

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

for

WHEN CHILDREN WITNESS THE SACRED: SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
IMPACTS, LIFELONG AFTEREFFECTS, AND DISCLOSURE ASPECTS OF
RELIGIOUS APPARITIONAL ENCOUNTERS

by

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A dissertation submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Transpersonal Psychology

Institute of Transpersonal Psychology

Palo Alto, California

May 9, 2005

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RESULTS SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to discover if there were any psychological or spiritual impacts or lifelong aftereffects related to religious apparitional encounters experienced in childhood, and, if there were, the variety of those impacts and aftereffects. Additionally, a second purpose of this study was to discover the benefits and/or consequences of disclosure, or lack of disclosure, of these religious apparitional encounters. Data were collected in four ways; (a) from a questionnaire, which provided demographic data from 23 participants; (b) from individual creative expression projects produced by 13 participants; (c) from a 3-10 page typewritten autobiography submitted by the same 13 participants; and (d) from two interviews, conducted with one participant who was chosen from the 13 extended study participants.

The following sections provide the results of the study. First, I show the demographic information for the total number of participants in Part 1 of the study consisting of the questionnaire. Next, I present the data from the 13 participants in Part 2, the extended portion of the study. I present the results of the thematic content (for the autobiographies and the interview) in table form.

Table 1

Current Demographics: Questionnaire Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Cultural Upbringing	Country of Residence
Barbara ♦	Female	52	non-indigenous American	USA
Richard	Male	50	non-indigenous American	USA
Morgan ♦	Female	43	non-indigenous New Zealander	New Zealand
Angelpauley ♦	Female	25	Filipino	Taiwan
Susan	Female	54	non-indigenous American	USA
Karina	Female	32	non-indigenous American	USA
Tenshi ♦	Female	40	Japanese	Australia
Mamachen ♦	Female	57	non-indigenous American	USA
James	Male	55	non-indigenous American	USA
Sarah ♦♦	Female	25	non-indigenous American	USA

(table continues)

Table 1 (*continued*)

Participant	Gender	Age	Cultural Upbringing	Country of Residence
Karen	Female	47	non-indigenous American	USA
Carol ♦	Female	70	non-indigenous American	USA
Maxie ♦	Female	52	non-indigenous American	USA
Samantha	Female	48	non-indigenous American	USA
Melissa ♦	Female	55	non-indigenous American	USA
Angel ♦	Female	43	indigenous American	USA
Sharon ♦	Female	43	non-indigenous American	USA
Cathy	Female	35	non-indigenous American	USA
Jordan ♦	Female	47	Irish-American	USA
Pamela	Female	61	non-indigenous American	USA
Naomi	Female	46	non-indigenous American	USA

(table continues)

Table 1 (*continued*)

Participant	Gender	Age	Cultural Upbringing	Country of Residence
Sister Mary of the Soul ♦	Female	57	non-indigenous American	USA
Imelda	Female	30	Filipino	USA

Note. The symbol “♦” denotes participants in Part 2, the Extended Portion of the Study.

The symbols “♦♦” denotes the participant who was interviewed.

Table 2

Demographics at Time of Encounter: Questionnaire Participants (N = 23)

Participant	Age	Religious Figure ^a	Multiple Encounters ^b	Religion ^c
Samantha	2	Jesus	yes	Protestant
Karen	3	Jesus	yes	Mormon
Melissa ♦	3	Jesus	no	Catholic
Angelpauley ♦	4	Mary	no	Catholic
Maxie ♦	5	Jesus	yes	Atheist, Protestant, Native American
Jordan ♦	5	Mary	no	Protestant
Pamela	5	Saint Theresa	yes	Protestant
Imelda	5	Mary	no	Catholic
Mamachen ♦	6	Mary	no	Catholic
Sharon ♦	6	Jesus	yes	Catholic
Barbara ♦	7	Abraham	no	Protestant
Angel ♦	7	Jesus	yes	Native American, Catholic, Jewish
Naomi	7	Moses	yes	Jewish
Sister Mary of the Soul ♦	7	Mary	yes	Catholic
Richard	8	Jesus	yes	Catholic
Karina	8	Jesus	no	Southern Baptist
Cathy	8	Mary	yes	Catholic
Susan	9	Jesus	no	Catholic

(table continues)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Participant	Age	Religious Figure ^a	Multiple Encounters ^b	Religion ^c
Sarah ♦♦	9	Jesus	no	some Mormon
Tenshi ♦	10	Jesus	yes	Protestant
Carol ♦	10	Mary	no	Catholic
Morgan ♦	11	Jesus	yes	Protestant
James	11	Jesus	no	Catholic

Note. ^a Question # 3 in questionnaire. ^b Question # 1 in questionnaire. ^c Question # 11 in questionnaire. The symbol “♦” denotes participants in Part 2, the Extended Portion of the Study. The symbols “♦♦” denotes the participant who was interviewed.

