he had taken refuge at the Rangoon zoo, but had slit his throat when British forces liberating Burma began to close in on his location. The most likely date for this event is May 1945, and Maung Myint Aung was born May 1972, 27 years later. Myint Aung said that after his death, he had remained at the zoo (as a discarnate entity) until his father appeared and he followed him home. Myint Aung claimed to remember details of his former life in Japan, but not with the specificity required for verification. However, he displayed Japanese behavioural traits, exhibited Japanese food preferences, and enjoyed playing at being a soldier.^[11] The anomalous features of his case may indicate that the suicide case data is skewed by a preponderance of family and acquaintance cases, which are readily solved. The significance of Myint Aung's case will become apparent only when a greater number of unsolved suicide cases are available for comparison to the solved cases.

The following case summaries are arranged according to the length of the intermission between lives, beginning with the shortest.

Cases of Reincarnation Following Suicide

Cemil Fahrıcı (Turkey)

Cemil Fahrıcı said he had been a 23-year-old bandit who had shot himself when the police set fire to the house in which he was hidden. He was born within two days of the bandit's death, in the family of one of his distant relatives, with two birthmarks – one under his chin, the other on the top of his head – in the places the bullet had entered and exited. Cemil had a strong phobia of blood and experienced headaches whenever he saw blood. He showed no tendency towards lawlessness, though, and as an adult opened a bakery instead.^[12]

Faruq Andary (Turkey)

When he was three years old, Faruq Andary began to recall the life of a hot-tempered and impetuous youth who had killed himself at sixteen by ingesting insect poison following an argument with his mother over his missing cigarette

lighter. He was born one month later into the family of distant relatives. Faruq also had a temper and was afraid of poisons. He had a strong but ambivalent desire to return to the family he remembered.^[13]

Rajani Singh (India)

Sixteen year-old Mithilesh was staying with the family of her father's cousin while preparing for a secondary school examination to be held at a nearby university. There she became romantically involved with a boy of a different caste, something of which her family did not approve. She became depressed, poured kerosene on her head, and set herself on fire. She was rushed to hospital, but died there. A week later, her mother dreamed that she would be returning to the family. Rajani's mother, with whom Mithilesh had been staying, was pregnant at the time, and Rajani was born about five weeks after Mithilesh's suicide. Her body was covered with red marks, particularly on her head. As she grew older, she sometimes asked to be called Mithilesh. She recognized places and people known to Mithilesh and was thought to be as stubborn as Mithilesh had been.^[14]

Ruprecht Schulz (Germany)

In his fifties, Ruprecht Schulz faced a situation in which he had to withdraw money from a wall safe night after night. He began to have the feeling that he had done this before and asked himself when that was, then remembered that in a previous life he had been a shipping magnate who had shot himself in the head when he realized that he had been robbed by an associate and that his business was ruined. Schultz remembered sufficient details to identify the man, who had died at 53, when he was five weeks old. Thus, in addition to having a short intermission, this is a case of [replacement reincarnation](#). Schultz related no past-life memories in childhood. The only hint of the previous life was his play at shooting himself in the head which, it turned out, he had done in his earlier incarnation.^[15]

Navalkishore Yadav (India)

Navalkishore Yadav was identified as the reincarnation of his father's second cousin on the basis of his stated intention to be reborn into the family, announcing dreams and a birthmark on the back of his neck. The boy had hung himself at seventeen to avoid an arranged marriage to a girl he did not like, one or two months before Navalkishore's birth. Navalkishore's birthmark matched the place the noose's knot had rested. He had not yet spoken about the previous life at two years, when Stevenson investigated his case.^[16]

Wael Kiwan (Lebanon)

At four years of age, [Wael Kiwan](#), a Lebanese Druze boy, started talking about events in the life of a 24-year-old Druze man who had hung himself at his home in Los Angeles, frustrated by life in the United States and his inability to return to Lebanon. Wael was born in Lebanon two months after the suicide, into an unrelated family. The previous family was identified when Wael recognized their house in Beirut. A week before his birth, his mother dreamed of a young man with an open shirt, sweating and breathing rapidly and with effort. When she later saw a

photograph of the previous person, she recognized him as the man in her dream. Wael did not talk about having killed himself but gave discrepant accounts of how assailants had shot him in the head or kicked and hit him until he was senseless.^[17]

Cruz Moscinski (United States)

Cruz Moscinski was still an infant when his case was investigated, yet he demonstrated behaviours that linked him to his father's deceased best friend, Cruz Rodriguez, an outgoing but troubled young man who had killed himself following a fight with his girlfriend. Cruz's father's girlfriend happened to be pregnant at the time, and four months later gave birth to him. By prior decision he was named Cruz, after Cruz Rodriguez. Cruz has a cleft chin, like Cruz Rodriguez, although no other members of the Moscinski family have cleft chins. When only a few months old, Cruz appeared to recognize family and friends of Cruz Rodriguez and reacted to urns with Cruz Rodriguez's ashes as if he realized they held the residue of his own late body.^[18]

Marta Lorenz (Brazil)

When she was about two and a half years old, [Marta Lorenz](#) started talking about having been a woman who had been a close friend of her family. This woman had deliberately contracted tuberculosis, from which she died at 28, after her father had forbidden her, for the second time, to marry a man she loved. Prior to her illness, her lover had killed himself. Marta was born ten months after the woman's death. She was given to upper respiratory infections and when she contracted the common cold, her voice would become hoarse or she would get laryngitis, things the woman whose life she recalled had had to endure before her death.^[19]

Paulo Lorenz (Brazil)

Paulo Lorenz, brother of Marta Lorenz, recalled the life of an elder sister, Emilia, who had killed herself at nineteen, saying she wished to be a boy. Her mother then received a series of mediumistic communications from a spirit claiming to be Emilia, who stated that although she regretted her suicide, she would return to the family as a boy. Paulo was born about eighteen months after Emilia's death, but in his early years was not happy as a boy. He steadfastly identified himself as Emilia and preferred to dress as a girl. Although his behaviour gradually shifted toward the masculine and he became heterosexual in adulthood, he continued to be notably effeminate and never married. At 43, he took his own life.^[20]

Kazuya (Japan)

A Japanese youth named Jun killed himself at 21 by jumping from a bridge onto a motorway after an altercation with his mother. A week later his mother heard knocking on the door and felt instinctively that it was him. Six months on, Jun began to appear in her dreams, night after night, reassuring her and trying to assuage the guilt she continued to feel over being the proximate cause of his death. Kazuya, who was born to Jun's sister about five and a half years after his suicide, was very similar to Jun in his behaviour and appeared to recognize some of Jun's friends. He identified himself as Jun and spoke about events he said had occurred

during the intermission between lives. After a period in the ‘reflection room’, ‘a dark room for the dead who regrets what s/he has done while s/he was alive’, he felt that he was ready to start over and decided to be reborn to his former sister.^[21]

Jacira Silva (Brazil)

Jacira Silva was precocious in speaking and by eleven months was relating her memories of her mother’s brother, Ronaldo, who had killed himself at 28 by drinking insecticide mixed in a red soft drink. In mediumistic communications after his death, Ronaldo declared that he had failed as a man and announced his intention to be reborn to Jacira’s parents as a girl. Jacira was born about five years and nine months after Ronaldo’s death. As a child she suffered from strabismus and was cross-eyed, as Ronaldo had been. She liked to wear her hair short and was tomboyish and energetic, constantly running through gardens, climbing trees and jumping over walls. She did not mind being a girl, though she showed little interest in boys. She had a phobia of red liquids and attributed her suicide to weakness from having been male before. She disliked the notion of suicide and as she grew older, began to speak out against it.^[22]

Julia Moreira (Brazil)

The intermission in this case is said to have been a ‘few years’, but its exact length is not recorded. It is another Brazilian case involving the suicide of a family member and also a change of sex. Julia’s father Olavo was attending a Spiritist meeting when a spirit began to address him through a medium. The spirit identified itself as his late son-in-law, who had killed himself by swallowing formicide, complained of pains in his throat and stomach, and asked if he might reincarnate as his child. Olavo did not see how this was possible, as his wife was in her late forties and was already in menopause. Nevertheless, she became pregnant and gave birth nine months after this communication. Julia suffered no physical effects of the suicide. She was a precocious child who began speaking early and at eighteen months told her parents she had two mummies. She was confused about how she could have the same grandmother as her mother and why she should call her ‘mummy’ when in actuality, as she saw it, they were brother and sister.^[23]

James G Matlock

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Endnotes

Footnotes

1. ^ Stevenson (2001), 219-20.
2. ^ Recent research has cast doubt that an apparent sixth case, reported by Hassler (2013), is in fact one of suicide (Hassler, in press),
3. ^ Stevenson (2001), 220.
4. ^ Stevenson (1997), 1406-7 n9.
5. ^ Matlock (2019), 181-82.
6. ^ Stevenson (2001), 120.
7. ^ Matlock (2019), 186.

8. ^ Matlock ([2020](#)).
9. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 252-53.
10. ^ Matlock (2019), 179.
11. ^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 197-202.
12. ^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 728-45.
13. ^ Stevenson (1980), 77-97.
14. ^ Pasricha (2008), vol. 2, 294-98.
15. ^ Stevenson (2003), 210-22.
16. ^ Stevenson (1997), vol. 1, 783-90.
17. ^ Haraldsson & Abu-Izzeddin (2004), 68-71; Haraldsson ([2017](#)).
18. ^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 248-52.
19. ^ Stevenson (1974), 183-203.
20. ^ Stevenson (1974), 203-15.
21. ^ Ohkado (2016).
22. ^ Andrade (2010).
23. ^ Playfair (2011), 167-69.