Table 3

Demographics as Post-Encounter Adults: Questionnaire Participants (N = 23)

Participant	Years Since Apparition ^a	Belief in a Higher Power ^b	Religion ^c
Sarah ♦♦	16	Yes	None
Angelpauley ♦	21	Yes	Catholic
Karina	24	Yes	None
Imelda	25	Yes	Catholic
Cathy	27	Yes	Catholic
Tenshi ♦	30	Yes	Buddhist, Protestant, Shinto
Morgan ♦	32	Yes	None
Angel ♦	36	Yes	None
Sharon ♦	37	Yes	Unity
Naomi	39	Yes	Jewish,Wiccan, Native American
Richard	42	— ^d	Universal Life Church and Unitarian

(table continues)

Table 3 (*continued*)

Participant	Years Since Apparition ^a	Belief in a Higher Power ^b	Religion ^c
Jordan ♦	42	Yes	Quaker and Buddhist
James	44	Agnostic	Zen Buddhism
Karen	44	Yes	New Age Spiritual
Barbara ♦	45	Yes	None
Susan	45	Yes	Astara
Samantha	46	Yes	None
Maxie ♦	47	Yes	Pagan
Sister Mary of the Soul ♦	50	Yes	None
Mamachen ♦	51	Yes	Unitarian Universalist
Melissa ♦	52	Yes	Nature Spirituality
Pamela	56	Yes	Christian and Native American

(table continues)

Table 3 (*continued*)

Participant	Years Since Apparition ^a	Belief in a Higher Power ^b	Religion ^c
Carol ♦	60	Yes	Sufism

Note. ^a Question # 2 in questionnaire. ^b Question # 12 in questionnaire. ^c Question # 13 in questionnaire. ^d Participant did not respond to the question regarding a belief in a higher power. The symbol “♦” denotes participants in Part 2, the Extended Portion of the Study. The symbols “♦♦” denotes the participant who was interviewed.

Questionnaire Responses Pertaining to Disclosure

The responses provided for Question #7 in the questionnaire pertaining to disclosure are verbatim and unedited. They showed that 14 of the 23 questionnaire participants, or 61%, disclosed their religious apparitional encounter immediately after or at some point following their experience. Of the 14 experiencers who did disclose their encounter as children, 10 of the 14, or 71% told one or both parents about their experience. Only three participants, or 13%, reported that they received a positive reaction to their disclosure. Two participants, or 8.7%, did not indicate their disclosure outcome. Of the participants who did receive a response to their disclosure, 75% reported receiving a negative response. Three respondents, or 13%, indicated that they have never disclosed their religious apparitional encounter experience to anyone before this study. Twenty-six percent of the respondents kept their childhood experience a secret until their first disclosure as adults. Table 4 includes data pertaining to the participants' disclosure history of religious apparitional encounters.

An interesting aspect to the answers provided in the questionnaire is the fact that several questionnaire participants provided lengthy answers for the open-ended questions. Other participants provided only a sentence or two. A few participants provided no additional comments for the majority of the questionnaire. The varying degrees of responses provided an interesting illustration of the levels of disclosure of the participants.

Table 4

Demographics Pertaining to Disclosure: Response to Question #7 in questionnaire (N = 23)

Participant	Disclosed	When	Participant's Comments
Barbara ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I told my dad...he got angry and took me out of the methodist school I was in and I never went back.</i>
Richard	Yes	As child	[no comment]
Morgan ♦	Yes	As adult	<i>It didn't seem to relate to everyday life and I didn't think anyone would particularly understand. I can't remember having a problem keeping it to myself.</i>
Angelpauley ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I told it some of the priests and pastor they always say that it is a devil's work.</i>
Susan	No		[no comment]
Karina	Yes	As child	<i>I was so excited I went to tell my mother. She did not believe me and made me tell my father. I was embarrassed and felt stupid. They acted like I was making up a story.</i>
Tenshi ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I kept telling my encounter with Jesus to my mother and my grandmother when I was 3 till 18 years old. They weren't surprised at all.</i>
Mamachen ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I immediately told my mom. She said she could tell I was telling the truth and she believed me.</i>
James	No		[no comment]

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Participant	Disclosed	When	Participant's Comments
Sarah ♦♦	Yes	As adult	[no comment]
Karen	Yes	As child	<i>I told my parents...they told me I had imagined it. I knew I hadn't, so I never told them about Christ coming into my room after they left, or the other times after that when he appeared.</i>
Carol ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I told my Mother since when she opened the door to my room the experience stopped. I do not remember that she had any specific response.</i>
Maxie ♦	Yes	As adult	<i>When I was an adult, I was talking to a co-worker who had told me about his spiritual experiences. Before that, I felt it was too private to tell. When I did tell him, he wanted to know more. I couldn't really express it since I did not think in totally Christian terms.</i>
Samantha	Yes	As adult	<i>Not at that time of the appearance.</i>
Melissa ♦	Yes	As adult	<i>Didn't keep it a secret, just thought it was a normal occurrence. Finally told my father when I was in my late 20's.</i>
Angel ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I told my adopted parents, they thought I was strange.</i>
Sharon ♦	Yes	As child	<i>When I told the nun what Jesus and Mary said she wasn't too happy. She starting yelling about 'Are you saying you know more than this book' holding up the bible. I only talked to my sisters after that.</i>

(table continues)

Table 4 (*continued*)

Participant	Disclosed	When	Participant's Comments
Cathy	Yes	As child	<i>I know I mentioned it to my parents who didn't really listen. Later on I was able to tell an aunt and she listened and it was great to have someone believe me.</i>
Jordan ♦	Yes	As child	<i>Only person I remember telling was my mother. She was accepting of what I saw, and very loving about it.</i>
Pamela	Yes	As child	<i>When I was a child, people thought I was crazy and I learned to be quiet to avoid ridicule. When I was older they said I was evil.</i>
Naomi	No		<i>I assumed that this stuff happened to everyone, so there was not point in making a big deal out of it.</i>
Sister Mary of the Soul ♦	Yes	As child	<i>I told my mother who thought it was my imagination. She did not believe in the visions I was having so I stopped talking about them and by the time I was 12 requested that I enter the cloister.</i>
Imelda	Yes	As adult	<i>Many years later, I told one person.</i>

Note. All participant responses are verbatim and unedited. The symbol “♦” denotes participants in Part 2, the Extended Portion of the Study. The symbols “♦♦” denotes the participant who was interviewed.

Themes in the Written Autobiographies

In Part 2 of this study, one of the projects required the 13 participants to write and submit a 3-10 page autobiography. The autobiographies contained details of the participants' personal religious apparitional encounter experiences and how their lives had been affected by the experience to the present day. Thematic content analysis was run on each written autobiography yielding 24 theme categories pertaining to impacts and aftereffects of their religious apparitional encounter, and aspects of their disclosure experience. Three additional themes emerged during this analysis. These three themes did not provide answers to the specific research questions, but are notable as they describe when and where the participants' religious apparitional encounters occurred and provide a context for the experiences. In the following subsections the themes and counts are presented in tables (see Tables 5-6).

Table 5

Themes in Written Autobiographies: Numbers of Theme Occurrences, and Number and Percentages of Participants Who used Theme (N = 13)

Themes	Occurrences	No. of participants	% of participants
Religious	313	13	100
Impacts	69	13	100
Nature	61	6	46.2
Disclosure	50	13	100
Paranormal	45	9	69.2
Career-Life Path	41	9	69.2
Physical Health	41	6	46.2
Mental Health	35	6	46.2
Spiritual	34	9	69.2
Light	33	5	38.5
Bliss	25	9	69.2
Aftereffects	24	7	53.8
Fear	24	9	69.2

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

Themes	Occurrences	No. of participants	% of participants
Isolation	24	9	69.2
Context of the Experience	22	11	84.6
Communication with Apparition	18	9	69.2
Creative	18	6	46.2
Location of Experience	17	5	38.5
Time of Day of Experience	13	13	100
Relationship with Apparition	13	5	38.5
Sexual	7	2	15.4
Altruism	3	2	15.4
Altered State	3	1	7.7
Here and Now	3	1	7.7

Themes: Part 3, the Interviews

One participant, Sarah, was chosen to be interviewed. The criterion for choosing the participant consisted of the participant's ability to come twice to the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California for the two interviews. Sarah was chosen from the 13 participants of the extended portion of the study. She was scheduled for a series of two interviews. Each interview was conducted within one week of each other.

Table 6

Themes in Interviews: Numbers of Theme Occurrences and Percentages of Overall Themes

Themes	Occurrences of Theme	% of Overall Themes
Religious	21	17
Impact of being in Research	19	15
Creative Expression	18	15
Spiritual	13	11
Disclosure	12	10
Impact of Apparition	12	10
Mental Health	7	6
Clinical or Spiritual Guidance	4	3
Memory of Apparition	4	3
Aftereffects	3	3
What would have made a difference	3	3
Apparitional Experience	2	2
Career-Life Path	1	1
Paranormal	1	1